

A Summer midnight's DREAM



A Saga of Faerie Treachery,
for ARS MAGICA™ 3rd Edition

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This supplement is designed for use with Ars Magica Third Edition, but can be used with the Second Edition with some adaptation.

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A Midsummer Night's Dream

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Midsummer night's DREAM

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Theseus

*Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days
bring in*

*Another moon: but, oh, methinks, how
slow*

*This old moon wanes! she lingers my
desires,*

*Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's
revenue.*

Hippolyta

*Four days will quickly steep themselves
in nights:*

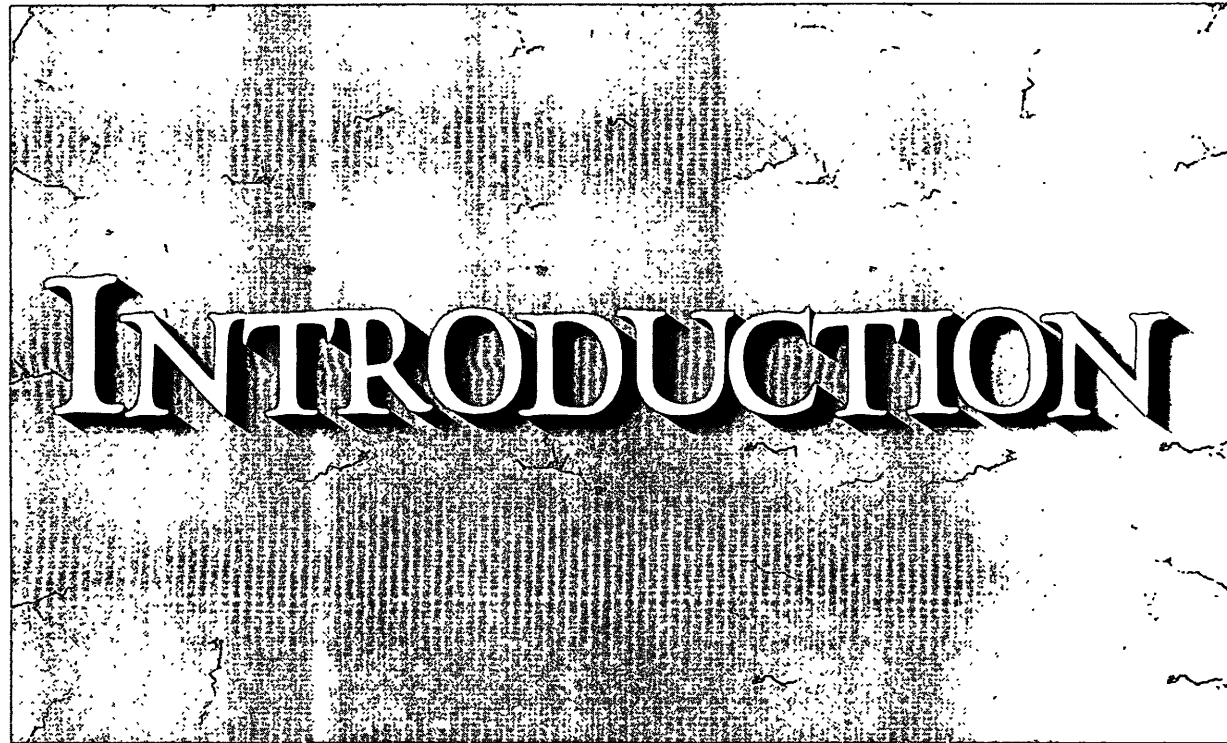
*Four nights will quickly dream away
the time;*

*And then the moon, like to a silver
bow*

*New bent in heaven, shall behold the
night*

Of our solemnities.

William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," 7.1



INTRODUCTION

Preface

What makes novice characters unique in fantasy roleplaying? In most games beginning characters have low scores, little power, and limited experience. They acquire higher scores, greater power, and wider experience with time and adventure. Certainly the events of characters' adventures improve their personal abilities, making them more capable. There should be more to a character than mere numbers, however. How do the events of adventures affect the story of a character's life, and a character's relations with others? Most games overlook the story — the narrative — of a character's entire life, from weakness and inexperience to power and wisdom. Most games simply portray a character — your character — in short episodes with little or no activity between those events. In dismissing the story of your character's entire life, most games fail to do your favorite character justice.

Ars Magica is a game that tells the tale of your character's life, from the beginning to the end of his or her career and beyond. In *Ars Magica* your character has a specific mission or function in life and in the world in which he or she lives. Your character belongs to a small society called a Covenant, an organization of Magi (wizards) and their aides, guards, and servants. Your character has a role in the Covenant, be it Magus or stable boy, and that role lends purpose to your character's

life. Thus, though your character may only go on the odd journey, he or she does not simply lie dormant between journeys. Your character's life has narrative.

Though all phases of your character's existence are exciting and intriguing, your character's first years can be the most exhilarating. At the beginning of his or her career your character has a whole world to face and come to terms with. Though your novice character may not see the entire world, even in a lifetime, he or she nonetheless learns and grows from that part of the world experienced. Only by learning from and appreciating this world can your character attain the laurels of age, power, and wisdom.

Just as a novice character's stories can be particularly entertaining, so can those of a beginning Covenant. In *Ars Magica* a new Covenant is much like a beginning character. New experiences test the Covenant's capabilities, measure its influence, and fortify its defenses against a harsh world. This dangerous time in a young Covenant's life is called its Spring Season. If care is not taken in this period, the fledgling Covenant could die.

As is often the case in *Ars Magica*, beginning characters and a beginning Covenant coexist. Characters who are just beginning their careers as wizards and explorers forge out on their own and establish a haven in which to reside, learn, and see the world. This is a time of terrible danger — all the world's powers loom at every turn — and glorious wonder — all the

world's beauties wait to be discovered. By coping with dangers and respecting wonders, characters and Covenant survive and gain a wider understanding of the world.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a Saga supplement that helps you, the Storyguide, tell the story of a Covenant's early years. This supplement provides stories that may be told over the course of several game years, bringing the Covenant and its inhabitants into the world and into experience. If the characters can weather the threats and employ the allies of this Saga their Covenant may grow from the vulnerability of the Spring Season to the grandeur of Summer.

The Saga

A Midsummer Night's Dream belongs to the Four Seasons series for *Ars Magica*, which includes *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale*. That is, this story supplement tells tales which help a Covenant develop through one of the four Seasons of existence. In the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the Spring Season is explored. The Covenant will progress from the infancy of Spring to the maturity of Summer, assuming even one inhabitant survives to see the Covenant through.

The events in this Saga unfold over a series of several years. These events are interrelated, all touching on a common plot that cannot be explored in a single game session. Indeed, telling the tale contained in this book takes dozens of game sessions, as well as considerable time and energy on your part. However, any amount of time devoted to storytelling is time well spent.

The passage of time in this supplement is ultimately controlled by you. Each story provided here may be told in sequence to complete a greater tale. However, such storytelling does not do justice to the full evolution of this supplement's events, or the growth of your Covenant. If this book's events are run sequentially the grace of stories is lost, for the subtle connections between each are made obvious. Furthermore, if this book's events are run sequentially characters only see limited growth during the Spring Season. Thus, the players may most appreciate these stories if they are allowed to recognize the connections between stories on their own. This recognition is only made possible if your own stories are interjected between those in this book.

The stories you tell between those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* should be fairly small in scope and without earthshaking consequences. After all, if you set up the delicate balance of this book's stories, their completion is made unlikely if half the characters are killed in an inserted story of your own. Thus, your stories should serve to perpetuate this book's tale, not undermine it. To help you create these extra stories this book provides several ideas that may be interjected into the main plot, and are directly related to it. These story ideas are ideal for Saga insertions, as they maintain the mood of the Saga without directly moving toward the Saga's end.



CRAYNE

Another factor to consider when running this book's stories is their recognition by players. With time players are going to recognize reappearing characters, like Captain Hagen (see below), and are going to recognize an ongoing plotline. This is not a bad thing. In fact, it's good.

When players begin to recognize the connections between events and people, they dominate the storytelling process. For instance, once characters realize Captain Hagen is a threat who will not simply go away, they may take matters into their own hands and seek to silence Hagen. That's a decision you must contend with in terms of the story, and it leads to the tale's climax. When players recognize trends in your stories, their pursuit of those trends perpetuates the tale in this book. The characters take charge of events and develop toward Summer on their own. All you need do to make this transcendence possible is be flexible and allow characters to behave freely.

