

Wonders of Art & Magic

ADVENTURES

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FOOL'S RANSOM

by Kevin Hassall

Pay up or she's dead. But then, she's dead anyway.

INTRODUCTION

Fool's Ransom is a quick mystery adventure – a familiar idea with a little twist – for a small group of grogs or companions, possibly with a relatively useless mage accompanying them. It helps if the characters are comfortable in woodlands and if the players have a brain or two between them.

It is assumed that the characters are returning from having completed some mission (deliver a book, etc.) and so have no great objective outside of this adventure. The characters' must be the sort who will either (1) try to help a damsel in distress, or (2) fancy some quick cash.

EVENING AT THE DANCING MULE

"It is a miserable, blustery night, with the first drops of storm rain borne on a cold wind. Shortly after dusk you reach The Dancing Mule, a travellers' inn, where a handful of other wayfarers have already settled down to their dinner. Tethered at the bar a bleary-eyed mule laps ale from a bucket and urinates on the floor, swaying and staggering slightly. The innkeeper ushers you to a table by the fire and calls to his daughters to bring you some food. The stew is bland but hot, and the fire soon dries the damp from your clothes."

The inn's customers include a pickpocket and a nervous nobleman. A lady has gone missing. And one of the innkeeper's daughters, Meggan, seems rather too attentive. There is skulduggery afoot....

The NPCs are normal humans, and include:

Askoe the innkeeper, a broad-shouldered widower who runs the Dancing Mule. He spends the evening keeping his customers happy – fussing over them, laughing at their jokes, etc.

Meggan, Askoe's oldest daughter, is a broad-shouldered woman, who ornaments her simple clothes with a few tasteful but pricey pieces of jewellery. She does little work around the inn, but always has plenty of money, as she has often collaborated with local scoundrels to make a few extra gold pieces. She keeps a wary eye on the customers this evening.

Brae, Askoe's overworked second daughter, shares her father's broad build but lacks his jovial temperament. She is aware that Meggan has recently had one or more midnight visitors to her room, and suspects some romantic entanglement.

Cadog is a short, unwashed man, with several missing teeth – a petty pickpocket who wanders the local roads disguised as a farm labourer. Meggan bribes him to leave the inn's customers alone tonight, but he still casts furtive glances over any jewellery and trinkets the adventurers may display.

Walter de Soane (that's "Sir Walter" to you, peasant) is a portly, limping nobleman, anxiously wringing his hands. Walter has travelled to the inn to meet a noblewoman called Ismae who is travelling here from the west (or any other direction suitable to your campaign). She has not arrived, and he is very worried. Characters hoping to impress him in conversation should stick to subjects like hawking, hunting and heraldry.

Edwin FitzAllen, a gangling young wool merchant, travels from the west with three horses and a load of cloth. The cloth and horses are in the stable, guarded by his servant, Pok. He babbles endlessly about prices, reminisces about his most profitable journeys, bemoans his loneliness, and ends up getting drunk and feeling sorry for himself.

Pok, Edwin FitzAllen's servant, is sometimes a beggar, sometimes a labourer, presently hired to tend Edwin FitzAllen's pack horses. He does not enter the inn, but stays in the stables, tending the horses, playing his flute and sleeping. If the party do not trouble to go talk to him, no one else does. If asked about Ismae, he says that a western noblewoman

named Ismae died (natural causes, e. g. disease) about a week ago – he knows this for a fact, because he was hired as a grave-digger to bury her.

In addition, the Storyguide should add other NPCs, as he or she wishes, to give additional colour – a zealous preacher, for example, or some dumb peasants – and may use conversations with the customers to forewarn the party of future adventures of campaign events. And of course, the inn has one more inhabitant:

The (Dancing) Mule: this lame creature is the inn's mascot, abandoned here by a merchant years ago. It spends the evening lapping at its bucket of ale and nibbling at the clothes of customers who stand too near. A drunken stagger is the closest it comes to dancing.

THE EVENING'S EVENTS

As the party finish their stew, Walter strides up to them and demands to be told – asking is not his style – if they have any news of a "Lady Ismae de Benvalle", a noblewoman who had been travelling to this inn from the west. The party have not heard of her. Walter proceeds to inquire with the inn's other patrons and staff, but none seem able to help him.

Later, the player characters notice Meggan approach Cadog and push a gold coin into his hand. The characters cannot overhear, but with Read Lips or similar may notice her whisper, "Nothing tonight. Just leave everyone alone." She has bribed Cadog to leave the inn and its customers alone for the night.

The characters may retire to their rooms whenever they wish. By midnight everyone else is asleep, and the rain beats heavily on the roof and shutters.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ISMAE?

Lady Ismae was a minor noblewoman, who was due to marry Walter's overlord. Unfortunately, she died about a week ago, as Pok (above) well knows.

Naturally, a message was sent to inform Walter and his master of Ismae's death. But the messenger, a woman named Gwyn, was a confirmed scoundrel and old friend of Meggan's.

Rather than deliver the message, Gwyn sought out Meggan. Over the last few nights the two have met secretly in Meggan's room to perfect their plan...

THE NEXT MORNING

Shortly after dawn, Brae opens the front door of the tavern – as she does every morning – preparing to walk to a nearby farm to collect fresh milk and eggs. Pinned to the door is a ransom note, and a scrap of paper bearing the wax imprint of Lady Ismae's family's seal.

If any of the party are already down in the common room, Brae asks them what the note means (she cannot read). If they are still in their rooms they hear anxious, raised voices across the corridor, as Askoe shows the note to Walter.

The scribbled note reads:

"We have Lady Ismae. We want twenty shillings, or equivalent. Bring money to old oak stump one mile north, one hour after dawn. Have a peasant woman bring it. She must be alone, unarmed. Trick us, Ismae dies. Attached is imprint of her seal, just to prove we have her."

The writing is poor – no professional scribe or mage's script for sure.

Walter not only allows the characters to look at the note. He actually invites their comments. If they show any interest at all, he offers them ten shillings to get Ismae back: they will get 10 if they can get her back without paying the ransom, 5 gp if they have to pay the ransom, and absolutely nothing if they foul up and get her killed. He can raise an equivalent of the the cash – mainly in semi-precious stones, prized from the hilt of his sword – but would rather not give in to blackmail.

Of course, Meggan "bravely" volunteers to deliver the ransom.

NOTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

The oak stump mentioned in the message is one mile away, in a large wood. It is not on a major path, and the "kidnappers'" knowledge of it implies that they are locals or have a local contact.

The seal is a family seal, not a personal one. Several members of Ismae's family might have such seals, and such wax imprints would be affixed to a broad range of official documents and letters.

The night's rain turned the ground outside of the inn to mire. But there are no tracks leading to or from the door. (Storyguide's note: Meggan just opened the door from the inside and attached the note during the night.)

Walter cannot accompany the party into the woods, due to his limp – he can't run and would make too much noise.

If the party want extra muscle they may tour the local farms to raise a militia. Have characters make Communication + Leadership to raise a peasant militia.

THE DELIVERY

The woods are light and airy, but with plenty of bushes, ferns and ground-level cover to hide in. The old oak stump stands in a small clearing. From daybreak until two hours after dawn, Gwyn and a henchman lie in wait, 100' from the stump.

Gwyn is well hidden (she may only be seen with a successful Spot Hidden roll), but her inexpertly concealed henchman can be spotted with a minute's careful observation and a Perception check.

However, any character moving through the woods must make suitable rolls (Stealth + Dexterity), or be spotted first by Gwyn. Unless such an intruder looks convincingly like a local peasant (no armour, no weapons) Gwyn assumes that the plot has been discovered and she and her henchman flee, crashing through the woods. Play this as a chase; Gwyn and her henchman have around a 100' head start.

If Meggan brings the ransom and seems to be alone, Gwyn comes out to meet her and the two divide the ransom. (If Meggan is aware that the party plan anything, she makes sure to warn Gwyn). Then Meggan hides her half in the undergrowth nearby, and Gwyn and her henchman leave. If the party interrupt the scoundrels, Meggan feigns innocence, while the others flee.

Of course, prudent players may have already encircled the area, perhaps with a local militia, or one of them might deliver the ransom and try to overpower or bargain with the "kidnappers".

If they cannot flee, the scoundrels try bribery and bluff. They fight only as a last resort and surrender rather than face likely death.

If the party capture Gwyn, or failing that can explain Gwyn' and Meggan's plot to Walter, he pays them the 10 shillings he promised for solving the mystery.

If Gwyn, Meggan or the henchman are captured, Walter takes them away and sees that "justice" is done: they may be flogged, branded or imprisoned for their deception – but they are not executed, and so may return in later adventures.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Gwyn

Vital Statistics: Intelligence +1, Perception +2, Strength -1, Stamina 0, Communication +2, Presence +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness +2

Important Abilities: Scribe 1, Forgery 2, Stealth 3, Guile 3, Intrigue 2, Bargain 2, Brawl 2, Area Lore 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 2

Equipment: Two daggers, ragged leather armor. A pouch at her hip contains the letter to Walter's overlord, explaining the circumstances of Ismae's death; the wax seal found with the ransom note was clearly torn from this sheet.

Hafgall the henchman (unemployed mercenary)

Vital Statistics: Intelligence 0, Perception -1, Strength +2, Stamina +1, Communication 0, Presence -1, Dexterity +1, Quickness 0

Important Abilities: Polearm 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 4

Equipment: Ring mail armor, quarterstaff, dagger Ω

BLOOD ON HIS HANDS

by Julio Couce

INTRODUCTION

This story was designed for a covenant which was placed in a castle. It wasn't a very secretive covenant, so the neighbouring peasants knew (or at least suspected) that its inhabitants were magi. If this isn't your case and you want to use this story, you will have to make some adaptations.

THE MYSTERY UNSOLVED

The grogs that guard the covenant tell the magi that there is a person from the neighbouring village who wants to speak to them. It seems that there is no way to dissuade him, and he says that he is not going to leave until he has spoken to the "lords of the castle". If any of these grogs has Area Lore of 2+, he tells the magi that this peasant is a quite wealthy and well-known one.

When taken before the magi, the peasant, with the hat in his hands and visibly nervous, addressing any magus as "lord" (or "lady"), tells them the following story:

"I didn't intend to bother your lordships with my problems, but I am sure that my son is going to die horribly if I do nothing, so I have decided to implore your mercy. I have already talked to the priest, but he refused to believe me.

Look, about a month ago my son, who is nine year old, began to speak about someone he called his friend Andrew. We didn't believe him, and we thought he was just letting his imagination run, as he is always doing. However, some weeks later, things began to disappear from the house and I found them in his bedroom. I hit him, but he kept saying that it was his friend the one who had taken them. After that, the thefts stopped.

Yesterday, I found my son crying. When I asked him what the matter was, he told me that he had seen terrifying images. May God forgive me, I didn't believe him and I told him to stop lying.

But last night, I woke up in the middle of a tormenting nightmare. I had dreamt that I was in a very small and dark place. I lit a torch, and close to me there was a putrid corpse. Its eyes were watery and it was staring at me.

I was still calming myself down when I heard my son shouting. I rushed in his room and found him unconscious and bleeding copiously. He had a bad wound in his chest. There was nobody else in the room. Later, we looked for footprints near his window, but there wasn't any."

This will probably arouse the PCs' curiosity. Besides, if they helped this peasant, their relationship with the nearby village would probably improve.

So they go to the peasant's house, which is rather big and relatively luxurious. When they arrive, they find out that the boy has regained consciousness. Nevertheless, he is still in pain and confused and can't say much. He only says that he heard a noise, woke up and saw a dark shape. He doesn't remember more.

If any magus examines the wound, he will see that it's a deep cut, like one made with a knife. The wound has been properly treated and, if it doesn't become infected, the boy will be recovered soon. Also, with a perception roll, he may realize that perhaps the boy has the gift.

Anyway, something strange is happening and the magi start investigating.

WHAT HAD REALLY HAPPENED

A monk called Brother Andrew came to the village. He was going on a pilgrimage but he became sick, so he decided to rest there for several days.

The following day, when Brother Andrew was going for a short walk, he met the village smith. Six years ago, this smith had killed his wife when he discovered that she was being unfaithful to him. He had buried her body in the forest, and it had never been found. He often had nightmares in which his hands were dirty with blood.

As soon as Brother Andrew saw him, he turned pale and exclaimed: "Your hands!! They're covered with blood!!". The hands were not covered with blood, but Brother Andrew had Second Sight and that's how he saw them.

The smith, horrified to hear the words he most feared, went mad and killed Brother Andrew with his knife. He hid the corpse and later came back to bury it as well.

Brother Andrew's soul went to purgatory, but his spirit remained here. It went to the village and tried to ask someone to find his body and bury it by Church ceremony. To its dismay, nobody noticed that it was there, speaking.

He eventually found a boy who seemed to hear what it was saying, but only a little. This boy had the Gift and was more sensitive than any other person in the village. Brother Andrew's spirit decided that he would keep speaking to this boy until he finally got the message. When he realized that the boy wasn't doing anything to discover his body, he began to hide things to get his attention and, when this failed, to send him desperate images of his corpse.

Finally, the boy understood what the ghost wanted and began asking questions about Andrew. The smith heard about that and became very frightened. He decided to go into the boy's bedroom one night and kill him.

PATHS OF INVESTIGATION

There are many things the PCs can do; some of them are listed below.

*Casting a ritual like *Eyes of the Past* (InIm 20) in the bedroom of the boy.*

If they aren't reluctant to spend some vis, this is a good option because the peasant can tell them approximately when the boy shouted. This ritual will allow the caster to see a man entering the room through the window. Then, he makes some noise and the boy wakes up and shouts. The man slashes him with a knife he is holding and escapes. It's possible to see the man's face at the moonlight and, if described (roll for communication) to someone with Area Lore of 2+, he will be recognized as the smith of the village.

Looking for footprints near the window of the room.

The peasant had said that there wasn't any footprints, but this is just because he didn't find any. Unfortunately, there are plenty of new footprints from the peasant and his family. Only with a Per + Hunt roll of 13+, some different ones can be found. They cannot be followed, for the earth is quite hard there.

Asking questions around the village.

If they ask in the inn of the village about someone called Andrew (and pass a Communication roll), the innkeeper will tell them that some weeks ago, a monk called Andrew came to her inn. He said he would remain there for a week, but the next day he went to have a walk and didn't return, leaving some possessions in his room. (If they can get any of these possessions, they will be able to find him – his corpse – with an InCo spell, via arcane connection). Also, some people in the village, when asked about the boy, could tell them that he had been asking about someone called Andrew.

Talking with the smith.

If they walk through the village, you should tell them: "Through the opened door of a cabin, you see a small fire. Judging by the noises you hear, it seems to be the smith of the village working." If they enter and talk to him, he will be very polite and answer all their question (obviously, lying if it's necessary). Someone with a high Per + Guile, might suspect that he's concealing something.

Reading the boy's mind.

Good idea. This way, they can find out that he began seeing a pale monk smiling at him and saying "I'm Andrew". Several days later, he told him "Look for me". The boy didn't know where to find him, so he did nothing. Then, several things disappeared from the house and were found in his room. He was sure that Andrew had taken them, but nobody

believed him. Some days ago, he started having nightmares and seeing visions of Andrew's corpse. Somehow, he knew by intuition that Andrew was dead and that he wanted him to find his body. He asked several people, but none of them knew someone called Andrew.

Making a spell like Incantation of Summoning the Dead (ReMe 25), using the name Andrew for the ghost.

Brilliant! When a magus casts this spell in the house, he (and only he) is able to see a very pale man dressed like a monk. The image is blurred and he (or it) appears to be weak and very tired. It doesn't seem to hear anything the magus says. It simply stands still and whispers: "Go to _____ (place near the village) and rescue me. Beware the man with bloody hands." Then, it fades away.

Going to _____, after learning somehow the importance of this place.

When they arrive at _____, any person with Second Sight will see the same ghost standing under a tree. Digging there, they will find a skeleton. If they are looking for the corpse but don't see the ghost, they'll have to find it by other means (like an InCo spell).

Well, those are the possibilities I could think of. Probably, the PCs will come up with something different.

NOTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

* If anybody with Second Sight sees the smith's hands, he will see them covered with blood.

* If a magus is looking for an apprentice, and he realizes that the boy has the Gift, he might persuade his father to let him take the boy as an apprentice.

* It depends on the relationship between the PCs and the local priest, but normally, he won't be pleased at all when he discovers that the PCs are not minding their own business.

* When discovered, the smith will try to hit his accuser with his hammer and run away. Killing him outright would be a bit over the fence, and could lead to heavy complications: the magi have absolutely no right to this kind of court-martialing, nor anyone else in the village. If captured and brought to the justice, the smith will be found guilty and executed by hanging after a few days, when the local lord will find the time to hear his case in court.

WRAPPING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

If they manage to solve the problem, the boy's father is very satisfied, and probably the PCs can count on him when they need a contact in the village. Moreover, they gain a level 1 reputation in the village as helpful (if they hadn't that reputation before). On the other hand, the priest will be resentful.

Also, it would be a good idea to bury Brother Andrew by Church ceremony, for his ghost is not going to stop being a nuisance until then.

Note: This adventure is intended to make the PCs interact with people from the village (and perhaps have a good quarrel with the local priest), and to let a PC find an apprentice when he wants to train one. It is not intended to be a difficult adventure. (In fact, if the PCs don't know what to do, they can always wait until the boy is well enough to tell them more information, though they will have to be vigilant if they don't want the attempt of murder to be repeated). Ω

GOING HOME

by Kevin Hassall

INTRODUCTION

Going Home is a quick supernatural story (it should take about an hour or so to play through) for a small group of characters – grogs would do as well as magi. The names assume that it is set in Christianized Scandinavia, but by changing the names it could be relocated to any area where paganism still survived a century before.

The references to "the gods" are left deliberately open. Some Storyguides will see the old pagan gods as faeries, others will see them as demons – do whatever works best in your saga.

PROLOGUE

During a preceding adventure, as the characters browse through a small market, they come upon an untidy junk stall. Amongst the trinkets on sale is a silver ring with an opaque crystal set into. An unknown family emblem is cut into the gem. It isn't magical. The stall-holder wants only a shilling for it – a meagre price.

If none of the players' characters buy the ring, one of their grogs could purchase it, or a local might buy it but lose it to a player character in a dice game that night.

For the Players

It is a hot, lazy day, as you travel through the rolling countryside, seeking a sheltered place to pause for lunch, when around a bend in the road you spot a broad oak tree next to a ford. Beneath the tree sits a young minstrel, a lyre and a wineskin at her side, bread and cheese in her hands.

"Care to join me?" she asks as you approach. "There's a story about this ford. I'll share it with you for the price of a mug of ale."

With nothing better to do, she'll actually relate the story even if the characters refuse to pay her, and throw in a couple of irrelevant songs if they give her some cash.

"There's often a beggar loitering by the ford – an old man, but straight and tall and dignified. I've met him myself, and he never asks for food nor coin, though he's gracious to those who show charity to him. All he asks for is a ring, he says, a silver ring with a crystal set into it and an emblem carved out in the crystal. Some say he's a ghost seeking for the only thing that will lay his soul to rest. They say that he is the son of King Harek, who ruled to the east fifty years ago. He took an oath to kill a German nobleman who had slain his uncle, and to bring back the noble's ring as proof that he had succeeded. But the German died in a distant land, and now the devils whom he swore his oath to won't let him rest until he recovers the ring."

The players should realize that their characters carry the ring that the beggar seeks. The minstrel's story, based on fancy and conjecture, is less than half true.

For the Storyguide

Over one hundred years ago, a petty prince ruled the surrounding lands. He was usually just, but proved merciless to those who opposed him – and in his old age he grew paranoid, suspecting all around him of treachery. At last he went too far, and executed his chief advisor, his life-long friend, a man named Fjalar. Many local nobles rose against the prince, and led by the advisor's three daughters they laid siege to his hall.

Fjalar's daughters swore by the gods that they would not leave the hall until their father's murder was avenged. The prince fled from his home under cover of night, vowing that he would reclaim his throne before he died. And the gods heard both proud oaths.

Today, the old prince still lives, a wizened old beggar robbed of his strength by time. He has tried to re-enter his castle, but finds a ring of enchanted thorn bushes barring his way. Unknown to him, Fjalar's three daughters still wait in the ruins of the castle, prevented from leaving by the same barrier.

Searching for the means to breach the bank of thorns and regain his throne, the beggar has consulted numerous diviners and wise women. Their advice has always been the same: to appease the gods he must find the Ring of Office that Fjalar wore; he must carry the ring through the thorn hedge to his throne; and there pronounce his long-dead friend and councillor innocent of all treason.

The gods want the prince to repent of his murder, and will not let him die until he has made some token amends. And at the same time, Fjalar's daughters will also have the opportunity to fulfil their oath – after they have had a century of isolation to wish they had never uttered it.

Fjalar's Ring of Office, of course, is the trinket that the party found on the market stall, above.

SCENE 1: FINDING THE BEGGAR

The prince is now so weak that he can hardly stand – but still the gods will not let him die. He lives at a local farm, where the family have taken pity on him. The party may find him by asking any of the local farmers. Alternatively they may just search through the surrounding woods in the hopes of stumbling across him – in which case they come to the farm – or wait by the ford for a week or so. Whether they seek him out immediately or return in a month, or a year or in ten years, he will still be in the area.

The Farm

Half a mile from the ford stands a small farmhouse and outbuildings. The farm's owner, Ingibjorg, lives here with her three children, a hard-working but pious and generous woman.

The beggar lies in a small room at the rear of the farmhouse, peeling vegetables, sewing and performing other light tasks for the farmer. He is wizened and frail, with only a few wisps of white hair remaining on his head.

The ancient man introduces himself as Vemund (characters with a good Legend or Local Area Lore roll recall that a petty tyrant of that name ruled this area a century ago), and speaks to them with a self-assured humility.

If the party show Vemund the ring, he is moved to tears. He explains to the player characters:

"Decades ago I held a great hall, and many were the fine warriors who served me. I had power and wealth and luxury. Perhaps I had too much power, too much wealth. I don't know. But I betrayed a friend, I clung on to my wealth and my power, and I swore that I would reclaim my hall when my people cast me out. The gods punish me for my pride: they will not let me die. I beg you, take me back to my home. Let me show the gods that I am sorry, and let me die there."

Vemund, ashamed of his crimes, explains no more at present. He only says that the ring belonged to a friend whom he wronged, and he promises the party any treasures which remain in his castle.

THE HALL OF BROKEN SPLENDORS

The party must carry or support Vemund on their journey to the castle, as he can barely walk. The journey takes most of one day to complete, so that the party arrive at the ruined castle about an hour before dusk.

All that remains of the great hall is a low hill, scarred with tumbled-down walls, and all around it what was once farmland has reverted to wood and moor. The hill itself is a hundred paces long, but at its summit is a flat area, encircled by some kind of hedge or thicket, about eighty feet across.

Thorn bushes have sprung up around the edge of the plateau, packed in so close together that they form a solid hedge.

Wall of Thorns

The thorn bushes can be climbed (the climber takes +5 damage doing so) or with much effort can be pushed through (+25 damage, reduced to +15 if using a shield, staff or other object with which to push the thicket aside). The thorn trees are immune to all non-magical damage. Spells and magic weapons affect them as usual.

Any character wearing or touching Fjalar's ring can push through the hedge at any point without taking damage from the thorns. However, Fjalar's three daughters wait inside, to oppose anyone who tries to gain entrance to the area.

The Daughters of Fjalar

The area within the ring of thorn bushes is scattered with rotted timbers and the remains of walls. At the east end a stone throne sits upon a low dais. Three pallid figures, their armour rusted and clothes tattered by the years, turn to face intruders as they enter.

The daughters – Asa, Nauma and Aslaug – have waited at the castle for a century. Their bones lie in the grass: what the characters can see are their ghosts – immune to normal weapons and damage, but very much capable of damaging living folk as if they were real (Spirit Might 20 each). For added nastiness, the Storyguide might rule that their swords can pass through metal etc., and so cannot be parried, so that only dodge-based defenses have any effect.

As soon as the party enter through the thorn hedge the women go to confront them and to block their advance. Their tactic is to prevent any characters from entering until they know exactly who the party are and what they want.

If the characters start a fight, the women retaliate. They do not venture out of the enclosed area unless they see Vemund – in which case they charge towards him, grimly intent upon killing him. Note that they cannot get through the hedge unless they somehow get the ring or the characters have destroyed a section to make a gap.

But the women would rather talk first: they want to kill Vemund, but have no quarrel with the characters.

Like Vemund they are trapped, and long for release. They want to kill Vemund to fulfil their oath, hoping that the gods will then allow them to rest. They have no passion in their vengeance. They now pursue their vendetta only to gain a release from their imprisonment, and can hardly even remember their father any more.

Both the women and Vemund try to persuade the characters to help them. Both want to fulfill their oaths. Neither side can bribe them, as there is clearly nothing of value left in the hall's ruins.

The daughters demand that the beggar be delivered over to them. He urges the party to kill or restrain the women (if they can!), so that he can get to his throne. The women tell the party what a tyrant Vemund became towards the end of his reign, and insist that they are justly avenging their father's murder. Vemund argues that only if he can get to his throne again – and fulfil his oath – will the gods let them all die at last.

The most obvious compromise is this: Vemund may be allowed to get to his throne and pronounce Fjalar innocent, and then the daughters may kill him. As Vemund longs to be allowed to die, this is fine by him, and the women have no objections. Other solutions may be viable, at the Storyguide's discretion, depending upon how the party handle the negotiations.

There are no obvious treasures for the characters to pillage, but with a little thought they might find a use for 15,000 cubic feet of near-indestructible thorn-bush.

WRAPPING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

Whatever happens, if Vemund is killed the women all "die" – fade away to be at peace – before sunset. If Vemund gets to his throne and pronounces Fjalar innocent then he and any remaining daughters "die" before darkness falls. Equally, if the characters persuade the protagonists to forgive each other, then all four die here at dusk. If Vemund is killed by anyone other than the daughters, then his ghost continues to stalk the region, looking for the ring (and note that his lone ghost will always be "killed" by the daughters if it tries to return alone). If the characters destroy the daughters' ghosts then the gods will not let them rest, so that they return after a few months – especially unfortunate if the characters have let Vemund free himself in that time. Ω

SINS OF THE FATHERS

by Kevin Hassall

INTRODUCTION

The following story revolves around two apprentices (lets call them "Rufus" – as he has red hair – and "the Maiden" for simplicity, though their names will vary depending upon the Saga's location.) The plot requires a somewhat urban-oriented Covenant; if your Magi are all forest-dwelling mysanthropic hermits, it could be difficult – but not entirely impossible – to bring them into line. Anyway, it works with more brains than brawls, though at the end stage it could be handy to have some heavy-duty grogs in the field with spells sizzling about.

PROLOGUES

First, the apprentices should be introduced – taken on by player character magi. Only try running this if at least two player character magi are at a stage where they can take apprentices, and if they are vaguely interested in doing so. It does not require that magi go out looking for apprentices: the prospective apprentices come to them.

Rufus is encountered in any city or town – an underfed red-haired boy, dirty, starving, scared. His feet are caked in blood, his clothes no more than rags, and magi will notice him even if they aren't looking for apprentices as he has the Blatant Gift. On closer examination, characters notice that his ragged clothes are actually inscribed with magical runes (occult, not Hermetic). Just as the player characters are about to start talking to him, a group of thugs approach: they have been hired by the boy's father to retrieve the kid. The father, Bernardo the Physicus, did not tell the thugs his name, and will contact them if they succeed: he did not give them any way to find him, so that players can't chase him down this early on after interrogating the thugs.

Rufus flees if the characters don't intervene, losing his pursuers (the thugs) and any characters who are trying to follow him. Bernardo does not contact the thugs after they have failed: he knows that they have screwed up. Saving Rufus from the thugs would be easy if this weren't in a city – but blatant magics must be avoided, making the encounter more interesting.

If the characters don't intervene, Rufus can find his way to the covenant by chance at a later date. One way or another, he should end up as a player's mage's apprentice, and the characters shouldn't find Bernardo (his father) yet.

He has no social skills at all, but he has got a frighteningly large Occult Lore skill, a major Hex talent, and an evil glint in his eye: after he is trained hermetically, the Hex may transform into an affinity with Perdo, for example, and his disconcerting stare and Blatant Gift should ensure that even at the tender age of ten he scares the hell out of the grogs etc.

In fact, he has spent all nine years of his life shackled in his father's house, acting as an "apprentice" and conduit for spirit summoning (the father summons spirits into the boy's body, they talk through him, etc.), and at last he has fled. He doesn't even have a name: his father didn't bother giving him one.

The Maiden is brought to the covenant by her father, assuming that (publicly or through friends-of-friends) he can somehow hear that the magi might be able to help the girl.

The Maiden's mother died in childbirth – painfully, as it happens, from severe internal bleeding. Her father, an innkeeper, has brought her up himself, but now, as she reaches puberty, she has begun to have visions – hallucinations, not premonitions, usually of an obscene nature, but sometimes being visions of her mother. He has also begun to notice strangers loitering around the inn – not customers, but people who watch his daughter, skulk around the rear entrance to the place, etc. He has no idea what is going on.

In fact, the Maiden's mother was not entirely faithful to the innkeeper. She had a fling, nine months before the birth, with a demon of lust named Ascerieis: whether the girl is the demon's daughter, or whether the demon's interference merely corrupted the child who is the innkeeper's, is up to the Storyguide.

The magi should not be able to find anything wrong with the girl. But she has the Gift, they should notice. Maybe the strangers are other magi? Maybe the visions are linked with the Gift? They can't tell. One player's mage, however, should take her on. Back at the covenant, the visions stop.

In accordance with Ascerieis's nature, the Maiden should have or develop virtues and flaws like Enchanting Music, Knack with musical instrument(s), Venus' Blessing, etc. Second Sight would also be good.

After the apprentices have been taken on, several years pass.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Ascerieis

Ascerieis is a demon of lust and vanity, who travels the world in the guise of a handsome minstrel. In this guise, in the innkeeper's hostelry, he encountered and later seduced the girl's mother. His intention was not that he should somehow become a father – that isn't what normally happens – but in this instance, he realizes, he has in some way gained a daughter.

As the girl reached puberty, Ascerieis came to reclaim her – checking out her father's inn, hiring beggars to spy on the place, looking for ways to lure her away. Because of his proximity and attentions, she developed her pornographic "visions".

When the girl is taken on by Hermetic Magi, Ascerieis backs off, and her visions stop. He is quite happy for her to learn a little of the Order, of Hermetic magic theory, even Hermetic magic – although he does not want her to complete her training, as he wants her abilities to remain pliable, so that he can bend her "gift" to his purposes (as determined by the Storyguide). And so a few years later – when the girl has a point or two in Magic Theory, Hermes Lore and an Art or two, he comes back for her. And as soon as he starts looking for her again, her obscene visions start afresh.

The demon should have an Infernal Might high enough to survive at least one Demon's Eternal Oblivion from the characters – allowing it to escape if required before the final show-down. Its abilities are: it can tell at a glance what a person's sexual preferences, past sins and fantasies are. It can improvise superb (but always impious) songs as required, it can listen in on any conversation within 100 yards, and it can instantly teleport to any location within 5 miles where carnal sins have been committed since the last Sunday (which, in a city, means that it can always teleport out of trouble, as one bedroom, somewhere in the city, is bound to fit the description). Moreover, by spending extra Infernal Points, the demon can take with him anyone whom he touches when he teleports. The demon has no real combat abilities, but he can cause anyone who has indulged in carnal crimes which they haven't done penance for to double over in agony – incapacitating them by inflicting severe pain to their genitals for up to one day per Infernal Point spent.

The Ghost

The Maiden's mother is guilt-ridden – for having betrayed her husband, and because she knows that her daughter is in trouble. Her ghost cannot rest until the girl is safe. And so, whenever Ascerieis is looking for her, she tries to warn the girl – appearing initially as hallucinations.

Some years into her apprenticeship, when her gift is better developed, the Maiden is able to see her mother more clearly. And so, when Ascerieis starts looking for her again, she comes to warn the girl.

Bernardo the Physicus

Bernardo was trained as a physician but developed a side interest in the occult. Both interests he inherited from his own father, along with a large stone jar called the *Dull Jar of Al-Adin* (actually detailed in the Nightbane RPG supplement, *Through The Glass Darkly*). His father warned him not to consult the Jar's malign djinn too frequently, but he ignored the warning, and soon the spirit's influence had quite corrupted him – so that he started sacrificing kidnapped beggar girls to summon up dark spirits in the hopes of learning their secrets, that sort of thing. At length, he decided that one of his victims should give him a child before he sacrificed her, and so he begot Rufus.

Bernardo's strengths are three-fold.

1) He is literate and well-educated. He can do a bit of divination using astrology, and earns a living as a physician. His trade and education actually make him a respected man in his home city.

2) He has the jar, recovered from the East decades ago. The djinn within it actually lives in the stone of the jar, not in the cavity formed by the jar, and can be called forth by passing a hand over the inscription on one side of the container. It can answer almost any question about the past or present, specialising in revealing peoples' darkest secrets. However, Storyguides should assume that a simple Hermetic Parma or Aegis can stop the spirit scrying on, locating or otherwise answering questions about any mage or person living within an Aegis. It obviously has no chance of gleaning information about anyone with good Christian Faith Points.

3) He is adept at summoning, binding, cajoling, and dealing with spirits – mainly of the nastier variety (though whether these are ghosts or demons is up to the Storyguide). These he can use as spies, for the most part. For added nastiness, assume that the spirits which he most often uses as spies are the ghosts of his raped and sacrificed beggar women victims.

No one knows about the bodies buried under his cellar – proof of his murders and enough to hang him – except for Rufus and, of course, the ghosts of these women. Characters who don't want to attack him directly could conspire to have him executed.

He is irate that his son has escaped – not from fatherly love, but because the boy was very useful. He wants him back.

For years the Jar has not been able to tell him where Rufus is (due to the Covenant's Aegis). But now the jar has told him to seek out a minstrel named Andrew (Ascerieis), who, the jar intuitively, will be able to help.

The Master Plan

Bernardo contacts Ascerieis, and tells him that a group of strange men took his son – and says that he believes that Ascerieis can help him. The demon, who knows that a group of "strange men" (magi) took its "daughter", guesses that their quarries are in the same place, and proposes that the two work together. In fact, the demon would actually like to get the occultist killed (as described below), and Bernardo has no qualms about betraying the "minstrel".

EVENTS ON THE SCENE

Stage 1: Foul Visions Renewed

The Maiden has her visions again – the pornographic ones – for the first time since her apprenticeship started. The magi cannot work out why. Nothing comes of this, though, and a season passes. (The Storyguide might now like to inject another little incident or story, unrelated to this plot, before the next event, so that the players don't immediately realize that the issues are linked.)

Stage 2: A Letter of Arrogance

Bernardo scribes a letter to the innkeeper, which one of his spirits causes to appear in his bedroom one early evening. The letter threatens to kill him if he does not hand over the Maiden. The innkeeper can't read, and so sends for the magi who took his daughter, knowing that they can read.

When the magi arrive at the inn, there is a minstrel there singing lively – if rather raunchy and less than pious – ballads about love, chivalry and adventure. There is also a game of dice which grogs are invited to join in (rigged, of course, with weighted dice) and a drinking contest in one corner. (Let the grogs have fun with the dice and drinking, and describe these as much as the minstrel so that the players don't immediately realize that the minstrel is plot-relevant.)

If the magi tell the innkeeper what the letter really says he is distraught, and begs them to help – not that he wants to hand her over, but he certainly doesn't want to die either. If they lie, well, that's up to them. Actually the innkeeper is quite safe.

Two of Bernardo's spirits loiter, invisibly, in the streets nearby – or ideally inside the inn if it's a really run-down establishment. Even if someone can see them (Second Sight, MuMe, etc.) they just look like beggars. One of these is

there to memorize the characters' faces, one to follow them to work out where they live. The real reason for the letter is to bring the characters running. The demon and the spirits assume that anyone who turns up to read the letter is likely to be attached to the magi. Note that the demon has his "overhear conversations" ability, which it will use to eavesdrop on the characters and the innkeeper.

Stage 3: Sanctuary for the Virtuous

The Maiden and her Master/Mistress (player character mage) are in the marketplace (or anywhere else that you like – even in the Covenant) some days later, looking for ingredients for potions (or whatever). The mage turns his/her back for a minute, and then the Maiden – the apprentice – is gone.

What has happened is that her mother (whom she recognizes from her earlier visions) has come and whisked her away. The mother, who when she died realized who the minstrel was (he couldn't resist mocking her, inaudibly to any others, as she died) hurriedly tells the girl that a demon is after her, and that these "strange men" cannot protect her: the mother, even in death, has the usual Medieval attitude that only the power of God is guaranteed to overcome the power of the Devil, and she has a point. In any case, for all that she knows, these "strange men" (magi) might be diabolists themselves.

The mage looks around, but cannot see the girl. There is, however, a wild-eyed beggar grinning at him across the market square. You know the sort of mad beggar – "Pity poor Tom, for Tom is mad!" –, and of course, the beggar, being as mad as a March hare, has Second Sight. He saw the woman taking the girl away (no one else in the market place could see the woman) and intuitively knows that the woman was the girl's mother; he also assumes, wrongly, that the player's mage is the child's father or aunt (as appropriate). This should make for some interesting role-playing. "Why yes, master – your daughter, she went with your lady wife. A penny? A penny, my lord?"

The mother actually takes the girl to the door of a church (she can't go in – she's a ghost), and tells her to go in and pray until someone she can trust comes for her. "And don't talk to any minstrels!" The ghost then heads for the nearest convent, where she tries very hard to speak to the nuns – who, of course, can't see or hear her. Eventually, one old nun, a blind old woman called Sister Maria, seems to be able to hear her. The two have quite a long chat in the cloister – the blind nun not realizing that she's talking to an invisible person. The mother explains that a young wife was once tricked by a demon, who now wishes to reclaim the wife's daughter – she doesn't admit that she was that young wife – and that the Maiden now waits in a church, with no one to protect her from the demon.

The old nun finds a younger nun to lead her through the streets, and goes to fetch the girl from the church. (Assume that the Maiden's kneeling and praying at an altar is enough to stop Intellego magics finding her in the meantime.)

The Maiden is then brought before the Abbess, who wants to know what is going on. The Maiden probably just says that she was abandoned at the church by her mother, and leaves it at that: if the magi mistreated her, however, she may betray them to the nuns, telling all about magic tuition, etc. (Abbess talks to Bishop, Bishop appoints Inquisitor... you know how it goes), but most likely she just keeps quiet and prays that somehow the whole mess will sort itself out. Sister Maria recounts the conversation in the cloister, but since everyone knows that she was alone in the building no one is too sure what to make of the tale. Some of the nuns say that Sister Maria must have been visited by an angel, but Sister Maria reserves judgement (she's 70, and in a few years such questions won't matter her any more), and the Abbess wants to know more before she passes judgement. Nonetheless, the Abbess agrees to take the girl on, and to start to train her to be a nun.

The Maiden's master/mistress (the player character) will doubtless want the girl back, but must first find her and then spirit her away (that's up to him/her). In the meantime, she is safe from the demon here, since he can neither affect nor enter the holy area of the Convent – and the demon is irate about this.

Note: If the Maiden's master is keeping her safe in the Covenant – not letting her out after her father was threatened – then the Storyguide will have to adlib this. Notice, though, that there should be no problem with the ghost appearing to the girl inside the Covenant, for example, and leading her away from there (especially if the apprentice can disguise herself, for example, or can do some basic *Perdo Imagonem* to conceal herself as she leaves).

Stage 4: Poison on the Honeyed Tongue

As the magi try to find the Maiden, a group of characters (perhaps out in the city looking for rumours) come across an inn where that minstrel "Andrew" (*Ascerieis*) is playing; this group must have at least one member who was also at the inn in Stage 2. As they enter, he brings his song to a premature end, and starts another – singing of the wretched quest

of a father to find his son: in the song, the child was stolen at birth by an evil diabolist and brought up as a slave, and although the child has since escaped the father has spent X-many years searching the land for the son he has not seen in all that time.

If the characters don't take the hint and talk to the "minstrel", he will go and talk to them. His story is thus:

"Many years ago, my illegitimate son was stolen away by a diabolist called Bernardo; I tried to have the city magistrates investigate, but Bernardo was a respected man, and I was a vagrant minstrel and my lover was a beggar woman – so the magistrates dismissed the allegations. I tried to find a way to get back at the diabolist, and after a time I heard rumour from one of the diabolist's house-servants that the boy had escaped, 'though I don't know where he might have gone. I still dream of revenge, and I still yearn to see my son – to find out what sort of a lad he might have grown into, to talk for a while. Recently, I heard from the diabolist's house-servant that he was to travel to [this city] to seize a girl who was appropriate for a particular ritual – a girl born to an innkeeper in this city. I went to the inn and waited there for him, and that is where I saw you. You are involved with the innkeeper or his child, aren't you...? Well, I will offer you a deal. If you can help me to find my son, I will tell you all that I know about this Bernardo who threatens your friend the innkeeper. Deal?"

Beyond the fact that "his son" had red hair, and that he must have been sorely traumatised by the diabolist, the minstrel can say nothing of the boy. It should be clear to the characters that this is Rufus. If they are very devious the players might work out that the minstrel is a demon (e. g. if they try casting a Demons Eternal Oblivion on him, just to make sure), but most likely they will be convinced by this bizarre story. He can fake his way through Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie and similar spells, has a huge Guile skill, etc.

Note that the demon's child is the Maiden, but he is claiming that Rufus is his kid: all will become clear. In order to win the characters' confidence, he will utterly betray Bernardo – giving his real address (in a distant city), for example. The forces of hell have nothing to lose by ensuring that this sinner is killed before he can repent, and nothing to gain by letting him live – so conspiring to have the characters kill Bernardo is actually a secondary objective for the demon. Rufus can confirm some details of this story, of course, since he knows that he escaped from a man named Bernardo, whom he thought to be his father.

The characters, hopefully, allow the demon to meet with Rufus. When this happens, Rufus is sceptical, but goes along with the plan. When they actually meet, however, the demon puts his hand out to touch the kid's cheek and, as their skins meet, there is a growl and a flash and they are gone – transporting instantly to a brothel room on the other side of the city – leaving nothing behind but a stink of sulphur and an echo of the words "I lied!" Back at the brothel, Bernardo and some thugs are waiting, and foolishly the occultist announces his plan to abandon the demon and leave with the boy: but before he can set his thugs on the demon, he doubles over in pain, his genitals burning like brimstone. After that, he obeys the demon.

Stage 5: A Message of Consequences

The characters will now be in a major panic, with two of their apprentices having disappeared. Let them worry for a while and cook up some plans. They may get a bit of information on where the Maiden is (or even get her back), but assume that the demon can effectively shield Rufus from scrying. Then, after a while, one of the grogs (off-duty, or out looking for information) meets a young prostitute in an inn: to minimize embarrassment, the Storyguide might want to start playing through this encounter as the grog actually starts to get out of bed a little later.

As the grog goes to stand up, the door swings open, and the demon/minstrel is standing there. The prostitute grabs her clothes and takes a purse of monies from the minstrel before leaving in a hurry. If the grog tries to scream, draw a weapon, leave, etc., his genitals start hurting like hell and he doubles up – in so much pain that he can't even cry out. When the prostitute has left, the minstrel closes the door, and very calmly says:

"You are going to deliver a message for me. I hope that you enjoyed your payment. She was cute, wasn't she? You will tell the magi – your masters – that I don't want Rufus. But if they don't cooperate I'll kill him, and then I'll send his ghost to torment them. I want the innkeeper's girl. Rufus isn't my son. But the girl is my daughter, and the innkeeper is a cuckold. I want her for seven years, after which time she will be free. There isn't a double meaning there. Free means free. It doesn't mean dead. Now, I'm holding Rufus as a hostage, and if I don't get the girl he will be dead. And there isn't a double meaning there either. Dead does mean dead. Tell your masters they can part with an apprentice for seven years, or lose one permanently. If they won't deal I'll be back in a year or so, and I'll take the girl anyway. If they haven't found her yet, she's at the convent of [name of Convent]. In three days time I'll be here with Rufus. I'll leave without him at midnight – leaving him with your masters if I have the girl, or leaving him dead if not. Three days time, here, before midnight. Pass on the message, or you'll suffer for it in nine months. Have you ever given birth?" And he leaves, leaving the grog to recover and to wonder what would be involved in a man giving birth.

Stage 6: A Battle Fought With Words

If the characters plan to get the Maiden from the Convent, there are two encounters which will occur.

First, as they approach the convent, the mother's ghost begins to plead with them – begging them not to put her girl in any danger, etc. If none of the characters present can hear her (Second Sight, etc.), have that mad beggar pass by: he can hear the woman, and see her, and thinking her to be alive he will get involved in the argument. "You should listen to your wife, you should – imagine a fine man like you being so heartless, as if you couldn't even hear the woman..." Having the mad beggar as a "translator" between the ghost and the characters should make for some interesting role-playing. If the characters refuse to talk to the ghost, or can't persuade her that they have the girl's best interests at heart, then she flies ahead and speaks to Sister Maria, saying that "wicked men" are coming to take the girl away.

Then there is the problem of dealing with the nuns (some of whom think that protecting the girl is a holy duty, on the grounds that an angel spoke to Sister Maria) and their sceptical Abbess. Whether they use diplomacy, guile, magic or force, the Storyguide will have to determine the effects of their efforts.

Stage 7: Treachery in the House of Ill Repute

The hand-over is an excellent opportunity for a show-down. The demon, Bernardo and a whole bunch of thugs will be at the prostitute's room (which may be a room in an inn, or a small house on its own in the suburb – as the Storyguide wishes), and the player characters should be able to use a combination of brains, magic and brute force to get both apprentices back. Note, however, that almost everybody is planning on betraying somebody, and the characters can exploit dissension between the villains.

Until the hand-over, one of Bernardo's spirits watches the Covenant (one followed them, remember?), and through her the characters may try to contact him – perhaps to strike a deal with him against the demon, or to try to attack him first (though that should be very hard).

Note also that one of his ghosts has seen some of the characters' faces, and will be loitering outside the room, watching for grogs, magi or companions who might be lurking in strategic locations waiting to attack, informing Bernardo of any such ruses.

The demon plans on being able to touch the girl and then vanish with her, leaving Bernardo (plus thugs) and the characters to fight it out: this will be very one-sided, as Bernardo's magics are not combat-worthy and the thugs aren't expecting to face sorcery! Note, any grogs who have not confessed to carnal sins will be immobilised until the demon vanishes, as the demon's first action is just to make them all fall over.

The thugs have been paid by Bernardo, but one of them has actually been bought off by the demon (with the obligatory 30 pieces of silver). If the characters don't show up by midnight, this traitor stabs Rufus, killing him, and the demon teleports away with this assassin (not wanting to waste an useful agent). The demon does not want the characters to think that his threats are entirely empty – although he hasn't the power to send Rufus's ghost to attack them, as he threatened.

Bernardo believes that the demon has some mighty magics which he will use to attack the characters so as to secure both kids, and will be very surprised when the demon turns out to be a noncombatant. Should the characters get Rufus and start to leave with him, Bernardo immediately realizes that he has been betrayed and orders his thugs to get the boy back – starting a fight – as he looks to retreat.

The characters, of course, will have their own plans.

AFTERMATH

Bernardo is at the characters' mercy. They know where he lives, they can plunder his house (think of his magic item, the Jar, as a malevolent spirit, which provides information in such a way that it encourages people to act in a barbaric, cruel and unscrupulous way), or whatever they want.

If the characters destroyed Ascerieis with Demons Eternal Oblivion or with other similar methods, then he is banished to hell for, say, 13 years – by which time the Maiden will have had her Gift fully formed in keeping with Hermetic magic. However, she may end up being Demon Plagued, nonetheless, although all attempts will then be to bribe or subvert, rather than kidnap her.

If the characters simply hack the demon down, he falls quite easily. Unfortunately, he can reappear on in the mortal world within a month, and will make other attempts on the girl over the next few years.

Of course, if the demon escapes with the girl, the characters may choose to hunt the demon down and to recover the girl. After seven years of demonic tutelage, she will be a very efficient weapon for the forces of Hell to use against the characters, or against anyone else that they want, if the players don't bother rescuing her. Ω

THE DEVIL CAN CITE SCRIPTURE...

by Kevin Hassall

*"The devil can cite scripture for his purpose."
Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*

INTRODUCTION

This earthy Saga outline is designed for Ars Magica (any edition), giving a string of linked Stories which involve the characters with a local Priory (a small religious community). The characters may become allies of the monks, or enemies: that's up to them. There's a mixture of intrigue, mystery, diplomacy and violence here – something for all tastes – and these Stories work best if run alongside other campaign-threads and stories.

Full character stats are not included for the NPCs. (Ars Magica has *lots* of statistics, and there's no point taking up space here with game mechanics when we can use these pages to concentrate on the plot, now, is there?)

The idea is that you can play this campaign with just an Ars Magica rulebook. The forces of heaven and hell play a big part in these stories, but all of the obscure drivel in the Maleficium and Pax Dei supplements has been ignored.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

A small religious house is established near to the players' Covenant, on land bequeathed to their religious order by the local Bishop. The reasons for the Priory's establishment are left up to the Storyguide: perhaps there are rumours of dark dealings or spiritual laxness in the area (stemming from the characters' actions?) or perhaps this is simply a political ploy (e. g. the local Bishop trying to gain the support of a religious order by giving them some land).

In any case, the Priory becomes the target of Hell's attentions, as the demon overseer of the region decides to subvert the community in order to win souls for hell and, perhaps, to gain leverage over the characters.

The Priory

The religiosi who arrive to establish the Priory are a splinter group from the Bishop's own Cathedral Chapter (i. e. they are a group of monks who used to serve in the Bishop's Cathedral). Their leader is a pious and determined man (with True Faith) and the local people welcome them.

The players should not be able to peaceably prevent the establishment of the Priory (the people will side with the holy men, and the leader's True Faith should be strong enough to keep him safe from the players' Mentem magics), and blatant attacks on the monks will incur the wrath of both the local Bishop and the religious order from which the monks came.

At this stage the community is very small – just five monks and a few servants. They take possession of the parish church and begin to expand on it, adding a dormitory, refectory and a couple of store rooms and guest chambers. A fish-pond is dug and a herb garden laid out.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Brothers in the Priory

The five monks are led by **Prior Matthew**.

Vital Statistics: Intelligence +2, Perception +1, Strength +1, Stamina 0, Presence +2, Communication +2, Dexterity –1, Quickness –1

Important Abilities: Church Lore 3, Church Knowledge 3, Speak & Scribe Latin 3, Folk Ken 1, Diplomacy 2

Virtues & Flaws: True Faith (lots), Clear Thinker, Poor Hearing, Decrepit (due to past illness)

Matthew is a young nobleman, about 27 years old, tall and gaunt, but with a haggard and aged face. At the age of 17 he suffered from a long and near-fatal illness, during which he believed that he saw the Blessed Virgin Mary smiling by his bedside, and upon his recovery he insisted upon taking Holy Orders and devoting his life to God and to the Blessed Virgin who had saved his life. His noble breeding, piety and tact have ensured rapid succession within the Church's ranks, and some suggest that he might eventually become a Bishop or Abbot. Matthew is always intense but amiable, and is filled with an optimistic love of God, but sinners and fools he has little patience with.

Matthew's right-hand man is the older (aged 44) and less likeable **Brother Theobalt**, whose piety is fanatical.

Vital Statistics: Intelligence 0, Perception +1, Strength -2, Stamina 0, Presence -1, Communication +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Important Abilities: Church Lore 5, Occult Lore 2, Herbalism 3

Virtues & Flaws: True Faith (lots), Lame, Decrepit, Intolerance (sin), Fear of Jews (whom he believes to be the devil's pawns), Herbalist

Everything that Theobalt thinks and says is focused on God, and his manner is aggressively fanatical.

The three other brothers are *Thomas* (an easy-going, burly man, with a gift for healing and a strong faith but a weakness for good ale), *Abelhardt* (a nervous youth, filled with self-loathing because of his homosexual impulses and attraction to Thomas) and *Georg* (a bitter, grumpy man, with no real piety).

The Three Demons

There are three demons involved in this Saga – *Custulzas* (Hell's ambassador to the region), *Azthei'im* (his lieutenant and enforcer), and *Eigrahb* (one of the Lilim, an arch-seducer of men). The first two are encountered directly by the player characters, and so are detailed below.

Custulzas

Custulzas is in command of this operation. In his natural form he appears as a fat, warty creature, with three serpents' tongues and golden puss oozing from his festering sores. He may only appear in the mortal world during the hours of darkness, materialising in any area within "his" region which does not have a Dominion or Faerie aura, and he may take on the appearance of any damned mortal who lives or lived his area (this local region).

Infernal Might 35

Vital Statistics: Intelligence (devious) +4, Perception +4, Strength +1, Stamina +3, Presence (confident) +2, Communication (authoritative) +2, Dexterity +2, Quickness +1

Important Abilities include all social skills, social talents, casual knowledges and formal knowledges 4, Local Area Lore 15.

Special Powers:

Take the Sinner's Form (1 point per hour): He can disguise himself as any person from the local area who has died and been damned to hell, or any living person with weighty sins which they have not yet confessed and done penance for. (Stop and think for a moment: how many of the player characters have committed major sins – theft, murder, fornication, gross pride – for which they have not yet done penance? Custulzas could disguise himself as any of those characters!)

Call Upon Hell's Aid (1 point per 2 points of the summoned creature's Might; no cost to summon Azthei'im): He may call up any lesser demon to serve him in the mortal world – e. g. Eigrahb. Such a creature is obliged to respect Custulzas' authority over this area of the earth, but is ultimately loyal to its own Prince and overlords.

See the Mortal's Sins (1 point): By staring into a person's eyes for a round, the demon can see any sins which they have committed in the past (treat as a level 30 Intellego Mentem).

Curse of the Blighted Land (0 points): Wherever Custulzas travels, the area within a mile takes on a haunted, creepy aspect; shadows seem strangely dark, the wind seems to whisper in the branches, crows and other cruel animals gather while gentler beasts flee, etc.

Azthei'im

Azthei'im naturally appears as an 8-foot tall creature, covered in scales, with tufts of black fur. It has a dog's head (with no eyes, but fires burning constantly in its eye sockets) and hooved feet. It cannot come to the mortal world unsummoned, and cannot disguise its appearance.

Infernal Might 30

Vital Statistics: Intelligence -1, Perception -2, Strength +5 (to 0), Stamina +6 (to 1), Presence +1, Communication -1, Dexterity -1 (to +4), Quickness -1 (to +4), Size +1 (to -1)

Important Abilities include all combat skills (brawl, all weapons, etc.) +6, Intimidation +6.

In combat Azthei'im's claws rake for +30 damage (to +5).

Infernal Powers:

Recurring Wounds (0 points): If a mortal is injured by Azthei'im, then the Storyguide should keep a secret note of those wounds. Any time that the character engages the demon in combat in the future, the wounds seem to reopen, very painfully. The recurring wounds actually cause Long Term Fatigue to the character – not Wounds – healing swiftly as Fatigue is regained. Only characters who have True Faith, or have very recently made confession (and have not sinned since), or have attended mass in the last few hours are immune from their wounds recurring.

One Made Many (0 points): Azthei'im may divide his body up into 2 to 6 identical – but smaller – versions of himself. It takes one whole round for his body to divide or remesh, and all of his many bodies share the same mind. Infernal Might is divided equally between bodies. Strength and Stamina fall by one each for every copy made (e. g. if there are four Azthei'ims, then Strength is 3 lower, at +2). Damage should be divided by the number of bodies (e. g. if it has split into two, each body's claws inflict $30/2 = +15$ damage). Quickness and Dexterity, conversely, rise as the number of bodies increases, rising by 1 per additional body (to +4 for 6).

Eyes of the Cat (0 points): as the spell.

Strike of the Sulphurous Death (0 points): If any one of Azthei'im's bodies is incapacitated or killed, it explodes in a shower of black fat, scalding sulphurous steam and shards of bone: anyone within 3 yards takes damage based on the creature's Infernal Might (e.g. +30 damage if it only had one body, +5 if 6 bodies), and is blinded for a number of rounds equal to the number of Body Levels lost. If such a Soak roll is botched, the victim is permanently blinded.

Scorch of the Flaming Touch (1 point): Azthei'im may ignite any one ordinarily flammable object that it touches (as a level 5 Creo Ignem spell). Ignited items burn as usual.

THE SAGA ARC

The idea is that, through the saga, events unfold as follows.

1) The Priory is established and, being asked to help investigate a theft, the characters are first involved with the new foundation. This is the first Story (Act I.), below.

2) Hell's pawn, Robert of München, joins the community, with the characters' aid. The second story (Act II).

3) Hell's forces engineer the death of the Prior, and Robert of München's selection as his successor. This is not detailed below: Storyguides will probably want to run this as a murder-mystery adventure, and will thus want to write it to suit their own players' characters' temperaments, intelligence, etc. Ideally, the players' characters should work out "who dunnit" but shouldn't be able to prove their case without admitting to the mundane authorities that they have supernatural powers. ("So, let me get this straight. You say that unholy powers murdered the Prior? And you know this because you have unholy powers...?")

4) How far the demons want to spread their influence from here is up to the Storyguide – if, indeed, the player characters haven't already killed Robert. If Robert is now Prior, then the devils may just use the Priory to corrupt these holy men and their recruits, or they may extend their influence into the surrounding area – tormenting and tempting the magi, for example.

The names are Germanic: Storyguides may wish to change these for their own sagas.

ACT I: LUST, ANGER AND SLOTH

While the Priory is being established, as the local peasants and itinerant labourers are working to help build the new buildings, the monks have nowhere to sleep but in barns or on the floor of the church. And the Priory's limited wealth is stored in an iron-bound chest amongst the brothers' personal luggage.

One night, a labourer named Gervas disappears – taking with him the brothers' box of treasures. Unable to determine where the fugitive has fled to, Prior Matthew sends Abelhardt to fetch aid from the nearby castle/tower/wisemens' manor – basically, from the Covenant, though he won't know at this stage that the characters' community is a mages' lair. If the Covenant is well hidden or unknown, or seems so unremarkable that no Prior would seek there for aid, then Abelhardt is sent to a nearby tavern to look for mercenaries, foresters, or anyone else who might be able to track the thief down: in this case, a number of characters are conveniently sat in the inn this morning as Abelhardt enters.

The characters are brought to the Prior, who explains about Gervas and the box's disappearance, and begs their aid in retrieving the treasures. There is cash in the box (enough to pay ten labourers two weeks' wages), but more importantly there is a holy Relic – the hand of Saint Marcellus. Prior Matthew will pay cash to have the treasures returned (he assumes that the Bishop will cover this cost), but he expects nobles, foresters and others to aid him for free – as they have a Christian duty to protect the Church, and a secular duty to uphold the law. Those who agree to retrieve the treasures as a favour come off better in the end anyway, as Prior Matthew's friendship and gratitude is probably more useful than a few shillings.

The other labourers remember Gervas as a quiet, sad man, with a couple of nasty warts on his nose and greasy hair. They felt sorry for him, and had no inkling that he would turn to theft; he seemed an honest sort. His few possessions – bedding roll, bowl and spoon – are still in the barn where he was sleeping, but his travelling cloak and a set of clothes have gone.

Gervas should be easy to follow. A good Tracking roll or magic (e. g. The Inexorable Search) should allow the characters to follow the wretch through the woods to a travellers' inn three hours walk away.

Gervas sits in the inn, having arrived several hours ahead of his pursuers. He is slumped over a table, sodden with ale, sobbing pathetically. The only other customers are two local farmers (who have only just arrived, and are breaking their journey hear for half an hour) and a band of really nasty looking Brabantine mercenaries who have been carousing here for a couple of days.

Gervas is pretty incoherent. He just sobs that "she isn't here, she isn't here..." over and over. If the characters are obviously interested in Gervas (try to move him or talk to him, etc.), one of the mercenaries strides up and slaps a hand on one of the characters' shoulders with a hearty "So do you know Prior Matthew, then?" If the character says "yes", then the mercenary slams a dagger into his back....

The situation is this:

The ugly, lonely Gervas had been visited over the last few nights (or was it all just a dream?) by a beautiful young woman called Isobelle, who claims to love him and has indulged his frustrated desires to their full. She wants to marry him, she said – but first she demanded that he prove his love by retrieving a family heirloom which had been stolen from her parents by a greedy monk. And of course, the heirloom is the relic, the Hand. She promised that if Gervas "reclaimed" (stole) the hand, and went to wait for her at this travellers' inn, then she would come to meet him here.

The mercenaries were hired by a nobleman called "Sir Stefan" to wait here for an ugly labourer who would be carrying a box. They were told to tell him that Isobelle sent them and to take the box: inside, they were told, would be a hand which they should hurl into a nearby river, and some money which they could keep. They should then wait in the inn, kill anyone who pursued Gervas, and leave before dusk. They know that Gervas took something from a Prior Matthew, but that's about all. They were given money up front, and were promised significantly more if they completed their mission and returned to meet their employer in a nearby town.

So, Gervas stole the box as ordered, and had it taken from him by the mercenaries on entering the inn. There is no sign of Isobelle. The mercenaries ridiculed him when he asked after her. He has been drowning his sorrows since, hoping that she hasn't deserted him. The mercenaries have taken the cash, leaving the empty box in the corner of the inn, and – too lazy to walk down to the river – have thrown the hand into the midden pit under the inn's privy (the characters *will* enjoy retrieving that, won't they!).

So, the mercenaries attack the characters (it should be a tough fight), and then flee to meet with their employer. Captives tell all that they know in return for any promise of freedom or leniency. If the characters don't bother taking prisoners they probably won't find the hand.

If the characters retrieve the relic or the cash Prior Matthew is grateful. If they manage to get both back, and give some sort of explanation of what was going on, he will be indebted to them.

If arrested, Gervas will be hung for theft by the local Baron. The characters cannot trace anyone matching "Sir Stefan" or Isobelle's names or descriptions. The mercenaries flee to meet with their employer, loitering as arranged in the market square of a nearby town – but Stefan never contacts them: he has tempted them into abusing a relic, stealing, and committing sins of anger (violence), which was his real intention anyway.

Both Stefan and Isobelle were demons, who were trying to dispose of the relic and spread a bit of lechery, greed, theft and murder along the way.

The Relic

Marcellus the Centurion was a Roman soldier who became a Christian and thenceforth refused to fight. He was executed for insubordination and was thereafter revered as a martyr – as any character making a Church Lore roll of 12+ (or flicking through some hagiographies) will know. The relic is a mummified hand. It has 3 Faith Points, no demon who hasn't got an Infernal Might above 30 may approach within five paces of it, and anyone carrying it is safe from the attacks and powers of all Infernal foes so long as she does not first attack them. (It is the hand of a Christian pacifist: it aids those who act without violence.)

Consolidation

A year or two passes uneventfully. The Priory gains a fine reputation for the good work it does amongst the poor – Thomas's healing, the Prior's generosity to beggars, and its hospitality to travellers, etc. Two teen-age novices (apprentice monks, basically) are recruited from the local area (perhaps one is related to one of the grogs?).

The Prior refuses to co-operate with known "magicians" (though he always remains polite), and Theobalt may limp up to the Covenant to rant and scream about how those who use "dark powers" (i.e. magic) imperil their souls.

If the characters seem like good Christian folk (mere "astrologers", "healers", noblemen, etc.), then they might find fine allies in the Priory. They might trade herbs with Theobalt or receive medical attention from Thomas, and they could easily win the Prior's friendship by donating inoffensive books (Church Lore, Local Area Lore, Humanities, even Fantastic Beast Lore) to help him establish a small library.

ACT II: THE ROT SETS IN

One or two years after the first Story, a group of characters (probably grogs) are returning to their Covenant. If there are any magi with the group, they should be relatively weak – the fights with Azthei'im should be a challenge. The characters' mission has been routine and uneventful: perhaps they have been to a town to buy lab equipment, which would have the added interest that they would have to guard the equipment while everything else is going on. They should expect nothing unusual.

But as dusk falls they are still a couple of miles from the nearest inn. As they travel through the dark, the woods around them seem unusually dark, with crows' calls and strange whisperings filtering through the trees. Soon pairs of red lights – like dark candles – begin to dart around them in the trees, keeping pace with them and closing in: these are Azthei'im, who has split into six bodies to harass the characters as they approach the inn.

Azthei'im follows the characters, trying to scare them into a run, chasing them towards the Inn. All the time Azthei'im mutters: "Is it he... I can't see... no, no... but should we kill them anyway?" etc. As the characters approach the inn, the Azthei'ims start to close in on them, emerging from the tree-line. The six Azthei'ims should be able to defeat three or four laden grogs, but they don't want to kill anyone (why should they?). The creatures just aim to wound the characters, maybe setting fire to a shield or two.

When the characters reach the inn – probably pursued by the creatures – they find the door barred from inside. Play this for tension and drama. The people barricaded in the inn know that there are "things" outside and aren't eager to open the door; the creatures are closing in on the characters.

Eventually the characters talk or smash their way into the building, and the Azthei'ims throw themselves against the inn in attack after attack (ripping in through the thatched roof, setting fire to doors to get in, etc.) until all are dead. During the fight the characters must lead the defence of the inn. There should be a couple of other travellers in the Inn, too – a peddler, a wandering labourer, and anyone else whom you want. The only other significant individual here is Rudolph of Seckau, a high-born Austrian who has spent the last eight years studying theology and philosophy in the great University of Paris. He is now travelling to the court of the local Bishop, who has offered Rudolph a place in his household as a secretary and advisor.

Rudolph is a plain man, with unruly, short hair, wearing a clerical tonsure but the tunic and sword of a nobleman. (He is a minor cleric, and expects to be ordained as a full priest on entering the Bishop's household, but his faith is mild and his present authority nil.) He is usually self-confident, but has been quite disconcerted by these events. His loves are debate and philosophy – and he isn't used to cowering from dark creatures in rural inns. He reoccurs later in the Saga, so make sure that the characters have a chance to befriend or antagonize him here.

(Statistics for Rudolph include Intelligence +4, Perception +1; Church Knowledge [doctrine] +4, Debate [theology] +3, Humanities [philosophy] +3, Church Lore +2, Etiquette +3.)

After the creatures have been destroyed there is a lull – though the woods are still alive with strange sounds and shifting shadows. Let the characters swap stories with the other guests (all were chased on their way in), and the innkeeper (who had noticed nothing strange until dusk began to fall). Let them organize the defences and arrange scouting missions. They should be a good long way from any help.

... Meanwhile, out in the woods, Custulzas re-summons Azthei'im, and with his human dupe, Robert of München, he prepares to make his dramatic entrance to the inn....

After a short while, the characters spot another one or two little Azthei'ims in the woods. And then two figures run out of the darkness pursued by the creatures (6 of them, again): the figures are of a tall, gaunt Templar (the surcoat is very distinctive) with one ear, and a shorter, chubbier man in nondescript clothing. The two holler for entrance, and if the characters don't open the doors for them they scramble onto the inn's roof and start hacking their way in through the thatch. The creatures do not try to follow in. They circle around in the woods, and shout threats and insults, demanding that the characters "hand over the fat one" or "kill him and save yourselves" – or else "face the wrath of our masters".

The characters are besieged. Their new companions introduce themselves as Brother Bertran of the Knights Templar (this is Custulzas), and Robert of München. Bertran claims to be escorting Robert, on orders from a very much more senior Templar: characters who know of local clerical or military matters might test him on this, and though he gives very little away he seems to know many of the local senior nobles, clergy and Templars (Local Area Lore 15!). He hints that Robert is somehow "blessed", but says no more. Robert himself is arrogant, and behind his veneer of piety is a cruel streak.

Robert is, in fact, a poor shoe-maker who has dabbled in the occult and pledged his soul to Hell in return for worldly power: Custulzas has promised to make him the Prior of a religious house within five years, "and that will be but the beginning..." He is not a local, as is clear from his accent, and he claims to be of minor noble birth. If pressed, he says that "prophesies" accompanied his birth.

The demons outside (Azthei'im) continue to demand that Robert be handed over to them or else slain. The devils' plan is that through this pretence, Robert should gain much fame, making people think that he is a man whom the forces of hell are desperate to destroy, who is protected by the orders of the Masters of the Templars.

If the Storyguide wants to pad this adventure out, have the characters hear the cries for help of another traveller coming through the woods, so that they can go out and rescue him from the creatures (Azthei'im) who circle around.

Eventually, the demons set fire to the inn (it is wooden and thatched), in order to drive people out of it. When the characters, Robert and the other guests emerge the creatures charge them, seemingly trying to kill Robert: but "Brother Bertran" (and hopefully the characters) fight bravely to destroy the creatures.

As soon as they are clear of the inn, "Brother Bertran" asks (effectively orders) the characters to take Robert to the Priory: "He must join a religious house, and that has been selected for him. He will be safe there. I must return to my superiors immediately, to tell them what has happened. You must take him. This is God's work." And so the "Templar" disappears in the opposite direction from the characters.

If the Storyguide wishes, Custulzas might summon up Azthei'im again and send him after the characters – perhaps with Azthei'im in only 2 or 3 bodies, and Custulzas himself joining in, leading the demons, in his natural form. That's up to you, and it depends upon how badly injured the characters are, and how bloodthirsty the players are.

And so Robert arrives at the Priory, introduced by the characters, and soon becomes a full brother. He proves hard-working and ambitious, but otherwise unremarkable, and soon his arrogance begins to annoy Prior Matthew and the others.

No trace can ever be found of "Brother Bertran", and in the confusion and chaos surrounding the burning inn, even his tracks cannot be distinguished leaving the area.

FROM HERE ON...

From here on, events will depend upon the Storyguide and players.

Rudolph is indeed appointed as secretary to the bishop, and ordained as a priest. He is subsequently made an Inquisitor in order to investigate any dubious activities around the Priory and Covenant – so the way in which the players' characters treated him this first time when they met will have far-reaching consequences.

Whether or not the Prior's death is solved, and whether Robert is appointed to his successor, will depend upon the player characters – and, of course, it will be more difficult for hell's forces to exert their influence over the Priory if the player characters returned the stolen relic.

And whether the demons target the characters specifically (tempting and offering to "help" them) is up to the Storyguide. Ω

SINS OF WRATH

by Mark Shirley

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Maequillus of Flambeau has a Bonnacon familiar, which is in foal. They have a standard (unextended) bond, and she loses track of it when the familiar runs off in search of a place to give birth. It travels far from Maequillus's home covenant (which can be any covenant distant from the PC's covenant) to the area in which the character's covenant is set, to give birth in some local woods. The peasants believe that a dragon has moved in. Most of the damage purported to be caused by the 'dragon' is actually done by a leopard which is stalking the familiar.

Dante referred to wrath and other sins of self-indulgence as "*the sins of the leopard.*" This would have given away the villain of the piece, so I adopted "Sins of Wrath" as the title of this adventure.

INTRODUCTION

On the Way to Adventure

The PCs may hear about the problem through a variety of means, local merchants, traveller's tales, etc. The baron whose lands are being ravaged has offered a reward of 30 livres to anyone who brings him the head of the dragon that is terrorizing his land. He wants to interview all prospective slayers before they set out. The covenant could badly do with the money, and it is likely therefore that the matter will be pursued. They may have other reasons for wanting to kill a dragon – the glory, the renown, the body parts for spell foci, or just for the thrill of it.