THEME

The theme of this supplement is freedom. Freedom, whether personal or social, and whether recognized or not, is a virtue that must be earned. This is a lesson characters from a Spring Covenant must learn the hard way, particularly when their freedoms are curtailed, ignored, and threatened. Such injustice is done to characters by both the Order of Hermes and by mundane forces at work in the world.

Only by making sacrifices, compromises, and deals can characters win the freedom they crave as members of a burgeoning Covenant. By surviving the restrictions and threats imposed by the Order and mundane powers, characters can seize the power they need to establish freedom for themselves. At that juncture the characters are a force to be reckoned with and their Covenant enters its Summer Season.

This theme pervades more than the characters' lives, though. People met throughout the Saga are obsessed with freedom. Powerful members of the Order of Hermes jeopardize weak Covenants before an impending crusade so that those powerful members may protect their own freedom. The crusade itself is an attempt by the Church to stamp out religious and personal freedoms. The faeries met by characters have their freedoms curtailed by the incursion of humanity. Commoners spread their Divine influence by cutting down faerie forests, limiting faeries' freedom to exist. No, the characters are not the only ones concerned with freedom in this supplement. However, exceptional play by the Covenant may well allow all to attain their desires of freedom.

*Here and now I give thee authority over the nations;
with a word thou shalt root them up and put them down,
overthrow and lay them in ruins;
with a word thou shalt build them up and plant them anew.*

-Jeremiah 2:10

Quoted by Pope Innocent III at his sermon of consecration.

Using an Older Covenant

If you are running *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a Summer or older Covenant, note that such a Covenant probably has greater access to allies and information than does a Spring one. Indeed, the mundane nobility and Church may have come to terms with an older Covenant, if they know it exists. Such friendly ties undermine the threat posed to the Covenant by mundane authority, and undermine the impact of this story. Still, such understandings may well be broken by news of the crusade. An older Covenant may also be drawn into the crusade due to its prominence. If established and well-known, a Covenant might be a prime target for pagan hunters. Even if an older Covenant seeks to hide from the crusade, irresponsible characters, drunk on their own power, might be tempted to wreak havoc during the war, jeopardizing Covenant and Tribunal alike.

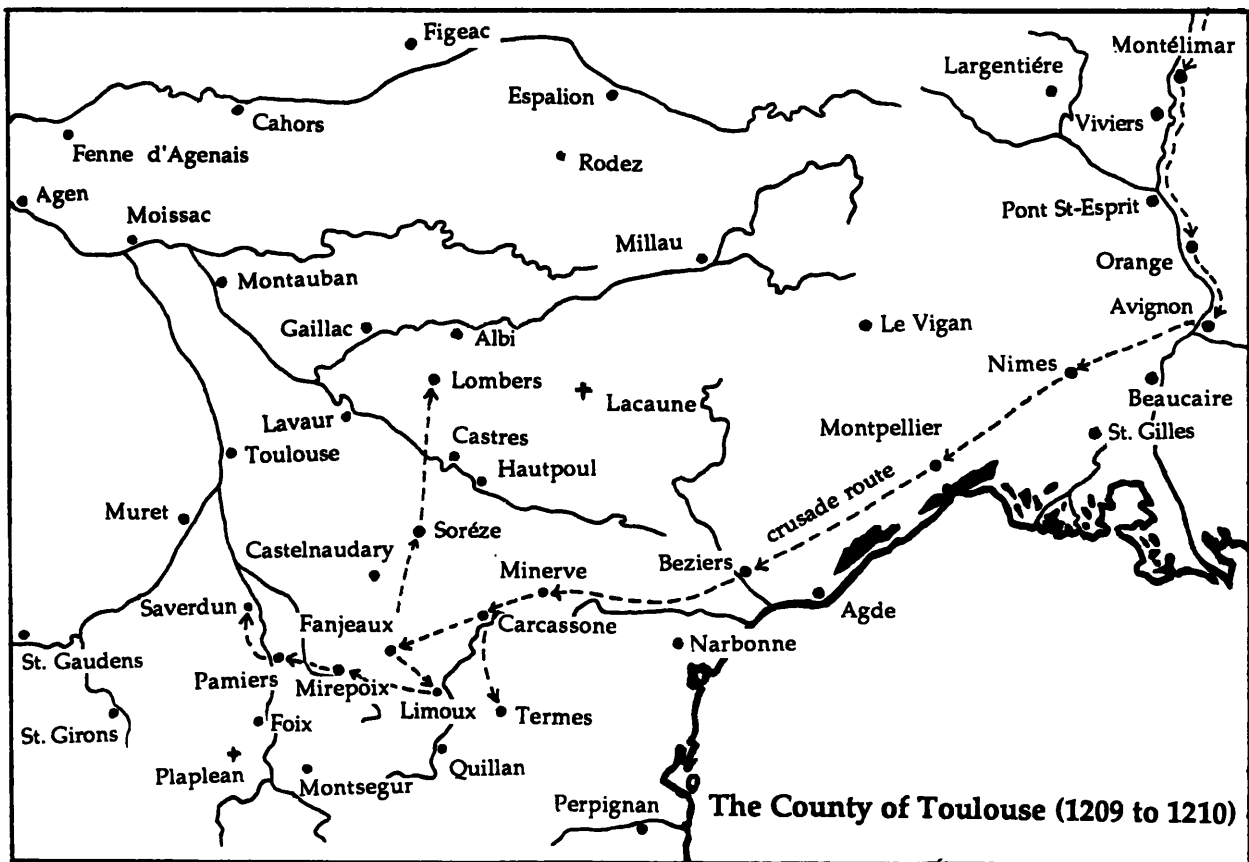
THE COURSE OF THE SAGA

The main plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* unfolds over five stories or Chapters. The first Chapter introduces the characters to a new and dire threat — a crusade — posed to the characters, their Tribunal, and the Order of Hermes as a whole. The last Chapter investigates the characters' final salvation from destruction. Whether the salvation in question is attained by defeating the mundane forces of the crusade or by negotiation with faerie powers is up to the characters.

The Saga assumes the characters are already set up in a new Covenant, probably one of your Troupe's creation. Indeed, Magus characters may well have just left their respective apprenticeships and banded together for mutual support. Such a young Covenant is assumed to have limited supplies, few outside contacts, and finite resources. Alternately, this supplement may be used with an established Covenant, one with increased access to outside aid. The threat of the crusade and the other dangers of this story are just as relevant to a Summer or Autumn Covenant as a Spring. However, this supplement is based on a Spring Covenant in order to provide new characters with a springboard into the *Ars Magica* world.

In Chapter One the characters learn of an impending crusade that threatens the survival of their Tribunal. The primary point of discussion at the Tribunal meeting is how to deal with the crusade. Ultimately it is decided that the mundane affair will not be interfered with; thus, while powerful Covenants may escape it, weaker ones with poor defenses and less remote locales may not be so fortunate. Of course, this probably means the characters' Covenant is in jeopardy.

In Chapter Two the crusade comes to the characters' door. The malicious Captain Hagen arrives in the characters' locale to impose the Pope's rule. Fortunately, the characters' limited defenses and relative anonymity preserve them for the time being, but they do witness the horror the crusade brings.



In Chapter Three the full weight of the crusade is brought to bear on the characters as Captain Hagen assaults villages partaking in a pagan festival, a festival marginally tolerated by the Church. The close-mindedness and zealousness of the crusaders is made painfully obvious and the characters realize they must take action against Hagen before all hell breaks loose.

In Chapter Four the characters realize the full extent of the damage done by the crusaders as local faeries take revenge for the desecration of the pagan festival. The faeries begin to expand their forests with the intent to swallow up the Divine lands of the mundanes. This action endangers the characters' Covenant at the same time. Furthermore, a curse is placed upon the land to ensure its eventual destruction.

In Chapter Five the characters must determine their fate by dealing with the faeries, stopping the growth of the forests, ending the curse, and defeating Hagen. Regardless of the characters' success, however, the crusade continues elsewhere and the characters' greatest accomplishment is to preserve their own Covenant, leaving the rest of the Tribunal to its own fate.