Note that it is important that the PCs have the ability to track down the beast, or this adventure will not work as intended. This does not necessarily have to mean someone with the Hunt skill. Intellego spells can work just as well. Travel to the baronial seat will take several days, and once they start to get close, a few signs of the destruction will be visible. Scorch-marks score several of the fields, and a certain amount of damage has been done to fence posts and wooden buildings which bear deep scratches (Int + Legend Lore 15+: the claws are in 4s, but a dragon is supposed to have 5 claws, like a man). One barn has been burnt down.

If the PCs decide to stop and talk to the local peasants, they may find out that the major losses have been in people. Many have gone missing in the last few weeks, and never been seen again. The livestock seems to have been entirely overlooked by the dragon. As usual, the peasants are frightened, particularly of strangers, but if they believe that the PCs are going to kill the monster (must have at least a passing resemblance to knights) they will only be too eager to spread wild rumours about the dragon – people who have seen it say that it is at least 20 foot long (often larger) with red scales, huge claws and massive wings. No two stories match to any degree of accuracy.

At the Castle

The PCs meet with the baron. Substitute any local lord as appropriate, and gauge his reactions according to former contact with the covenant, the number of warriors in the party, and the presence of Magi (don't forget the effects of the Gift). In my adventure, the Barony of Duvaliel was exceedingly poor due to a recent plague, which had killed the benevolent baron, leaving a council of regents guiding his 12 year old son. I stressed the bad state of the barony, thus the sacrifice being made by the baron to have this beast slain. In addition the reward was actually only 15 livres – the amount had been exaggerated by rumour and misinformation on the part of the baron's seneschal. Bargaining with the baron is a good way to annoy him!

This is an opportunity to make an ally, if they impress the baron, or make a brooding enemy – one who has no choice but to accept the help of the covenant.

TRACKING THE BEAST

The PCs set off for the beast's lair, heading off for the woods indicated by the locals.

The problem as far as the PCs are concerned is that there are signs of three separate entities in this wood, all of whom may be mistaken for the dragon. In addition, the Storyguide may wish to put other obstacles in the way of the PCs – other dragon-hunters keen to gain the bounty are the most obvious choice.

The bonnacon, Olida, is in the wood, as is the leopard who wishes to eat her. In addition, Maequillus has used an arcane connection to track her wayward familiar to this wood.

Note that much of what follows considers what happens when the PCs track down signs of the threesome.

As they approach the woods they see more signs of the nocturnal raids of the ‘dragon’ in the form of scorched trees (actually due to the fiery excrement of the bonnacon) and scrape-marks in the fields. When they get into the woods, it is usual to set up a base camp, and then patrol out from there.

The PCs must first endeavour to find signs of their quarry, and then attempt to follow those signs back to the source. Because of the existence of three sets of trails in these woods, this may prove quite confusing for the PCs. It may be necessary to liberally sprinkle in signs of the other two parties once the PCs are already following a trail – it is likely that the paths will cross. The most important thing is that in order for the final encounter to run smoothly, they must first encounter Maequillus, then the bonnacon, then the leopard.

I ran this random searching by having the PCs make Per + Hunt simple rolls for each hour of searching, with an Ease Factor of 9. At the same time I made a simple roll, and compared it to the roll made for tracking. Consult the table below:

Storyguide’s roll is....	Event Indicated
less than twice track roll	evidence of Maequillus
less than track roll	evidence of bonnacon
equal or greater than track roll	evidence of the leopard

If the roll was a success, evidence of one of the three was found (see the *Evidence* sections below). A failed roll meant a wasted hour.

Once at a site of evidence, further Per + Hunt rolls could be made to try and find a trail. Again, the Ease Factor is 9. If successful, see the *Following the Trail* sections. These trails may lead to more evidence, or to the tracked animal/person itself, as the Storyguide decides

Evidence of Maequillus

* An abandoned campsite, including the remains of a fire. A Per + Survival roll will reveal a handful of silvery scales reveal that the camper fed well on fresh caught salmon.

* A flattened area of little interest. A Per + Awareness roll of 15+ will reveal a tiny scrap of red sealing wax – examination reveals part of a Seal of Solomon.

* A blackened scar on a rocky scree. A Per + Awareness roll will reveal the flattened marks where someone stood, facing the blackened area. A second Per + Awareness roll at the scorch-mark will reveal the charred and fragile corpse of a squirrel in the centre of the blast-circle, and the faint pattern of sulphur marking the limits of the blackened region.

Evidence of the Bonnacon

* A blackened and burnt tree. There is also a terrible odour here, all must make Stamina rolls or have to avoid the area. Legend Lore 9+ will tell that a dragon-burnt tree often contains vis, and checking will find this to be correct; of the Ignem variety. The amount will be impossible to estimate (cannot weigh a tree), but amounts to a single pawn. The vis is actually the remnants of Olida’s excrement.

* A ‘nest’ of grass, flattened into a circular area with high sides. Per roll of 10+ will pick up a faint nauseous odour.

* A trampled patch of weeds. A Per + Awareness roll of 10+ will reveal that some of the weeds have been eaten, an Int + Herbalism + Herbam/5 will identify that plant as Lady's Ease. A second roll (Int + Herbalism/Medicine) of 12+ will reveal that this plant is used to reduce inflammation in the gut and ease labour pains.

* A scrape of earth, as if something has been roughly hidden. If this is dug up, the faeces of the bonnacon will be uncovered. Stamina stress rolls of 12+ at the sudden waft of vile humours or be so nauseated that one can barely stand (-4 to all actions). If this roll is Botched, the character is infected with a disease by the evil smell. The Stamina roll can be repeated once per hour for those that failed their first roll: the Ease Factor decreases by 2 each time, and reduces the penalty by one for each success. Int + Legend Lore 15+: one beast in particular is famed for this dreadful odour – the bonnacon.

Evidence of the Leopard

* One of the leopard's lairs will be found. All around lie the corpses of small animals (squirrels, rabbits, roe deer), all of which have starved to death (Int + Animal Ken + Animal/5 of 9+). There is a sweet, rather pleasing smell around the lair, which is a nest hollowed out from a bush.

* A lone oak in a more open part of the wood shows the damage done by the creature's claws. It is the scratching post for the Infernal beast, and inch-deep scars in 4 parallel lines have been scored into the wood. An Int + Herbalism + Herbam/5 indicates that a clear fluid smelling of vomit that runs in these gouges are not part of a healthy tree – it will be dead in a few days.

* A stain in an otherwise blooming meadow draws the attention. Here are the viscera of an animal (it is hard to tell what, actually a human) that have been removed from the chest prior to consumption. There is no sign of the rest of the body.

* The most horrific discovery of all – the leopard's larder. The swarm of flies are the first indication here. Looking up, the source of their interest can be seen. The old elm that dominates the clearing has macabre fruit hanging from its branches. In total there are 15 bodies, naked and suspended by the feet, by having the ankles wedged in the fork of a branch. Most of the bodies bear claw-marks on the back (indicating they were taken from behind), all have their throats torn out. The youngest of the corpses is the highest, and is only six years old.

Following Maequillus's Trail

If Maequillus's trail is found, it will be the footprints of a human with small feet who is unused to working in a wood – they go straight through a nettle-bed, manage to step in badger fumes and scuff-marks show wear the person has tripped on roots. If followed successfully for 3 subsequent rolls, they will find Maequillus (see *Encountering Maequillus*).

Following Olida's Trail

If found, the bonnacon's trail looks vaguely like a goat's tracks, but much larger. The beast also has a funny way of stepping that doesn't look quite right (Int + Animal Handling – like a horse). If followed successfully for 3 subsequent turns then go to *Encountering Olida*, below.

Following the Leopard's Trail

If found, the leopard's trail is very occasional, and impossible to follow. The pug-marks, as large as a tea-plate, can be found leaving the scene of evidence, but cannot be followed, as the leopard uses the trees as its form of locomotion. Once the larder has been discovered, the PCs will have a distinct feeling of being watched whenever a Per roll gets over 8.

Encountering Maequillus

Maequillus will no doubt hear the party's approach unless the tracker is sent on ahead (Per rolls to spot her, then opposed Stealth/Awareness to sneak up or creep away). She stands tall and regal in a clearing, fists clenched, trying to hold onto her frustration. She will lash out at lone person she detects, verbally if they approach openly, magically if they are being stealthy. If a group approaches she will be prepared to cast a spell, but will drop her wary stance if they announce themselves in an educated fashion. She will introduce herself as Lady Maella of Gasconne (Per + Speak Latin: she has Hermetic inflection to her speech), but it will probably not take long for her to be revealed as a Maga,

when she will introduce herself properly. She guesses that the PCs are here in response to the baron's plea, and demands that they abandon their journey and leave the beast to her. She is adamant about this and refuses to explain why (she is too embarrassed that she has lost her familiar), and will challenge Certamen if it looks as if she will not succeed in getting rid of them. Her terms are that they leave the region and not return until the moon is full (about 2 weeks).

Whatever happens, she will not accompany them, as she does not trust others with her beloved familiar. She will not say that she believes the 'dragon' to be Olida, either. Bonnacons are rich in vis, just like dragons.

Maequillus filia Ralatati Majoris of House Flambeau

Maequillus is a youngish Maga desperate to rise in the Flambeau hierarchy. She has been applauded for her wondrous familiar Olida at the recent Tribunal, and now she has lost her. Maequillus is a tall woman, with auburn hair and a haughty face. She favours gowns of deep scarlet, with gussets of crimson silk, although today she has covered up the garish dress with a woollen cloak of forest green. She keeps the hood up to cover the back of her head, which was severely burnt at the Tribunal by Faunus Fervidus (or, perhaps a magus who is an enemy of the PCs), who she has developed a hatred for (Int + Organization Lore to remember this). A battered broadsword is belted at her waist.

Age: 40

Size: 0

Vital Statistics: Intelligence +3, Strength -1, Perception 0, Dexterity -1, Presence -1, Stamina +1, Communication -1, Quickness 0

Personality Traits: Angry +1, Brave +3, Anxious +2, Friendly -2

Virtues and Flaws: Fast Caster, Bonus with Familiar, Affinity with Ignem, Clear Thinker, Severe Magic Deficiency (Imagonem), Favours, Personal Hatred (Faunus Fervidus), Spell Restriction (in the rain), Disjointed Magic

Abilities: Speak Latin 5, Speak Own Language 4, Scribe Latin 3, Magic Theory 5, Organization Lore 2, Concentration 2, Parma Magica (Corporem) 5, Certamen (Ignem) 3, Finesse (Creo) 5, Penetration (Ignem) 5, Ignem Affinity (Creo) 4, Single Weapon (Broadsword) 4, Dodge 2, Ride 2, Athletics 2, Chirurgy 1, Medicine 2, Etiquette 1

Confidence: 4

Reputation: none

Techniques and Forms: Creo 10, Intellego 5, Muto 7, Perdo 5, Rego 8, Animal 10, Ignem 16, Aquam 4, Imagonem 2, Auram 2, Mentem 3, Corporem 6, Terram 6, Herbam 2, Vim 7

[Add Stamina for Formulaic spells, Intelligence for Spontaneous spells, Intelligence and Magic Theory for Lab Totals.]

* Casting Speed (Qik + Finesse): +8

* Targeting (Dex + Finesse): +4

* Twilight Points: 3

* Effects of Twilight: none

* Longevity potion bonus: +3

* Sigil: fingers flash with sparks

Spells Known: Flash of the Scarlet Flames (CrIg 15, +31), Ball of Abysmal Flame (CrIg 30, +31), Cloud of the Dragon's Breath (CrIg 35, +30), Hornet Fire (MuIg 15, +28), Eyes of Fire (CrIg 20, +31), Fires of Hell's Torment (PeCo/Ig 25, +16, causes a human to burn), The Burning Blade of the Defender (Cr/ReTe/Ig 30, +19, creates a burning dancing sword), Lift the Dangling Puppet (ReCo 20, +14), Cripple the Howling Wolf (PeAn 15, +15), Repel the Wooden Shafts (ReHe 10, +7)

Magic Items:

Ring of Aquamarine (Rise of the Feathery Body, 3 uses/day)

Ring of Ruby (Ward against Heat and Flames)

Other Information:

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

Fatigue Levels: 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Certamen:

Attack (Int + Certamen) +6

Damage (Int + Certamen) +6

Soak (Stm + Certamen) +4

Encountering Olida

The PCs will hear a snorting / squealing sound from ahead. In a thicket is a large beast, which is also very angry. It is making a lot of noise, but has not yet shown itself. PCs have the chance to prepare for 2 rounds before the creature charges out. The bonnacon that emerges is probably not quite what they expected, but they will no doubt get stuck into dispatching it. The beast is enraged, and will attack with murderous intent, horns facing forward ready to rend and tear.

All in melee can attempt a Perception roll. A 10+ is required to spot each the two following facts (50% chance of each), although a 15+ will reveal both. The first is that the bonnacon wears the remains of a tattered flag or blanket tied around it's neck – this bears Hermetic symbols (the full sigil of Maequillus). The second item of note is that the belly of the beast is greatly distended, and its flanks are soaked in sweat. An Int + Animal Handling will tell a character that these are symptoms of a birthing horse or cow. Hopefully, these two facts will be enough to encourage the PCs to try to subdue the frightened herbivore, instead of killing it. Ask for Magic Resistance rolls to be made during the fight, using the Mentem Art. The results will be applied later.

The stress of the fight will mean that the bonnacon (if she survives) will go into labour. Int + Animal Handling rolls (Medicine is of little use) are required, accumulating a total of 30 point over an Ease Factor 8. The bonnacon's fatigue/wound penalty is applied to this roll, and it must make a fatigue roll for each Animal Handling roll made, with an Ease Factor starting at 6 and increasing by one every second roll. If the mother falls unconscious, the foal is still-born. It may even be possible to rescue the foal from the mother's corpse, if she died in the fight – in this case the Ease Factor is 12, and Medicine is required. Wound/fatigue penalties are irrelevant, but the 30 points must be accumulated within 7 rounds of the mother's death.

Even if delivery is successful, the foal must make a Stamina stress roll to survive the harrowing experience, at +1 to the base Ease Factor of 4 for each round of labour (the foal's Stamina is +1).

Go immediately to the final scene – *Encountering the Leopard*.

Olida, familiar of Maequillus

The bonnacon is not unlike a bull, but all of its body is covered with hair like that of a horse's mane. The horns are curled round like a rams, usually facing inwards, but they can swivel them when enraged. This bonnacon has reddish hair with a white star on the forehead. Its belly is bloated unnaturally. The eyes are unnaturally red, and it blows spark-filled clouds of smoke from it's nostrils.

Magic Might 18

Size +3

Vital Statistics: Intelligence 0, Strength +5, Dexterity +1, Perception +3, Stamina +4, Quickness +2

Personality Traits: Angry +2, Frightened +3, Motherly +2, Vain +1

Important Abilities: Ferocity (cornered) 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Alertness 3

Combat Scores:

Horns: First Strike +11, Attack +7, Damage +15

Hooves: First Strike +5, Attack +6, Damage +10

Fatigue +4, Defence (Active) +4/10, (Passive) +5/11, Soak +12/18

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

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Unconscious

Magic Powers:

Odious Excrement: Incapacitates those it strikes unless a Stamina roll of 12+ is made. They are stunned for 3 rounds. The excrement will also set afire any flammable material it touches.

Snort Fire: Every other combat round, Olida can snort forth a burning cloud of sparks into the face of those that are in melee with her. A dodge is allowed if no action has been taken yet: 7+ to avoid, otherwise it hits. This attack does +10 damage, armour only protects if the victim wears a helm (half protection for a half-helm). If 3 Body Levels are done in this attack, the victim is blinded.

Familial Powers: The bonnacon is outside the range of the three Familial Cords, thus does not have access to these powers.

Vis: 10 Creo in stomach, 2 Ignem per year in excrement

Encountering the Leopard

The encounter with the leopard will occur just after the fight with Olida. Whether the familiar is dead or subdued, there will be a hush across the wood. The PCs will receive that feeling of being watched again, but this time it is very strong – as long as Perception is positive, it is noticed. Then the Magic Resistance rolls made earlier should be applied. Compare to the Leopard's Infernal Might – if penetration was successful, pass a note that the PCs smell a intoxicatingly sweet smell, and will not perform any action during the next scene. Once paranoia has built enough, the leopard coughs from the bough on which he sits, alerting all to his presence. He then bounds down to the centre of the clearing. Use lavish descriptions of the smell (the favourite smell of the PC) and the beauty of the creature's coat. Do not refer to it as a leopard, as it bears little resemblance to what most people consider a leopard to be, and players may know that they are Infernal beasts.

It prowls around menacingly, as if it owned the place, sizing up the opposition. It then speaks. The voice is honeyed, with a strong purr. What it says is up to the PCs actions. If they have slain the bonnacon it will express its displeasure at them spoiling its hunt, so it will have to find fresh meat elsewhere. If the bonnacon is still alive, it will compliment them on a job well done, and say that it will now take its prey. Time how long it speaks for in real time. For every 30 secs, a cumulative –1 penalty is applied to the Magic Resistance roll. Actions can only be taken when the beast stops talking. PCs capable of action can do so, making a second Magic Resistance roll. If attacked, a PC can attempt another Magic Resistance roll, or receive a roll equal to Int + Personality Trait such as Selfish, Rebel, etc. Likewise, others can attempt Int + Loyal rolls to help their friends. The leopard is ruthless, efficient and very dangerous.

Leopard

A beautiful creature, a full 5' long, with a 2' tail. It is cat-like, although moves with a fluid grace and an air of menace that a common household cat could never achieve. The head is held low, and the green-yellow eyes sweep over its audience. The beast is a pale tawny in colour, with faint markings of russet spotting its hide. The voice of the beast, when it speaks, is deep and melodious, and captivating in an inexplicable way.

Infernal Might 25

Size +1

Vital Statistics: Cunning +2, Strength +2, Dexterity +4, Perception +3, Stamina +2, Quickness +5

Personality Traits: Cruel +3, Vain +2, Brave +2

Important Abilities: Brawl 5, Ferocity (malice) 4

Combat Scores:

Bite: First Strike +13, Attack +13, Damage +15

Claws: First Strike +11, Attack +12, Damage +10

Fatigue +2, Defence (Active) +9/15, (Passive) +10/16, Soak +10

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

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, –1, –3, –5, Unconscious

Infernal Powers:

Pleasant Breath (ReAn/Me 30, 4 Infernal Might points): All animals (except dragons) are seized by the power of the leopard's breath, and are unable to do anything but follow it wherever it may lead. The smeller is aware of his/her favourite scent, whatever that may be.

Venomous Claws: The claws of the leopard are poisoned, and infect any wounds made with a slow-acting venom. The victim loses one point from each of their 4 physical statistics each day until one reaches –7, then they die. One point of Decreptitude is gained whether they live or die. Any magic or medicine used on the victim must overcome the beast's Infernal Might before their attempts are successful.

Vis: 4 Rego vis, in the tongue.

AFTERMATH

The Leopard's head can be taken back to the Baron as proof. The 15 livres will be paid, but if the PCs did not sufficiently impress the baroness, they will receive 3 livres per year for 5 years, instead of a lump sum.

Maequillus will be delighted to have her familiar back, even if she is damaged. She will not hold any recriminations, especially if the foal is alive, and may well become a friend of the Magi responsible. At the sight of the Maga, the bonnacon goes all puppyish, and when they touch, the familial bond is re-established.

If the familiar is killed, things are bleak for the Magi involved. There will have to be an investigation, but there is little doubt as to the outcome. The beast was clearly marked as a familiar – there is little excuse. Maequillus will want blood, and she will probably get it. Ω

NIGHT OF THE FAERIES

by Lisa Stevens

(originally published in White Wolf #17)

INTRODUCTION

The moon was slowly turning blue. It was the night for the party. Had it been ninety-seven years already?

Bogemeer laid back on his mighty chair, and pondered the passage of time. Not that time really mattered anyway. Around him, the faeries of the mound made preparations for the evening. „I wonder if the magi of Mistridge have changed from their selfish, boorish ways.” The thought intrigued him, for the wizards were a strange lot not given to pleasure or feasts.

The revel will go on regardless of their intentions, but perhaps the wizards and their kind could be guests at the feast rather than victims... Some young sprites spiraled upwards to greet the rising moon, the shimmering colors of their wings dancing amongst the motes of starshine. „A wise human once said that the best way to understand an animal was to crawl around inside its skin for a while. Maybe I should give a try.” He chuckled to himself and with a sigh of contentment settled back into the cushions for a moment. What would it take to join those wizards? Rising to his feet, he stretched the stiffness from his limbs. Perhaps a little trip to Javielle would do the trick.

His laughter filled the night as the sun burned cherry red for a moment and slipped below the horizon. This did indeed promise to be a night of revelry greater than any other before.

This is an adventure for use with Lion Rampant’s *Ars Magica* role-playing game. The story takes place in Val du Bosque and is intended for use with Mistridge covenant as detailed in the 2nd edition of *Ars Magica*. However, with a little work, this story can be adapted to any ongoing saga since the details of the story are not solidly tied to any specific region. The story emphasizes diplomacy and role-playing over combat and straight ahead tactics. This is a story about whimsical fun and is perfect for a session in which the troupe is not in the mood for a more serious and involved story.

SETTING THE MOOD

Set a frantic, non-stop pace throughout the story. Never let the player grow bored, or have time to think. Any time things slow down, throw something new at them, either of your own invention, one of the miscellaneous encounters, or a lead to one of the more major encounters. This feeling of excitement will accent well the feeling of the night of the faeries.

Faeries reflect the passionate aspects of human existence, they take out emotions and go with them. They can be outrageous, dangerous, spiteful, whimsical, wonderful and wacky. Role-play them any way which feels natural to you, but remember that this story is intended to entertain the players not to educate or to frighten them. The faeries have been unleashed from their forests and mound in this story, it is a special night, and they roam about the valley in perfect freedom. They are experiencing a whole new world, and they are having fun. The more you play out the delight and wonder of the faeries the better everything will go.

SYNOPSIS

In this story, the characters are warned about the imminence of an enormous faerie revel which, if all accounts can be believed, is going to be held at the covenant and could possibly destroy it. It seems that Mistridge is built upon a site of great faerie power, being a spot of an immense faerie celebration every 97 years. Indeed, it is these parties which could be responsible for giving Mistridge its magical aura. The covenant is warned that they have time until the moon has turned completely blue (there is only a blue edge at the beginning of the story) before the faeries invade Mistridge. The only hope of the covenant is to find the faerie prince Bogemeer and try to convince him not to hold the party at Mistridge (a difficult task indeed). On the way to Javielle, the group runs across a traveller being tortured by some dark faeries. After a daring rescue involving some dark spells and a

hive of bees, the traveller asks to accompany the group for safety's sake. Upon reaching Javielle, the troupe finds the place in an uproar. The faeries have taken over the town and are frolicking and causing mischief while awaiting Lord Bogemeer's call to the revelry. As the moon becomes bluer and bluer, the party searches the town (perhaps even visiting Sir Guifre's manor house outside of town) for the elusive Bogemeer, who it seems they just miss all the time. Mostly good-natured faeries are encountered, all awaiting the call from Bogemeer to start the revel. Finally, the group has to give up since they are needed to defend the covenant from the faeries' arrival. As the moon turns blue, a loud trumpeting is heard from the tower of Mistridge and all the faeries in the valley are summoned to the presence of the rescued traveller, otherwise known as Lord Bogemeer. If the magi have been good to the faeries and Bogemeer in particular, they will be invited to join the revelry and no intentional harm will be done. On the other hand, if they have been poor company, the faeries do their best to tear apart the covenant and it will be years (if ever) before the covenant returns to normal.

Lord Bogemeer

Even Lord Bogemeer has forgotten how many years he has hosted the faeries in Val du Bosque – for faeries do not measure life in years as humans do. Hosting this party is the greatest power and the most basic responsibility of this famed and mighty faerie. Feasting is all he does. And he is very good at it. His immense status among the faeries is granted only because he is so fun. He amuses them, so they (no matter what court they come from, Seelie or Unseelie) accord him respect and will obey his wishes.

Around people, Bogemeer is very easygoing. When this immense fellow laughs his belly jiggles and his eyes gleam. He influences the emotions of those around him, to such a degree that is impossible not to have a good time (even if your laboratory is being torn apart). Play out his genial, likeable nature.

Bogemeer is an extremely knowledgeable fellow. He likes to spend time living among the mortals, learning about them. In this story, his goal is to see if the magi have matured enough to be seen as allies and friends rather than nuisances and enemies. The wizards amuse him with all their seriousness and their interest in arcane matters. So far, they have been such dreadful bores.

As Martin, Bogemeer should remain in the background, being mostly forgotten until the characters remember him and ask him something. With them he will be a jolly but serious kind of fellow, who seems preoccupied in observing the faeries. If the players ask him questions about the faeries he will gladly give them whatever information he can – even more than a normal „scholar” might know.

Faerie Might 40
Size 0

Faerie Powers – Horn, calls the faeries to parties, and provides the immense and delicious feast at the party.

You should also give him whatever other powers are necessary. Bogemeer is probably the most powerful individual in Val du Bosque – though his only interest is in hosting parties.

PLAYING THE FAERIES

The sheer variety and number of the faeries leaving their forests and mounds to take advantage of this special night is mind-boggling. It would be nigh unto impossible to document every faerie the party could encounter. Be limited only by your imagination as a storyguide. If someone asks you to describe a faerie for which you have no description, make up something with a lot of whimsy; adding human and animal parts to create an especially vivid character. Anything mythological is ideal. Simply role-play out whatever first comes to mind. Don't hesitate, don't think, just *act*. Since the goal of this mission is diplomatic and role-playing is being encouraged rather than combat, these instances are few and far between.

Most faeries have a main power or two listed, along with a brief physical description, motives and thoughts, and any role-playing tips we feel are necessary. If combat ensues with any of the friendly faeries, you will have to improvise. Figure that most small faeries have one Body Level, at most two, with the larger of the faeries having the equivalent of five or possibly even six for the largest of the trolls. Combat stats will be low for the more friendly faeries, while the dark faeries are usually martially oriented and will thus have higher scores in

combat-related skills. Bogemeer will dislike any combat initiated by the troupe against good faeries and this will weigh heavily against the covenant when the time for the party comes.

PRELUDE

During a special wizard's council, the magus Grimgroth tells the covenant that he has seen a blue nimbus around the moon as of late. This evening he was on Mount Tierne, and began to watch the moon rise. As time passed, he saw a blue tinge around the edges. He informs the magi that when the moon will turn completely blue, he thinks the faeries of the valley will march upon Mistridge and hold a huge party. Much of the covenant would be destroyed after a faerie party of this magnitude. One of the older covenant diaries refers to a night when the faeries held a party at Mistridge. The faeries were led by a prince named Bogemeer. The next few pages are torn out and the next readable entry describes the horrible clean-out after the faerie revelry. (One of the faerie mishaps after the party was the disappearance of these pages.) This should cause the magi to seek out Bogemeer before he and the faeries descend on the covenant. Clavius and Grimgroth were both young apprentices at the last revel and don't remember the destruction too well. Vulcris and Felix don't believe Grimgroth at all. Allow the magi to make whatever plans they want to try and protect the covenant. No matter what else they do, make sure that somehow part of the plan is going down to Val du Bosque when the moon starts to turn blue to search for Bogemeer. Let them know that the faeries start their party in the surrounding villages while they are waiting for Bogemeer to call them. Grimgroth tells the group to return before the moon turns completely blue, mission accomplished or not, to help with the defense of the covenant, if a defense is possible at all.

ON THE ROAD TO JAVIELLE

On the way to Javielle, the characters encounter some faerie ruffians humiliating and beating up an older gentleman. As the group arrives on the scene, they see a troupe of black horsemen riding away. The leader of the remaining faeries is a member of the Unseelie Court at the Moaning Oaks. The dark faeries have tied the old man by his feet from a tree branch and are pouring honey down his body and into his beard. They seem to be torturing him for the sheer fun of it, with one faerie threatening him with a beehive held in the air over him. When the faeries see the characters, they will tell them to bug off and mind their own business. The poor traveller will beg for mercy and deliverance.

If attacked, the one faerie will throw the beehive down, releasing bees to attack the traveller (remember, honey attracts bees in the paradigm) and the party. Smoke, water or a good Animalem spell should do the trick with the bees. The other faeries will command two boars to attack the characters. Meanwhile, the faeries will attempt to destroy the characters' clothing, armor and weapons with Perdo Animalem and Herbam spells as appropriate and using Rego and Muto Corporem spells to hold and mutate the characters. The faerie ruffians will be chased off rather easily, bullies being bigger in bravado than bravery.

Faerie Ruffians

These gnarled brownies have been told that they are part of a ruse to be played upon some humans. Being particularly fond of tricks and jokes, these Unseelie brownies do their part of this con job with vigor and unconcealed glee. They have been told to flee at any great resistance, but to make it look good. Humans are not to die, but accidents happen.

Faerie Might 10
Size -1

Faerie Powers: Can cast any combination of Rego and Muto with Animalem, Herbam and Corporem up to level 20, It cost 1 Faerie Might points per 5 levels of the spells cast.

The brownies command two magical boars – and three more are waiting in the bushes in case the brownies' lives are in danger.

Size 0, Cunning +2, Perception -1, Stamina +5

Fatigue +2, Defence +1, Soak +10
Firts Strike +4, Attack +6, Damage +12

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

Each boar has 3 points of *Animalem vis* in his tusk. These are fierce and bad-tempered beasts.

When the characters rescue the gentleman, they will find out that he is a scholar from Foix who has an intense interest in faeries and was coming in Val du Bosque to attempt to see a faerie revelry first-hand. He was tricked by the faerie ruffians and the characters saw the plight that got him into. When and if the characters either reveal that they are magi or cast magical spells, the gentleman – Martin – will feign surprise and interest.

This gentleman is really Bogemeer, the faerie prince. He wants to see how far the magi have progressed since the last time ha trashed their covenant, 97 years ago. The magi back then lacked humor, compassion and a will to join in the party, so the faeries had a good time at their expense. If the characters can convince Bogemeer that they have changed for the better, they will be invited to the revelry and the covenant will not sustain much damage. Martin will try to get the characters to take him with them „for his own protection” and will promise to provide them with any pertinent information that he can.

CONCEALING BOGEMEER’S TRUE NATURE

As the group encounters more faeries and asks them where Bogemeer is, they will usually break out laughing or some other silly thing, and then say something cryptic like: „Oh, he’s nearer than you think” or „I think he’s back the way you came a little ways” – after which there will be more silly laughter, dancing et al. Speak in puns and innuendo. Through all this Martin will stay at the back of the group, watching, and not calling any attention to himself. If asked questions, he will answer guilefully, but with a sincere voice. Martin will accompany the group, watch their reactions to the fun-loving faeries, and then try to get the characters to take him back to the covenant with them, promising them just about anything and preying upon their sympathy for a poor stranded traveller or greed for a knowledgeable scholar. If the magi take him with them to the covenant, he will be able to call the revelry by blowing upon his silver horn, which he will keep hidden until then. The faeries will appear at his side, most likely right in the middle of the covenant and bypassing any magical barriers and defenses the magi may have erected.

If, for some reason, the party decides not to help this poor traveller or bring him with them, then Bogemeer will have to insert himself into the group in some other way. As a last resort, he can turn invisible or become an insect, and thus enter the covenant with the group when they return later. Of course, Bogemeer wil not be at all pleased with the covenant at this point and he will grow more and more mischievous. In order to get the most enjoyment out of this story, it’s essential that the characters take Bogemeer with them. Do everything in your power as a storyguide to achieve this end.

With Bogemeer now firmly entrenched in the group as Martin, the party will set off down the road to Javielle to search for him. The encounters described hereafter can be used in any order you find suitable. Some are tied to a certain location and are thus encountered when the characters investigate that location. But most are tied only to the whimsical wanderings of the faeries and are thus at your beck and call whenever you feel the need for a little fun.

THE BLUE MOON

Remember that the character have until the moon has turned completely blue to find Bogemeer. Use this as a plot device to inspire worry and stress in the party. They should get more and more desperate as the blueness slowly creeps across the moon and they have come no closer to finding the faerie prince. There is no „official” time frame for this adventure, pace it to fill up your allotted time, allowing as much time as the roupe wishes for the faerie revelry. If you wish to stop the troupe from wasting time, describe the condition of the moon and we guarantee that they will be running before you finish the sentence.

THE VILLAGE OF JAVIELLE

The nearest village to Mistridge is Javielle, the largest village in the area, boasting 300 souls. It is only a mile away from Mistridge covenant, but a river cuts between them, and the nearest ford is three miles downstream. For more information on Javielle, see the Saga chapter of the 2nd edition Ars Magica rules.

The Dominion is almost completely gone from the countryside except around extremely holy locations such as the stone church in Javielle and the shrine to Santa Fabia, just to the north of town. The Faerie Aura is +2 in all areas where the Dominion used to hold sway. Near the holy places, the aura will go from the +2 Faerie to +5 or +6 Dominion near the altar of the church. Adjudicate the relevant aura as the situation arises.

SET LOCATIONS

The Village Square Tavern

The faeries here are out to drain the entire alcoholic contents of the town's open air tavern. Music seems to drift upon the breeze and sprites dance through the air, the ground and the treetops. The fun-loving faeries will invite the characters to join the bash, challenging them to drinking contests (a chance for the grogs to show off), inviting them to play music with them, and offering to swap stories. This is a good chance to introduce future story lines and develop friends to the covenant to have among the faeries. If nothing else, loosen the group up with the sheer fun of it all. Note: it is rumored that drinking faerie beverages and eating faerie food causes strange reactions in mortals, sometimes losing them forever to the realm of faerie. Most of the food and drink the characters will encounter in Javielle is mortal, but you can never be quite so sure about anything the faeries may give you.

Faerie Food Effects

(roll a stress die)

01	Belch for an hour non-stop
02	Speak only in nouns
03	Cry when you're happy, laugh when you're angry etc.
04	Think everything around you is a hallucination
05	Giggle incessantly
06	Can't stop talking
07	Tell people around you all your deepest secrets and greatest fears
08	Lips turn blue and begin to pucker. If you don't kiss something they burst, causing 8+ damage
09	Start growing leaves and if you stay still long, you take root and become a plant
10+	No effect
botch	Go to live with the faeries for seven years

The Village Church

Father Llorenc is out in the church yard, chanting prayers and swinging an incense thurible as he walks circles around the church. Trailing behind him is a small sprite, sucking up the incense smoke as it trails out behind the good Father (it seems that the sprite is „smoking” the holy incense smoke). Father Llorenc believes that the wizards have something to do with this night and sees it as a fulfillment of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation. There are a number of the townfolk in the church, praying for the Day of Judgement. The Father, normally very cold to the magi, will be downright angry, evoking God's wrath on the evil-doers and condemning them before all mankind. At your option, if the troupe is belligerent and bullying to Father Llorenc, a minor miracle could happen, even though the Dominion is weak in the area. Note: The Dominion is still very strong in the church and within the circle inscribed by the incense. This is Father Llorenc's home ground and a fight with him would be probably a mistake.

Sprites

These beautiful sylvan creatures are never more than a foot high and have gossamer wings and chime-like laughs. They are the most gleeful and playful of all of the faeries, though they can be as mischievous as brownies.

Faerie Might: 5

The Mill

If the magi go near the village mill, they will hear the sound of crying coming from within. A knock on the dorr will bring a very frightened Poul, the miller, peeping out. He will actually be glad to see the magi (the magi, like everyone else in this valley, get their flour from Poul's mill). The crying comes from Poul's wife. Before Poul can get a word in edgewise, she will blurt out that their youngest daughter, Alba, has been missing ever since these horrible, strange events started to happen. Poul has been too frightened to go out looking for her, but will implore the magi to search for her and promise them almost anything for his daughter's safe return.

Poul's daughter is playing with some water faeries upstream from her father's mill. Her belief in the faerie magic has allowed her to walk on the water and the group will find her skipping merrily up the swiftly moving stream, riding the water like a moving carpet. The faeries are dancing around her and will shyly dive into the water if at all threatened. Alba will call for her friends to come back and actively search them. If any adults sound worried about her walking on the water or tell her that she is in a dangerous position, her faith in the faerie magic will waver in the light of adult reasoning and she will begin to sink into the water. The more she panics, the quicker she sinks, all the while being swept towards the water wheel and the rapids below it. It will be incumbent upon the characters at this stage to save the young girl from what is almost certain death. This should be an abrupt change from the whimsical tone of the rest of the story. This serious diversion will only accentuate the whimsy of the remainder of the story.

Water Sprites

With their translucent blue skin and spry little bodies these sprites are at home in the water and spend all of their time frolicking in it. They cannot leave it for long, for they will dry out. Water seems to always drip from them. It is not really known whether they are of the water, the water itself or something else entirely.

Faerie Might: 10

The Smithy

A terrible accident has happened here, terrible that is for a faerie, for it would mean an end to an otherwise immortal life. It seems that two young quicklings were playing tag through the streets of Javielle when their merry little game led them to the smithy. While dodging around the furnishing in the smithy, a table was knocked over and a pile of scrap iron fell upon one of the poor little faeries. With the iron dampening the quickling's power to move through nonliving material, the little guy is effectively trapped by the iron. His pal is frantically trying to help his friend, but can't get near the iron. Realizing that only a non-faerie could free his friend, he has gone out into the night in search of mortals to help. You should have the little quickling buzz up to the group, run a few quick circles around them, and then lead them off to the smithy. (Think of a dog trying to get humans to come and help its master.) Any speech by the quickling is unintelligible due to its high frequency and rapid emission, being beyond the capabilities of human hearing for the most part. Therefore, the quicklings will communicate in sign language when necessary. If the characters free the little faerie, the injured one will be too weak to move, but will recover enough to leave the party in an hour. During this time, the characters can carry the little fellow, all the while being attended by the other quickling. At the storyguide's discretion, these little friends of the covenant can show up at a later game session and extract the troupe from some precarious situation.

Quicklings

These diminutive faeries (under 2 feet high) are of an alabaster complexion and sport tiny wings on their backs. They have over-sized heads, short alabaster fur and permanent grins. They can fly through most solid object at the cost of 1 Faerie Might point. They are of extremely curious and inquisitive natures.

Faerie Might: 15

The Cooper

While outside sometime near the cooper's, the characters will hear a rumbling noise. Hurling toward them are four wooden barrels. Make the characters roll dodges to avoid being hit by the barrels. Use the character's marching order and a little bit of whimsy to decide who is threatened by the careening barrels. It should be obvious to the characters that they just in the way of the barrels by happenstance. The barrels bounce off objects like trees and house corners, making the way generally to the other side of the village, the purposed finish line. One of the barrels could break open on the side of a hut of your choosing. Inside, a dusty hill goblin (a type of faerie who lives in mound in the mountains) will swear profusely, brush himself off, scowl at the characters and head off after the retreating barrels.

Hill Goblins

These stench-ridden, dusty, filth covered mongrel faeries are often the least favorite faerie of most mortals – though they are not necessarily of the Unseelie court. With their tight brown skin, scrawny little arms and bald bumpy heads they do not appear to be very formidable warriors, and indeed they are not, but in the game of steal and ambush they are supreme. Their strangest feature is their long eyelashes.

Faerie Might: 7

The Carpenter

A game of „Launch the Rock Troll” is in progress at the carpenter's house. The carpenter and his family have taken refuge in the church. The faeries have set boards on some of the cooper's barrels, much like a teeter-totter. A rock troll sits on one end of the board. Then the contestants jump out of a nearby tree, sending the rock troll (tucked into a little ball) through the air, hopefully, down the carpenter's chimney. Each contestant gets five attempts, with the most successes determining the winner. The rock trolls are very resistant to physical damage, and they actually like flying through the air. In fact, it was a rock troll who invented the game „Launch the Rock Troll”. Betting is going on amongst the faeries present, though not for money. If a character looks interested in participating in this little game, a short faerie with grayish pink hair and flowers growing out of his ears will challenge him, with the winner taking the loser's hair, all of it. The faerie's hair is worth 5 Herbam vis. An Athletics + Per roll of 8+ will allow the character to realize that where you jump on the board will determine the leverage for propelling the troll skyward. The first jump will be an Athletics + Dex ease factor of 15, with each subsequent jump reducing the ease factor by 2 until an ease factor of 9 is reached. If a player figures out an intelligent strategy for playing the game give them a bonus to their rolls.

Rock Trolls

These obese and wart-covered creatures are the smaller cousins of the enormous Mountain Trolls. These more diminutive kin are only three feet high or so, and much more playful.

Faerie Might: 15

The Reeve's House

An old, cronish faerie has decided to redecorate Joaquima the Reeve's house from the outside. She has used her Faerie Power to cause the wooden house to sprout new branches, leaves and even fruit. At the moment, Joaquima's house looks a lot like an overgrown garden. Many small sprites are playing amongst the vines and branches. Anyone who makes a Per + Carpentry roll of 9+ will notice that the weight of the new plants has weakened the wall of the house and it will collapse soon if nothing is done. Talking to the sprites playing on the house will lead the characters to the old crone. She will be reluctant to remove her plants, being swayed by the pleading of her childish charges, but can be reasoned with and will tidy up her jungle, leaving a neat house-top garden in its place. If the troupe can't talk her out of growing her plants, the house will collapse, leaving the faeries unscathed but possibly harming or even killing the mortals inside.

MISCELLANEOUS ENCOUNTERS

Two Drunks

These two drunks seem to have attracted a lot of faerie attention, perhaps due to the fact that they are so drunk that they don't believe anything that they see. Since their „hallucinations” haven't gone away, they've decided to make the most of them and have some fun. They're dancing and singing songs with about twenty faeries as they travel from the tavern to their homes, wherever those are. Of course, they won't believe that the magi are real either and will laugh at, make jokes about, push around, and otherwise abuse the different characters in the party, not for an instant believing that they are in any danger. One of the drunks has a gripe to pick with the magi and will take this opportunity to relieve some of that built-up tension. The magy may even learn something of interest on how the villagers feel about them and what things they are concerned about that might affect the covenant.

The Coronation Procession

The sound of chanting assaults the character's ears. Coming into town from the north is a large procession. The faeries are wearing bizarre and outrageous costumes, with hats on backwards and colors clashing horribly. They have attached the village tavern's sign to a staff and are using it as a standard. The chanting comes from some dwarvish monks. If someone listens closely to the words, they will realize that the monks are really singing a drinking ditty, in Latin., Gregorian chant style. The cause of the procession is to coronate the new King and Queen of the Revelry. Incredibly enough, the king and queen to be are none other than the village mudlarks, Marius and Marti, paternal twin orphans. Having no other place to hide, they have found the faeries more accepting folk than their own people. The procession will wind through the village to the open air tavern. There, the coronation will take place, with crowns of ivy being placed on the new nobility's heads. Thereafter, court will be held in the tavern, with any grievances being brought before King Marius. If the characters do serious harm to the faeries, they may be brought before the child „king” to be judged. This royalty status will only last until daylight, but until then, the two mudlarks are on the top of the world. They are not likely to forget this night.

Dual Trouble

The party encounters a small group of irate men-at-arms, who are covered from head to foot with rotten vegetables. When they see the party, they look angry and move to surround them. If they can actually complete this maneuver, they will tell the group that they are under arrest for the humiliation of the Baron's troops. The soldier were assaulted a short time ago by a group of faeries who have decided to imitate the wizard's party and see how much trouble they can cause. It will be difficult to persuade the guards that the group didn't perpetrate the crime that they are accused of doing. Just before a real confrontation results, the group of gaeries, looking exactly like the characters will arrive on the scene, act extremely arrogant, and accuse the characters of being imposters. The faeries duplicate the group exactly, except for the fact that Martin has not been duplicated (a possible clue to Martin's identity as Bogemeer).

The guards at this point will be so confused and befuddled as to practically be out of the picture. The faeries will move to attack the characters, each faerie engaging the character that they are imitating. The guards will attack if they are attacked, but will otherwise move into a defensive line well away from the feuding parties. If a character is killed, the imposter faerie will try to stay with the party as if they were the original character. The

faeries will not hesitate to use their magical powers during the melee and this might allow an observer to tell the difference between two otherwise identical combatants. The faeries who resemble the wizard(s) cannot cast the wizard's spells, but can only use their own miscellaneous powers. If the party has not added Bogemeer at the beginning, this might be a good time to insert him. When the combat is over, the guards will apologize to the characters, state that justice was done to the perpetrators of the crime and then beat a hasty retreat back to the Baron's castle. As they disappear, rotten vegetables will pelt them all the way out of town from faeries drinking on top of the village's roofs.

Six Men-at-Arms

These six men were caught outside during this faerie night. They are confused and angry, having been humiliated frequently. The characters are the first near human folk they have met.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated
Two-Handed Spear: First Strike +12, Attack +6, Damage +9, Parry +4
Leather Hauberk: Soak +5

The Faerie Duplicates

These faeries have decided to imitate the wizard's party to cause mischief. No matter who they imitate, they have the following statistics:

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, Incapacitated
First Strike +5, Attack +6, Damage +9, Defence +4, Soak +7
Faerie Might: 8

They are also able to cast miscellaneous spell-like powers up to level 15. These cost 1 Faerie Power point per 5 levels of the spells.

Who's Laughing at Who

A high, contagious laughter seems to come from nowhere and everywhere at once. The characters need to make Serious rolls of 6+ to avoid breaking out in uncontrollable laughter too. Other rolls could be made if you deem them appropriate. The perpetrator of all this nonsense is a wayward leprechaun, far from his home on the Emerald Isle. He was captured and brought here by a magus who moved to the covenant of Val Negra, to the south of Mistridge. When the magus tried to use him in an experiment, the leprechaun used his ability to cause laughter to escape. He has been living at the Moaning Oaks for the past few decades. He will continue to pester the magi out of spite for their kind. When imitating the leprechaun's laugh, use a nauseatingly high pitched, mocking laugh.

The Village Idiot

The troupe comes across Pep, the village idiot, holding an animated discussion with a number of older elves, under the graceful boughs of the willow trees by the river. This is surprising because Pep is a dumb mute, having been unable to hold an intelligent conversation since his visit to the Moaning Oaks, ten years ago. Now it seems, with the rise of the faerie powers for an evening, that his senses have returned to him. He can be a source of unlimited gossip for the magi, since most people talk around him without fear, feeling that he is unable to pass along any information he may overhear. He also knows a lot about the faeries, having a Faerie Lore of 4. How much he imparts to the magi depends on how they have treated him during past adventures. If questioned about the faerie lord Bogemeer, he will look surprised, point back the way the group had just come, and say: „Why, he's right...” – at which time his tongue will go dumb again. (Bogemeer had to keep him from blowing his cover.) Staring at the group, his eyes will go wide with fear and he will bolt away as if all the demons of Hell were on his tail. For the rest of the evening, the group will see Pep avoiding them as if they had the plague. Future encounters with him after this night will find him just as mute as dumb as ever, as well as sad. Any questioning about this evening will bring tears to his eyes and he will blurt out his favorite phrase „Agi- agi- agiflum.”

Elves

These spry and thin little men with steel grey hair, cold grey eyes and solemn faces are the most noble of all faeries. Through they never smile they engage in revelry as much as the other faeries, though in their own way. They like to discuss things and talk about intellectual matters. Their wit and verbal adroitness make them highly difficult to debate and they are known for their evasions when it comes to questions about their own lives. They are much too powerful to be trifled with, and they are invariably surrounded by dozens of animal-like servants, guards and courtiers.

Faerie Might: 45

Sir Guifre's Manor

If the troupe seeks help from Sir Guifre, the magi encounter a horde of faeries making mock attack on his castle. Sprites drop flowers on the warriors manning the walls, and satyrs throw a javelin or two and then trot off to drink some more wine. The faeries are recreating the epic battle in which the thirteen tribes of the Celts defeated them and drove them to their forests and mounds centuries ago. The pain of that defeat is strong, and this group of faeries takes out their anger in this mock attack on Guifre's manor. Ig magically attacked the faeries flee into the woods until the magi have left, whereupon they return to resume the siege. If any faerie is caught and asked where Bogemeer is, they will respond that he is in the village down the road from here (Javielle). If asked why they aren't there too, they will respond that they are waiting for him to call them to celebration ridge. They can't be any more specific about the details but they are looking forward to it. If physically attacked the faeries will dramatically play out the scene, attacking grogs, companions and magi with more intent to humiliate than kill. Sir Guifre and his men have locked up the castle and are manning the walls. The servants and womenfolk are in the chapel praying and singing litanies. No amount of noise can get them to open up the gates until daylight. Some drastic means, which won't put the covenant in good standing with Sir Guifre, will have to be used to get an audience with him and little information, except that the siege started at twilight, can be obtained. Use the statistics for satyrs and goblins in the *Bestiary* chapters of 2nd edition *Ars Magica* if combat breaks out.

BACK TO MISTRIDGE

When the moon almost turns blue (when you *decide* it turns mostly blue), the characters will no doubt wish to hightail it back to Mistridge to help defend against the onslaught of faeries that is expected since the mission was a failure. Many of the faeries will be seen making their way towards Mistridge and huge numbers will be seen encamped all around the ridge. Otherwise, there will be no opposition to the characters making it back to the covenant. Let them make whatever preparations they wish to protect their labs etc. Let them catch their breath and worry about the onslaught they are probably expecting.

THE FINALE

Once at Mistridge, Bogemeer will take the opportunity to sneak off and ascend to the top of the tower. There, once the moon has turned completely blue, he will blow his silver horn. Only if he blows the horn from the top of the tower can the party begin, and the faeries can pass through the Aegis of the Hearth. However, Bogemeer is magically powerful enough that preventing him from doing so would be very difficult. There will be a rumbling in the sky, bright colors will flash, and then, flying through the air and galloping on the ground, in a rush of color and sound, will come the faeries from all directions. Magic will have no effect on the faeries until the revelry is over (the power of Bogemeer's spell prevent this). Once in the covenant, all faeries will congregate in the council chambers of the magi, which are built upon the former site of Bogemeer's throne and feast room. His silver horn will grow larger and larger when he sets it on the floor, and all kind of exotic food and wine will spill forth. The party then ensues in full force, occupying the entire covenant. The council chamber will have been magically changed for the duration of the night, seeming many times larger than it normally is and being decorated appropriately for a royal party. Bogemeer will hold court in a place of honor, with the King and Queen of the Revelry have secondary places of honor.

If the magi impressed Bogemeer, he will welcome them to the revelry and invite them to participate fully. He will also warn the faeries not to harm the covenant, but genially tells the wizards that „accidents can happen”.

On the other hand, if the magi were rude boors, they will be refused admittance to the initial revelry in the feasting hall (council chamber) and anything is fair game. There are hundreds of faeries who are especially strong on this night, so the magi will be hopelessly outnumbered and any ideas they have on retaliating against the faeries should be discouraged and stopped summarily if they are initiated.

If the troupe has been exceptionally good, Bogemeer will give them a token of his friendship, thus making him a strong ally of the covenant. This could be a bell which could call any faerie within one mile to the magi's aid for as long as the sounds of the bell last (about half an hour). The revelry will be raucous and can be role-played out if you wish. The party involves faeries of both the Seelie and the Unseelie courts, and for the duration of the feast, there is a truce. They are joined together in a cacophony of celebration.

In the morning, all the faeries will be gone and the covenant will have the task of cleaning up afterwards. Some things might be missing and strange event can happen from time to time in the years to come. A few faeries remain hidden in the cracks and crevices of the covenant, to come out in occasion for mischievous purposes. The amount of strange events, and missing or broken items, is dependent on how friendly the faeries were with the covenant. Use your imagination, many future stories can arise from this night's events. Too bad it comes only once in a blue moon... Ω

FALCONSHAND

by author unknown

INTRODUCTION

„I'd like to see a light hearted faerie adventure like the festival they published in White Wolf a while back.”

Of late a number of people have mentioned that almost all of the recent adventures for Ars Magica have been dark, gloomy affairs filled with corrupt churchmen, evil Magi and a virtual infestation of demons. So when I was handed this “suggestion” I abandoned my plans for a dark descent into depths of your players psyches, and dredged up something a little less serious. For those who like to know these things, Falconshand is the home covenant of the players in my Saga...

Falconshand is designed as a one or two session adventure for a troupe of Ars Magica players, ideally a group of one to three magi rounded out with grogs and companions. So long as the magi are relatively inexperienced it can be run with only minimal alterations to the power level of creatures to suit the group. The nature of the adventure is such that, if they are wise, the players should never have to consider actually fighting the powerful individuals who appear in the adventure.

INTEGRATING FALCONSHAND IN YOUR SAGA

Falconshand is in Provence on the lands belonging to the Count of Barcelona, somewhere between Marseille and Nice. But unless your covenant happens to be in the Provencal Tribunal, or the magi are vacationing on the Riviera about 600 years early this is entirely irrelevant. All you need is a sufficiently large body of water, and it can quite happily be dropped just off the coast. If you have detailed your saga with such precision that the entire tribunal is mapped out exactly, put it just across the border in the next one.

While almost every Tribunal has room for one more covenant, especially one as obscure as Falconshand (see accompanying sidebar), relative proximity does not imply interest. Ultimately some sort of excuse is needed to persuade the Magi to get out of their labs (often one of the most difficult feats in an Ars Magica saga) and into the adventure. The most important thing to cultivate is a degree of patience. It is easy enough to have a nearby villager come running up to the covenant complaining about something or other in order to rouse the magi, but after a while this can lead to apathy, it's almost as clichéd as meeting in an inn in other roleplaying games. My suggestion is simply to drop hints and wait until the time is ripe. Falconshand has a relatively good library, is obscure enough to pique the interest of the curious, has more votes for their faction for a tribunal, and has a number of annoying inhabitants who can visit the characters home covenant in such a manner that they will want to go visit them in return. More importantly, the adventure presented here has absolutely nothing to do with whatever reason they had for visiting the covenant. None at all.

THE PLOT

Falconshand has a variety of interesting inhabitants. Fortunately for our heroes most of them are out. However enough of them are left to cause problems. When they arrive only two Magi are in residence and available: Vergis of House Flambeau, the leader of the covenant, and Thibault of House Tytalus, one of the new magi. A third – Porphory of House Criamon – is locked away in his lab and will be very annoyed if disturbed. Finally, Mercurio the Quaesitor will turn up eventually.

Briefly put, Vergis is as senile as they come, Mercurio is so hard-line it's ridiculous, Thibault is far too clever for his own good and Porphory is just not interested. As such there isn't really a coherent plot, more three parallel plots which serve only to complicate each other. The objective of the exercise is to make the characters so confused they don't know whether they are coming or going any more. The whole thing is designed as more or less broad comedy, with the magi providing the major themes and covenfolk, grogs, villagers and assorted sea-faeries providing the background.

The first plot revolves around Vergis and a bit of mistaken identity. So far has he gone into twilight that his mind can scarcely be described as whole. As a result he mistakes the whole group for members of the covenant and sets them to

finding out what happened to the covenant vis stores which appear to have gone missing. If they don't they are in deep trouble.

In the face of this the characters will probably turn to anyone who can help them at all (or maybe not if they are really greedy), and Thibault is more than willing to help. He seems so willing indeed that is downright suspicious. Not surprisingly, being a member of House Tylalus, he is up to something behind their backs. Namely, he has promised the queen of the local sea-faeries a few mortals as gifts for the next festival they hold, which is any day now.

Finally, just as things seem to have reached the maximum of confusion, Mercurio turns up and starts a miniture in-house inquisition. He doesn't have any proof but that isn't stopping him, as he attempts to find every mage in range guilty of something. Fortunately much of his fury is directed towards Thibault who really does have something to hide.

With a little bit of work and a certain amount of luck, the characters should come out of all this more or less unscathed, and maybe even ahead of the game, so long as they don't resort to violence. There is nothing to be gained by fighting, and certainly a lot to be lost. Diplomacy, sneakiness and low-down trickery will get them further than anything else.

THEME AND MOOD

“Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.”
Tennyson: Ulysses

The theme of the adventure is old age and senility. Falconshand itself lies in the depths of Winter, and its inhabitants are no younger. Yet despite its very age it is a long way from death and though the minds of its people are addled they are still alive, confused but alive. They have not given up hope, nor will they. Just because they are old does not mean that life is over, far from it.

The mood is one of confusion and bewilderment. It is as if they have suddenly awoken from a nap, only to be suddenly confronted by a world working on principles completely different from their own. Its most important to keep them off balance: no sooner have they reached a state of equilibrium, before the rug is yanked out from underneath them again.

At the same time, it should be as if the world has suddenly come into sharp focus. If at all possible in the scheme of your Saga, have them travel to Falconshand in spring or summer, simply so you can have good weather. Bright sunny days, clear blue skies and the fresh sea breeze bringing the whole covenant to life, and hundreds of myriad details crowding their senses, making them feel awake again. Aim to overwhelm them with the wonder and strangeness of this new place. Stamp it in their memory for their old age.

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT FALCONSHAND

Some characters might be a little curious about this covenant they are going to visit, and may try to find out something of its background first. With successful Int + Hermes Lore rolls the following information is available:

6+ There might be a covenant by that name in the Tribunal, but you can't remember really hearing anything about it at all, which in itself is very strange.

9+ Falconshand is by far the most obscure covenant in the area, mainly it seems because for some reason the redcaps will have nothing to do with them, indeed they refuse to speak about them at all.

12+ Apparently they have been taking in new magi of late, but very dubious sorts on the whole.

15+ The covenant was apparently associated with a number of pirates some 20 or so years back who preyed on nearby shipping. Its magi, lead by Vergis of House Flambeau, were continually in hot water with the Quaesitors and the rest of the tribunal.

18+ Vergis was responsible for the break with the redcaps. Apparently one of them offended him in some way. He challenged him to Wizard's War and then killed him in it, despite the fact that the redcap had no magical abilities at all. A very dubious act, but technically legal, he then proceeded to run off everyone who came after him as a result of this. House Mercere has formally put an embargo on all traffic with him, which accounts for the covenant's isolation.

THE COVENANT OF FALCONSHAND

From across the bay Falconshand appears like a bastard crossbreed of a monastery, a cathedral and a castle built in marble and terracotta. It squats on a small rocky outcropping quarter of a league from the land, joined only by a thin stone causeway pockmarked with holes and ruts where it has been washed away by the sea. The main structure consists mainly of an eclectic series of walls, towers and halls crammed one on top of the other, topped off by an airy gothic church, buttresses, arches, stained glass and all. Once it might have been impressive but the whole has a weary air that bespeaks long neglect.

The massive walls surround a series of layered courtyards, passageways, cloisters and terraces, designed seemingly to confound the mind. From these halls the windows look out over the long wide bay within which the island sits, up to the road at the top of the low sand cliffs and to the woods and fields beyond. Some of the buttresses of the walls extend down into the sea, and from certain angles it is more or less impossible to see the rocky island on which it is built. Clustered around the south side of the covenant, sheltered from the open sea by the rock itself, lie a series of docks cluttered with boats ranging from tiny skiffs to a forty oar galley, and small gardens hard against the looming walls. Over all towers the spire of the old church around which everything else is built. Its crumbling peak hosting the roosts of the hundreds of hawks, eagles and falcons which give the covenant its name.

THE INHABITANTS OF FALCONSHAND

Aside from the already mentioned Magi, both those in residence and those otherwise occupied, Falconshand boasts about 30 inhabitants. These are more or less equally divided into servants, guards and a number of assorted individuals who anywhere else would probably be considered Consors.

The one thing that stands out about the group though is their age. With the exception of only a few, the entire population is aged over 30, most of them considerably older. This in an age when forty is considered old for anyone outside the nobility.

The servants are ancient and gnarled, and rattle about the huge structure making vague motions towards maintaining the place. Only the kitchens, magi's quarters, and one end of the vast church hall, and the servant's refectory, are at all maintained. The long corridors, vaulted store-rooms piled with goods and the chambers which used to house so many, all are filled with dust and cobwebs.

The grogs are all grizzled old veterans, who have probably seen better days. They could barely guard the Covenant if all of them were on duty at once. As it is, they keep a perfunctory watch on the main gate and the docks. On clear days one of them is stationed at the height of the bell-tower to watch for approaching ships, at least if he is able to make the climb.

The companions themselves are a varied bunch. Many of them too are past their prime, with the exception of a scant few who have joined since the arrival of the younger magi a few years ago. Shaw, the alchemist; Delmont, the stunted mute librarian; Guillemo, the weathered bosun of the Sea Falcon; Quinn, the chronicler; all of them have seen better days. Even Zahir, the arab mercenary who commands the guard, is becoming old, though his face, hidden behind his black beard, seems ageless.

Yet for all their age and infirmity, the covenant is surprisingly alive. They bustle back and forth at their own rate, gossiping and chattering and complaining. The halls ring with laughter at the antics of the more youthful covenfolk. The young Magi are served with a watchful eye and a hidden smile. Life goes on whatever.

ARRIVING AT FALCONSHAND

As they head down towards the ramshackle wreck of the covenant, there can be seen a small hunched figure sitting on the edge of the causeway. Closer inspection reveals that the individual is an old man with a raggedly hacked deep gray beard and a face like a ploughed field. Appropriately clad for the weather, he appears to be deeply engaged in communion with the sea through the medium of his fishing rod.

The fisherman is one of the local villagers, and should they come this way often, it's quite possible that they may begin to believe that he is actually attached to the causeway. Come rain or shine, night and day he can be found sitting in the same spot, occasionally landing a fish out of the bay. If they actually go to the trouble of watching him for a long period of time he will eventually pack up his things and head home. But next time they check he will be back in his usual place.

If they try to talk to him, he can, though with every evidence of just wanting them to go away, be persuaded to speak. However his conversation consists almost entirely of "Yep", "Nope", "Couldn't rightfully say" and assorted grunts. Any questions about the covenant will eventually bring out the comment: "I wouldn't go up there if I were you. They're all mad."

The only way to get much more out of him is to just sit there, preferably with a fishing rod. After a couple of week he might strike up a conversation. Threats are ignored or result in a clout round the head with a fish bucket, Mentem spells seem to elicit no response, and mind reading gets beautiful clear pictures of the sea and little else.

At the end of the mole the high walls of the covenant stand: the twin towers of the gatehouse, and the gate itself. Flanking it are two immense statues of gargoyles, some 8 feet high. These stare at visitors, scratch themselves, pick their teeth, and do nothing else (damn impressive though). The rusted gates stand slightly ajar and somewhere about is probably a guard or two.

Once the guard is located, sheltering in the guardroom or lazing on a stool in the sun, he will do his best to welcome the visitors. After fumbling around for his rusty helmet and snatching up his spear he will enquire in his best voice as to the business of the travellers.

The guard, Anselm of Bec, isn't really interested in their business, except as something to talk about. Guard duty is rather boring, and besides it's nice to know what's going on in the world. He will happily chatter on about any topic under the sun, including the inhabitants of the covenant, their comings and goings and the latest servant's gossip. ("Apparently master Mercurio left the covenant in a huff two days ago. Not that this is an uncommon occurrence, but it seems, according to Elen, who does his cleaning, that he did so without taking anything like a spare set of clothes or his books, which he usually does. This probably means he'll be back soon, and everyone can't wait to find out exactly what its all about.") He is more than informed about the local area too, from the sea faeries to the old man out on the causeway. ("Oh, you mean old Jean? I wouldn't listen to him. He's mad.")

Eventually, though they may well engage him in conversation for some time, some sort of decision has to be made about what to do with them. After a bit of head scratching, he will come up with:

"Well, I suppose you had better see Vergis. He's the master of the Covenant, you know." And with that, looking around, he will call out bringing a young boy dressed in a simple wool tunic. The child, some 8 or 9 years old, appears almost as if an angel, with pure blond hair, blue eyes and a perfect face.

"Adam," says Anselm, "these visitors need to see Vergis. Will you take them?"

Adam smiles and beckons, leading them into the Covenant.

ADAM

Adam is the only child in the covenant, nor he is the offspring of any of its inhabitants. He knows little if anything of his own parents or even of his own arrival. The other servants are careful to avoid talking about whilst he is around. He half-dreams that it involves dreadful portents and dark stormy nights.

Despite this he is more than happy. He is doted upon by all and sundry, does little work but run errands, and lives in a place full of wonder and amazement. Though shy, a little kindness will open him up and he will soon be chatting as volubly as any other of the covenfolk.

Adam takes them through the gatehouse, up a long series of staggered stairs, open to the sky and bounded by walls on each side. The walls are punctured at regular intervals with doors leading to rooms and stairs. Some are open, others closed, a few are marked with sanctum sigils, and others contain people engaged in various tasks who all look up and smile as the group passes. Shouted questions echo out of upper story windows and a number of covered bridges join the two walls.

At last, reaching the top of the stairs he pushes open a gate, and the group comes into a large open courtyard. Waist-high walls surround its flagged expanse on three sides, giving it a commanding view of the sea. It seems almost domed by the blue sky. All but ignoring the vista, Adam turns and leads them through the door of the church which forms the fourth side, the steeple of which has towered over them the entire trip.

Within the shadowed air is filled with many colored beams of light, dust motes floating within them, as they dance with the dark pillars that hold up the vault. Up the aisle towards the cracked and battered rood screen which hides the altar. Then left and through a door into a room hung with tapestries and Vergis.

MEETING VERGIS

Vergis sits beside a table covered with papers next to a window overlooking a grassy cloister. The sun pours over him, sprawled in oak chair, making him look like a rag doll flung down by a bored child. His downy, pure white hair and beard billow in the gentle breeze and fall down the brown robe which seems far too large for his tiny body. For a moment he lies there, arms and legs askew, snoring lightly. Then at a cough from their escort he starts to life. He suddenly sits bolt upright with a quizzical expression on his face, and then relaxes. Drawing himself upright in the chair he looks round the room at each individual and, frowning, begins to speak:

"Now," he clears his throat, "I expect you are all wondering why I have called you here today. Well... hmm, it has come to my attention that something has.. um... gone missing. And I want to know who took it, and I want to know now!"

"Well, next... hmm," pointing to one of the characters, "what do you know about this business?"

By this point they should be more than a little confused about what is going on, though a certain amount of comprehension may well be dawning. It will do them little good.

Vergis is quite convinced that they are covenant members (take a look at the missing magi and see who fits best) and refuses to be convinced otherwise. Should they try to do so Vergis will respond with disbelief ("What do you think I am? Senile or something?"), and, if necessary, with threats both vocal and magical.

Eventually they should give in, simply because with enough provocation Vergis may actually hurt them. Most though tend to crack under close proximity to extreme manifestations of Ignem magic.

The "something" in question is the covenant vis stores, normally kept in a magically locked cabinet in the library. Vergis expects results of one sort or another, and while he is willing to accept that none of them took it, he won't settle for less than an immediate production of the vis or a promise to find it as soon as possible. With the threat of a dissatisfied Magus on one hand and the nature of the object of the quest, it shouldn't take long for the characters to come to a decision.

Having obtained a commitment from the characters to go look for the missing vis, Vergis will turn them loose into the covenant to manage as best they can. Unless they manage to hit exactly the right note they won't have much help from him though. Questions such as "Where is the vis kept?" will be responded to with "The same place as usual, of course," and requests for some way to demonstrate authority to the servants will result in "What? Do you mean they don't listen to you? What's gotten into you, boy? Why, when I was younger... (here follows a long, incoherent tale of his adventures in his youth)." As for how much vis was there, "Well, I can't be expected to keep track of these things, can I?"

FALCONSHAND GEOGRAPHY

There isn't a map. A good thing too, as it would probably confuse you as much as it confuses me. However, don't let that be a drawback, in fact it's an advantage. Paint the covenant in your own mind, the church and its tower at the top, a couple of courtyards around it and the great stairs running round one side. The outer buildings clustered around it rising three stories to the level on which the church is built. Verandas, porticos, cloisters, kitchen gardens, docks, causeway. Now, it doesn't matter that your imaginary landscape doesn't agree with mine, so long as it's sort of consistent. And considering the labrynthine nature of the structure, the players don't deserve a more coherent concept of its layout.

All you have to do is to know (sort of) where the important bits are, and just wing it from there. And if you can't remember how to get from the library to the kitchens, well, either just let them wander a bit and find it, or get them well and truly lost. From now on you can juggle with the scenery to do anything you want.

If they decide to map it, shoot them. We are no longer playing that game.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

The following areas are important (at least to the people that live in them and to the plot), so make them the landmarks in Falconshand.

The Library

Right next to the room where they met Vergis. Where the vis was, also where the books are (better than vis any day). They may have some difficulty getting in, the doors being locked and warded (Magic Resistance is 30), and Delmont the librarian being perennially suspicious.

The Kitchens and the Refectory

A floor below the church on the opposite to the great stairs, sits the center of the covenant's lives. Both are large pillared rooms filled with the smoke from the kitchen fires and the smell of food. When not otherwise engaged, most of the covenant ends up here.

The Magi's Labs

Scattered around the covenant, though Porphory's is sunk deep into the rock and Vergis's is under the courtyard in front of the church. Only Vergis and Porphory have significant defences, but similarly only they have anything really worthwhile.

The Storerooms

A series of vaulted rooms at the base of the covenant, containing literally everything of any value that Vergis ever acquired during his youth. It would probably take years to adequately catalogue.

The Baths

A series of magically heated baths in the style of the Romans in the crypts under the church.

THE HUNT

Now that we have a vague idea of the layout of Falconshand, we can set the characters off on their wild-goose chase. It is a wild-goose chase, simply because the reason the vis is missing is because Vergis borrowed it and forgot to put it back. Typical of him really.

So, seeing as they aren't going to find it let them search until it ceases to be amusing for them to do so, then we can move on to the next part of the adventure. This is your chance to cameo bits of the setting that you like and improvise to your heart's desire.

Of course the conduct of the search depends entirely on the characters themselves. The covenant is huge, there are no end of places to hide such things and besides there is no reason that it should still be in the covenant. If they have any sense, a little detective work is probably in order. The following are a list of possible leads, just don't confine yourself to them.

The Library

The scene of the crime will probably present the most frustrations. With its magical locks and persistent guardian, it will be difficult to enter. Barring magical means, the only real way to enter is to have one of the covenant's magi accompany you. Even this information, though rather logical, may be hard to come by. It is difficult to conduct a conversation with a mute, like Delmont, through an iron door.

If they do manage to enter there are shelves of arcane tomes and an empty cabinet, showing no signs of being forced (indeed intensive analysis will show that there are a number of waiting spells still hanging around on it). Little, beyond a chance to pilfer the library, is to be gained without magic. Delmont will spend the whole time staring at the characters, an unerving experience (especially since he has the merit Piercing Gaze).

Should they interrogate Delmont through the medium of a sheet of paper, at least they will find that he is in the library about 16 hours a day, leaving only to eat and sleep. That and the fact that he first found the cabinet open two days previously narrows the time frame considerably. Indeed so much that a simple application of Eyes of the Past (InIm20), will reveal the real culprit.

Of course hopefully they won't have such resources. But they may realize that the cabinet doesn't appear to have been forced, so probably it was one of the covenant magi. Further investigation may turn up interesting facts.