The Crusade

The plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place against the backdrop of the reign of Pope Innocent III, under whom the Albigensian Crusade takes place in western Mythic Europe. Indeed, the Albigensian Crusade is the direct backdrop to the events of this story, although any other crusade, historical or fictional, will do. Though this book introduces the

Faerie Characters

It is advised that characters with faerie blood be excluded from the majority of this story. Such faerie characters may have no status in Chapter One (set at a Hermetic Tribunal), and may undermine the challenges of later Chapters, which involve negotiation with a faerie court.

basics you need to describe the background of the Albigensian Crusade, the terror of the war is fully developed in the *Ars Magica* sourcebook *Mistrudge*. That sourcebook also suggests ways of portraying the crusade over its full length, not merely in its initial years, and offers many story ideas to help turn the crusade into a reality for characters and players.

Pope Innocent III has an obsession for crusading. He incites crusades in the Middle East, Sicily, Iberia, and the Baltic, not to mention inciting many lesser crusades throughout western Mythic Europe. In A.D. 1209 an army of some 30,000 men from northern Mythic Europe descends upon the tolerant and educated population of Provençal (a region of modern southern France). In the 40-year war that ensues the entire region is ravaged. Crops are destroyed, villages, towns, and cities are razed, and a whole population is put to the sword.

The crusade is called by the Pope to wipe out the heretical Cathars, a group which preaches against the corruption of the Church and proposes doctrines different from but based on those of Christianity. In Beziers alone almost 20,000 people are slaughtered wholesale by crusaders, regardless of sex or age;

many victims are murdered in the sanctuary of the church itself. Indeed, when an officer inquires of the local Bishop of Citeaux, Arnald Amalaricus, how he might distinguish heretics from true believers, the bishop's reply is: "Kill them all. God will recognize his own." Much as the characters may wish to keep to themselves, they must realize that there are events in the world that even their great magic cannot alter or deter.

CHARACTERS AND THE CRUSADE

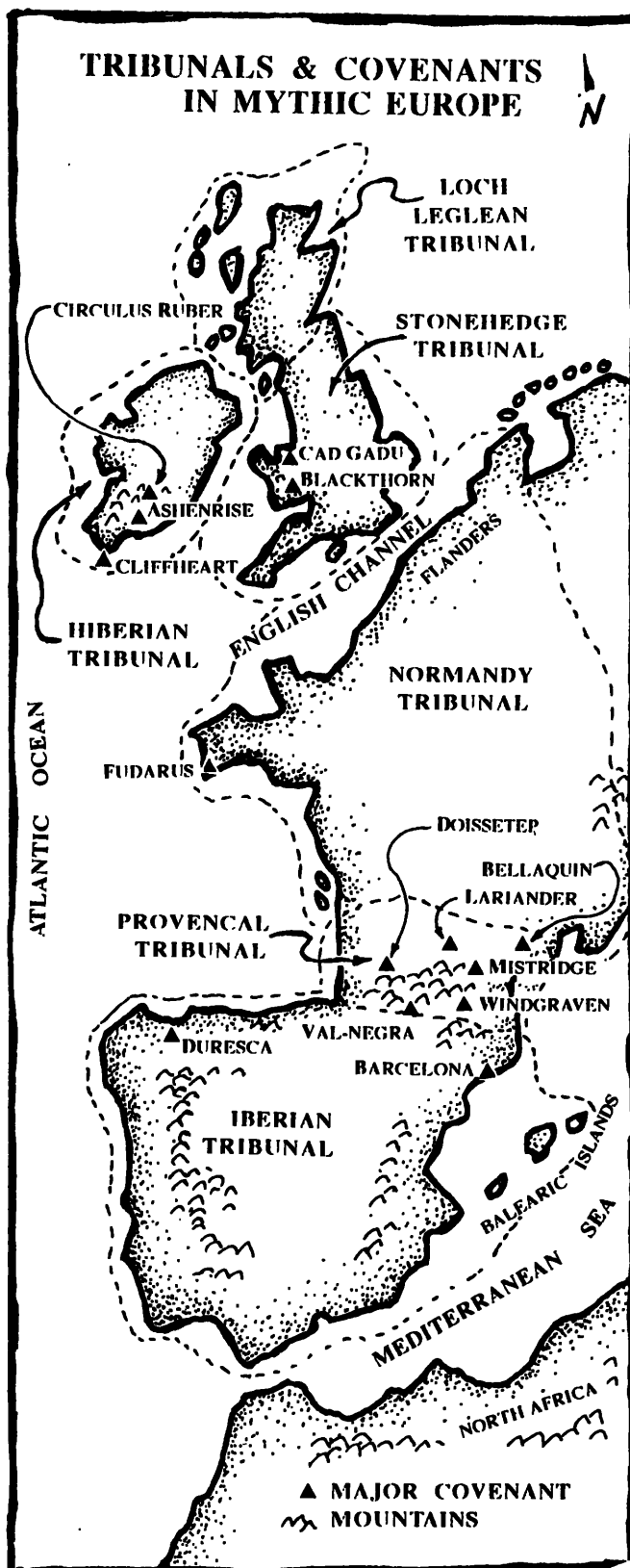
The crusade and subsequent deaths of Cathars and honest Christians are subjects which cannot be ignored by characters in the vicinity of the battleground (the region of southern France and northern Spain). Even if characters try to keep to themselves their efforts undoubtedly fail. Though Magi and their assistants may be able to isolate themselves from the war, their contacts, friends, and loved ones in the mundane world are surely exposed to assault. Those people are left in dire jeopardy; no one is safe from the crusade. Not only are heretical Cathars killed, but many Christians are also murdered for their wealth, lands, and liberal attitudes. Indeed, mere association with "the astrologers on the hill" may condemn mundanes to death by crusaders, unless characters come to their allies' rescue.

Ultimately, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrates how even isolationist characters are hard pressed to remain hidden from the world. This is particularly true when a fellow Magus is killed by crusaders, and a terrible curse is brought upon the land, endangering the characters' Covenant. If characters don't voluntarily emerge from their isolation they are probably destroyed in spite of themselves.

Setting

This Saga supplement assumes your Covenant is located in Provence or in a nearby region. The story is specifically designed for use in the Val du Bosque, a valley in the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains. The Val du Bosque is fully detailed in the Mistridge sourcebook and reference to that book is suggested if you choose to set *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the valley. Indeed, you could locate the characters in the Covenant of Mistridge itself.

If you choose to set this story elsewhere you face few problems. The names of villages, manors, and some personalities can easily be changed. The greatest problem in changing the locale of the story lies with its crusade background. Though the Albigensian is not the only crusade in western Mythic Europe, it is certainly the largest and most terrifying. If, through historical research, you cannot locate a crusade that suits the time and location of your Saga you may certainly fabricate one to meet your needs. After all, this is *Mythic Europe*.





The stories of this supplement are assumed to begin around A.D. 1207. They can begin at any time, of course, but that year marks one of the established Tribunals of the Order of Hermes, and a Tribunal begins this Saga. Furthermore, the year 1207 precedes the Albigensian Crusade by a suitable margin, allowing characters to prepare for war. Finally, that date coincides with the "official" Ars Magica Saga starting date of A.D. 1197 in that it allows time for the establishment of a Covenant and offers you the opportunity to tell some stories of your own before leaping into those contained in this book.

As previously stated, the duration of this Saga is up to you, based on the intermediary stories you want to tell. Keep in mind, though, that the Albigensian Crusade only lasts about 40 years. After that time the threat posed by the crusade is gone and characters no longer have impetus to act against its participants, so this Saga would fall apart if continued past the end of the war. Besides, any Spring Season that lasts 40 years is a painfully long one.

Prelude

Before the first story is told all should be relatively normal at the characters' Covenant (or as normal as can be). Your Covenant is unique and thus has its own situations that cannot be predicted here, but characters should not be so taxed with their own problems that they cannot attend the upcoming Tribunal.

Generally speaking, local conditions are good. The locals are probably tolerant of the Covenant's activities, if they know about them at all. The Church may also tolerate of the Covenant, may be unaware of its true nature, or may not even know the Covenant exists. Characters have also undoubtedly made reconnaissance runs from their home, getting the lay of the land, collecting provisions, and perhaps encountering faeries for the first time.