Oh yes, the books if they want to steal them: Creo 10, Intellego 12, Muto 8, Perdo 9, Rego 11, Animal 5, Aquam 7, Auram 6, Corporem 11, Herbam 4, Ignem 12, Imagonem 8, Mentem 8, Terram 10, Vim 10. Very impressive really, but don't worry, we'll get them back later.

The Covenfolk

None of them really know anything of particular pertinence, but so long as they don't think they are more than gossiping they will let out a horde of mundane trivia concerning the magi. Come up with whatever you like about the magi based on their profiles, nothing is too strange. (E.g. Medwrydd is seeing Nex, though she is married to Araq and is carrying Thibault's child, or Essian is really the long lost heir to a barony. Both of those just happen to be true...) More importantly they can tell characters who is in and where to find them. Also they may well let out the rumour about Mercurio (see Anselm the gate guard above), though that is just a coincidence as well.

Porphory

By all accounts, Porphory is a bit more rational than Vergis. Just the man to sort out this little problem, and the servants are more than willing to point them right direction, though a little nervously. A little trip down a set of dark winding stairs and they are confronted with the door. Set into it is a carving of the head of Medusa, next to it is a sanctum sign. Wise characters will leave round about now. More persistent individuals may try knocking or calling. Unless they are really loud or obnoxious they will merely be ignored. If they are really loud, or they try magic to get the door open (Magic Resistance 50), the head wakes. With a deep, grinding noise the snakes begin to weave and the eyes open. Anyone who doesn't shut their eyes deserves what they get.

The insanely persistent may keep their eyes closed and keep on calling. Another half-hour of that and Porphory himself will open the door and tell them to shut up and go away or he will kill them. Anyone who turns that one down is asking for it.

Thibault

Somewhere during their search, the characters are bound to come across Thibault, the sole other magus in residence who is actually available (in stark contrast to Porphory). Indeed he is the most likely way for them to get into the library.

When they do find him he will probably already heard about them and perhaps even about what is going on. Regardless, he will be making his own plans. Since they do not come to fruition straight away there is no reason for him not to help them. In fact, he will be eager to do so, since it might mean vis for him, and besides who knows that they may be up to. When he is trying to be, Thibault can be unfailingly helpful and kind. He seems such a trustworthy individual and so friendly...

And so he will be until he gets a scent of where the vis is (unlikely), or he manages to get a couple of them (preferably non-magi) alone. If that simply isn't happening, then he can use his Entrancement to make sure it does. As evening approaches he will make his move (see Kidnapped below).

Shaw the Alchemist

Why would want they talk to him? Well, because he's there I suppose. Shaw doesn't have anything useful to aid the investigation. What he does have is a small lab tucked away in the tower, filled with the most poorly maintained set of laboratory equipment imaginable. All of it of course filled with a variety of reagents. The whole thing gives off a vast cloud of black smoke that billows out of the room as the door is opened, sending everyone in the nearby area into fits of coughing. The only person unaffected by the whole thing is Shaw, who emerges, much burned, carrying a bubbling beaker. He wants a volunteer to test his newest concoction... The covenfolk still shudder to think that he was once the cook.

Guillemo, the Bosun of the Sea Falcon

The Sea Falcon was Vergis' old galley, which now lies moldering by the dock, and Guillemo was one of her officers. These days he is perpetually half drunk, and spends his time reminiscing about the old days. He won't be much help though, except that he will mention that tonight is a bad night to be out on the waves. It's the dark of the moon, and on this night the unseelie sea faeries and merfolk acquire a taste for human flesh. A very bad night.

KIDNAPPED

Eventually, though their suspicions might point them in certain directions, the search will come to a halt. It will soon become apparent that a couple of the characters and Thibault have disappeared. As night falls one of the covenfolk, a chambermaid by the name of Adela, will mention that she saw them not long before heading off down the causeway for the mainland. Missing with them is young Adam.

For the kidnapping itself, simply have Thibault arrange to get alone with one or two characters (using Entrancement if necessary) and then he will attempt to Entrance them into accompanying him. He says that he has an idea where the vis might be, and they had better get it before it gets taken by someone other (roll his Presence+Entrance of 7 vs. their Stamina+3). If that doesn't work, he'll gesture and a huge lumbering figure (a zombie) will come round the corner. Then he will multi-cast Agony of the Mortal to immobilize them long enough for them to be captured. This needs to go smoothly so fudge the rolls if necessary.

As they reach the gates Adam runs into them and is snared. Thibault commands the guard on the gate to tell no-one of their passing and they head out along the causeway.

By the time they raise a search party Thibault is half and a hour gone and the sun is sinking below the horizon. The covenfolk are eager to find out what happened, especially as the gate-guard remembers nothing of people passing. As they set off, Guillemo tries to stop anyone leaving because of the dark faeries. More than likely this will only spark the fears of the covenfolk and the characters, sending them hurrying into the growing dusk.

THE DARK FEY

Meanwhile, Thibault and his new friends have wended their way along the track by the sea to a large copse of silver birch trees sitting on a high promontory overlooking the water. From the top of the cliff a narrow path heads down to a cove, otherwise only accessible by sea. Carefully making their way down they come to a small beach, the sand seemingly made of crushed shells. By this time, if they aren't already trussed up, Thibault's companions will want to know what is going on. As the still water begins to stir and horrific dark shapes rise from the water, Thibault will be more than happy to tell them in full grisly detail.

While the fae are immortal, some have fouled themselves with the touch of mortality. Their once beautiful and pure bodies, weighed down by that dross, become warped and terrible; they even begun to age. Only through the consumption of mortal's flesh can they halt this process, though by this very means they weaken still further their ties and their appetites grow grosser still. They lust after the meat of the pure and innocent and will go to any ends to obtain it.

For a few short moments Thibault talks quietly with one of the fae, something changes hands and then they are alone with their captors.

PURSUIT

With the sun gone and no moon, finding the trail is impossible. Old Jean is still sitting on the causeway, but when asked where they went he will just gesture vaguely towards the land. Unless the characters produce some magic which will allow them to track them, the covenfolk will disperse in all directions, in the faint hope of finding something.

Tracking with magic is not easy. If someone possesses an arcane link to anyone they are seeking, then things are much simpler. Without the link an InTe or InHe spontaneous spell of level 20 or an InAu spell level 25 or similar might work. With a link the above are 5 levels easier, and InCo, InMe and InIm would probably work as well. Talking to the

local animals is also effective given a bit of time. A wide variety of other tactics come to mind, but each needs to be judge individually.

Should no magic prove helpful they will just have to head off randomly. Either way, about 10 minutes after they reach the mainland a man on a horse can be seen coming down the road. He stops short by a birch copse and appears to be talking to someone standing by the road rather acrimoniously. Closer inspection yields the fact the the standing man is Thibault. Anyone from the covenant can recognize the other as Mercurio, the Quaesitor.

QUESTIONS

By the time they arrive the dispute has settled down, though Mercurio is still looking daggers at Thibault. Thibault, faced with such a large number of individuals interested in his welfare, is entirely confused as to where are the missing people and how it came to be that he had been seen last in their company. No indeed, he had simply been out for a walk. This it seems is enough to incense Mercurio who immediately begins an investigation into the actual events.

All of which is probably of no help to the missing persons, and it is likely that the characters will not be willing to go through all that again while their friends might be in danger. Unfortunately Mercurio, always a stickler for the law, is entirely unwilling to allow illegalities to be perpetrated on Thibault. Moreover, any move towards Thibault brings Marcus, his zombie lumbering out of the bushes, scaring off all the covenfolk, and Thibault's sword out of its scabbard.

After a few moments of thought and an understanding of the situation, Mercurio notes that the code only allows for restitution in the case of destruction of properties appertaining to the study of magical arts: that which might conceivably affect their ability to work magic. Unfortunately, grogs and companions don't come under that heading. Now while he may be able to get Thibault on account of interfering with the faeries it doesn't help them in the least. Their only option is to challenge him to certamen.

At that very moment a gale of howling, bubbling laughter rises up from the nearby promontory, probably putting off the prospect of a magical duel for some time.

GOOD NIGHT STORIES

Around the captives the fae gather talking amongst themselves. Their plight looks grim, but should they think to bargain at all they may save themselves. Even if they only plead for mercy they will be given the same offer:

"We will let you live if you can do one thing. Tell us stories." A many-toothed grin. "If you can keep us amused till dawn with your tales, we will let you go free. But should one of us become bored at any time... then you die. Begin, I'm getting hungry already."

Hopefully they will be able to rise to the occasion. Give them five minutes to keep the whole group entertained: as soon as someone stops paying attention, then the creatures become hungry. If they can make it that far then, at an appropriate point, laugh long and loud and back to the others.

RUNNING TO THE RESCUE

Racing through the birch wood, they come to the top of the cliff and can look down at the horror below. Lit by the stars and the phosphorescence in the water a circle of monsters crouches around the ones they are searching for. If they are lucky a lone voice is telling a tale to the accompaniment of grisly laughter and mutterings. If they aren't so lucky the monsters have already started eating and it would seem they have come too late to do anything but join the feast.

Assuming the former, there are a number of options. The first is to fight, which way lies utter disaster, as the creatures would retreat into the water with their captives, and in that environment they are nigh unbeatable. The second is to join in the story-telling: in which case wrap up with a half-hour long story-telling session with the creatures, demanding that different people take turns, and characters butting in when others falter. The third is to get Thibault to do something about it: if they can beat him in Certamen they can insist he get the prisoners out of there. The fourth is to offer someone as a replacement: Thibault; Marcus the zombie; nearby villagers; themselves. There are probably a dozen more options, from airlift rescues to bringing in Vergis on them. One way or another, the whole thing will get sorted out.

WRAPPING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

Of course the story is far from finished. While the characters have probably endeared themselves to the populace of Falconshand, their masters are another matter entirely. Things probably haven't turned out as Thibault hoped, but at least he is alive if somewhat less well liked; perhaps they even declared Wizard's War. If he isn't alive then probably someone is due for a Wizard's March, and Mercurio is bound to prosecute to the fullest degree.

On that note, Mercurio isn't going to leave them alone. When he discovers exactly what happened he will start trying to charge them with impersonating other magi for the purpose of subverting the resources of Falconshand. While he is at it he'll go over them with a fine toothcomb and probably find anything they did "acquire". However, it will all come to nothing, especially when Vergis hears about it.

"What do you mean they were trying to steal the vis stores? Preposterous! I had them in my room the entire time!" Indeed, Mercurio is liable to take it so far that Vergis feels obliged to hand over a small quantity of vis or offer a season or two library time just to make up for their inconveniences.

The other magi are coming back sooner or later. What will they think of all these goings on?

And then, for what cause did the characters come here for in the first place?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Vergis of House Flambeau

A tiny old man, bent by age, twisted, gnarled and half resembling a desiccated corpse with a mane of fuzzy white hair, Vergis is the final and sole authority in Falconshand, at least when his wits are about him. Unfortunately the proportion of time when Vergis is completely calm and lucid is very small indeed. Usually either he is suffering from some form of delusion or he is balanced on the edge of collapse into one of his temper tantrums. His delusions usually involve mistaken identities, for instance assuming that someone is a former apprentice or a covenant member or similar, or simply amnesia. Vergis has a very variable recollection of current events; current being anything that happened in the last twenty years or so. However, these problems wouldn't be a real difficulty if it weren't for his temper.

The slightest thing can set him off, and once he gets going very little can stop him. Vergis is above all else a stubborn old man, who, once he has an idea in his head, refuses to compromise or listen to reason. Moreover, once he has made a decision he has a tendency to back it up with displays of his magical power. On the other hand, he isn't malicious or vindictive, at least towards those he perceives as being on his side. Inside his crusty exterior he does have a heart, and he is loyal to his friends to the death.

Of course this often causes as much trouble as anything else about him. He is apt to fly into a frenzy over some perceived wrong and simply make matters worse. What do you do about an ancient mage who decides to declare war on Doissetep on your behalf?

Vergis is meant to be a source of endless frustration and amusement for anyone who comes near him. Unless they are very, very careful about how they confront him, Vergis will almost always become mixed up in one way or another. Simply listen to whatever they say, and then see how far you can twist it. If they assume he is going to be irrational, make him rational and vice versa. Help them and hinder them more or less in equal proportions.

As for his abilities, suffice to say that Vergis is over 100 years old, with almost all of that time devoted to some form of magical research. In this area his faculties have barely waned. Magic to him is second nature. Essentially do whatever you like with him: he's an Aquam/Ignem specialist with more than a fair competence everywhere else. So let him conjure up infernos of searing fire, boiling rivers of water, massive waves and blinding flashes of light. Just be careful not to actually hurt anyone too badly with them. Making them scramble is fine, toasting them because it's amusing isn't.

Thibault filius Demetrii of House Tytalus

Thibault (he pronounces is Tybalt) is a simple man, he wants only two things in life: the power his master has and immortality. Along the way of course a few things have struck his fancy so he intends to have them in the meantime in order to keep himself occupied.

A Scotsman by birth, he was apprenticed to one of the most ruthless Tytalus magi of his day and drank up his secrets with an unquenchable thirst. The fact that Demetrius is now dead, having been slain in a Wizard's March for using forbidden magic to steal the powers of an Archmagus, does not disturb Thibault in the least. He merely intends to be more careful himself.

It seems unlikely. He pursues power in any form with an enthusiastic ruthlessness that is almost reckless. He would have been long since condemned himself if it were not for his gift for twisting minds and his gift with words. But he doesn't seem to worry, consumed as he is by his own insatiable desire for magical power in any form.

Attributes: Intelligence [Wily] +4, Perception [Apprehensive] +2, Strength [Small Frame] -1, Stamina [Iron Willed] +1, Presence [Handsome] +2, Communication [Honeyed Tongue] +3, Dexterity [Catlike Grace] +2, Quickness [Deft Hand] +2

Age 37, Cnf 3, Twilight 0, Size 0

Virtues and Flaws: Good Characteristic (Stamina) +1, Entrancement +4, Magical Affinity (Corpore) +3, Special Circumstances (Blood Magic) +1, Susceptibility to Divine Power -4, Driving Goal (Immortality) -1, Infamous Master -1, Discredited Lineage -2

Abilities: Speak Latin (Expressive) 5, Speak Gaelic (Slang) 4, Speak Langue d'Oc (Orders) 3, Scribe Latin (Codes) 3, Hermes History (Tomes) 2, Hermes Lore (Legends) 2, Parma Magica (Perdo) 4, Magic Theory (Enchant Items) 5, Finesse (Corpore) 1, Penetration (Rego) 1, Certamen (Creo) 3, Concentration (Ignore Pain) 1, Meditation (Control Emotions) 1, Hermetic Law (Tribunals) 1, Entrancement (Seduction) 5, Occult Lore (Undead) 1, Sword Attack (Wild Melee) 1, Charm (Ingratiating) 1, Athletics (Grace) 1, Stealth (Hide) 1, Etiquette (Women) 1

Personality Traits: Confident +2, Cruel +1, Enthusiastic +3, Self Centered +2, Lecherous +2

Arts: Creo 5, Intellego 5, Muto 5, Perdo 7, Rego 5, Animal 1, Aquam 1, Auram 2, Corpore 8, Herbam 2, Ignem 2, Imagonem 5, Mentem 4, Terram 5, Vim 7

Spells: Chirurgeon's Healing Touch CrCo 20, Restoration of the Defiled Body CrCo 25, Eyes of the Cat MuCo 10, Agony of the Mortal PeCo 15 (as Agony of the Beast PeAn 10 - mastered), Twist of the Tongue PeCo 20, The Walking Corpse ReCo 25, Discern Images of Truth and Falsehood InIm 5, Gather the Essence of the Beast MuVi 15, Wizard's Communion MuVi 20

Mercurio filius Sylgi of House Guernicus

Mercurio is completely sure of himself. He knows that other, weaker Magi succumb all too easily to the temptation to break the Code. He can feel it. Exactly what it is they have done he is not sure, but under stern enough questioning it always comes out. It's simply a matter of asking the right questions.

Of course when he doesn't get answers right away, or when magi start hiding behind the Code itself it can become too much. He becomes a little highstrung and starts shouting. Which tends to lead to him storming out of the covenant in the direction of the nearest ranking Quaesitor to get back-up. Often it is only once he is there that it comes out that he has little if any evidence.

To be quite honest, the reason why Mercurio is assigned to Falconshand, is because it was the most convenient backwater his superiors could find. They had hoped to keep him out of trouble and out of their hair. At least this way they don't have to worry too much about his lack of diplomatic ability.

Attributes: Intelligence [Shrewd] +3, Perception [Instinctive] +3, Strength [Weak Body] -1, Stamina [Determined] +2, Presence [Self Assured] +2, Communication [Uncompromising] -1, Dexterity [Uncoordinated] -1, Quickness [Slow Reflexes] -2

Age 29, Cnf 3, Twi 6, Siz 0

Virtues and Flaws: Quaesitor +1, Good Characteristic (Stamina) +1, Gentle Gift +1, Magical Affinity (Mentem) +3, Minor Deficiencies (Aquam, Auram, Ignem, Terram) -4, Compulsion (Find Code Breakers) -1, Sensitive (Violations of the Code) -1

Abilities: Speak Latin (Regional Accents) 5, Speak Langue d'Oc (Legal Terms) 4, Scribe Latin (Forgery) 3, Magic Theory (Mentem) 5, Hermes History (Quaesitors) 2, Hermes Lore (Quaesitor) 2, Hermetic Law (Judgements) 2, Parma Magica (Mentem) 3, Concentration (Mentem) 1, Penetration (Mentem) 2, Mentem Affinity (Intellego) 4, Subterfuge (Bluff) 1, Finesse (Mentem) 1, Forgery (Signatures) 1

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Easily Angered +4, Zealous +4, Self Confident +3, Impulsive +2, Jumps to Conclusions +5

Arts: Creo 5, Intellego 7, Muto 5, Perdo 5, Rego 5, Animal 0, Aquam 0, Auram 0, Corporem 3, Herbam 0, Ignem 0, Imagonem 3, Mentem 12, Terram 0, Vim 8

Spells: Sight of the True Form InCo 10, Discerning Images of Truth and Falsehood InIm 10, Memory of the Dream CrMe 20, Weight of a Thousand Hells CrMe 25, Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie InMe 20, Tip of the Tongue PeMe 5, Loss of but a Moments Memory Pe(In)Me 20, Blessing of Childlike Bliss PeMe 25, Call to Slumber ReMe(Co)15

The Dark Fae (all eight of them)

Hideous deformed things, made up of the cast-off parts of the worst creatures of the deep. Yet in their eyes lies a glimmer of the beauty that once lay within them. Their voices are like the gurgling of the sea among the rocks and hold some of its terrible majesty. There is beauty in them yet, for all their terror.

Faerie Might 20

Attributes: Intelligence (Cunning) +1, Perception (Alert) +1, Strength (Huge) +3, Stamina (Scaled) +3, Dexterity (Sure) +1, Quickness (Webbed feet) -1

Combat Scores:

Maw (First Strike +4, Attack +5, Damage +18)
Claws (First Strike +7, Attack +8, Damage +10)
Dodge +3, Soak +10
Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -1, -5, Incapacitated

All First Strike, Attack and Dodge scores increase by +3 when in the water.

Faerie Powers:

Drowning (2 Faerie Might points): Any non-waterbreather in the sea will immediately begin to drown as by Lungs of Water and Death.

Lungs of the Fish (1 Faerie Might point): as the spell.

The Other Magi of the Covenant

Porphory of House Criamon: The other elder Magus of the covenant, Porphory towers over Vergis. Some six feet tall from his bare feet to the top of his bald head and massively built, his presence suggests the stone which is his preferred element. Bleak and domineering, he is little interested in mundane matters of any sort but rather seeks the secrets of the universe in his lab buried deep in the rock on which the Covenant sits. He hates to be disturbed and rarely passes the massive basalt door, carved with the bas relief of Medusa, which guards his lab.

Nex of House Flambeau: Nex, Vergis' second apprentice, possesses a temper as volatile as his master and a talent for Ignem magics. So long as one is careful not to be rude, he is an enjoyable companion and loyal friend. Otherwise he is a dangerous man to be around. Presently he is away in Iberia, with several other covenant members, looking for a disappeared nobleman.

Essian d'Argent of House Jerbiton: A quiet, scholarly magus, who spends much of his time either dealing with the servants or immersed in the library. He possesses more compassion and morals than is sometimes comfortable for his more pragmatic Sodales. By profession he is a physician, but his magic is ill suited to healing, and instead he pursues all arts equally. He is currently in Iberia with Nex.

Araq, Spirit Master of House Ex Miscellanea: Branded with the reputation of a diabolist, Araq does his best to avoid the authorities. All the while he protests his innocence and claims that he is being drawn closer and closer to God. No one is exactly sure where he is right now, though a number of the Magi would like to know, Mercurio in particular, on account of a sword wound.

Medwrydd of House Criamon: Taught Shamanic magic by her first master, Medwrydd eschews her hermetic heritage almost entirely in its favor. Though blind, through a variety of bargains she has grown fast in power and controls a number of dangerous spirits. In return though, she owes a series of debts that she does not quite understand. Currently she is journeying in the Novgorod tribunal, attempting to fulfill one of those debts. Ω

OF MICE AND MEN

by Henry G. Thomas

INTRODUCTION

Trean Dair is the name of our covenant. At the time of the adventure, it was a spring covenant set on the south-western coast of Hibernia, near Dingle Bay. The covenant is set on a hill, surrounded by a friendly forest. Of particular interest is the fact that the forest is protected by a treant that calls itself Blackthorn. The covenant has entered into a mutual protection agreement with Blackthorn. The magi protect the forest, and Blackthorn protects them (and doesn't chase them out). This is clearly used in the first scene of the adventure as a hook to draw the players in. Note that the later scenes basically bludgeon them over the head with the problem. This is a one-shot adventure, and it's not supposed to be hard to figure out what the problem is.

It should be rather easy to lift this adventure out of its current setting and place it practically anywhere else, as long as there are both a faerie forest and a village near to the covenant you wish to run this for.

Creature statistics are given at the end of the adventure. Some of them might seem a bit high for almost-new characters, but we have a munchkin Bjornaer (that the usual Storyguide allowed) maxed-out for combat (great white stag heartbeast + Form of the Avenging Beast, etc.). What I'm basically saying, is don't unleash these creatures as is on a group of unsuspecting Intellego magi with standard grogs and expect them to survive very long.

Synopsis

Unseelie faeries have a problem with the village near Trean Dair, and decide to play a rather cruel joke on the village that will hopefully encourage the nearby magi to solve the faeries' problem for them. An atmosphere of dark humor, chaos, and wild action should be attempted.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Unbeknownst to the magi (who never go to the village unless they absolutely have to), the villagers have built a small chapel so that the priest from the next village over can come to their village to say mass once a week. Unfortunately for the villagers, the site chosen for this chapel lies directly across the path of a faerie-trod (leading to the nearby faerie forest, inhabited in part by a group of unseelie imps).

Well, a couple of weeks before the Trean Dair magi return from their adventure with the Golden Ship, the altar is consecrated, and that evening, a small group of imps using the faerie-trod are bumped out of Arcadia and into the midst of the village (fortunately for the villagers this happened late at night when nobody was in the chapel). The imps, seriously offended by the Dominion into which they had been deposited, immediately left for their forest and their king.

The imp king, Ciaran of the Kia-Sidhe ruled that the villagers had shown extreme rudeness in building a church across their road, and declared that a proper way must be found to remove the church. Remembering the nearby covenant of wizards, Ciaran decided upon a most excellent plan. If the proper joke were played on the villagers, those annoying magi of Trean Dair could be forced into doing the imps work for them. Even if they couldn't, the fireworks that were sure to occur would certainly provide his imps with proper entertainment.

THE EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

So Ciaran and his imps created thousands of mice. These mice look like normal mice, but they are anything but normal. When killed, they explode in a ball of flame, doing +10 damage to all within one pace, and +5 damage to all out to two paces. Note that the mice are not immune to fire.

These mice were distributed throughout the village at night. Each night, more were brought to make sure that the village stays thoroughly infested. Over the next couple of days, the villagers noticed that they were suffering from an extreme plague of mice, so they set what traps they could, and made sure their cats were out at night. The results of this were immediately disastrous. Several dead cats, dead villagers, and housefires later, the villagers figured out that they were faced with a plague of "demonic" mice. The villagers quickly began to grumble against the nearby covenant, blaming them for the plague.

ACT I: INTRODUCING THE ADVENTURE.

For effect, it would be good to start with normal covenant matters after the end of the Golden Ship adventure (from White Wolf Magazine #22), and then build up the chaotic atmosphere over a period of time. This can be accomplished in the following way.

Scene 1: A Fire in the Forest.

Not all of the mice put in the village stay there. Some wander off, say, in the direction of the forest of Trean Dair. Enter an innocent falcon, hunting for his midday meal. He dives for his catch, and boom, feathers everywhere. Of course, a small fire starts as well, and begins to spread through the woods.

Blackthorn senses the fire in his woods, and appears at the covenant. He is angry, and asks the magi why they are not putting out the fire in the forest (he doesn't really know that they don't have the same affinity for the woods as he does and therefore don't yet know about the fire). If they value their agreement with him, they will go and put this fire out. They are then to determine the cause of this fire, and inform Blackthorn of it.

It is likely that one of the magi will attempt Tales of the Ashes. Near the edges of the fire, this spell will show objects like bushes and trees being burned by a natural fire spreading outward. I suppose enough castings like this could determine the source of the fire (which most people would probably guess correctly to be somewhere in the middle of the burned area). At the source, a magus might be lucky enough to get some of the ashes from the falcon, or a burned feather. Casting the spell on these will show the image of the diving falcon being enveloped in a ball of flame (but the storyteller might not want to give away that it was a mouse exploding, rather, try to get the magi to believe that someone cast a *Creo Ignem* spell at the falcon, blowing it up).

Scene 2: What's Cooking, Doc?

A day or so later, at night, repeat scene 1 with an owl. Then have several more fires the next day. If the Bjornaer spends a lot of time patrolling the forest, eventually he will see some animal go after a mouse and be blown to smithereens. At roughly the same time, it would be amusing for a couple of the kitchen grogs to see a couple of mice invading the covenant food stores. Arrange for at least one of the mice to explode nicely. This will probably injure the cooks, but hey, they knew covenant life would be dangerous, didn't they?

A short time after this event happens would be a good time for the village reeve to show up at the covenant, looking out of breath and somewhat harried. She will tell the magi that the villagers are all up in arms, and are talking about marching on the covenant. She will then fill them in on the events that have been occurring at the village over the last week or so. She might ask the magi what has upset them so much that they have sent this terrible plague on them. Of course, since she is supposed to be a good contact with the village, the magi should be able to convince her that they are not responsible. At this point she will beg for their aid, unless it seems obvious that they are on their way to the village anyway. Note: it would obviously be a very bad thing for the covenant to at this point ignore the village and what is going on there.

Scene 3: A Village Besieged, or Playing Cat and Mouse.

If they go to the village, the villagers will act in complete fear of them, but unless provoked, they will not start any acts of overt violence. There really isn't anything that the magi can say at this point that will convince the villagers that they are not responsible for the plague of mice. Perhaps even a couple of the elderly women will beg the magi for forgiveness with a statement like "Whatever we have done to arouse your anger, please have mercy on us! We beg of you, please end your curse now, before we are all destroyed!" etc.

The village is the center of the mouse-infested area. There are mice everywhere. Play up the villagers' reactions. Note: the village is has a Dominion aura of +1 during the day, except for the region near the new church, which has a Dominion aura of +3.

* A mouse darts across the street from under one house to the next. A dozen stout men see it and run screaming from the mouse's path.

* A cat is seen outside, looking through the door of one of the village houses, ready to pounce. Suddenly, the cat runs into the house, and several peasants come screaming out of the house. Seconds later, the house is enveloped in a huge ball of fire as the cat reaches his prey (and the several dozen other mice in the vicinity go up as well).

* Some villagers near the town square have set up a short wall of stout logs, and they are hiding behind it. In the center of the street is a small pile of cheese. Several mice are investigating. One of the peasants has a sling, and with great trepidation, prepares to fire it at one of the investigating mice, while the others duck down and cover their ears.

* The main room of the reeve's house is now an infirmary. There are about a dozen peasants here, suffering from burns of varying severity. Nearby, some peasants keep careful watch with brooms (to hopefully scare the mice away without killing them).

* Several peasants are around the grain storage bins, carefully sifting through the grain, and putting what they can into new bags, to be taken elsewhere and guarded. A less cautious group is by one of the more distant bins. Give the magi a chance to stop them (read, get close) if they want, but suddenly the entire bin is ripped apart by an explosion, sending flames, pieces of wood, and grain everywhere. (Note that grain dust is highly flammable. Silos in the Midwest have been known rarely to spontaneously explode. Killing an exploding mouse with your shovel in a bin full of grain and other exploding mice is a bad thing to do). Those within range (whatever range the Storyguide wants to set) should attempt to soak +25 damage from the blast.

* A brave man with a broom is trying to chase a group of about a dozen mice out of town.

* A falcon is seen diving for a nearby field. Suddenly there is a small puff of fire, smoke, and feathers. Maybe a fire will start in the fields.

* Perhaps a cat can go running by the magi, after a nearby mouse. See how many of them start trying to kill the innocent cat. If you are feeling particularly whimsical, the cat can kill the mouse, and nothing happens (this mouse is one of the few normal mice left in the village). If you are feeling cruel, boom. Roll that parma.

Scene 4: Things That Go Boom in the Night, or A Conspiracy Exposed.

Nighttime is in a way better and in a way worse. At night many of the mice that were dormant during the day come out. On the other hand, the villagers, mostly exhausted, sleep huddled in the mill, a few of them keeping watch with brooms. Every once in a while there could be a random explosion, as a mouse is killed by some night creature, swarmed by a bunch of other, hungry mice, or killed by the traps (see below). Sleeping in the central square might be a safer idea, but that's where the villagers have set up all of their remaining traps, hoping to explode many mice out in the open, where they won't do as much damage.

If the magi wander the village at night, they will probably meet a group of five imps, appearing near the new chapel, with a new load of exploding mice to release upon the village.

If the magi try to talk to the imps, one of the imps will laugh as they are releasing the mice, and ask them (the Merinita if he's there): "Isn't this just the greatest joke? Why I haven't had this much fun since we filled that other village's well with blood!" Another imp will kick the first and drag him away, saying something like, "Hush you! Don't you remember, we're only supposed to be seen by them, not talk to them!", and the imps will run away, use their shapechange to animal abilities to turn into mice, and try to scurry off into the night.

If they attack the imps before they have freed all of the mice, it is likely that one of the mice that they are carrying will explode, causing the great big sacks full of mice that they are carrying to go up, most likely killing the imps, and probably some of the grogs (if they are there). This would be a bad idea.

If they try to sneak around and follow the imps, the imps will ignore them (they want to be seen by the magi, but not by the villagers). When they are done distributing the mice, one imp will say "There. We can go back to the forest now and tell the king that we're done for tonight. I only hope that nobody saw us here making our delivery." Then the five imps will all cackle for a bit and run off, eventually turning into mice to slip away.

If the magi follow the imps around and then try to kill them after they are done releasing the mice, they will do their best to defend themselves and get away. If one of them is going to get away, in parting, he'll say something like "Oh dear! It seems as if our little joke has been discovered! I'd better run back to the forest and tell the king that those annoying magi have ruined everything."

The bodies of any if these imps recovered (mostly) intact are worth 4 pawns of Muto vis each, which will be gathered into their noses.

The idea here is that the imps want the magi to find out what they are doing, so that hopefully they will come and talk to the king. Ciaran figures that the magi are so dumb that they need help to figure out what is going on so that they can then solve the king's problem for him.

If the magi decide to go immediately to the faerie woods in search of the king of the imps, go directly to act II, and run act I, scene 5 when they return to the village later (in act III). If they hang around the village too long, and things seem to be slowing down, pick things up with scene 5 first, to possibly clue them in as to what the problem is, and to get them moving.

Scene 5: Heart of Stone.

While the magi are wandering uselessly through the village, screams break out from near the church building. Investigation shows a large, irate, mean looking lizard creature charging directly at the group of magi and grogs. Fortunately for them, the peasants still alive are becoming quite experienced in running away from things, so none of them have been hurt yet. If any of them are found after the battle that will ensue and questioned, they will all claim that they have no idea where the creature came from. One minute they were walking by, returning to the mill from the trap area, and the next there was a screaming lizard-terror running through the streets.

The lizard creature was using the faerie-trod and appeared next to the church. Pained by the dominion aura, the creature wildly begins to strike out at the nearest creatures. Stats for the creature are given at the end of the adventure. Note that the creature's special abilities are permanent. To permanently restore a person who was turned to stone requires muto or terram vis. If the lizard creature turns out to be too powerful for the magi (i.e. they all are in danger of being killed or turned into statues) don't hesitate to lower the creature's potency a bit. It's meant to be a challenge, not a complete deathtrap. Note also that any damage done to statues of people will appear as wounds when the statues are restored to flesh (don't break off any arms or anything by mistake!). If the villagers see the magi fight off the creature, this might help them later in trying to convince them that they weren't responsible for the mice. The body of the creature is worth 10 pawns of terram vis (scales). If many of the magi are turned to stone, you might consider making the creature worth a little more vis (if you're feeling cruel, then maybe not).

ACT II: THE KING AND I

Eventually, the characters will probably have to make a journey to the faerie forest to see Ciaran, the king of the imps. Ciaran and his court are unseelie faeries, and as such will only be met in the forest at night. During the daytime, play up the gloomy nature of the section of the woods into which they have journeyed, giant trees with moss hanging from them, and a slight smell of decay, etc., but don't do anything bad to them. That is what night time is for.

Ciaran will be expecting the magi to show up eventually (see scene 4). Therefore, at night there will be imps in the forest on the lookout for the magi. Note that they won't be terribly pleased if the magi bring grogs carrying lots of iron with them. The imps are supposed to report the presence of the magi to Ciaran, and they will, but they are not ones to ever let the opportunity for a good joke to pass. Therefore, on their way through the forest at night, they should have a few encounters with some of the various imps. During the day, the forest has a faerie aura of +1.

Scene 1: This is the Pits.

While wandering through the forest, looking for the imps and their king, the magi notice that their forward progress seems to be getting slower. It seems sometimes as if they get turned around, or that they are walking in circles. Then one of the magi (or grogs) spots what appears to be an animal track leading through the thickening underbrush. If they follow this for a bit, it gets a bit more regular, and eventually looks like a regular path leading through the trees. Note, if at any time during this sequence of encounters, the magi leave the track, they will once again become lost, wandering in circles until they come upon the track once more. Obviously, they are in a regio. The faerie aura here is +3.

Eventually, they will come upon an open pit across the path in a region where the underbrush is quite thick and thorny to either side of the path. Since it is night time, and the pit is dug in the shadow of several great trees, characters without faerie sight must make perception rolls of 9+ to see the pit before falling in. Those characters with faerie sight need only make a perception roll of 3+ to see the pit. A botch indicates that not only did you fall in, but you dragged

someone else in with you. The pit is about 10 feet deep (with a packed dirt floor, damage roll is +10). Obviously once the first person falls in, the others will know that there is a pit there.

If anyone falls in the pit, cackling laughter will be heard from behind the thorns, and an imp might make a comment like, "Got one! That was too easy, I guess these humans are blind as well as clumsy." The two imps present will try to flee once their trap has been sprung.

Should the pit be spotted, and nobody fall in, after it looks as if the characters will safely circumnavigate the pit, brief cursing will be heard from behind the thorns, and then scurrying feet, as the imps try to make their escape.