Ideally, the characters should also have made contact with some Cathars. Familiarity with the Cathars in advance of the coming crusade allows characters to understand why the crusade is called, and allows characters to decide where they stand in the war: as Cathar allies or enemies.

Preliminary Cathar encounters may take many forms, and may be inserted into the few stories you tell before the onset of this Saga. Here are some sample encounters you may use:

- The characters could hear a Perfecti (Cathar priest) trying to convert a crowd of townsfolk to Cathar belief. The Perfecti is naturally intrigued by the characters and tells them of a holy treasure, revealed to her in a dream. Questing for the treasure will, she hopes, concentrate the characters' minds on pious thoughts, and thereby convert them. Such a quest also reveals to the Perfecti and the characters alike the similarities and differences in their philosophies. Whether the holy artifact exists is up to you.

• Cathars could come to the Covenant to enlist the characters' support in the upcoming crusade. If characters are suspicious of the Cathars, the heretics point out the powerful nobles who have allied with them, nobles who could also be allies of the Covenant. Once again you should play up the similarities and differences between the Order and Cathars. By understanding the Cathars, characters may freely choose their side and course of action in the upcoming crusade. Who knows: maybe the characters become so offended by Cathar beliefs that they turn the heretics out, thus fouling future relations between the two groups. Such conflict is most dramatic if the groups must ultimately ally against crusaders to survive.

COVENANT LANDS

The prelude of this Saga does rely upon one premise; this is not a pervasive or dictatorial premise, however. This Saga require the characters to have unwittingly set up their Covenant on lands owned by the Church. In the case of the Val du Bosque setting, this would be land presided over by Merdici, the Catholic Bishop of Foix. However, the characters have not yet suffered the slings and arrows of the Church. In fact, they have probably conducted their Hermetic business in complete ignorance of their jeopardy.

Trespassing on Church lands without penalty may be justified in your Saga in a few ways. Ideally, the Church does not know the Covenant is built on its lands and does not even



know the extent of its own lands. This might be true if the characters built their Covenant in an especially wild or remote place. Only with time does the Church discover its strange tenants.

In the Val du Bosque setting another option is available. Bishop Merdici, though a staunch Catholic, spends most of his time at his Italian estates, living in luxury. Since he is often absent from Foix the administration of his diocese is conducted by his canons, Dietrich von Braden and Ramon D'Uverre. With innumerable minor tasks of their own to handle, the overburdened canons are not very interested in Church lands and their reaches, and thus have not looked into any strange intruders. Only with time do they discover and enforce their lordship over the characters.

This premise about the location of your Covenant is important in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because that location becomes the foundation of a deal made between the characters and the local Church. Of course, if founding your Covenant on Church lands does not suit your Saga you are free to arrange another means for Church-Covenant relations and treaties. However, that means must somehow involve a liberal Church official blackmailing or bribing characters into lending their aid. (See *Ramon's Request* in Chapter Four for the situation in which this blackmail occurs.)

THE CANONS

The canons of Foix are integral to this Saga and the relations between characters and Church. The canons deal with the characters and may be constant contacts throughout A Midsummer Night's Dream. The canons are therefore presented here.

Dietrich von Braden

Most valued among Merdici's canons is the swarthy Dietrich von Braden, a young German priest who studied theology at the University of Paris. An unwaveringly orthodox man with an excellent understanding of theology, von Braden has been able to match the Cathars' arguments in recent debates and has preached many powerful sermons in the cathedral of Foix since his arrival.

Von Braden believes the Cathars, though naive, jeopardize the very order of the civilized world. To him their oriental heresy is a demoniacal phenomenon appealing to the simple because it suggests the possibility of a different life than that proposed by the Church. Whether the Cathars actually commit the crimes attributed to them von Braden does not know, but he does know they reject matrimony and deny Hell, two foundations of Christian belief. Von Braden defends the



Dietrich von Braden

Characteristics: Intelligence (bookworm) +2, Perception (oversights) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (nagging cough) -1, Presence 0, Communication (debating) +2, Dexterity (graceless) -2, Quickness 0

Age: 26

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Debate (religious theory) 4, Church Knowledge (heresy) 4, Diplomacy (clergy) 1, Scribe Latin (religious essays), Speak Provençal (quickly) 5, Speak Latin (precisely) 5, Church Lore (heresies) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Devout (clergy of Foix) 1

Personality Traits: Devoted +2, Merciful -1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense 0 (6 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1



Ramon d'Uverre

Characteristics: Intelligence (creative) +2, Perception (intuitive) +1, Strength (scrawny arms) -1, Stamina 0, Presence (unassuming) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (gangly) -2, Quickness (ungainly) -1

Age: 20

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (expansive vocabulary) 5, Speak Latin (scholarly terms) 4, Scribe Latin (fast writing) 4, Humanities (philosophy) 4, Church Knowledge (theology) 1, Church Lore (corruption) 1, Ride (journeys) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Sympathetic to Cathars (clergy of Foix) 1

Personality Traits: Brave -2, Devoted +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Pope's views on the crusade because, in his opinion, the Catholic Church guarantees the safety of all the Dominion, including that of mundane man.

Ramon d'Uverre

Ramon d'Uverre, nephew of the Baron d'Uverre of the Val du Bosque, is another of the Bishop's canons. Bishop Merdici knows Ramon is an honest, devout man, and although Ramon has obvious sympathies for the Cathars, the Bishop trusts him to investigate matters and to carry messages to the noblemen and churches of the area. Ramon fears the growing conflict between Church and Cathars. He opposes the crusade but is powerless to prevent it. He can sympathize with many Cathar views. Nonetheless he wishes to peacefully convert the Cathars to Catholicism, for he believes their views to be misguided. As far as Ramon is concerned, the Roman Catholic Church, despite its obvious corruption, is the truest form of Christianity.

Ramon does not have von Braden's knowledge of theology but is learned in philosophy. Ramon spends much of his life isolated from the wickedness of the world. Life in the corrupt city is far too complex for him to grasp.



THE TRIBUNAL

CHAPTER ONE



Tyler Gill cursed — not over-loud, lest that devil's-get felix hear — and pulled his tattered cloak tighter as the wind knifed through the pass yet again. He gritted his teeth as the throbbing in his ears grew; he was certain his head would soon split. Blessed Virgin, but 'twas cold! He turned his head away from the bitter blast —

only to gaze over the edge of the pass and down the terrible drop to his right. Shuddering, he faced the cliff once again. There had been no mountains such as these in England, save perhaps in Wales...

Above him Doissetep squatted on the crag, rising from the fog like a great dragon of the old tales, all knotted and coiled and spiked. The central spire seemed, like the Tower of Babel in the priests' tales, to try and touch Heaven. Atop its pinnacle, the Covenant's banner — a dragon, gules, couchant, devouring itself — snapped in the wind.

Tyler might have been awed by this greatest of mortal man's works, this enormous fortress that could have swallowed Mistridge without a trace — had he not been so tired. As it was, he merely turned aside and locked his gaze on the scarlet cap of their guide, bending all his will to the task of putting one foot forward, then the next, then the next...

Not that he was over-eager to enter into another den of wizards; his immortal soul was no doubt already destined for Purgatory at the least. Madness, and the Devil's mark, was upon all his lieges, save possibly the lord Grimgroth. Still, he had but another seven months to serve — then his year-and-day would be done, and he would return to England a free man. Not that he had any faith that his lieges would let him leave willingly, felix least of all.

Through the fog he saw Grimgroth, attired in his finest robes, turn and walk back through the ranks to the rear guard, admonishing the turb on their slovenly appearance. "Though we be of Springs," he heard the wizard lecture, "must we look thus as well?" Despite himself, Tyler smiled. Vanity was far more comforting than the dark passions Grimgroth's peers displayed.

A sudden gust of wind smashed through the pass like a battering ram. Desperately Tyler clutched the cliff-side; out of the corner of his eye he saw the rest of the turb react likewise — all save Luc. The huge Grog had been caught unaware by the wind; in helpless horror Tyler saw the man plucked from the pass like a rabbit by a falcon and hurled over the side with a wail.

The wind died. Tyler and the rest of the turb rushed over, gazing mutely at the spot where Luc had dropped. The stern voice of Grimgroth broke their reverie. "Come. There's naught we can do for him now. And cleanse yourselves, lest Doissetep think us bumpkins." He beckoned imperiously. Tyler cursed him silently. Devil-spawn, the lot of them...

Summary

Chapter One deals with the machinations of the Provençal Tribunal. During this Chapter the characters not only experience the workings of a Hermetic Tribunal but also meet the Magus Sarimarcus, who reappears later in the Saga.

Chapter One tests the characters' diplomatic talents. Magi must establish allies while Companions and Grogms must avoid conflict and protect their masters from harm. Harm may come from many directions — foreign Magi, Grogms, covenfolk, strange Familiars, or the many traps and secret passages of the Tribunal Domus Magnus. Ultimately you should ensure that Grogms and Companions, not just Magi, are occupied during the Tribunal meeting. Grogms and Companions are likely to be busy with behind-the-scenes activities, though.

The main subject of debate at the Tribunal is the upcoming crusade, which is predicted to cause widespread destruction throughout Provençal. Indeed, this Chapter hopefully reinforces how an Ars Magica Saga meshes well with the greater events of history.

As this Chapter is set at Doissetep, the Domus Magnus of the Provençal Tribunal, you are advised to refer to the Ars Magica supplement Covenants, as that book details Doissetep. However, Covenants is not necessary to run this Chapter. Enough detail on the Covenant is provided here to manage events. A broader understanding of Doissetep imbues more color into events there, though.

News of the Tribunal

In A.D. 1207 (1346 of the Age of Aries) a Tribunal is convened by the Order of Hermes. In Provençal the Tribunal takes place at Doissetep — one of the most powerful Covenants in the Order, and Domus Magnus of Provençal. The characters may send as many Magi to the Tribunal as they wish. They may

Other Redcaps

If you have already introduced a Redcap who tends the vicinity of the characters' Covenant, or have introduced one that characters have dealt with before, you may use that Redcap here. The continuity of your Saga is much more important than the disposable characters presented in this book.

also send apprentices to be initiated. Those Magi who do not go may entrust their sigils (symbols used to vote with) to others to vote on their behalf. Select Grogms and Companions may also accompany attending Magi as protectors and advisors, although those assistants have no vote at the meeting. Experienced players may decide to play their Magus, Companion, and Grog characters if they wish many Magi and assistants to undertake the journey. Keep in mind, though, that players adopting many characters in an episode can confuse themselves and the Troupe.

THE REDCAP

The characters are probably aware of the upcoming Tribunal based on personal experience. Meetings are usually held every seven years, so each comes as no surprise, especially if characters were involved in the last one. However, characters can be reminded of the Tribunal by the visit of a Redcap, a member of House Mercere.



If characters are determined not to attend the Tribunal, the Redcap may be able to motivate them to participate, for he knows Provençal's response to the crusade will be determined at the Tribunal. If the characters want any say in their Covenant's fate, the Redcap warns, they had best attend the meeting. Otherwise a council of uncaring Magi could destroy everything the characters have worked for.

Aestrius of House Mercere

Aestrius is a Redcap. It is his role to make sure the characters' Covenant, like those of other local Magi, is able to attend the Tribunal (i.e., to ensure that nothing untoward has happened to a Covenant since the last Tribunal meeting). The characters may know Aestrius from past visits; he likes to keep tabs on young Covenants to see whether they survive their Spring Seasons. As the characters are still around, Aestrius is willing to escort them to the Tribunal Domus Magnus. In doing so Aestrius acts as harbinger for the characters' arrival, helping them enter Doissetep and ensuring due ceremony and hospitality is given them by Doissetep's often offensive hosts (see below).

Aestrius is a cynical man who bravely runs the gauntlet of the outside world, facing innumerable daily hazards: brigands,

irate toll-keepers, inquisitive roadwardens, pilgrims, vagabonds, and wild beasts. The roads he travels are seldom maintained so Aestrius must often trudge through muck and mire to Covenants in the back-of-creation. To add insult to injury, those places are often guarded by fierce and ignorant Groggs who mistake Aestrius for a leper or rogue and confront him after a grueling journey. (Aestrius often dresses in the distinctive dark gown and cape of a lazar, or leper. In doing so he may wander Provençal largely unmolested, sustained by alms.)

The drudgery of Aestrius's profession has bred bitterness in him. The more he sees of the world the more he hates the ignorance of those he meets. Indeed, Aestrius regularly witnesses the narrow-minded, Machiavellian behavior of Magi, princes, and churchmen throughout Christendom and perceives little distinction between any of them. Magi often treat Aestrius with disdain, while mundanes are often too frightened of him to offer hospitality.

Aestrius remains in House Mercere for only two reasons: fear of his superiors, and the rare opportunity to meet people who are genuinely interested in knowledge over personal gain.

Getting to the Tribunal

Even with Aestrius's help, getting to Doissetep is not easy. The characters must negotiate the treacherous mountain terrain of the Pyrenees (the mountain range that separates France from Spain), and must also face the adversities of weather and wild animals. In contrast to the smiling, populated and civilized plains, the Pyrenees are rugged and forbidding: the refuge of the defeated preservers of tradition, and the mother of brave and tenacious men. It is the agile shepherd of the Pyrenees who forms the backbone of the lowlands' armies. Not all mountaineers are admirable, though. The marches of the Pyrenees are the haunt of many brigand gangs, unemployed mercenaries who prey on the caravans of pilgrims traveling south to Santiago de Compostella and other shrines.

You may add a number of hardships and dangers for characters to face in their journey to Doissetep. The trip may be harrowing or easy; encounters and situations may be exquisitely roleplayed or simply glossed over. Regardless of how you roleplay the characters' journey, remember that Aestrius is with the characters and plays an active part in scenes.

The length of the journey to Doissetep depends on the location of your Troupe's Covenant. The map *Tribunals and Covenants in Mythic Europe* (Ars Magica, page 295) indicates the location of Doissetep, and may be used to judge the distance from your Covenant.

Aestrius

Characteristics: Intelligence (cold, clinical) +2, Perception (others' motives) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (enduring) +2, Presence (rugged) +1, Communication (gruff) -2, Dexterity (stiff-jointed) -1, Quickness (tired step) -1

Age: 56

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Redcap +4, Curse (attracts foul weather) -1, Judged Unfairly -1, Social Handicap (wears leper's garb; -3 to social rolls) -1, Enemies (Gorodon) -1

Abilities: Alertness (ambushes) 4, Direction Sense (woods) 2, Dodge (ambushes) 2, Folk Ken (pilgrims) 3, Survival (woodlands) 4, Ride (long distances) 3, Drinking (extended periods) 6, Broadsword Attack (keeping distance) 5, Broadsword Parry (holding at bay) 5, Speak Provençal (travel terms) 4, Speak Norman French (bureaucratic terms) 4, Speak Latin (scholarly terms) 6, Speak Tuscan (mercantile terms) 3, Speak Aragonese (news) 3, Speak Lombard (terms of intrigue) 4

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Crusty (Groggs) 3

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cynical +3

Weapons and Armor:

Leather Cuirass

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +6, Attack +8, Damage +11, Parry Defense +8 (Action 14)

Encumbrance: 1

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +3 (9 Action), Fatigue +1

ARRIVING AT THE COVENANT

Doissetep is strategically located upon Mount Celidar near a major Pyreneen pass, a thin trail which winds its way between the Norman county of Armagnac and the kingdom of Aragon. The hamlet of Osprey, in the foothills of mount Celidar, offers characters rest and recuperation before they tackle the mountain. The locals here speak Catalan (a cross of French and Spanish), a language much like Provençal, so characters speaking Provençal should have few difficulties. Characters speaking other languages may have to rely on sign language or creative use of magic to communicate.

To enter Doissetep itself characters must make their way up a twisting trail that climbs to and passes Fabym's Rest, from which the previously cloud-shrouded Covenant becomes visible. Fabym's Rest is high up on a narrow perch, with a dreadful fall into the dim valley at one side. Fabym's Rest is protected by a hanging rock; the perch is named after a hapless soul who met his fate here. His willowy remains are rumored to still linger in the area.