A ways after the first pit, the magi will come across a second pit, similar to the first. This pit isn't hidden as well as the first though. It only takes a perception roll of 3+ to spot this one (besides, they should be looking for pits at this point). The pit looks identical to the first one, but in reality it isn't. This pit is an illusion. In reality there are two pits, one directly in front of the illusory pit, and one directly behind it. Both are covered with illusory ground. Anyone advancing to investigate the visible pit will fall into the pit in front of the illusion. The faeries will attempt to make it look like the investigator slipped on something and fell into the illusion. Hopefully (according to the imps), they can trick someone else into coming forward to investigate. If a first character falls in, the others will invariably hear stifled laughter coming from behind the thorns (on the other side of the illusionary pit). Again, when it looks like they will be attacked, the imps will try to get away.

A third pit is completely concealed beneath a glamour of a regular pathway. It was created by two imps hiding in the thorns by the side of the road. Groggs and companions passing over the pit will not fall in (this glamour has substance). However, if any magus touches the glamour and makes his/her parma roll, the glamour will be dispelled, and anyone standing over the pit will fall in. This will, of course be greeted with wild cackling from the bushes, and then the sound of scampering feet as the imps try to get away.

Note that if you decide to include any more pits, the characters should be well trained enough by this point to simply char the thorns to either side of the path when they see the pit, hoping to capture some vis, I mean, kill some imps. By the way, the nose of each pit imp killed is worth 2 pawns of either Creo vis or Imagonem vis.

Once you have amused yourself sufficiently with the pits, and given out enough vis, the path they were following suddenly ends. If they retrace their steps, the path continues a short distance back and ends as well. Must be another effect of regio. So it's off into the woods I guess.

Scene 2: Maiden in the Woods

Moving down the path, the characters notice the sound of music (lyre) coming from the woods. Off to the left of the path, there is a clearing in which sits a beautiful raven-haired woman, playing the lyre and singing to herself (if anyone listens, it's a song with an eerie tune, about the coming of autumn to the forest). There is a small campfire burning in the middle of the clearing, and the woman is seated on a fallen log, facing the fire. She is Fitheach na Kia-Sidhe, but will introduce herself, if asked her name, as Morgana. By the way, the clearing in the forest has a faerie aura of +6. When describing Morgana, use terms that refer to autumn or winter whenever possible (i.e. her lips are red like an autumn ripened apple, her eyes are as grey as a cloudy winter's eve, etc.).

She will take note of the arrival of the players, but will not stop her song until it is complete unless she is interrupted. If she is interrupted, make a note of who interrupted her, she will definitely think him/her rude (unless it is a him with the Curse of Venus flaw, in which case see below). She will converse with the characters for as long as they like, but she will not reveal who she is (the wife of Ciaran who is the king of the court). If asked why she is singing here, she will give some reply like "Well, it's a beautiful night under the stars. What more could one want than to spend the evening singing to the stars and to the seasons." If you can make it even more cryptic, then do so. She will not fight unless attacked. In this eventuality, she will do her best to escape.

If any of the characters in the clearing are male and have the Curse of Venus flaw, she will become strongly attracted to them (pick one of them if there are more than one with the flaw). She will try to get the character to stay with her after everyone else has left. If the character stays, she will seduce him and bring him with her to Arcadia (just wait until Ciaran finds out about this, see scene 4). If the character snubs her and leaves, remember her forgiving -3 personality trait. She will definitely appear in the future just to make that character's life miserable. If nobody in the adventure has the Curse of Venus flaw, this encounter can be safely dropped to save time.

Scene 3: Ogre, Ogre

Wandering through the woods, the magi come upon a large oak tree under which stands a huge two-headed ogre, with a large club. The aura here has increased to +5 (faerie). The ogre will call out in a pair of loud voices:

Head 1: "Ey, oo are ya oo be trapessin' in me woods?"

Head 2: "Yeah! 'An whar do ya tink ya be goin' anyways?" Anticipating a good fight, the ogre will begin tapping his club against his left palm. If they say they are looking for the king, they'll get a response something like:

Head 1: "Izzat so?"

Head 2: "I suspose youse can go, bucha gotta pays us furst!" They'll point at a random grog and say in unison: "We'll take that one!"

Head 1: "Yumm!"

Head 2: "Tasty!"

There are three ways to proceed here, the brute force way, the heartless way, and the intelligent way. Attacking the ogre is the brute force method, and probably the one that the magi will choose, but you never know. The heartless way is to give them the grog to eat (so much for morale). The intelligent way is to try to find a way to get the two heads to argue with each other (like suggesting that they might want to consider eating a different grog, and pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of eating each). Then they can slip by unnoticed, or attack with some surprise. If they kill the ogre, they can extract eight pawns of Corporem vis, four into each hand and four pawns of Terram vis, two in each jawbone.

Scene 4: In the Halls of the Forest King

After getting past the ogre by some means, let them wander about in the woods for a short time. Then they come across a clearing in the underbrush, beneath a great stand of beech trees. In the center of the clearing is a ring of toadstools. Note that the region has a faerie aura of +8. Nothing will happen at all in this clearing until one of the characters steps into the faerie ring. At this point, the party's light sources will all be extinguished, and everything will be plunged into darkness. Before anyone can react completely (there might be just enough time for someone with lightning reflexes to stab the person behind them...), the branches above will rustle and draw back slightly, the clouds will part, and the moonlight will shine brightly down upon the clearing. Literally hundreds of imps will step from the shadows of the trees ("I could swear they weren't there before!"). Among them will be a few large ogres, and several unidentifiable creatures, large and misshapen. At the front of the circle stands a man-like faerie with black hair and elfin features, wearing a circlet of silver, Ciaran of the Kia-Sidhe, king of the assembled court (by the way, the aura just jumped to +9).

Ciaran will speak as if he doesn't know why the magi are here, even though he knows exactly why they have come. "I am Ciaran, king of this court, and you have trespassed on my domain and harassed my people. Explain yourselves! What manner of creatures are you, and why have you come thus into my realm, bearing implements of cruel iron?" Of course, he already knows who they are and why they have come, but he has to put on a good show for his court, doesn't he?

If they want to attack Ciaran in these conditions, they are totally clueless. Warn them off once or twice, if they persist, kill the bastards.

If, on the other hand, they do a reasonable job of explaining themselves and why they have come, negotiations can begin. Ciaran is willing to stop sending the mice to the village, but he'll see just how much the magi are willing to give up. His initial demands will be outrageous, but he'll be willing to bargain down. The following is a list of sample conditions that Ciaran might ask for.

Non-Negotiable

* The church in the village must be destroyed. This is an initial condition. It can be negotiated down to just moving the church away from the faerie-trod. This is the main reason for the faeries to be playing the joke on the village (and the magi), so they must do something about the church.

Strongly Desired

* Chase off the priest, and make sure he never comes to the village again (the priest has convinced the villagers that it is a sin to provide "tribute" to the nearby faeries, and they miss the gifts of food and drink that they used to receive).

* Convince the villagers to provide "tribute" to the faeries. Scraps of food and bowls of milk used to be provided for the faeries to partake of before the priest stopped the practice.

Absurd, but if the Magi agree he'll take it (he really doesn't expect to get these)

* 7 years of service from each magus. This will be dropped fairly quickly to 7 years service for one magus. Then it can be haggled down to 1 year, a season, and then perhaps eliminated completely.

* A pledge of fealty from a character's faerie companion (if there's one).

* The spear of Laochailan (*la ok lan*), a Daoine Sidhe faerie hero.

* The firstborn child of one of the grogs.

* A pledge of aid to be called upon in the future. (Basically he'd like them to help him in a battle with seelie faeries in Arcadia that would happen in another adventure later on, if the players agree to this term. They would be needed to lend permanence to the results of the conflict.)

* The heart of Liosliath (*liess-lia*). This is a Grey Sidhe fortress deep in Arcadia. He obviously doesn't expect to get this one, but maybe he can get them to agree to it without knowing what they are agreeing to. You never know.

* A new joke.

* Any other completely unreasonable task you can think of at the time.

You can have a lot of fun tormenting the magi with this. Start out demanding 7 years service for everyone. Then drop it to seven years service for just the magi, but add a couple of the other requirements like destroying the church and the new joke. Each time the service gets bargained down, add more of the other things. If they bargain away one of the other things, replace it with something else. Feel free to re-introduce something that they thought they had taken care of again during the bargaining. After the magi have finished their bargaining, Ciaran will say:

"So be it! According to your word and mine, let it be done! Now begone and see to your tasks. I shall see to mine. Do not think to cheat me of what you have promised me. I will know if you forsake your promises, and my vengeance will be complete!"

With that, the trees will rustle once more, the boughs closing over the clearing, and the clouds moving back again. The darkness will encroach once more. When all is completely dark, the party's light sources will once again flare up, and the clearing will be as it was when the first person stepped into the faerie ring. If anyone pledged service to Ciaran, they will be missing. If they all pledged service to Ciaran, then none of them will be missing, but they will be expected to return when they have finished moving the church, etc. If they do not, they will be visited by (read, plagued by) imps until they return.

The journey out of the forest will only take an hour or so (while the journey in might have seemed to take much longer). I guess it's back to the village to take care of that church.

ACT III: INTO THE BREACH ONCE MORE.

The players return to the village (eventually), and have to take care of the chapel (and maybe the priest and the "tribute" as well). If it hasn't already been run, now would be a good time to run act I, scene 5.

At this point, there really aren't any more discrete "scenes." Things in the village are still just as bad as when the magi left. Ciaran promised to stop sending the mice, he didn't say that he'd do anything about the ones that were already sent. If the magi want to make a good impression with the villagers, their first order of business ought to be ridding the place of the mice, preferably without burning down the entire village. If the magi do a good job with this, the villagers might be more disposed to listening to suggestions about moving the church. Otherwise, there may be trouble.

It's always possible for the magi to keep their promise and in the process burn the chapel down. Perhaps they could corral all of the mice into the chapel and then throw in a pilum of flame or a rock, grog statue, etc. If they just burn the place down, the villagers will be extremely angry. If they destroy it in the process of ridding the town of the mice, they might be able to be reasoned with (although there are those who will blame the magi, no matter what they do).

They'll have to find some way of explaining to the villagers that they can't have a church across the faerie-trod. The best way of doing this is probably to convince the village reeve, who is the most sympathetic person in the village to the magi anyway.

If they agreed to any of Ciaran's other conditions, like chasing off the priest and getting the villagers to provide "tribute," they'll have to figure something out. It would be best not to tell the villagers about getting rid of the priest. This could be done secretly at some later time (but not too much later, or the imps will start visiting). The tribute will probably have to be explained to the reeve. Most of the villagers won't mind "paying the tribute" as they were used to doing in the past. In fact, some of could even be convinced to transfer all of the blame for this entire incident on the priest if they were properly motivated. A few bribes couldn't hurt either.

All in all, if they are reasonable to the villagers after removing the mice, the villagers will be reasonable in return. If the church isn't destroyed in the process of removing the mice, however, there might be a bit of a problem. The villagers really don't want to move the building. After all, the ground has already been consecrated, and the building is already finished. This obstacle can be surmounted by the judicious use of Rego Herbam spells once the altar stone has been removed from the building. Of course, if the villagers see the magi doing this, they will react badly (it's best to try to move the church in this instance after a couple of days, once things have cooled down a bit).

After this adventure, the magi should be looking forward to the relative peace and quiet of their covenant. The villagers, and perhaps some of the magi, may give any mice they see in the future a healthy respect. The Merinita should also have learned a healthy respect for the unseelie court in the nearby forest. Never let them forget that there is a slight chance that the mouse that they see running for cover just might explode someday.

FAERIES APPEARING IN THIS STORY

Exploding Mouse

(This isn't really a faerie creature. Treat as a waiting spell on a creature with a penetration total of 23. If you're feeling particularly nasty, the penetration total is 44, Ciaran's Faerie Might.)

Size -5, Cunning 0

Personality Traits:

Hungry +1, Explosive +3

Combat Scores:

Explosion: Dam +10, 1 pace, +5, 2 paces

Fatigue n/a, Defence 0, Soak +1

Body Levels: OK, Incapacitated

Imps in the Village

Faerie Might 23

Size -1, Int +1

Personality Traits:

Frivolous +2, Respectful -2

Combat Scores:

Knife: First Strike +6, Attack +6, Damage +10

Fatigue +2, Defence +7, Soak +8* (tough skin)

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

* +4 damage from iron and steel

Faerie Powers:

Shapechange to Animal (mouse costs 1 point), see Faeries p. 50
Flight (Faeries p. 49)
Elfshot (see Faeries p. 49), only Cause Pain (2 faerie points)
Faerie Sight

Bodies are worth 4 pawns of Muto vis (collected into nose).

Also, each of these faeries has a waiting Talons of the Winds cast upon it which is triggered if the imp dies.

Lizard Creature

Faerie Might 30
Size +2, Cunning 0

Personality Traits:

Irate +3

Combat Scores:

Bite: First Strike +8, Attack +8, Damage +20
Fatigue +4, Defence +7, Soak +20
Body Levels: OK, 0, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Faerie Powers:

Faerie Sight

Medusa's bite, 1 Faerie Might point: venom that turns its victim slowly to stone (takes 4 rounds) unless a stamina roll of 12+ is made. The effects are permanent unless magically reversed (MuCo[Te] 40). Faerie magic applies.

Medusa's breath, 3 Faerie Might points: breath that turns to stone (immediately). A stamina roll must be made as above, and the effects are again permanent, unless magically reversed as above. The breath only affects a single person per use, but may be used on up to 3 different targets in a round (for 9 points).

The body is worth 10 pawns of Terram vis (collected into scales). If a magus or several grogs are turned to stone, the Storyguide might consider increasing this award. Then again, maybe not.

Pit Imps

Faerie Might 15
Size -2, Int -1

Personality Traits:

Sadistic +1, Respectful -2

Combat Scores:

Knife: First Strike +6, Attack +6, Damage +10
Fatigue +2, Defence +7, Soak: +8* (tough skin)
Body Levels: OK, -3, -5, Incapacitated

* +4 damage from iron and steel.

Faerie Powers:

Shapechange to Animal
Glamour
Illusion (pit covers cost 2 Faerie Might points to make each)
Elfshot, Cause Pain (2 Faerie Might points)
Faerie Sight

Body worth either 2 Creo vis or 2 Imagonem vis (collected into nose).

Two-Headed Ogre

Faerie Might 25
Size +4, Int -2

Personality Traits:

Belligerent +3

Combat Scores:

Brawl: First Strike +8, Attack +9, Damage +15 (gets 2 punches/round)
Two-Handed Club: First Strike +10, Attack +9, Damage +25

Fatigue +4, Defence +9, Soak: +30*
Body Levels: OK, 0, 0, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

* +2 damage from iron and steel.

Faerie Powers: Faerie Sight

Each hand worth 4 Corporem vis. Each jawbone worth 2 Terram vis.

If you don't have a munchkin Bjornaer white stag with Form of the Avenging Beast in your troupe, you might want to tone the stats on this one down a little bit.

Ciaran na Kia-Sidhe

Faerie Might 44

Size 0, Int +5

Personality Traits:

Calculating +3, Domineering +2, Impulsive +1

Combat Scores:

Silver sword: First Strike +8, Attack +9, Damage +14

Fatigue +2, Defence +9, Soak: +15*

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

* +2 damage from iron and steel.

Faerie Powers:

Faerie Sight

Invisibility

Infatuation

Glamour

Shapechange to Animal

Shapechange to Object

Enchant Objects

Elfshot (any from Faeries p. 49)

Magical Ability: Herbam, 1 Faerie Might point per 5 spell levels

Vampirism (see Faeries p. 73)

Fitheach na Kia-Sidhe

Faerie Might 44

Size 0, Int +5

Personality Traits:

Possessive +2, Forgiving -3

Combat Scores:

Burning sword: First Strike +9, Attack +11, Damage +22

Fatigue +2, Defence +9, Soak +20*

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -4, Incapacitated

* +2 damage from iron and steel

Faerie Powers:

Faerie Sight

Invisibility

Infatuation (sight)

Glamour

Shapechange to Raven (2 Faerie Might points)

Flight

Elfshot

Enchanting Music and Voice

Kiss of life draining (PeCo, 2 Faerie Might points): Victim loses 1 fatigue level per round. A stamina roll of 12+ is required each round to avoid losing a body level as well. Particularly nasty Storyguides might require a perception roll of 9+ to notice the effects. Ω

TROUBLE AT GLORIA SENECTA

by Henry G. Thomas

INTRODUCTION

In our saga, Gloria Senecta is an ally covenant to the covenant of the players. We have a leader (a Jerbiton, mentioned somewhere in the text briefly), and so introducing this adventure was a snap. The leader called a council meeting and simply stated that a representative from the other covenant had appeared to call in one of their favors, and three of the covenant magi were ordered to go and see if they could solve the problem.

It should be rather easy to lift this adventure out of its current setting and place it wherever you want to. If your magi don't owe tons of favors to various people or don't have a leader, then introducing this could pose a bit of a problem, and I pity you, because leaders and favors are really useful for dragging unwilling magi out of their labs to trapse across the countryside for practically no benefit of their own.

In our saga, Gloria Senecta is located in the Greater Alps Tribunal (but this is not really important). The covenant is a large, partial ruin that stands atop a huge rocky promontory, surrounded by an ocean of trees. It is, of course, in the middle of a faerie forest, with a faerie aura of +8. Note: the gnome king, Zwerg lives in the same location as the covenant, but in regio. Gloria Senecta is faerie-plagued, haunted, the magi are divided, and their covenfolk and grogs are all mentally warped. The grogs are actively lazy.

At the end of the adventure, I have added some of the relevant stats I used for the magi at Gloria Senecta. The creature statistics were fine for the people I chose to go on the adventure. Be careful with those wolves, though.

SYNOPSIS

The magi are called to help with a problem that their ally covenant is having. Faeries have stolen their magical fountain, their protected source of 20 pawns/year of Vim vis, and incidentally, their only source of drinking water (there's another stream nearby, but it's about a mile away). To complicate things further, the Vim vis is needed in an annual ritual performed by the resident Quaesitor to keep a major demon bound into a magical tree on the covenant grounds (their source of Herbam vis) so that it cannot wreak havoc in the world. A temporary solution may be reached by convincing the divided magi at the covenant that it is in their best interests to provide the vis for the ritual for a year at least, but the only real solution seems to be recovering the fountain from the faeries.

The faeries have stolen the fountain at the urging of Praeses of House Merinita, who has been championing their cause for about five years now. Unfortunately, Praeses does not know about the demon and the tree.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Magi of Gloria Senecta

Vigor Invictus of House Bonisagus

Vigor Invictus is obsessed with the creation of, in his words, "The perfect longevity potion." That is, he is seeking immortality. Over the years he has gotten better and better at longevity potions, and he feels that he is on the brink of a major breakthrough (he has felt this way for several years). One of his most current lines of research involves faeries. It is rumored that faerie creatures do not age or die of old age. Vigor Invictus interprets this to mean that there must be some substance to be found in faeries that is responsible for this agelessness. If he can discover what it is, and distill its essence, he can be famous in the order forever (and live to keep reminding everyone). The gnomes that dwell nearby live in constant fear and hatred of him.

He is also a busybody. When he is not immersed in his research, he is moving about the covenant, finding people to bother and distract. For some reason he is very interested in knowing what everyone else in the covenant is doing. If, for some reason, he perceives that the players are keeping a secret from him, he will try everything to get it out. Failing in that, he will suddenly become unfriendly, and work to hinder their progress. The other magi here put up with him because he designed all of their longevity potions. Without him, most of them would probably have been dead a long time ago. He has also made several longevity potions for the covenfolk and the grogs, with experimentation, of course.

Futurus Caecus of House Criamon

Nobody at the covenant remembers seeing Futurus Caecus at all in the last 25 years. He was last seen by the magi at the council meeting before last, held 25 years ago. The grogs say that they leave food by the door to his sanctum and they sometimes find it gone, but none of them report having seen Futurus or anyone else take the food. The magi don't really care that he is apparently missing. The Flambeau find his absence refreshing. The Quaesitor is too involved with the tree to have even noticed. The Jerbiton thought he was annoying. Dominus Mundus felt that Futurus was too unpredictable to be included in his plans, and so is glad to not have to deal with his random influences. Vigor Invictus doesn't even remember the name, although if somebody mentions the Criamon, he'll remember. "He was OK, I guess, but his riddles were pointless. It's too bad he could never dedicate himself to any useful research."

Ictus Igneus of House Flambeau

He and Vox Mentis are the youngest magi here. 30 years ago, when both were Flambeau, they had a falling out over whether to try to reason with unruly mundanes first or just burn them. Vox then joined Jerbiton. They haven't spoken to each other since. Ictus Igneus is the prototypical Flambeau: excitable, impulsive, and violent. You don't want to insult him or his house, because he's likely to forget himself for a moment and incinerate you before remembering the code. Fortunately everybody else knows this, and they'll tell the visiting magi, unless they incite Ictus first. When Ictus learns what covenant the players come from, he will seem to like them less. Remember where the covenant's vis resources came from.

Incendium Spissus & Obitus per Ignis of house Flambeau

Incendium and Obitus are twin brothers and pretty much interchangeable. In fact, they even share the same character sheet. Both are obsessed with fire in its many forms, and love to watch things burn, especially faeries. They are not as overtly violent as Ictus, although they sometimes seem to share a similar philosophy.

Incendium and Obitus retired here from southern Italy, because, in their opinion there were just too many churchmen in Italy. Vigor Invictus thinks that they were exiled here by their local tribunal over an incident that occurred about 40 years ago when a bishop and his entourage kicked them out of a village inn in which they were staying, and offered them reconciliation when they started swearing at him. According to the story, they burned down the inn and killed the bishop. If confronted with this story, Incendium and Obitus will maintain that they showed great restraint by not burning down the entire village for that terrible insult. They will also maintain that they were not exiled, but chose to come here to get away from such clerical annoyances.

Saevitia of House Jerbiton

As her name implies, Saevitia has a cruel streak. Undoubtedly she owes this streak to the many years she spent as a member of House Flambeau prior to her "retirement." She has mellowed considerably in her old age, but can still be pushed over the edge. She dislikes to use her magic unless it is necessary, because her magical addiction has proven to be a problem for her before. If Vigor Invictus is asked by the visiting magi about Saevitia, he will tell them the story behind the ruined northern watchtower. It seems that about 35 years ago when Saevitia was new to the covenant, having just arrived from Iberia, that one of the grogs made rude advances toward her, and she decided to teach him a little lesson. A judicious use of Perdo Corporem made sure that the grog wouldn't be making advances to anyone for about a month. Unfortunately, she lost control, and in a fit of spell casting she levelled the watchtower, and would have continued to destroy the entire covenant if the other magi hadn't taken action.

Saevitia is originally from the Iberian tribunal, where she took part in roasting and otherwise killing as many moors as possible. She mellowed slightly with age and finally decided to retire to house Jerbiton. Of course she couldn't stay in Iberia. She had made too many enemies to relax, and it was getting so that every up and coming Flambeau would challenge her in order to try to increase his reputation. Thus she came to Gloria Senecta to try to live out the remainder of her life in a slightly more peaceful fashion. She sees everything that she disliked about her former life in the lives of the other Flambeau here, and so she does not associate with them. If she could, she would like to convince them to become less actively violent, or get them to leave.

Vox Mentis of House Jerbiton

Vox Mentis also used to be a Flambeau, but he changed to house Jerbiton after he became resigned to the fact that all Flambeau were simply mindless engines of destruction. He and Ictus Igneus had a heated argument over this, and the two of them haven't spoken to each other since.

Since coming to the covenant, Vox has learned of the demon bound in the tree that Vigilax is guarding. He is convinced that it is his doom to be destroyed by that demon. When the players arrive, Vox will be moping about the covenant with a long sorrowful expression. If asked about it, he will explain that he knows for a fact that the characters

will fail and the demon will get out and kill him. If they don't know about the demon yet, and they start asking him about it, he will tell them that they ought not to bother with trying to help, since they are already doomed to fail. If they had any sense, they would pack up immediately and return to their covenant. At least then, they would not be killed or corrupted when the demon gets out.

If Vigor Invictus is asked about this, he will respond by telling the players that Vox is just in one of his "moods." Eventually, he'll get over it. He will also tell the characters that if they see Vox and Ictus heading for the same area of the covenant, that the wise thing to do is go somewhere else, immediately.

Vigilax Arbiter of House Quaesitor

These days, Vigilax spends most of his time next to the tree that it is his responsibility to guard. In fact, the entire time that the players are at the covenant, they are unlikely to see him move more than 20 paces from the tree. Vigilax likes to lie under the tree and sleep leaning against it. Undoubtedly this is how they will first see him. He will probably not be sleeping though, just pretending. If the characters attempt to pick any fruit from the tree, they will be surprised as Vigilax quickly grabs the offender's arm and orders them never to touch the fruit of the tree. If they ask him enough questions, he will tell them that there is a demon bound in the tree and that he is worried that it may corrupt them, or that they may in some way weaken the enchantment that binds it there. He of course sent for them to come and deal with the problem of the missing fountain, but he will not approach the characters and speak to them. They must find him and ask him about things to learn anything. This is not efficient, of course, but Gloria Senecta is a rather strange place, and stranger things than this are due to happen.

Vigilax has been guarding this tree for about half a century now. It is his grand obsession. If he is asked what will happen when he dies, he will say that somebody else will take over the job. He will then look at that character as if to imply that it will be him. This may stop the questions from that character.

Vigilax has become quite warped from his many years guarding this tree. Probably his most disturbing trait, however, has to be his "imaginary friend" Astan. Vigilax acts as if Astan is a real person that he met 20 years ago or so, who is kind enough at times to keep him company at the tree. He will think that the players are playing a joke on him if they claim that they cannot see or hear Astan. The other magi at the covenant have given up trying to convince him that Astan is not real. The real question is, however, is Astan really a manifestation of Vigilax's mind, or a manifestation of the demon trapped within the tree (Astan, Satan, who knows...)?

Dominus Mundus of House Tremere

Dominus Mundus is always plotting and planning. One of his favorite activities is playing the Jerbiton off the Flambeau and watching the ensuing arguments. He is currently the *de facto* leader of the covenant, not really because of his political shenanigans, but rather simply because he is the only one who really cares. The Bonisagus is too busy with his research, the Criamon hasn't been seen in decades, the Quaesitor won't (or can't) leave the vicinity of the tree, and the Jerbiton and Flambeau are too busy arguing with each other to care about much else. He is the only one of the magi to still go to tribunals, so he is also their major source of information.

Dominus can often be found talking to Vigor Invictus when Vigor is not doing his research, because he knows that Vigor is always current on the latest gossip. Vigor thinks that it's just that Dominus likes him, and isn't at all aware that he's really interested in his stories about everyone else. After he gets over being offended at the player's presence (see below), he will probably try to get them involved in a long conversation with Vigor Invictus, so that he can hopefully learn all about them.

Dominus loves certamen, and is itching for an opportunity to establish his superiority to the visiting magi.

The Covenfolk of Gloria Senecta

The covenfolk of Gloria Senecta have given up trying to use their real names. The magi at the covenant are constantly referring to them by a latin title, and have never used their real names. Hence, the players will probably never learn their real names, simply because they will introduce themselves by their titles. Also note that the covenfolk will be perhaps stranger than the magi, as they have been fed Vigor Invictus' experimental longevity potions and their usual source of drinking water is the Vim vis fountain.

Librariolus – Scribe/Archivist

Librariolus spends most of his time in the covenant library, trying desperately to copy faster than the books can decay. It's not easy, since the library is so big, and he doesn't have any help, not even to make the ink. The magi have chewed him out repeatedly over the condition of the arcane books, but they seem to not care a whit about the mundane knowledges. Thus, Librariolus spends most of his time with the arcane books. The once great mundane library is in truly sorry shape indeed. Only a few books remain that are legible.

Librariolus is harried and somewhat reclusive. He will take anything the players say to him as a useless interruption to his work. If they persist, he will eventually talk to them. At first, he might call for guards, not having heard about their arrival, or mistaking them for faeries come to steal or ruin the covenant books. Librariolus is so involved with his scribing, and perhaps getting so blind as a result, that late at night, when the skeleton of a long dead archivist comes to converse with him, he treats it exactly as he treats the players, with disdain for the interruption of his time.

Dux – Autocrat

Dux is always depressed. It is his job to maintain the covenant, and it's an impossible task with only 40 grogs to man the place. There aren't enough people to keep the place clean, let alone keep the walls in good repair. Couple that with an extreme sense of doom. He will find some way to be depressed about anything that the players can say to him. He also walks in his sleep.

Venator – Hunter

Venator is perhaps the most normal of the covenfolk of Gloria Senecta, probably because he spends the least time there. He spends most of his time hunting for game to feed the covenant members. Of course, he also spends a good deal of his time evading the faeries, and hopefully avoiding their jokes. He will be assigned to them if they ask for a guide to find the faeries nearby the covenant. They may be rather distrustful of him after the initial scene, where they are led to the covenant by a faerie impersonating him.

Others**Praeses of House Merinita**

Praeses considers himself the champion of the gnomes in the region near Gloria Senecta. He is not from the covenant, but was travelling through the area about 5 years ago. Some of Zwerg's gnomes played a joke on him as he was passing through, so he went to meet their king. He learned of the faeries' plight and decided to champion their cause. It was he who suggested that the faeries steal something that the magi value from their covenant to barter with.

Praeses feels that the covenant land belongs to the gnomes, and should be given back to them. If the players find him and make him talk to them, he will try his best to convert them to his cause. Assuming that they will not be converted, he will act as intercessor between them and Zwerg. He will try at all times to derail any plans the players might have that would be disadvantageous to the gnomes. Basically, he is annoying.

Zwerg, King of the Gnomes

Zwerg is the king of the gnomes of the lands near Gloria Senecta. In fact he actually lives in a regio in the same location as the covenant. He is playful at heart, but he has become wary of magi and other humans due to the treatment of his people by the magi of Gloria Senecta. He too wants to see the covenant gone, since he and his people were there first. His attempts to communicate were in his opinion repeatedly ignored by the magi of Gloria Senecta, and usually resulted in vis extractions for the Flambeau. Over the last decade, he has developed an intense hatred for Vigor Invictus especially.

Zwerg will be extremely distrustful of the players, since he has no idea who they are, and also because Praeses has told him that they are not to be trusted. Praeses is the only magus who he trusts. He will not want to return "his fountain" to the covenant. After all, they stole it from him, he has a right to steal it back. Zwerg, however, is a lover of contests. It might be possible to "win back" the fountain.

ACT I: DISCOVERING THE PROBLEM

Scene 1: A Funny Thing Happens on the Way to the Covenant

It is assumed that the characters have been assigned the task of providing help to the covenant of Gloria Senecta by their leader. The characters will not have been informed as to the nature of the problem, only that a request for aid was delivered by Gloria Senecta's hunter, Venator.

Venator will lead the party from the players' covenant to Gloria Senecta. The voyage is to take about 5 days. On the evening before their arrival at the covenant, they will have to camp in the faerie forest surrounding the covenant (the aura here at night is a faerie aura of 6). That night, the camp will be overrun with gnomes. About two dozen of them will attempt to sneak up on the campsite; an Alertness (ambushes) roll of 12+ will detect them while they are still about 20 paces off. If they are detected, they will immediately swarm the place, attempting to create as much confusion as possible. If they manage to sneak up on the campsite, they will steal things from the camp until they are detected. Once they are detected, they will swarm about, again creating as much confusion as possible.

The gnomes will continue to swarm over the camp for about five rounds, and then they will attempt to melt back into the woods. Anything they stole, they will try to take with them. This swarming tactic is merely a diversion. The gnomes actual goal is to kidnap Venator and replace him with a shapechanged gnome, who will travel with them in his place. Unless the characters state that they are actually keeping close watch on Venator during this attack, the faeries will succeed. Once Venator has been captured (put to sleep using elfshot and carried off), the remainder of the gnomes will leave (this is the five rounds of swarming). The bodies of any gnomes killed in this altercation will be worth 2 pawns of Corporem vis (extracted into their big, round noses).

Scene 2: A Grand Welcome

The characters will arrive at Gloria Senecta about midmorning on the day following the gnome incursion (assuming that they continue to travel). Describe the covenant as they see it from a short distance. It is a large structure covering a hilltop, walled and surrounded with watchtowers. It is also partially ruined. Sections of the wall are crumbled, and several of the towers are in ruins. The central keep is in better repair, but there are sections that are obviously uninhabitable. When the players are led through the main gateway, they will see and hear nobody.

If Venator has not been replaced by a faerie, he will turn to the apparent leader and say: "Well, I brought you here. I suggest you find somebody and ask them which problem they need your help with." He will then turn and start to leave. If they stop him and ask him who sent him, he will reply "I don't know. One of the magi. Dux told me to go and bring you here. I did. I'm sure you'll be wanting dinner this evening. I've got to go catch it now. Why don't you go look for Dux." With that he'll leave.

If they wander about the covenant grounds, they are likely to meet several of the grogs working on repairing the smithy. These grogs will know nothing of the characters' invitation, and will be surprised to see them. If they are not threatening, they will not do anything to hinder them, though. They are resigned enough to believe just about anything they are told. They will suggest that the characters go and find Dux. They have no idea where he is.

Continuing to wander, the characters will meet a man who will introduce himself as Dux. He is, of course, not Dux, and looks nothing at all like Dux, but they haven't met him yet, and so they don't know what he looks like. Anyway, this "Dux" who is actually a faerie will tell the players that a magus named Dominus Mundus sent for them. He will tell them that he will go find him, but first he will see them settled into "guest rooms." He will lead them to the second floor of the covenant, to the third door on the right, and tell them: "Your rooms are right through this door. If you need anything, let me know, and I'll try to help. I'll go now and try to find Dominus for you. I'll bring him back here once I've located him." There is, of course a glamour on this door, see below. This is really the door to Dominus Mundus' sanctum, and he did not really send for them.

If Venator has been replaced, the faerie will enter the covenant with the magi and say: "I'm not sure which of the magi sent for you, but Dux knows, because he told me to go to your covenant and lead you back here. He told me to tell you that he would meet you in the records room. It's on the second floor. Just go in the main keep and up the stairs to the left. It's the third door on the right. You can't miss it, just go right in and wait for him there. I've got to go catch dinner now. Good luck." With this, he will apparently leave. In actuality, his image has left the covenant and disappeared behind a tree. The gnome is actually still with the magi, but invisible. If they follow his directions, they will end up outside the sanctum of Dominus Mundus. The gnome will have gone ahead and put a glamour on the door so that Dominus' mark cannot be seen.

Of course, Dominus is in the room studying from Rego vis, and will not be at all pleased when the characters intrude. If one of the magi is first to open the door, an Perception + Alertness roll of 15+ will allow him to notice that something is wrong before entering the room. Tell the character "something's wrong" and give the player about two seconds to act. If the player does nothing, the character enters the room. A grog or companion will have to roll an 18+ to notice.

If your players are extremely cautious and knock on every door they come to, you can let them off the hook, or, if you want to be particularly cruel, the faerie's illusion is such that Dominus Mundus cannot hear them knocking...

Scene 3: Certamen or Die!

If a companion or magus enters the room first, Dominus will be extremely angry and multicast Thief of the Stolen Breath five times on the offending character (actually quite a tame response). Hopefully he will make his concentration roll for his magic addiction. If the offending character is a grog, it will be four Pila of Flame. At this point, perceptive characters might notice laughter, and fleeing footsteps heading down the stairs. These are from the gnome that was Venator, making his invisible escape.

Assuming that Dominus eventually comes to his senses he will continue by chewing out one or both magi. He will be sure to point out the mark of his sanctum, now clearly visible on the door. If it was a magus who opened the door, he will challenge that magus to Certamen, choosing Rego as the technique, with the conditions that the magus never open a door without knocking first again. He will also try to make sure to make it clear that he expects the magus to be grateful for the gift of his life (Dominus didn't just kill him). This can be repaid with a favor later. If it was a companion or grog who opened the door, Dominus will pick whichever magus appears to be in charge and challenge him to Certamen, again with Rego as the technique, with the condition that the magus never again knowingly allow any of his companions to open a door without having him knock first.