Characters may also reach Doissetep through a tunnel dug into the side of the Covenant's mountain. This entrance is usually relied upon when travelers are in a hurry or when travel to the Covenant via the pass is made dangerous by bad weather. The entrance to the tunnel is concealed by a small waterfall and

Gorodon

Characteristics: Intelligence (dim-witted) -2, Perception (glazed eyes) -1, Strength (monstrous biceps) +7, Stamina (powerful heart) +5, Presence (tufts of hair) -2, Communication (slow speaker) -2, Dexterity (thick fingers) -2, Quickness (thundering stride) +3

Age: ?

Size: +2

Virtues and Flaws: Giant Blood +5, Black Sheep (giant relations cast him out) -1, Curse of Venus (women believe him sexually potent when he wants nothing but to be left alone) -2, Haunted (by a Grog accidentally killed in an elevator accident) -2

Abilities: Speak Giant (drinking terms) 4, Speak Provençal (insults) 3, Climb (tunnel walls) 5, Guile (illnesses) 3, Sing (work songs) 2, Brawl (tackling) 4, Bargain (bribes for elevator rides) 3, Craft (simple mechanical devices) 5, Drinking (guzzle) 6, Chain Attack (when angry) 5, Tug-of-War (dirty tricks) 8, Quiet Talk (receiving orders) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Quick to Anger (Doissetep's Grog) 1

Personality Traits: Short-tempered +3, Patient -2, Lazy +2

Weapons and Armor:

Chain Totals: First Strike +10, Attack +5, Damage +22

Encumbrance: 0

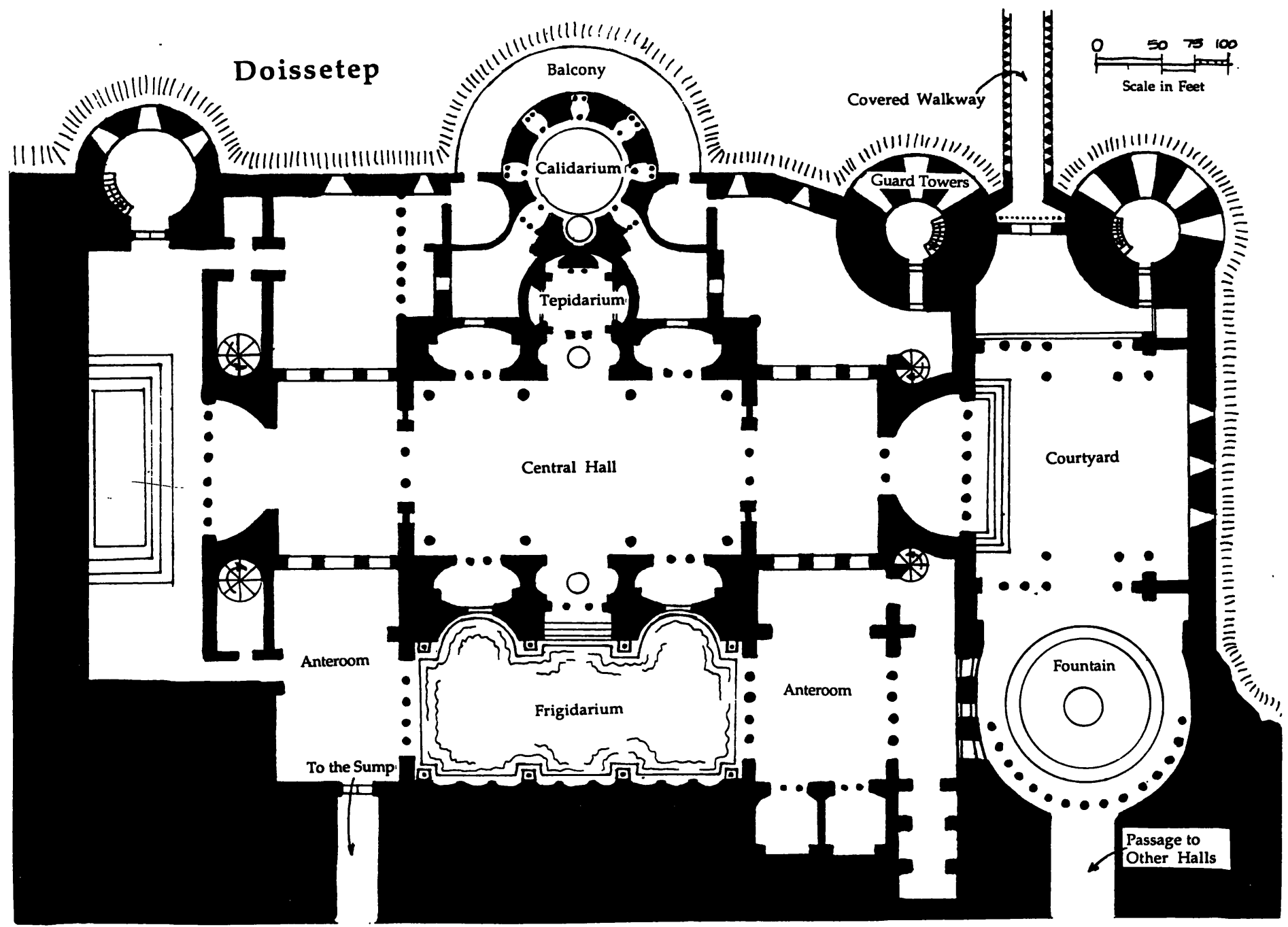
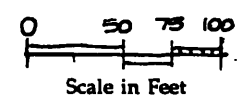
Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action), Fatigue +5



Doissetep



CHAPTER ONE

is guarded by Covenant Groggs. Within the tunnel is a chamber and vertical shaft, up which a primitive elevator carries passengers to the Covenant proper. The elevator consists of a rickety wooden platform raised by pulleys and rusted chains. The elevator chamber is operated and guarded by Gorodon, an immense ogre-like man.

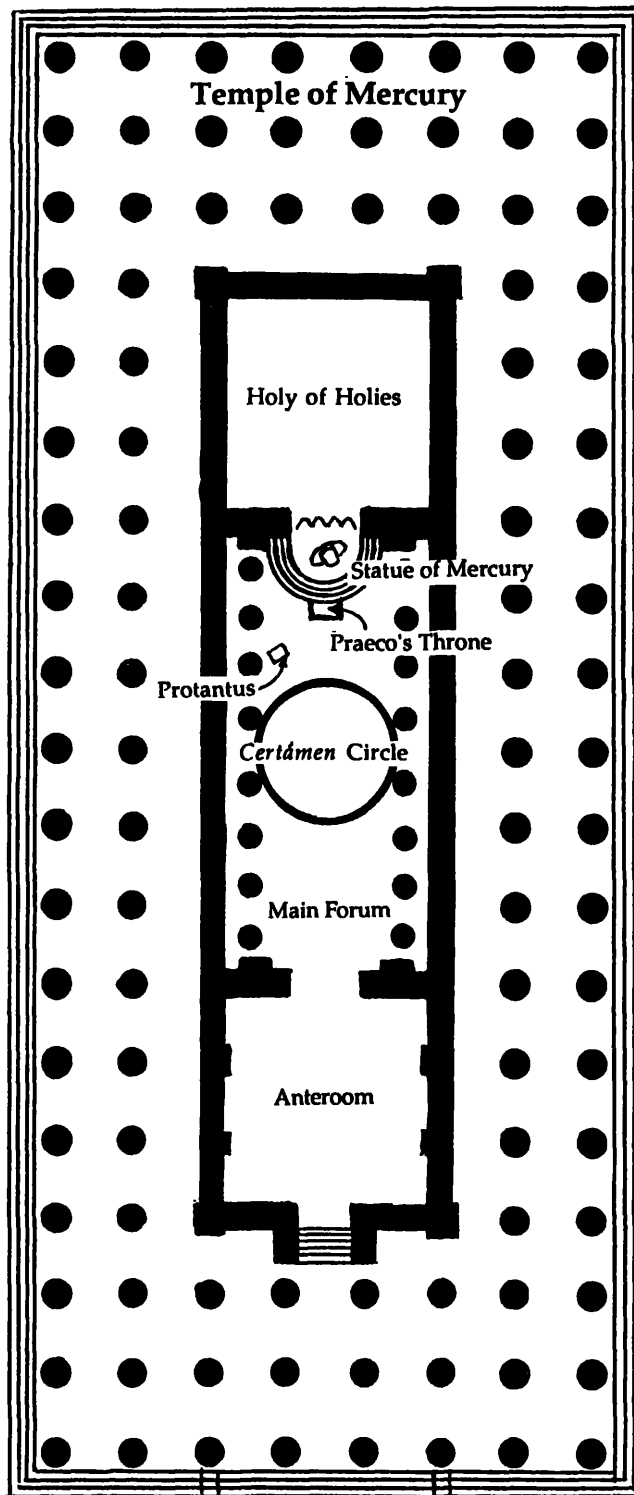
The tunnel entrance and elevator are known to Aestrius but he is not likely to lead characters this way. The elevator is unsafe; besides, Aestrius made an enemy of Gorodon during his last visit to Doissetep. (Aestrius, angry that Gorodon once refused to lift him on the platform, introduced a persistent coven-woman to the giant—a barren woman who desperately wanted to bear a child.) If the characters insist on using the tunnel, or the mountain way is hampered by bad weather, Aestrius reluctantly takes the characters through the secret pass. Convincing Gorodon to spare Aestrius and lift the group requires characters to use coercion and subtlety (i.e., compared stress rolls of the characters' Social Abilities and Gorodon's Personality Traits).