After the Certamens are over, Dominus will inquire, "Just who the hell are you anyway?" If they want to know who sent for them he'll reply "How should I know? I was trying to study this Rego vis. Find somebody else to bother," and he'll slam his door in their faces. Later on, they might meet Dominus again. Assuming that it is on better terms, he will be much more pleasant to them, although he will remember the conditions of the Certamen, so the players had better as well. He will also be sure later on to make sure that the other magi know of the conditions, especially Vigor Invictus.

Scene 4: Vigor Invictus, Covenant Busybody

When the shouting started outside Dominus Mundus's sanctum, Vigor Invictus heard and came out from his rooms (two doors down) to investigate. He will not become involved in the argument, but once Dominus slams his door, if he hasn't yet been noticed, he will clear his throat and ask them, "Can I help you?"

Vigor Invictus is willing to help the characters figure out what is going on, and when he hears why they have come he will nod and suggest that perhaps it was Vigilax Arbiter who sent for them. He will tell them how to find him, and then follow after them, eager to see if they will get themselves into any more trouble. He will be quite happy to talk to them, and will try to learn as much about them as is possible. Of course he will tell any magi they meet while he is with them (and later) of the Certamen and what the magi think about it. If the players tell him that Dux sent them there, he will have them describe Dux, and then tell them that the person they talked to wasn't Dux.

Scene 5: Vox Mentis, the Voice of Reason

On the way to the covenant gardens where Vigilax Arbiter can be found sitting under his tree, the players will meet Vox Mentis, who is standing near the ring of one of the ruined towers. In front of him he has erected an easel and canvas. He is working on a half completed painting of the ruins of the tower. Something about the painting does not quite sit right. It appears to be an accurate rendering of the scene, but somehow it captures an extremely eerie atmosphere. There is a blank spot in the left center of the painting. If he is asked about it, he will reply, "That is for the demon. I'm going to paint it last."

Vigor Invictus will be sure to introduce the visiting magi to Vox Mentis, and explain that they have come at Vigilax's request. Vox will reply "Come to help Vigilax, eh? If you were smart, you'd turn right now, leave this forsaken place and never come back, but I doubt you will. Your mission is already doomed. Trust me, I know." He will refuse to comment on this further.

Scene 6: Vigilax Arbiter and His Invisible Friend

Vigor Invictus will lead the characters to the gardens. At the center of the gardens stands a large apple tree (with apples even out of season), under which an old man is sleeping. A snowy owl can be seen in the branches of the tree, also asleep. A few paces away from the tree there is a cylindrical hole in the ground, about two paces in diameter and six feet deep. The hole has walls of earth. Around the hole is a dry pool bed ringed with stones with an opening where a stream must have once flowed.

The old man is Vigilax Arbiter, and the owl is his familiar, Prudentus. If someone reaches for any fruit, Vigilax will grab his arm as is stated in his description. If they wake him, he will sit up and then exclaim, "See, Astan, I told you they would come! You didn't believe me, but I knew they would." There will be a brief pause, and then he will say, "Astan greets you and apologizes for doubting that you would come."

If anyone looks, they will notice that the owl is awake and has moved to a lower branch. If anyone says anything to the bird at this point, it will speak, saying "My name's not Astan, I'm Prudentus. Astan is his friend (pointing a wing in the general direction of Vigilax), but he doesn't really exist." At this, Vigilax will turn to his familiar and say, "Don't tell me he doesn't exist, you sorry excuse for a feather duster! He's right there (pointing at empty space), as clear as day." Turning to the magi he'll ask, "Surely you can see him, can't you?"

If they reply no, he'll say "Well, who asked you, anyway? I can see it now, you're all in this together. Well, I'll tell you it won't work. I'm not crazy, and you won't convince me that I am by lying about Astan." If they say yes, he'll turn to Vigor Invictus and say, "Hah! I knew it. He's been there all along. How much are they paying you to tell me that he isn't?"

After this flurry of activity he will turn to the characters once again and ask them, "So why exactly are you here now, anyway?" If they say nothing right away, Vigor will speak up, "You sent for them, perhaps?" If they suggest that maybe he sent for them, he will respond, "Of course. You're with that Jerbiton. [The leader of the characters' home covenant, who sent them to this mission to fulfill an old obligation towards Gloria Senecta.] You've come to help. I can't thank you enough. You see, we've got a bit of a problem..."

Interlude: The Problem at Gloria Senecta

Vigilax will explain what he knows of the situation to the characters. The presentation should be a bit disjointed, in the way that the conversation above is. Occasionally, he will pause in mid-sentence and say something like "Yes, yes, Astan, I was coming to that part next," or something like that. The players should definitely be wondering if this Quaesitor is playing with a full deck. The details of the situation as far as Vigilax knows them are as follows.

There is a major demon bound within the tree. Vigilax is guarding the tree to make sure that nothing happens to it. Once a year, a ritual must be performed to renew the enchantment on the tree, or the demon will be able to escape. This ritual requires 20 pawns of Vim vis. The hole in the ground used to be the fountain that was the covenant's water source. It was also the covenant's source of 20 pawns of protected Vim vis a year (maybe that's why these people are all so warped, or it could just be the faerie aura of 8).

A couple of weeks ago, Saevitia convinced Vigilax to go get something to eat in the covenant. Astan told him it would be OK to go, he would keep an eye on the tree (Astan has told him this in the past, and everything was OK). When he returned to the tree, the fountain was gone. Astan told him that some faeries came and took it away. It's not really Astan's fault, because Vigilax didn't tell him that the fountain was important as well. Vigilax doesn't have 20 pawns of Vim vis, or enough time before the ritual needs to be performed to extract it.

If the players ask Vigilax if the other magi at the covenant might have the Vim vis, Vigilax will reply "Could you ask them? Maybe they do. It would mean a lot to me if they did. Why don't you go and talk to them." If they ask him why he doesn't go himself, he'll say, "I have to stay here and guard the tree. Look what happened last time I left it for a few minutes. (Pause.) No, Astan, it's not that I don't trust you, but what if the faeries came back? I wouldn't want them to hurt you."

If they ask about going after the faeries, Vigilax will tell them that if anyone could track them, Venator could. He's sure to be back after sunset with whatever he managed to bring down today. If they mention that Venator sent them to

Dominus' sanctum, Vigilax will say, "Oh dear. That's not like him at all. I'll have to have a word with him about that whenever I see him next." If the players haven't figured it out yet, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they are sure that it was Venator who gave them the directions. If they describe him, etc. Vigor will say "Yes, that sounds like him. Did anything unusual happen on the way to the covenant?" This should spur them to figure out that Venator got captured by the faeries. Thus, he will not be able to lead them, and they will have to find another way. If, of course, they stopped the faeries from getting Venator, and it was the Dux impostor that told them to go to Dominus' sanctum, then they will already know the faeries have it in for them, and Venator will be back at nightfall to lead them out into the wilderness wherever they care to go.

Scene 7: Getting A Council Together

One of the things that the magi might consider doing is trying to convince the other magi of Gloria Senecta to contribute enough Vim vis for the ritual to be performed. The magi will not individually want to do this. If, however, there were a council decision, they would abide by it, and contribute the vis. Therefore, in order to pursue this path, the players will have to manage to get a council meeting called.

Vigilax Arbiter will think that a council meeting would be a good idea. Unfortunately, he will be unable to gather the magi together for the meeting, as he must guard the tree. He will suggest that the players approach the other magi and explain the situation to them.

Vigor Invictus, who will probably be present when they come up with the idea will seem reluctant for a moment, but then concede that a council meeting would probably be a good idea. He will attend, but he has a few things he needs to take care of in his lab first (he will then scurry off in the direction of his lab).

Vox Mentis will eventually agree to attend the council meeting, although he will state that he is sure that nothing good will come of it.

Saevitia, Incendium Spissus and Obitus per Ignis will all give in begrudgingly. Before they agree, however, they will want to know how many of the other magi have agreed to go. They don't, after all, want to waste their valuable time if none of the other magi have agreed to go.

Dominus Mundus will not agree to attend the council meeting, and he will definitely make the point that they cannot have a valid council meeting without him. In order to get him to come to the meeting, they will have to challenge him to Certamen. It doesn't matter whether the players win or lose this contest, Dominus will agree to go to the meeting once the players have shown the courage of challenging him.

When Ictus Igneus is first asked to join the council meeting, he will ask in return if Vox Mentis will be attending. If the players say yes, then Ictus will refuse to attend. They won't be able to get him to go without challenging him to Certamen. They can get Saevitia to challenge him for them, but they might not think of this.

Scene 8: An Abortive Start

The council meeting is about to begin, and there are two empty seats (assuming that the players have by some means gotten all of the magi of the covenant to agree to come). Vigilax Arbiter is not bodily present. Standing on the table in front of the chair, is his familiar. Prudentus will indicate (distastefully) that his master felt that he could not leave the tree in light of the recent theft of the fountain, and so he is here in his place. Of course, Prudentus will be in communication with his master, so there should be no problem. There will be some grumbling about this, but nobody really cares enough to want to go and drag the Quaesitor here.

The other magi will be settling down, and then Vigor Invictus will pound the table and call the meeting to order. At this point, Dominus Mundus will clear his throat and say, "Aren't we forgetting someone?" After a somewhat long pause, Vigor will blink twice and then say, "Of course, the Criamon! I guess it wouldn't be polite to start without him." He will then turn to the players and say "Why don't you go look for him? His name is Futurus Caecus. We'll wait here."

Saevitia will then speak up, "Don't take too long about it, though. If you can't find him, I wouldn't worry about it too much. I haven't seen him in over 25 years."

Scene 9: After the Search

The search for Futurus Caecus will be in vain. His sanctum is closed and locked. If any of the magi decide to enter, see the end of the adventure for possible things to find. One thing is for sure though, they will not find Futurus Caecus.

As they are returning to the council chambers, they will hear the sounds of shouting and heated argument coming from that direction. Entering the council chamber, they will see Ictus and Vox shouting insults at each other, Vox calling the Flambeau a mindless killer, and Ictus looking like he's about ready to start acting the part. The Flambeau twins and Saevitia are just beginning to get warmed up. Vigor Invictus is trying to calm everyone down, and his efforts are failing miserably. Prudentus is hiding in the rafters. Dominus Mundus is still sitting quietly in his chair, smiling.

If the players stay out of the arguing, the shouting and insults will work their way into a frenzy, and then the three Flambeau will storm out of the council chambers, followed by the two Jerbiton. Vigor Invictus will follow them, still pleasing with them to calm down and come back to the meeting. Prudentus will fly like an arrow for the nearest window, and escape to return to the tree. Dominus Mundus will turn to the players with a bemused expression on his face (still seated) and say, "I guess this means that there will not be a council meeting after all." If nothing further comes of this statement, he will get up and walk calmly out of the room, leaving the characters there alone.

The players can try again, but it will take at least a week before the Flambeau and the Jerbiton can bear the sight of each other. If they collect them again into the same room and leave them alone with Dominus Mundus, the same thing will happen all over again.

ACT II: GOING AFTER THE GNOMES

Scene 1: A-Hunting We Will Go

As the players are preparing to leave the covenant to go after the faeries, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they want to take any of the covenant grogs with them. These will be a sorry bunch. Physically, they are all fine, but years of living at this covenant deep within the faerie forest and drinking from the Vis fountain have made them a bit unstable. Common among the grogs are visions, delusions, and strange behavior. Still, some of them might be handy to have along, in case of a fight.

If they still have Venator with them, he will frown when the prospect of taking the covenant grogs is brought up. If asked to explain, he will whisper to the person who asked, "It's not that I'd say they couldn't be useful, it's just that some of them are a bit, well... strange." If they have to rescue Venator, then they're on their own in making this judgement.

Just before they leave, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they want any covenant vis to take with them. If they say yes, he will ask them what kinds they think they will need. He will be able to give them up to 4 pawns of any technique or form, but will only give them a maximum of 16 pawns of vis. In addition to this, they can take as much Herbam vis as they want. This vis comes from the tree (the one that Vigilax Arbiter guards), and it is in the form of small, dried apples. Unfortunately, this vis is demon-tainted (double the number of botch dice), but he will not tell the players this unless they think to ask. They are expected to return the vis that they do not use when they return. If they took any Herbam vis, when they return, they will be told that they can keep whatever remains of that.

Scene 2: Be Very, Very Quiet, We're Hunting Faeries

Whether or not the characters have Venator with them, it is definitely true that the faeries know their way around the faerie forest much better than the characters. When the characters are out of sight of the covenant, the faeries will be all around, keeping an eye on the characters, and trying to figure out what they are doing. If this does not become obvious from their conversation after a while, a small band of gnomes will let themselves be seen by the characters to see what the reaction will be. If the characters show interest, the gnomes will run away through the woods, trying to get the characters to chase them. If the chase is on, they will tantalize the characters with the possibility of catching them, while leading them deeper and deeper into the forest. Once the gnomes are certain that the characters will be completely lost, they will try and fade into the forest. Perhaps, if you are feeling kind, they can catch up to the gnomes and question a few, who will be most unhelpful (they have been ordered not to tell the characters anything useful). By now, night should be falling, and the characters should be completely lost. The hunters have become the hunted.

Scene 3: A Knight of Terror

During the evening, the unseelie faeries come out to play. The characters will be attacked by a group of faerie silver wolves. The size of the group will depend on how many grogs there are with the magi. Basically, it should be a bit challenging, but not too much trouble. Once about half of the wolves have been wounded or killed, they will all try to get away.

About ten minutes after the wolves have left, the watch will be alerted by the sounds of an approaching being. Into the camp will stumble a bleeding gnome, who will beg the party for help. If he is heard out, he will say that he was spying on the characters and got stuck out after dusk, and now he is being hunted. If the players mention the wolves, the gnome will recoil in fear and look about as if surrounded. He will state that the wolves are after him, and if the magi have a heart at all, they will protect him from them. If they agree to this, and he survives the night, they will have a helpful ally in the days to come. It will also turn out to be very useful when they finally meet Zwerg and Praeses.

If they send the gnome away, or kill him for his vis, it's their loss. If they try to get him to promise anything in return, he will try to make the wording such that they have as little hold over him as possible, but in exchange for protecting him, he will eventually promise to anything reasonable that the characters ask. If asked, the gnome will tell the characters that they can call him Lakai. While they are talking to the gnome (or collecting his vis), they will hear the baying of the wolves in the background.

About an hour later that evening, the wolves will silently return. They will encircle the camp, and the watch might notice the reflections of the firelight in their eyes as they turn to regard the campsite. If they are attacked, they will fade back into the woods, and tear anyone who ventures out of the firelight to bits. After a few minutes (allowing the watch to wake up the magi, if they want to), a dark form will enter the circle of the firelight. It is a dark knight in dark full chain armor, wielding a huge greatsword made of silver and bone. He is wearing a huge helm with a stag's horns protruding from the top. It is unclear as to whether the horns are part of the helmet, or part of the creature wearing it. In a deep voice, the dark knight will say:

"I am looking for a creature of the day. What have you done with it? I and my servants have tracked it to your campsite. Know that it is a crime to harbor a fugitive in the lands of my lord. Speak up! Where is that creature?" If they say that it is dead, the knight will want the body. If they provide the body (i.e., they have killed the poor little bugger), he will take it and say, "My thanks. I give you leave to spend the remainder of the night in my lord's lands unmolested, but come tomorrow eve, you had best be gone, for my lord is not fond of visitors." If they say that the gnome left, the knight will say that that is impossible. The wolves would have seen the trail. If they say that they have no idea what he is talking about, then the knight will begin to search their campsite, rather messily.

They can defend the gnome if they challenge the knight to a fight in a one on one test of arms, with no magical assistance. The winner gets to keep the gnome. The challenge ends when one of the contestants yields or is unable to fight further. If the characters manage to win fairly, the knight will bow and leave them. They will not be disturbed for the remainder of the night.

If they cheat, and the knight finds out, he will storm off into the woods, exclaiming, "You have cheated in a contest of honor! My lord shall not suffer you mortals long to stay in his woods." When he leaves the circle of the firelight, he will blow a great horn. Several other answering horns will be heard in the distance. The players had better make tracks as fast as they can, because they are to be hunted until dawn. When the last echoes of the horn blast has ended, the wolves will charge.

Scene 4: Praeses of House Merinita

The next day, they will be followed as before, although nobody will show themselves until midday. If they talked to the gnome last night, they will know that the gnomes took the fountain. If they managed to extract a promise to do so, the gnome will begin leading the characters to Zwerg, the gnome king. While they are moving, the gnome might mention the fact that everything they are doing is being watched by the servants of Zwerg. If they try to see the watchers, the characters will be unable to do so without magical assistance, even if they convince Lakai to point them out.

At about midday, Praeses will step forth from the underbrush with a half-dozen gnomes. He will inquire as to the characters' business. If they do not have Lakai with them, Praeses will tell them that he is helping these gnomes find a friend of theirs who was caught out after dark last night. He will ask them if they have seen him. If Praeses finds out that they killed him, he will become enraged. "You're just like those clods at Gloria Senecta! You have no appreciation for the fair folk. Begone from this place before I forget that you are Hermetic Wizards and do something rash! Go back

to your friends at Gloria Senecta and tell them that they will never see their fountain again. This land belongs to the gnomes, not to any bunch of murderous invaders. We will not rest until they are all gone from this land."

If they have Lakai with them, the six gnomes will rush up to him and begin chiding him for getting caught out after dark. Praeses will thank them for protecting Lakai, and will agree to take them to see Zwerg if that is what they want. He will inquire on the way why they are helping Gloria Senecta. He will say this name as if it is an insult. In conversation with Praeses they will learn of the fact that many faeries have vanished near the covenant, and that the faeries speak of tortures that go on there. They pleaded that they only wanted to play a few innocent jokes at first, but after their treatment, it was necessary to do something to get them back. Praeses will tell the characters that he has agreed to help Zwerg chase off the magi of Gloria Senecta, as he cannot tolerate their treatment. He will try to convince the characters that they should help him. He will lead the characters to Zwerg, but will insist that they leave their iron behind.

Interlude: What if the Characters Seriously Offend Praeses?

If the characters have killed Lakai or otherwise seriously offended Praeses, he will not lead them to see Zwerg immediately and the faeries will not help them. The players will be left to wander around in the faerie regio that they are now in. After a while, the gnomes will try to capture them (by using enchanted arrows of sleep). Should this work, they will be taken in front of Zwerg to explain themselves and pay for the sins of Gloria Senecta (after all, they are magi, and they came from Gloria Senecta, so they must be responsible). This will be their last chance to try to come to some peaceful agreement between the faeries and the covenant.

Scene 5: Zwerg the Gnome-King

One way or the other, the characters will end up in front of Zwerg, king of the gnomes. He is a short, ugly chap, who wears a crown of gold that is several sizes too big for him. He will be at first extremely distrustful of them, since they came from Gloria Senecta. If Praeses vouches for them, it will help, but they still must mollify him if they are to get anything accomplished. Zwerg will accuse them of helping the magi at Gloria Senecta commit heinous acts of torture on his people. He will ask them why he shouldn't do the same to them.

Basically, they need to seem sincere and to say that they will try to find out what has been happening to the faeries at the covenant and put a stop to it. If they seem to honestly not know anything about the torture of the faeries, Zwerg will be surprised. One of his advisers will try to convince him that the magi are lying. "Surely these creatures are lying, lord. Your spies clearly saw them coming from the house of torture. How could they have entered there and not know?" If they killed any faeries on the way here, this adviser will make note of it, calling it damning evidence that cannot be overlooked. If they managed to rescue Lakai, he will meekly step forward and tell the king that they saved him. This will help the characters immensely.

If they promise to return to the covenant and put a stop to the "tortures", the king will let them go, as long as Praeses agrees with it. If they have offended him, they will have to do a lot of groveling before he will agree. No matter which way the characters get to see Zwerg, the matter of the covenant and the tortures will have to be cleared up before Zwerg will even think about returning the fountain. He will not agree to return the fountain in exchange for the tortures to stop. He will mention that according to the magi's own code, they should stop it, so he doesn't owe them anything for it (Praeses told him about this). Zwerg will agree to return Venator to them if they manage to obtain a promise to stop the torture.

Scene 6: Torture of the Faeries

Returning to the covenant, the players will have to talk to the magi about torturing the faeries. Most of the magi there have been guilty at one time or another of torturing some faeries that came too close to the covenant, but the tortures that the king is referring to are those conducted by Vigor Invictus as part of his "research." They will have to convince him to find an alternate path of research for his longevity studies. Probably nothing short of a threat to call in the Quaesitors will be able to convince him. If they call Vigilax Arbiter, he will have a little talk with Vigor about his research.

Once he is convinced, he will complain repeatedly about what a shame this all is, and how it is so terrible that the other magi would hinder his great research, which will mean so much to the order when it is complete. He will probably make an appeal at the next tribunal (the first time he has gone to one in many decades).

After extracting a promise from the other magi not to molest the faeries, they can return to see Zwerg. Praeses will be waiting in the woods when the characters decide to go back again. He will take them back to Zwerg, where they can now begin negotiations for the fountain.

ACT III: THE FOUNTAIN

Scene 1: Arguing Over Possession

Zwerg will be in a much happier mood once he has learned that the magi of Gloria Senecta have agreed to stop the tortures. On the other hand, he would really still like to get his hands on the one responsible. If the characters begin to ask for the fountain back, Zwerg will refuse, saying that he stole it fair and square. If they are willing to buy it back, however, he is willing to listen to their offers. Basically he will refuse any offer they make for the fountain. If they finally get fed up and ask him what he wants for it, he'll say, "Bring me the one you call Vigor Invictus. I will take him in exchange for the fountain." This will obviously be intolerable and/or impractical for the magi, but Zwerg will not accept anything less.

Zwerg will wait patiently while the characters think it over. If they ask Praeses, he'll respond, "Well, it's only fair." If they saved Lakai, he will be there while all of this is going on. While they are thinking about it, Zwerg will begin the day's entertainment, challenges among the faeries.

If they ask Lakai about what they should do, Lakai will respond that his king is rather fond of challenges and contests. Maybe they could win the fountain back. If Lakai is dead, and the players are obviously not getting anywhere, then perhaps Praeses could volunteer this information. If the characters advocate a contest, then Zwerg will smile and laugh. "A contest! Indeed, a contest would be most grand."

Scene 2: The Contests

Zwerg begins, "Yes, a contest would be most grand, but I know what would be even grander, three contests. We shall have three contests, and whoever shall win the majority shall take their prize. The loser of each contest shall select the next contest. As the challengers, I shall magnanimously allow you the choice of the first contest. What do you claim as the prize should you win?" If they claim the fountain, then he will respond, "Aye, and I choose Vigor Invictus. If we win the contests, you shall bring him here to me." The other faeries will gather around to witness the spectacle that is sure to follow.

The characters are allowed to choose the first contest. Hopefully they will win. If they lose, Zwerg will ask them if they want to up the stakes and increase the number of challenges to five. He will tell them of his magical caverns and offer them some of the treasures from within. He will ask them what they will wager in return. They can agree or disagree as they like. The treasures he is offering are some gemstones worth 10 pawns of Terram vis, and a curiously shaped emerald worth four pawns of Creo vis. He will expect the magi to wager something he considers of equal value. Regardless, they will be allowed to choose the second contest, having lost the first. Should they lose this one too, they have lost, unless they have agreed to extend the number of challenges to five.

Zwerg's first challenge will be a drinking contest. He will have a table brought forth, and one of the players must drink Zwerg's finest brew against one of the faeries chosen by Zwerg. Zwerg will choose a small gnome, with a large red nose, who will eagerly take his seat at the table. If the characters have lost the first challenge, and not extended the number of challenges to five, then they might be allowed to choose Lakai as a champion if they think of it. Otherwise they will not. The brew they are drinking is extremely strong. After each glass the character drinking must make a stamina roll of 15+ or fall asleep. Each glass drunk gives the character a -2 to his roll. The faerie who is challenging merely needs to avoid botching to stay awake. The faeries are probably going to win this one unless Lakai is drinking for the magi (he too must only avoid botching to stay awake).

If Zwerg gets to choose again, he will suggest a hunt. The characters will be allowed to select a hunting party from amongst themselves of whatever size they wish. Zwerg will choose a party of equal size from his people. Both parties are to go forth, and the first to return with a boar wins. The two boars will serve as the evening meal (assuming that the characters are competent enough to get one). If they have Venator with them, it will help them get a boar faster. Basically, the faerie party will originally leave in a different direction from the characters. When the characters finally get a boar, and are returning to the king, the first faerie party will try to steal the boar from them. They had better not kill any of the faeries. If the faeries manage to steal the boar and return to the king, they will be declared the winners.

If Zwerg must choose a third time, he will suggest a contest of dicing. The rules are simple, each player gets to throw five dice against one of the faeries. Highest total wins. Whichever side has the most number of winners wins the contest. If there is a tie, Zwerg will dice against the champion of the players.

If the players choose sensible contests, they should win, since they were given choice of the first contest. If they lose, they will have to attempt to abide by the contest. If they somehow manage to bring them Vigor Invictus, Zwerg will give them the fountain anyway (he's a good sport, and he doesn't really need the fountain for anything). Chances are, they'll have to convince the other magi at the covenant to extract vis for a while. Vigor Invictus will not go to the faeries willingly. If they somehow manage to Certamen him, he will go, and use his spells to leave, once he is there (thus fulfilling the terms of the Certamen). Zwerg will not be happy if he is cheated out of his prize.

The players should be able to win in a contest of arms (as long as it is not archery). Also, if they think of it, they can choose Certamen as a contest. In this case, Praeses will act as the king's champion. If they must choose a third contest, they are on their own to think of it. If the players mention upping the stakes at any time, Zwerg will offer them the same deal that he would offer them if they lose their first contest. Try to arrange things so that the challenge lasts until the last contest. If the players win, Zwerg will thank them for a good contest, and tell them that the fountain is theirs. Of course, they are now going to have to figure out a way to return it to the covenant.

Zwerg might be willing to return it to the covenant if they are willing to pay him something reasonable in return. He will not return it for free unless it was made explicitly a term of the contest.

APPENDIX I: THE SANCTUM OF FUTURUS CAECUS

If the characters decide to enter the sanctum of Futurus Caecus in their search for him, they will not find him there. They will find a large pile of the covenant silverware, which the grogs would appreciate being returned (but they're not about to enter the sanctum to get it).

There is no trap on the door, and no waiting spells present to torch the characters. However, in Futurus' lab there is a large, standing mirror. The mirror does not reflect the surroundings as it ought. Instead, it reflects a dark cave in which a stream flows. Light comes from somewhere out of view and is reflected from the water onto the walls of the caves. The effects are mesmerizing, and characters who study the scene should make Int + Concentration rolls of 9+ to turn away. If a character touches the surface of the mirror, his hand will pass right through it, into the scene. Any character entering the mirror will enter the cavern, where the full effects of the mesmerizing light will come into play. A magus will definitely experience a twilight. The character should roll for control. Once the experience is over, the character may return through the mirror, given that he can make a Concentration + Int roll of 15+. He may try this once every minute, but should he botch, he must roll for twilight again. Non-magus characters can enter the mirror to fetch the magus without the trouble of twilight, but they must roll too or be mesmerized.

APPENDIX II: FAERIE CREATURES

Gnome Raiding Party Members

Faerie Might 20

Size -1, Int +1

Personality Traits:

Playful +2 vs. Angry +2 (problems with Gloria Senecta not yet solved)

Combat Scores:

Sword: First Strike +5, Attack +8, Damage +12

Fatigue +5, Defence +8, Soak +6 (+50% damage from iron/steel)

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

Faerie Powers:

Invisibility (3 Faerie Might points)

Elfshot (cause enchanted sleep, Stamina roll of 12+ to resist, 2 Faerie Might points)

These are the faeries that the characters will encounter on their way to the covenant. There are two dozen of these, who will try to confuse the characters while they capture Venator. Then they will attempt to slip away. Their bodies are worth two pawns of Corporem vis each, collected into their noses. One of these faeries will take the place of Venator (or Dux if necessary).

Gnome Bait

Faerie Might 15

Size -1, Int +1

Personality Traits:

Playful +2

Combat Scores:

Sling: First Strike/Rate +11, Attack +10, Damage +4 (annoying)

Fatigue +2, Defence +6 (Dodge), Soak +6 (+50% damage from iron/steel)

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

Faerie Powers:

Invisibility (3 Faerie Might points)

Stones of Enchantment (cause hallucinatic visions when touched, 3 Faerie Might points, Stamina roll of 12+ to resist, Perception roll of 12+ to act each round, actions at -5, missiles at -9). The gnomes use these sometimes in their slings.

These gnomes are worth two pawns of Terram vis each.

Lakai

Faerie Might 15

Size -1, Int +2

Personality Traits:

Playful +2, Helpful +1 vs. Direct -3

Combat Scores:

Lakai has no weapon

Fatigue +3, Defence +8 (Dodge), Soak +6 (+50% damage from iron/steel)

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

Faerie Powers:

Communicate with Stones

Shapechange to Rock (1 Faerie Might point)

Invisibility (3 Faerie Might points)

Lakai's body is worth 2 pawns of Terram vis.

Faerie Wolves

Faerie Might 20

Size 0, Cunning 0

Combat Scores:

Bite: First Strike +10, Attack +6, Damage +18

Fatigue +4, Defence +7, Soak +10

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

These wolves are larger than normal wolves, and much, much fiercer. They have midnight black fur with silver eyes. They will run away (initially) when half of the attacking force is killed or wounded. Figure out the size of the attacking force in relation to the number of grogs and/or combat magi present. When killed, their wounds flow with water. Should the magi look, they will find that the hearts of these beasts are worth 3 pawns of Animal vis. They are, however, made of ice, and must be kept from melting.

The Black Knight

Faerie Might 25

Size 0, Int +3, Strength +7

Personality Traits:

Brave +3, Honorable +1, Devoted +2 vs. Cruel +2

Combat Scores:

Silver Greatsword: First Strike +11, Attack +14, Damage +23

Fatigue +1, Defence +10, Soak +25 (+4 damage from iron/steel)

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

The Black Knight is very strong and brave. He will not yield the contest until he is reduced to his -5 body level. He is dressed in full chain made of bronze painted black, and a long black cape. He carries a silver greatsword and a large horn. His helmet completely obscures his face, save for two red points of light which are his eyes. Immense stag horns

protrude from the top of his helmet. It is unclear whether these are part of the helmet or not (they are not). Should they kill him and collect vis, his heart is a rook of Creo vis, but if he is killed, the wolves will attack immediately. If the horn is blown, hunting parties from the unseelie court will respond by hunting for the characters (whether the knight blows it or the characters do). These hunting parties consist of more wolves and more dark faeries like this one.

Zwerg, King of the Gnomes

Faerie Might 35

Size -1, Int +5

Personality Traits:

Cunning +2, Distrustful +3, Gambler +2, Playful +2

Combat Scores:

Sword: First Strike +8, Attack +10, Damage +16

Fatigue +3, Defence +8, Soak +8 (+22 with armor) (+4 damage from iron)

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

Faerie Powers:

Elfshot (cause enchanted sleep, Stamina roll 12+ to resist, 2 Faerie Might points)

Enchant Objects

Invisibility (3 Faerie Might points)

Zwerg is described with the major characters at the beginning of the adventure. Hopefully the Storyguide will not need to use these stats for anything. Zwerg's body is worth four pawns of Muto vis.

APPENDIX III: THE MAGI OF GLORIA SENECTA

If you hadn't realized by now, the magi at Gloria Senecta are supposed to all be exceptionally old. It's sort of like a retirement home for old Flambeau. Here are some of the stats for the magi that I used (although most of the stats weren't that important):

Vigor Invictus of House Bonisagus

Arts: Creo 21, Intellego 30, Corporem 35, Vim 32, others around 15

Age: 112

Personality Traits: Brave +1, Practical -2, Devoted +2, Meddlesome +1.

Virtues: Affinity with Corporem, Affinity with Death and Aging, Hermetic Prestige, Inventive Genius, Strong Writer, Busybody, Alchemist

Flaws: Driving Goal (invent perfect longevity potion), Gangling, Faerie Enmity, Susceptible to Infernal Power, Sensitive (poor manners)

Dominus Mundus of House Tremere

Arts: Intellego 21, Muto 21, Rego 31, Corporem 25, Mentem 24, others around 14

Age: 92

Personality Traits: Overbearing +2, Brave +3, Timid -2

Virtues: Affinity with Rego (skill at 7), +2 Knack with Certamen (Certamen skill 10 without including the knack), Gentle Gift, Fast Caster

Flaws: No Familiar, Magic Addiction, Incomprehensible Writer, Overconfident, Compulsion (settle arguments with Certamen)

He's the only one at the covenant who bothers to go to tribunals anymore.

Vigilax Arbiter of House Quaesitor

Arts: Intellego 34, Perdo 27, Corporem 30, Mentem 21, Imagonem 20, Vim 28, others around 15

Age: 105

Personality Traits: Devoted +3, Brave +0, Owl +3, Nocturnal +2

Virtues: Affinity with Intellego, Personal Vis Source (Intellego), Quaesitor, Quiet Magic, Versatile Sleeper

Flaws: Susceptible to Divine Power, Obsessed (guarding the tree), Sensitive (poor manners), Fragile Constitution, Wild Magic, Delusion (imaginary friend Astan)

Vox Mentis of House Jerbiton (ex-Flambeau)

Arts: Creo 14, Perdo 29, Corporem 25, Ignem 14, Mentem 16, others from 8-12

Age: 73

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Violent +1, Calm +2

Important Virtues & Flaws: Sense of Doom.

Saevitia of House Jerbiton (ex-Flambeau)

Arts: Creo 19, Perdo 31, Corporem 25, Ignem 17, Mentem 24, others from 14-19

Age: 98

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Calm +2, Violent +1, Cruel +1

Important Virtues & Flaws: Gentle Gift, Sensitive (remarks about females), Magic Addiction

Ictus Igneus of House Flambeau

Arts: Creo 27, Perdo 24, Ignem 25, others from 8-15

Age: 73

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Violent +1, Impulsive +1

Important Virtues & Flaws: Fast Caster, Fury (when injured), Minor Magical Deficiency (Rego), Blatant Gift, Sensitive (disrespect to house Flambeau)

Incendium Spissus & Obitus per Ignis, both of House Flambeau

Arts: Creo 30, Perdo 24, Ignem 31, others from 8-19

Age: 85

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Reclusive +1

Important Virtues & Flaws: Quiet Magic, Obsessed (with fire), Overconfident, Blatant Gift

Praeses of House Merinita

Arts: Creo 6, Intellego 6, Muto 16, Perdo 6, Rego 10, Animalem 8, Aquam 3, Auram 6, Corporem 8, Herbam 9, Ignem 3, Imagonem 10, Mentem 8, Terram 5, Vim 6

Age: 34

Personality Traits: Stubborn +1, Brave +2

Virtues: Sidhe Blood, Student of Faerie, Faerie Magic, Faerie Eyes, Personal Vis Source (Muto), Free Expression, Clear Thinker

Flaws: Susceptible to Divine Power (-2 faerie flaw), Vulnerability to Iron, Strong Faerie Nature, Compulsion (champion the faeries), Fear of Clergy, Hedge Wizard. Ω

THE THREE SONGS

by Kevin Hassall

INTRODUCTION

It is Christmas – a time of feasting and merriment in the midst of bleak winter. The local lord (earl, baron, etc.) invites to his castle all of his main allies and a few of his other important neighbours – a handful of knights, a local Prior, and, this year, one of those strange scholars from nearby.