Doissetep

Doissetep is an ancient and immense complex built from a cluster of cliff-top monasteries thrust onto, or carved into, Mount Celidar. The Covenant's gloomy form is darkened further by the rock walls of the giant chasm enclosing it. Enclosed wooden walkways criss-cross between its many labyrinthine towers and peaks. Fabym's Rest allows a clear view of its dark bulk rising atop the conical mountain.

Doissetep's high perch keeps the Covenant beyond the prying eyes of the local peasantry, so they cannot see the strange events which occur (and are about to occur) on the mountain. After all, it's only logical that the bizarre occurrences which transpire when a large number of Magi meet should be kept far away from the eyes of mundanes. Even if some adventurous mundane dares approach Doissetep, the entire complex is surrounded by a series of massive battlements to keep out any who threaten.

The interior of the Covenant reflects eclectic borrowing from many cultures, the imaginations of many Classical scholars, and the frightening grandeur of unrestrained magic at work. Indeed, the Covenant is a romantic and sometimes megalomaniac vision of both the inhabitants' heritage and the triumphs of their exotic adventures; minarets, Gothic towers, and Romanesque rotundas all appear here. Furthermore, Doissetep's Magi have maintained an unbroken cultural tradition since Roman times and many of the Covenant's buildings reflect this. While the exterior is cold and desolate, the layout of the interiors varies from the warm decadence of the bath halls to the freezing darkness of the dungeons. Among the many-columned halls, corridors, and passageways are numerous niches and grottoes. All are full of alcoves housing statuary of both obscure Classical figures and ambiguous mythological creatures, some benign, some terrifyingly malevolent.



Scale in Feet

For the layout of different places in Doissetep, refer to the two maps provided. One shows many of the important sites of the Covenant; the other details the Temple of Mercury, where the Tribunal meeting is held. If you need to detail or elaborate on the many other rooms and regions of Doissetep, feel free to create them as needed. Certainly Doissetep is large and strange enough to house any weird area you wish, and few places need ever be visited twice (or ever be found again). The text that follows also details some rooms not depicted on the maps. These entries can be used to detail any scattered rooms you might want characters to see or have encounters in.

TEMPLE OF MERCURY

The Tribunal meeting itself takes place over four nights in Doissetep's primary building, the beautiful Roman Temple of Mercury. The frescoed roof of this huge, elongated, rectangular building is supported by rows of caryatid pillars. Inside, tiled mosaics on the floor and walls shine as moonbeams strike down from the skylights. A gilded statue of Mercury sits at the far end of the hall. There is a huge decorative curtain behind the statue, and behind the curtain is the Holy of Holies, forbidden (on pain of death) to all but the priesthood. Flames burn in Olympic bowls set at intervals around the forum.

The Holy of Holies is a secret scroll from Roman times; it predates Christ, and is said to have been carried by Mercury himself. The scroll's writings may only be understood by those religiously devoted to Mercury, as the priests of Mercury are (at

least in name). The scroll has a rating of 10 in the Roman History Ability, and offers a Hermes History score of 8. However, to read the scroll properly requires an Intelligence + Scribe Latin stress roll of 10+, not to mention the aforementioned religious devotion. Those who fail the roll simply cannot read the scroll. Those that Botch the roll, or are of another devotion, must make a Magic Resistance roll of 20+ (with Mentem as the Form), and a Natural Resistance Intelligence stress roll of 6+ or go blind (as per the Physical Flaw, *Ars Magica*, p. 78).

In the middle of the temple, a 30-foot wide circle is inscribed on ceiling and floor. The bottom circle is part of the decorative mosaic. The upper one is marked out by a blackened and dented surface within its circumference. This circle is strongly magical, and is used to contain the phantasms and magic of *Certámen*. Any *Certámen* staged at the Tribunal is waged within this circle; the magics used are contained by the perimeter of the ring. A collaborative Mercurian ritual strengthens the ring's phenomenal powers of containment, powers which reach up to the ceiling. When *Certámen* is not taking place the ring acts as the forum for orators to address those present.

Robed Magi attending a Tribunal stand in solemnity beneath the temple's roof while the Praeco sits on a throne, which in turn rests upon a dais just before the statue of Mercury. Protantus, the ruling Quaesitor, sits near the Praeco, presiding over the votes.



The Priests

The "Priests of Mercury" still use the temple as their council hall. These "priests" are pagan Magi descended from those who originally presided over the temple in ancient times. They are greatly respected within Doissetep and make up the core of the "conservative" faction (see below). The priests maintain many ancient practices, including the cremation in purifying flames of all those who die at Doissetep (that is, those who are not Christian or Muslim). The priests are also practitioners of some Mercurian magic, a form of collaborative magic detailed in *The Tempest*, the second book in the Four Seasons series.

Omens are held in great esteem among Doissetep's priesthood. Omens which come from the east are good, as all the principles of life and heat come from there; omens that appear in the west are bad, as the sun declines in that direction. Whenever the temple is struck by lightning (and it frequently is, due to its aura, location, and unusually high conductivity) a lamb is immediately sacrificed upon the altar to appease Mercury. If a priest is killed by lightning during such a sacrifice, that priest is believed offensive to the gods, and the corpse is hurled down the mountainside lest it contaminate the ashes of other honored folk.

THE DINING HALL

This is a huge circular hall under a massive dome. In this hall, and the bath halls (below), most of the informal affairs of the Tribunal meeting take place. Indeed, more is decided through private discussions than through the arguments of the forum. Seating in the dining hall is deliberately circular so that no one Magus takes precedence over another.

THE BATH HALLS

Despite the bleakness of the Pyrenees and the depths of the ignorant age in which Doissetep stands, the imagination of generations of covenfolk has crafted the bath halls. The baths are heated by underground lava flows, and here the covenfolk maintain the Romano-Islamic tradition of bathing. The magic of the Magi has created a palace of marble halls, a rambling complex of classical architecture. The interconnecting, many-columned halls and chambers are arranged on undulating ground in several interrupted parallel rows, positioned in courtyards and ranked in long perspectives. Shallow pools, each about four feet deep, are placed within these arcades. Shallow steps lead out of the pools, while a wide walkway, backed by parallel rows of columns, spans the circumference of each pool.

Steeped in classical learning and iconography derived largely from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the interior of the bath halls is a sumptuous prelude to the distant Renaissance. The Romanesque walls and ceiling are covered with sculptural representations of classical mythology — of the bacchanal, and of nymphs, nereids, satyrs, centaurs, and harpies.



Characters may reach the bath halls from across a covered walkway, down from the halls-above, or past a large fountain from nearby halls. Guard towers, created in the last hundred years, protect this area as they do most areas of the Covenant. From the courtyard visitors to the baths pass into a wide central hall, with anterooms for disrobing. From here they may pass into the *tepidarium* (warm baths), thence to the *calidarium* (hot baths) and thence to the *frigidarium* (cool baths) for a refreshing change of temperature. From the *calidarium*, windows give a view over an outside balcony, then over the cliff side to other towers and crags.

Once in the bath halls covenfolk consider the nudity of both men and women inconsequential. However, visitors may be shocked by such lack of humility.