And so the apparent leader of the magi (whoever normally receives and deals with mundane visitors) receives an invitation to the lord's castle for the last five evenings of the twelve days of Christmas. The messenger who brings the message (who will also, incidentally, be reporting back to his lord on the state of the scholar's home, apparent defences, etc.) makes it clear that the earl will have a room for the "scholar" and some mattresses in the storerooms or stable for any servants who may accompany him/her. The messenger will display surprise – indeed incredulity – if the scholar wants to bring a retinue of soldiers (it's a series of feasts, not a campaign of battles, and why does a scholar need soldiers anyway?). All of the players should be able to play a companion or non-combat grog (if you don't have any, now's a time to roll some up – you know, the stable lad, a guide/scout, etc.), a grog who has left his weapons behind (or carries them hidden) or even another mage.

When the characters arrive at the castle, they are formally received by the lord, who asks a after their journey and has servants deal with their horses and baggage and find them places to sleep. The audience over, they should have a few hours to check out the castle, consider escape routs and do other pointless player-characterish things. Or maybe there are some old friends or adversaries here to meet up with (Storyguide's discretion).

Some hours after dark, they are invited to be seated – the "scholar" (mage) and any noble retainers with him/her at the lowest (least important) end of the lord's own high table (raised on a dais overlooking the hall), while other characters are found seats suitable to their rank (a magister or nobleman on the next most important table, with the lord's chaplain and some of his knights; a stablehand on the lowliest table with other guests' servants; etc.). When his guests are seated, the lord enters in a torchlight procession and takes his place at the centre of the high table.

The food is excellent, served in several "removes" or installments, with the rare and highly spiced foods – including a whole roast swan, decorated with its feathers etc., as the centrepiece – served to the high table, while the lowest folk must make do with coarse brown bread, bacon, mutton and beans. (Assume that subsequent evenings' banquets follow this pattern, too, though with different food – a peacock one evening, a goose another, etc.) Between each "remove" (course), while there are fewer servants moving around the hall, the lord's minstrel plays and a group of wandering jongleurs tumble and juggle.

The important events which now unfold are as follows.

SCENE 1: THE SONG OF SADNESS

An hour into this first feast, a servant approaches the high table (the "scholar" is close enough to overhear) and tells his lord that a traveller has sought shelter at the castle. Who is he? the lord asks. The servant didn't catch the name, but speaks of the stranger's deeply dyed tunic and gold bangle. The lord assumes the man to be a knight or wealthy merchant, and orders that he is found a seat on one of the better tables – virtually next to one of the grogs or companions, as it happens (but make sure that he's isn't within easy range of a mage). The stranger chats amiably, talking of the weather, asking about his fellows, etc., and occasionally filling in gaps in the conversation with "you know, what you've just said reminds me of a story I once heard..." and proceeding to tell a story. He starts with a version of Ashputtle (Cinderella), and as people get drunker and coarser he tells the comic story of the bird, the sausage and the mouse who set up home together, and ends with an almost pornographic poem about a young man spying on two lovers. His Communication is about +4, and his Storytelling +5, his Legend Lore being even higher, as it happens, and lets just gloss over his Faerie Lore.

As the meal ends he stand and calls out to his host, the lord. He thanks the lord for his hospitality and says that wishes to repay him for the favour. The lord consents, and the stranger calls for the minstrel's lute. Accompanied by the lute he begins to sing a song in an unknown language, which successfully reduces the rowdy, drunken, happy revellers into a mass of sombre, maudlin mourners, many of them sobbing into their wine glasses. At the end of the song, he bows,

carries the lute back to the minstrel's seat, and turns towards the door. The lord is obviously considering calling after him, but, the spell now broken and no-one feeling much like partying, most of the guests rise to leave at this point, heading for the exit and obscuring the lord's (and characters') view of the stranger. Any attempt by any player character to follow the man will fail – but the minstrel (who was right behind him as he left) does manage it.

When the "stranger" returns to his fellows in the faerie mound, he tells them of the evening – and he remarks on the wonderful effect of his armband, which allowed him to so bewitch the court. After this, the faeries retire to bed for the night and the minstrel – who had snuck in and overheard the conversation – steals the golden bangle from the sleeping faerie's arm. He then returns to the castle.

SCENE 2: THE SONG OF JOY

The next day, the lord's steward approaches the scholar. He asks whether the accommodation is adequate, if the scholar needs anything, etc., and he asks what diversions the scholar might enjoy. The chaplain will soon say mass, there will be dancing in the hall, a chess set is available, and the lord and some of his retainers will be riding out on a stag hunt (the scholar and any noble retainers would be welcome, if they can ride well).

That night, the stranger arrives again, just as the banquet begins. The lord welcomes him formally, clearly delighted to see him, and makes some remark about his skills so outshining those of anyone present. His minstrel, purple with rage, rises and declares that anything that the stranger can do, he, too, is capable of: and he takes his lute, and begins to play the Song of Sadness. Characters with a good Awareness + Perception roll notice a golden bangle half-hidden beneath one of his sleeves.

Soon everyone is in tears. When the song ends, the stranger rises and complements the minstrel politely, but announces that there are better ways to begin a feast. He takes the minstrel's lute and begins to play again. Awareness + Perception rolls may note that although the stranger is dressed as before he wears a different gold bangle this time. Soon people are clapping, dancing on the tables and laughing, with tears of joy pouring down their faces. As soon as he has finished his song, the stranger puts the lute down and turns to go. It should be very difficult for a character to follow him – given that the hall is clogged with dancing guests.

About an hour later the minstrel has vanished. This is blatantly obvious, as, when the lord calls for music, there is no one there. If any of the characters can come to the rescue and provide entertainment, a generous gift (e. g. silver belt buckle or fine musical instrument) will be given to him/her at the end of the feast by the grateful lord. The minstrel, of course, has gone straight to the mound, and tonight he steals the second bangle.

SCENE 3: THE SONG OF SILENCE

The next morning the steward comes to the scholar again. He has already established the scholar's leisure interests, and has an invitation from the lord (e. g. an invitation to play a game of chess, or to go hunting, as appropriate). The lord wants an opportunity to talk to the scholar – first about the stranger (who is he? weren't his songs... strange?), secondly about the scholar's own "home" (if the covenant has soldiers and fortifications, he will want to know what a scholar wants with a fighting force, and will want to make sure that they aren't a threat to him).

That night, at the feast, the lord calls on the minstrel to play and he rises with a smug grin and begins to play the Song of Joy. Now he is wearing two bangles. Soon there is dancing on the tables again, and everyone is well set up for a night of merriment. And as the last notes of the song end, the stranger enters the hall to a warm welcome. He takes a seat – near one or more of the characters – and gets on with enjoying the feast, showing neither animosity nor anger – or, indeed, any interest in the minstrel. Questions about who he is and where he comes from he simply deflects or avoids, which is easy enough, given that everyone around him has been put in a light-hearted and loud sort of a mood by the minstrel's song – although he might indicate a general direction (e. g. "west") and environment (e. g. "woods") which will be useful for the players as clues.

At the end of the feast, he rises, and says that he has one last song which he would like to play, and he dedicates it to the lord's own minstrel. The first few notes of the Song of Silence will ring in the guests' ears but then the next thing that anyone knows a cock is crowing and the sleepy guests are raising their heads from the tables. Everyone has slept wonderfully through the night. The stranger, the minstrel, and any character who had stolen either bangle from the minstrel, are gone. The lord is disturbed. There is talk of witchcraft, faeries and demons. No one knows what to do. The

lord, naturally enough, turns to the "scholar" who is his guest. Will the characters agree to sort the situation out and recover the minstrel? The lord will be very grateful.

Finding the faerie mound shouldn't be difficult. A few people (guards etc.) saw both the faerie and minstrel travelling to/from a certain direction on the first two nights, so can indicate a direction. And talking to local peasants elicits local legends of a dragon who was slain in such-a-lake years ago and the faerie hill, both in that direction. Dragon Lake or Faerie Hill? Not a hard choice.

The players find doors in the side of the mound, and are admitted if they can come up with a decent reason, or offer something – assuming that they leave all iron outside. Have the doors develop a face and talk, or something. Inside the stranger (the lord of the mound) and his family have taken the minstrel and anyone else with the bangles hostage – and have taken the stolen bangles back. They intend to hang on to the miscreant(s) until they can think of a suitable punishment, which could take decades. To get the hostage(s) back, the characters must either offer something substantial in exchange, think up a "suitable" punishment, or do some fancy talking. Have fun role-playing it out.

WRAPPING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

Back at the castle, hopefully with the minstrel in tow, the lord wants to know what had happened. He wants an explanation. And if he discovers that his minstrel stole from one of his guests, then he is inclined to punish the man himself – but, given the strange circumstances, he will rely on the "scholar's" advice, so that the player characters effectively get to determine the minstrel's fate. If the characters handle this well, the lord will publicly thank them and ask them if there is anything that he can do for them in return: this is in public, note, so the characters can't ask for anything compromising but, on the other hand, the lord can't refuse apparently innocuous demands without losing face in front of his other guests (his main allies and vassals!)

A NOTE TO THE STORYGUIDE

In running this story, the Storyguide has two options:

1) Make sure that the lord has something that the player's covenant wants – e. g. the ability to grant them legal mundane ownership of a vis site, or just influence with a local bishop (maybe that troublesome bishop is the lord's brother), anything so long as they can't just steal it (e. g. money is right out). This will give more mercenary players some motivation – giving them a reason to do a favour for the lord.

2) Ensure that the players want nothing from the lord. Without selfish motivations they will be much better placed to deal with the situation "fairly" – empathising with the protagonists, arguing amongst themselves about what is a just punishment for the minstrel, etc. This works best for players who enjoy arguing over abstract issues, but much less well for powermongers. Ω

THE ISLAND OF SORROW

by Kevin Hassall

INTRODUCTION

On the summit of a tiny island, a woman sings each midsummer's night, a hymn of sadness in a forgotten language. Her voice ceases if anyone starts to climb the hill towards the summit, and no one has ever seen her, but any mage (with a little Rego Vim or Rego Imagonem) can trap her song in a bottle. Each year's song is worth three pawns of Mentem vis.

The singing is heard from near to the mouth of a cave on the island's wooded summit. The cave overlooks the only small settlement on the island: a cluster of six fishermen's huts around a natural harbour, with their little chapel on a small mound just up the hill from the houses – and the song cannot be heard from the chapel or village as these have a Dominion aura. Characters with True Faith, demonic taints, and other non-faerie connections likewise cannot hear the song.

The wooded summit of the hill has a faerie aura of 3, with an upper level of Regio accessible only on midsummer's night. The chapel usually has a Dominion of 4 (dropping to 1 on midsummer's night), and the village has a Dominion of 2 (in the houses) or 1 (in the gardens and harbour).

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

For centuries, Llawen lived happily in her cave on the hill, hosting a great party every midsummers beneath the boughs of her sons Gobaith and Tostouri. The Seelie of the sea came out to join in the party, along with other woodland fae who travelled here from their own forests. But the sea fae are fewer now, and most of the forests felled. The guests ceased to come. Then, several decades ago, men came to the island and built their village. They felled Llawen's sons, sawing their boughs and trunks to build a church on the mound where they had stood. And so now, each midsummer's Llawen sings her lament.

(Llawen means joy, Gobaith means hope, and Tostouri means compassion.)

ACT I: A BOTTLE OF PITY

A companion, or grog, during a visit to a market, comes across a strange bottle on a peddler's stall. Whoever touches the bottle – which seems to be empty – feels a great sadness. If the bottle is uncorked and "shaken out", the song escapes and the bottle no longer has this effect.

Let the grog/companion bargain with the peddler, but eventually buy the bottle. If the grog/companion leaves to get someone else, the characters return to the stall to find a large crowd and a larger argument: a knight returning from the crusades has found the bottle, and exclaiming that it is cursed, has smashed it. The peddler wants recompense; the knight is refusing to pay for a "diabolical" object; if the authorities are called in, justice will serve the pious noble, not the pragmatic peasant.

One way or another (e. g. paying the asking price for the bottle in return for information), the magi should learn that the peddler bought the bottle from a poor merchant in the nearest port. Travelling there (the Storyguide may add any side encounters in the city), the magi should be able to bribe or persuade the merchant to reveal the name of the dubious fellow (thief) who sold him the bottle: make his name X of Y (e. g. Aerlic of Loxley) so that the characters can try to follow him to his home town.

The thief who procured the bottle has indeed returned home. And he's done a bit more thieving – and been caught. When the characters arrive it is common knowledge that the thief is spending his last night on earth praying, in his gaol cell, with a local priest. He is to be hung at dawn. The characters must either get in to talk to him (what about the priest?), or break him out, or look into his mind, or (Whisper's Through the Black Gate) steal the corpse after it has been hung and before it is buried.

The thief had encountered a drunken youth in an inn (an apprentice, sent on an errand to collect vis, and making the most of a night of freedom away from his master) who boasted that he had collected a bottle "full of power" just the night before. Intrigued, the thief had got him drunker still, and liberated both the bottle from his pouch and his purse

from his belt. When was this? The night after midsummer's night. Where had the bottle come from? The drunken fool (apprentice) had said that it came from an island (and there is only one within a day's easy travel of the inn specified). Anyway, disappointed with the patently empty bottle, and disturbed by the feeling it gave him, the thief had sold it on at the next opportunity.

How the characters persuade the thief to talk is up to them.

ACT II: THE ISLAND OF SORROW

The characters will find an insular community on the island – though the folk are welcoming to storytellers and entertainers, or travelling traders. Such welcomed folk will be given lodging in the fishermen's homes; others will be given a store-shed to sleep in.

The community's leaders are a gruff and intelligent fisherman (head of the largest family on the island), and the charismatic friar who runs the local chapel on behalf of an abbey which (by mundane law) owns the island. Storyguides should feel free to give one Strong Willed and the other a few Faith Points if this stops the characters from just Rego Menteming their way around the last section of the story.

There are a few rumours about the wooded summit of the hill being haunted (one or two locals report having heard a ghostly "chant" or song from the woods sometimes on midsummer's night, if they stray from the village), and so all stay indoors at midsummers. Characters who search the wood, except on midsummer's night, just find a shallow cave and lots of trees.

ACT III: RETURNING AT MIDSUMMER'S

The player characters will find nothing unless they return at midsummer's. At dusk on midsummer's the Regio in the woods becomes accessible, and Llawen starts to sing. Following her voice as it echoes around the woods is the surest way to enter the Regio.

The locals try to persuade the characters not to go into the woods. There is no logic to this – just the fear of the unknown.

If characters start walking up the hill (in human form) Llawen senses their approach and stops singing: she is frightened of mortals (look what they did to her sons!) and her fear closes the Regio. For her to sense the characters, they must either: be entirely human or have the Gift. Non-Gifted characters who either have faerie blood or can take an animal form can approach. (If none of the characters can manage this, the Storyguide may change this requirement – but the idea is that only one of the characters should get to meet her at this stage.

When a character reaches the cave, they see a beautiful woman. Should they speak to her, touch her, or otherwise attract her attention, she wheels around, and they see the most beautiful eyes that they have ever seen – eyes like peace, like love, like joy... but at the same time, eyes full of sadness. As soon as she realizes that she has been disturbed, she is terrified; she stops singing, closes the Regio, and vanishes. (Actually, the interloper is ejected from the Regio, but it will look as if she vanished.) Note, if a mage uses InIm or similar magics to see into the grove, then the mage will see into her eyes – and at that moment, when she intuitively realizes that she is being spied on, she closes the Regio and vanishes from his sight. Basically, one character makes eye contact, and then she disappears: rationalize it however you need to.

Thereafter, the character who looked into her eyes cannot shake the image. Whenever another character is met, the Storyguide should add to his/her description "but of course, his/her eyes are nothing like as beautiful as the woman in the woods"; and every time s/he thinks of the eyes, s/he feels a profound sense of loss, pain, pity, sorrow. The character suffers –3 penalties to any task requiring prolonged attention (including lab activities, Awareness rolls when standing guard, Scribe skills, etc., etc.) The Storyguide might also impose the flaws Short Attention Span or Lost Love on the character, as the unfortunate keeps thinking about Llawen's eyes and feeling this deep pity.

The characters may leave the island for now but, eventually the one who made eye contact will want to return to put his mind at rest.

In the meantime, a magus will doubtless be returning to the island each midsummer's to collect the song for vis. But consider this complication: the apprentice who gathered vis here before will be back, and if he is sent packing his master will come here the year after. Magi should have to engage in a couple of bouts of Certamen in order to keep this vis site.

ACT IV: DEALING WITH LLAWEN

In Llawen's Regio, the shallow cave is the entrance to a beautiful cottage (intricate furniture of living wood, plush cushions of moss, candles which never burn down but which shine like moonlight, etc.). From here she watches over the whole island.

For a character to get close to her, she must be persuaded that he is (a) harmless (not like the humans who cut her sons down!) and (b) worthy. Characters who just blunder into the woods again next midsummer will find the same problem as before: as soon as they get close to her, she "vanishes" (hurls them out of the Regio). Characters who actually kill her just prevent a solution: the unfortunate who made eye contact will have those flaws/penalties forever if she is slain.

How does a character persuade her to talk to him? The character must do something dramatic, romantic, stirring, striking, cool – whatever. Play it for drama. A bard character might sit outside the wood every night for a year, singing of the pain he has felt since seeing her eyes. A mage may Creo Herbam a red rose to appear outside the cave every dawn for a year. Another character might create a garden in her honour just outside the wood. Etc.

It might take years, but when the character finally impresses Llawen enough for her to let him/her talk to her, she will explain the source of her sorrow. She will tell how her children were killed, and the church built over their homes. What can be done? Nothing, as far as she knows. But she would deeply love the chapel to be removed. Perhaps, with time, her children might be born again? There is no reason, of course, why this shouldn't be the start of a love affair between the character and Llawen.

It is now up to the characters. Magi might fear for their vis source. (If she stops singing – no more vis.) Without their help, the character may not be able to persuade the villagers to move their chapel – and characters who resort to arson against the church might find that there are angelic powers who frown on that sort of thing.

Good ways to get the villagers to move the chapel would include: faking an angel appearing and telling them to move it (Imagonem); making the current chapel site seem to be haunted; simply offering to pay for a nice stone church to be erected on another part of the island... but all of these options will likely involve the cursed character persuading others (e. g. magi) to help him/her. Let the players bicker about this.

ACT V: REBIRTH

If the chapel is removed, then, the very next day, two oak shoots are visible on the top of the hill – the children being reborn. The next midsummer's, Llawen walks down to the hill and sings her song there – this time a hymn of joy. If magi are on hand to capture this in a bottle, it yields 10 pawns of Mentem vis. The next time that the character who has seen her eyes looks at her, s/he sees her eyes full only of joy: his/her memories of Llawen are thereafter only positive (no more flaws or penalties) and, if it seems to fit his/her usual demeanour, the Storyguide and player may consider giving the character the virtue Carefree.

After this Llawen doesn't sing again, so the magi have lost their vis source. But she owes them a favour, for sure, and she should have magical powers which allow her to dispel any magics which cause despair, pain, etc., which makes her a useful ally. She is deeply grateful to any who helped her children be reborn.

And after a few decades, when her sons have started to grow, they will bear acorns with magical powers. (If your Saga won't run that long, you could always accelerate their growth.) If just one of Gobaith's acorns are eaten, they dispel all magics and curses which cause despair and misery, and generally perk people up. Tosturi's acorns likewise ease physical (rather than mental) pain. The locals, however, will realize that these acorns have fine powers; they will not want strangers turning up and stealing all of the acorns, and the Abbey which technically owns the village and lands (including the mound) are likely to see the acorns as wonders of nature or even divine miracles, and will want access to them. And the apprentice (by now a full mage?) and his master both know of the island. The characters will have to cut deals to get access to the acorns, but might find them both useful objects to own and a nice little source of extra income.

And if the player whose character first saw Llawen's eyes wants to pursue the romantic potentials here, there is no reason why the character could not begin a long relationship with the faerie, perhaps "marrying" her eventually. Ω

CARIADFERCH'S COTTAGE

by Kevin Hassall

THE COTTAGE IN THE VALLEY

By a stream in a secluded valley in the Welsh borders stands a pretty cottage – creepers covering the stone walls and small flowers growing from the thatch, a willow standing by the door. In the spring and summer it seems to be the home of a beautiful young woman, with long golden hair and teeth like pearls, who sits here spinning wool on a wheel. There are no sheep or vegetable gardens near, and no sign of how she might feed herself or where her wool might come from. In autumn and winter, however, the cottage is deserted.

The stream by the house once led to a faerie glen, where a Seelie Court once cavorted. The cottage stood as a gatehouse, at which all visitors once presented themselves if they sought admission to the court. But the Dominion has spread through the Welsh borders now, and the court has retreated to Arcadia. Meanwhile the faeries who own this "gatehouse" remain stranded on the mundane world.

The young woman who often resides here is called Cariadferch (the word means "mistress" or "lover" in Welsh), although she abbreviates her name to Cari when dealing with mortals. She is one of the faeries who once held the gatehouse, and she laments the disappearance of the court and longs for laughter, music and dancing. A handsome young man who stopped at her cottage – particularly if he were witty or creative – could find her delightful company; but should he be lured into her bed he is doomed.

A man who willingly shares Cari's bed may be Charmed by her. If he fails to make a Magic Resistance roll greater than her Faerie Might, or an Intelligence stress roll of 12+, he is permanently Charmed. He believes himself to be deeply in love with her (gains a +3 Passion for her, and will not willingly leave the cottage without her), and the Charm can only be broken if he sees her in her ugly, winter state (see below).

He is likely to spend several months of bliss with his love: there is always food and wine aplenty, and the setting is idyllic. But when autumn comes and the first leaves turn brown on the tree outside the cottage, Cari begins to lose her fabulous good looks. As soon as she notices this, she vanishes and flees from the cottage, returning to her husband's cave for the winter. By the beginning of winter she appears as a haggard old crone, unable to improve her looks through Glamour.

Gumple, Cari's husband, is as ugly as she is beautiful, a wrinkled old dwarf with a hunched back, red cheeks and a fat nose. He spends his entire time in a cave overlooking the cottage, three hundred yards away in a small copse on the hillside, or fishing in the river upstream of the cottage. His cave however, is covered by a faerie Glamour.

Gumple is grouchy and cantankerous, jealous of his wife's lovers. On the evenings when Cari is attempting to seduce a mortal he stomps down to the cottage and hammers on the door. He insults the mortal whom his wife has chosen, berating the dupe's weakness and saying that he will be sorry if he falls for her charms. He refuses to explain further, but just stomps back up the hill, vanishing into his copse. The only other times that he leaves his cave are to steal ale – of which he is particularly fond – from local mortals, using his Invisibility power, or to fish in the brook (there is a particularly troublesome trout which he has been after for years, and he would be delighted if someone would help him catch it).

A mortal who becomes obsessed with Cari is heartbroken when she leaves in the winter. Unless he can make another Resistance or Intelligence roll he pines away and dies by spring. (The lack of food in the cottage probably contributes to this death, as well as sheer grief.) Just as he dies, he sees the pretty cottage for what it really is beneath the faerie illusions – a filthy shack. Discovering Gumple's cave and showing the unfortunate his lover in her ugly winter form is the only sure way to break the enchantment. Next spring, bored and lonely, Cari is ready to take another lover.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cariadferch ("Cari")

Faerie Might 20

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence 0, Perception +1 (alert), Strength -1 (thin limbed), Stamina 0, Presence +5 (stunning), Communication +2 (witty), Dexterity +2 (graceful), Quickness 0

Personality Traits: Fun-Loving +3, Frivolous +2, Lusty +1

Combat Scores:

Cari carries no weapons and lacks the skills to use them

Fatigue 0, Dodge Defence 5, Soak 0

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

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Abilities: Sing (duets) 5, Charm (creative men) 4, Folk Ken (men) 3, Storytelling (about faeries) 2

Faerie Powers: Charm (5 Faerie Might points), Glamour, Invisibility

Presence falls to -3 (wizened) by winter.

Gumple

Faerie Might 15

Vital Statistics: Size -1, Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength +2 (thick limbed), Stamina +2 (stocky), Presence -5 (grotesque), Communication -1 (gruff), Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Personality Traits: Drunkard +1, Happy -3, Grouchy +2

Combat Scores:

Faerie iron dagger: First Strike +1, Attack +4, Damage +4, Parry +2

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

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

Fatigue +4, Dodge Defence 0, Soak +2

Abilities: Drinking (lots) 9, Evaluate Alcohol (ale) 5, Stealth (woods) 4, Folk Ken (lecherous men) 3

Faerie Powers: Glamour, Invisibility

STORY IDEAS

A Companion (bard, handsome knight, etc.) might stumble across the cottage one evening, in need of shelter for the night. Or local mundanes might ask characters to search for and recover a member of their family who has vanished in this area – seduced and charmed by Cari. Ω

BRIDES OF THE SUMMER

by Kevin Hassall

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Across Europe, peasants celebrate the coming of summer by crowning a May Bride – a young woman from the village is chosen, and in front of a May Pole, an especially erected tree, or other phallic-looking object, is crowned with a garland of flowers and is paraded around the village. A bride for the summer, if you like. Common European custom. In some cases the girl was then hurled into a pool or river (and fished out again), it seems, but that (as a less romantic and entertaining feature) soon seemed to die out (understandably, if you've ever fallen into a European river in May...).

A bride for the summer? Now there's an idea....

IDEA 1: DEMANDS OF THE FAERIE LORD

The Faerie Lord is annoyed. In times long ago the locals would give him a Queen to rule with him each year – someone young, beautiful, nubile and innocent. They would crown her, and lead her to his Grove, and then she would rule with him – riding in his hunts, eating at his table, bringing joy to his bed. The local women, moreover, considered it an honour to be married to a faerie lord for one summer. They were always returned to the village each autumn, always with some gift from the Lord.

But times change. The local priests have stamped out such "paganism", and the Lord has had no bride for decades. Only one old woman in the village still lives from the days when the May Bride really was that, a bride. Now the crowning is just an excuse to drink and be merry.

Well, the Lord wants a companion, so he's going to take one. And because he doesn't trust the locals to provide another next year, he is demanding that this bride stay with him permanently. And so, on the last day of summer, he rides to the largest nearby village, and he tells them that unless they give him a bride next May-Day, he will curse their crops and they will all starve. They have the whole winter to decide who the bride should be, although he demands that she'll be young, witty and beautiful. If they can't decide, or if they choose some senile old crone, he will take a woman of his choosing.

The local priest says that this "creature" must be a demon. The local nobility dismiss reports of the Faerie Lord's visit as "superstition" (some because they don't believe it, most because they'd rather lose one peasant girl than go out and fight such a creature). The villagers all want to protect their daughters, but are happy to offer up someone else's. And a group of village headmen and/or petty land-owning nobles, seeing no other way out, send a delegation to the magi, begging for them to sort it out. The magi will lose a direct combat, but the Lord will accept a contest which he thinks he can win, will accept a compromise, and can be tricked.

IDEA 2: RISE OF THE ANCIENT SPIRIT

In former times, the Spirit of the Pool was used to take a bride. The locals would hurl a virgin girl into the sacred pool, and when she had drowned, they said that the spirit had "married" her. In thanks, the Spirit, in human male form, rose from the pool some days later, and ruled the village for six months. He would rule wisely and justly, protecting the people from famine and disease. On the night when the first frost fell, he would return to the pool for the winter, and the next spring, when the first buds appeared on the trees, a baby would be found, wrapped in moss, on the shores of the pool. Whichever family had lost their daughter the May before would take this – her baby, their grandchild – and raise it as their own.

At last, the church stopped the barbaric sacrifice. Now (13th century), hundreds of years later, the girl is hurled into the pool as a folk tradition, but fished out again. The Spirit has no bride, and does not rise, for the girls' deaths awakened him, and without a death he slumbers still. Now, perhaps, a cranky old man comes down from the hills, plotting to waken the sleeping "god"... Or perhaps, one spring a girl slips and drowns in the pool, by accident, awakening the Spirit who rises from the waters expecting to rule the village – and not about to take no for an answer... Ω

WHICH WITCH?

by Rich Staats

INTRODUCTION

The adventure takes place in North-Central Europe at the end of the 13th century. The golden age of the mounted warrior has fallen across Europe. The house of Habsburg has carved out a niche which will last another 500 years, and the Inquisition is at its height. The land has been ravaged by war after war, and an entire generation of men has been lost to the Bohemian and Holy Roman Empire's conflicts. Although the Bohemians have been assimilated into the Habsburg dynasty, the warring nobles have turned their aggressions to their old allies. Chaos, disease and famine still rule the day, but the future does look hopeful, and the plague is still 60 years in the future.

The more specific setting is in the neighborhood of Marchsfeld in the holdings of Rikkaberg, the craggy keep of Duke Bernardyn the Just. Duke Bernardyn took over after completing a time as the ward of Graf Ubel, his uncle. Bernardyn's father, Aldo, was killed in the Eighth Crusade on the long road back from Tunis in the company of Graf Ubel who still curses the Turks for poisoning the deceased Duke's food.

The Holy Catholic Church is the champion of good in this part of the world, and although it has had its failings in other locals, the Church is viewed with respect and deference in Rikkaberg. The local clergy are zealous in their service, and most would rather die than betray their vows or bring discredit upon God's communion on Earth. The Church was a bastion of stability during the turmoil of the wars waged across the frontier. The current Abbot is especially well respected.

There are no wizards, druids or sorcerers. There is magic in the world, but it comes in but two varieties: the miracles of Faith and the vile machinations of Satan through his minions – warlocks and witches. Witches are truly evil and arrange for things like famines, deformities and disease.

PCs: The player characters are displaced minor nobility (*Landsknechten*) with the education and finances to adventure for the common good.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Duke Bernardyn

The good and wise ruler of the lands the PCs come from. He was widowed with no heirs. He still grieves for the loss of his beloved wife, Yseult, and has vowed never to remarry. If the Duke had a flaw, it was in his willingness to forgive wrongs against him and a weakness for his family.

Kuonrada the Wise

The strong-willed niece of Bernardyn appointed as protector. She has long been a favorite of the Duke, and she rules the equivalent of a barony. The Duke sought her council on all important issues.

Graf Ubel of Marchsfeld

The evil uncle of Duke Bernardyn. Ubel has long considered himself to be the proper ruler of Rikkaberg and its holdings, and Bernardyn's possession of it is only a coincidence of birth. Ubel is not a direct man though and would rather plot for years and take revenge in a complete way than tip his hand too early. Ubel is clever and heartless. In particular Ubel hates Kuonrada who spurned his advances on her.

Abbot Ablard

The head of the local monastery. Ablard is a good and righteous man. He has used the resources of the monastery to service the needs of the people of Rikkaberg. Ablard has insisted on a liberal education of the young nobles. The Abbot has introduced new techniques of crop rotation to Rikkaberg that he learned while studying in Italy. Ablard is a veteran of the Eighth Crusade, and he shares some history with both Bernardyn and the Duke's deceased father, Aldo. Ablard dislikes Ubel and would use any reasonable means of getting Ubel excommunicated. The Abbot has a deep seated distrust of authority, and there are rumors he was remonstrated while in Rome for speaking out against certain doctrines of the Church.

Bosella

Vile witch.

Father Raymond

Inquisitor. Pompous and very aware of his authority. Still, Raymond is totally fair, discreet and honest. He has a weakness for poetry.

Brothers Loritz, Lutz, Hacket, Franz and Drugi

Monks. Although wholly devoted to the Church and the betterment of man on Earth, each has a comic character flaw. They are inserted at key moments to break up tension or divert the party.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The PCs have sworn allegiance to Duke Bernardyn. Duke Bernardyn was called away in 1292 by his uncle, Graf Ubel of Marchsfeld to Cyprus, to recover a family artifact pulled from Jerusalem just prior to the battle in 1187. In Duke Bernardyn's absence, his strong-willed niece, Kuonrada the Wise, was installed as protector of the Duke's estates.

In 1297, Graf Ubel returned from the Holy Lands claiming that the Duke had been hideously butchered by the Saracens. Graf Ubel produced a document with the Ducal seal giving him complete control of Duke Bernardyn's holdings.

Kuonrada called the PCs in, and while they were at the fortress, Rikkaberg, Kuonrada had a vision of the Duke being betrayed by Graf Ubel and somehow imprisoned. Kuonrada asks the PCs to help her rescue the Duke and restore order.

Within the week, Graf Ubel had seized control of Rikkaberg and denounced Kuonrada as a witch. When Kuonrada's chambers were searched, several Satanic implements were discovered. Kuonrada has maintained that she is completely innocent. Graf Ubel has requested that the Inquisitor at Ulm send an agent to deal with Kuonrada's witchery. Even as the adventure begins, Father Raymond is making his way across the paths leading to Rikkaberg.

Abbot Ablard has offered to accept Kuonrada's confession in lieu of a confession with the Inquisitor. In exchange, Abbot Ablard will take Kuonrada in as a nun to prevent the use of any untoward "methods" the Inquisition might employ. (Abbot Ablard has confided to the PCs that he believes Kuonrada completely innocent, but he distrusts any organization such as the Inquisition to uncover the truth.)

For the Storyguide

The Duke is still alive, but he is held by Turkish allies of Ubel in Macedonia. (These are the same allies who poisoned Aldo.) A manuscript containing a map showing this place is in the monastery.

Ubel arranged for the Duke's abduction, and Ubel planted the Satanic items in Kuonrada's chambers.

Father Raymond will find Kuonrada innocent if left to his own devices. No one will claim to have seen Kuonrada practice any witchcraft, and even if Ubel makes such a claim, Father Raymond will reject his testimony based on Ubel being a biased witness. (Ubel has everything to gain from such a conviction.)

Kuonrada, if left alone, will banish Graf Ubel.

Ubel actually serves Bosella who holds a good portion of the realm under her horrid sway. (This should not arise immediately however. Bosella makes for a good shadowy figure who remains always just out of the party's grasp.)

Loritz, Lutz, Hacket, Franz and Drugi can be used liberally to give hints or drop clues and red herrings. The more accidental and bumbling this seems the better. As young nobles, the PCs were likely schooled at least for a period of time at the monastery. So, it is a natural base of operations for the party.

Father Raymond will cross the party's path again and again. Eventually, the party will come to see Raymond as a trusted ally.

Father Raymond will be called upon to challenge Bosella. He is really outclassed by Bosella and will require the party's help again and again before the group is finally victorious. (If Graf Ubel was not killed earlier in the campaign, it might prove as an interesting plot twist for him to come to the party's aid when they most need it. Kind of like Darth Vader killing the Emperor in Star Wars.)

NOTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

The natural tendency these days is to mistrust the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. Playing it as primarily a good organization will tend to catch some off balance. Have some fun with this. Play into the player's beliefs and then turn the tables with plot twists and red herrings. Adding things like wandering holy men and lay healers would be a nice touch as well.

People are even more adamant about their disdain for the Inquisition. It will be easy to portray Father Raymond in such a way that the party's initial reaction is to dislike him. Father Raymond has the potential to be a long-term ally and absolutely critical to the final stages of the adventure; so, the Storyguide must find a way of getting the PCs to see his good side too.

The party will have seen very little evidence of magic, and when Father Raymond tells them that Bosella is really a witch, it should be presented in such a way that the PCs are able to laugh it off, i. e. this guy seems earnest enough, but he really believes it! Ha-ha! Then, slowly introduce Bosella's vile magic. At first, all of the effects of her spellcraft should be able to be explained in terms of natural phenomenon or coincidence. As time goes on though, the evidence should become overwhelming.

Remember that Bosella is not a Wiccan or Samantha from "Bewitched". Bosella is a *bona fide* worshipper of the devil and practices vile arts for self aggrandisement. Blinding an orphan and throwing the tart into the water would be a minor amusement for Bosella.

Have fun blowing the stereotypes and really role-playing the encounters! Ω