THE SUMP

At the far, dark end of the bath halls is a deep pool, drain, or well inhabited by the water-loving Familiars of the Covenant. Like a dank hippopotamus-pool in a modern zoo, the drab walls of the pool are stained with algae. The pool seems very deep, with a brick and stone island arising from the murk. A large circular drainpipe feeds the pool with dark water, a drain that erratically gurgles, dries and suddenly floods as though responding to some distant lavatory of incontinent giants. What exactly dwells in this water is subject to conjecture. However, the barred gate that cordons off the area seems reason enough to not learn what lies beyond.

THE LIBRARY

The center, focus, and physical high point of Doissetep is its library. Based around a central atrium and adorned with beautiful stained glass windows, Doissetep's library is arguably the largest in Christendom. Indeed, for the Magi of Doissetep the "dark ages" of ignorance are actually far from dark. At Doissetep the period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the present (the early 13th century) has been a time of incredible intellectual vitality. It's been a time of impassioned dialogue between barbarian civilizations, Romans, and Christian-Eastern elements; a time of journeys and encounters, as a result of which the covenfolk have amassed a great wealth of information and legend.

At every opportunity, in every corner, along the walls, on shelves and tables, on benches and lecterns, and piled high on flagstones, are books. A light covering of dust lies on all the volumes. These books are often magical. Some open and close of their own accord. Some shine in the dark. Still others flutter with bright, small lights, are invested with rainbows, repeatedly flood with their own ink, blow open in unseen draughts, or burn with an unconsuming flame. Many texts are no more than wooden tablets bound in leather, or simple scrolls faithfully copied from ancient times. Some texts are huge, as much as 10 feet wide, and bound in thick embossed leather.



Many of the books are attributed to Hermes or Mercurius Trismegistus as well as to Pseudo-Dionysus, Pythagoras, and Zoroaster, all of whom are legendary characters of questionable existence. Works of Plato, Arab alchemy, and the Hebraic Cabala can also be found among the dusty archives, as can bestiaries, herbals, almanacs, and travelogues.

The library is also dark, to protect its books. Occasionally lanterns can be seen passing among the many tiers, but open flames are banned from the immense chamber.

Ladders are used to reach high books, which are then dropped into nets and winched down to the ground by a long rope. The feat of organization and engineering that the library represents is truly staggering. However, no good catalog system has been invented for the storehouse (alphabetical cataloging is a Renaissance invention). The dozen scribes who work in the library are therefore indispensable if one wishes to gain anything from it. The scribes have peculiar quirks and tolerance is required of them to find anything. The scribes have a tendency to mutter and let their minds wander when they come to certain items of esoterica. They also hate to be rushed and must be persuaded to help find an item. Together the scribes have a nearly complete knowledge of what books are contained in the library.

Doissetep also has a secret library which is restricted to the *Consilium Maximus* (leaders of the Covenant). The high library contains the Covenant's most powerful books of secret lore (some say diabolist tomes). However, this valuable hoard is not guarded. Neither is it hidden in the normal fashion. In truth, its books are hidden in plain sight, on the shelves of the ordinary library! However, since only the library's scribes know where anything is, others are unlikely to find any dark or powerful tome. But, if a Magus browses long enough (maybe a week) who knows what might be found?

Access to Doissetep's library is restricted to Magi and Covenant scribes.

THE CHARACTERS' RECEPTION

The characters' journey to Doissetep may be fraught with many dangers and pitfalls, some of which can befall them at Doissetep's door. At some point, though, the characters will enter and be received by the Covenant.

If they approach via the "front door," the characters are greeted by the aged, crotchety *factotum major* (chief butler), Valenus. Though a mundane, Valenus is empowered with much authority and respect at Doissetep. His task is to meet and deal with visitors to the Covenant, sparing resident Magi and other *consortis* the bother of dealing with strangers. Given his gruff veneer and cold nature, Valenus is difficult to get past, even for visiting Magi. Valenus virtually ignores arriving Grogs and Companions and is at best inhospitable to Magi. He demands to see Magi's sigils and requires proof of their Cov-

enant symbol, which he pores over for an inordinately long time. Any interruption of Valenus's inspection only angers him and makes him start again from the beginning.

With Aestrius's help the characters may expedite their entry of Doissetep. The Redcap knows Valenus has secretly been stealing and hoarding *vis* for years, anticipating the day when Doissetep's Magi might turn against him or decide he is no longer needed. At that point he plans to buy himself out of trouble or into a comfortable residency with no duties to perform at the Covenant. However, if Doissetep's Magi ever learned of Valenus's embezzlement they would surely destroy him after a long and terrible torture. Valenus therefore turns pale when Aestrius is called upon to help get past the gatekeeper, whispering in Valenus's ear. Aestrius is willing to share what he knows of Valenus with the characters, but asks that they keep it quiet. "After all," he explains, "information like that is invaluable in time of need."

If the characters enter Doissetep through the tunnel under the mountain, they must negotiate with Gorodon, and are met at the top of the elevator shaft by Valenus. Gorodon signals Valenus that strangers are coming and must be checked out.

With or without Aestrius's aid, characters are eventually allowed into the Covenant and solemnly led to opulent quarters.

Events Before the Tribunal

Depending on how much interaction and intrigue you want at the Tribunal, the meeting can begin in a few nights or on the night of the characters' arrival. Regardless of how early characters arrive, there's plenty for all to do.

Magi have been arriving at Doissetep for many weeks now. Most are from throughout Provençal, while some have traveled from remote islands or are visiting as non-voting observers from distant Tribunals such as Novgorod and the Levant. Informal feasts take place almost every night, leading up to the Tribunal's official convening date.

During the day there is much informal banter as well as squabbling, slander, and bribery. Various Magi eat meals together in the dining hall and discuss issues in preparation for formal nightly debates. However, the sinister locations of such informal meetings and the doom-laden topics discussed make conversations guarded.

The Tribunal is a rare occasion for Magi to meet socially with others of their own kind. Indeed, this is an opportunity for characters to meet and learn about other members of the Order of Hermes. This is also an ideal opportunity for characters to become reacquainted with people they've met in the past, be they friends or enemies. How far you want to take such encounters is entirely up to you. Information is provided below on encounters characters can stumble into, but these encounters lack the immediacy of those you create, encounters involving people characters have worked or clashed with before.

Advance days of the Tribunal also offer a golden opportunity for you to introduce rumors as catalysts for later stories in your Saga. Rumors abound about the impending crusade, about faeries in the forests of Provençal, and about how the local Church might deal with crusaders (i.e., that Bishop Merdici spends little time in Foix, and that his harried and somewhat liberal canons perform his duties and may be reasoned with). Rumors even offer you a chance to involve usually elusive characters in social circumstances. Rumors can be related in quick conversations so quiet Magi may learn them and quickly retreat back into their own little worlds.

There are many things Grog and Companions can do before the Tribunal. Like squires at a tourney, they may proudly announce their allegiance to their peers. They may also socialize with equals from other Covenants, sharing stories, commiserating, and making friends and enemies. Examples of Storyguide characters that Grog and Companions can interact with are provided later.

The Tribunal Meeting

At dusk on Wednesday, the high day of Mercury, a single clear bell rings out; this marks the official start of the Tribunal meeting. The doors of the Temple of Mercury are thrown open and the Praeco and attending Quaesitor are ceremoniously ushered to their thrones. "Priests" sweep the dust away before

the pair's stride, an age-old ceremony of forgotten symbolism. Magi attending the Tribunal are required to stand in silence about the temple. Those too infirm to stand are seated. This moment is the first time the characters see all their wizardly acquaintances of the past few days assembled in one place. It is a moment of great awe and you should describe, if possible, the appearance of all significant Magi. Most are clad in a dazzling array of exotic regalia, and carry fantastic magic items: staves, wands, and other strange paraphernalia. Characters may wear what they please, but may receive even less attention than Spring Covenant attendants deserve if their raiment is particularly tattered. Even if characters don't know all the Magi present they may recognize the more notable ones with Intelligence + Hermes Lore simple rolls of 6+, depending on the notoriety of the Magus in question.

Though most people in the room are voting Magi, some are not. Some Magi present do not vote and are on errands for their Covenants, as messengers or protectors for certain Magi. Even some Familiars are allowed in the Temple of Mercury, provided they can behave and are not too large.

RITUALS AT THE TRIBUNAL

The meetings of the Tribunal resemble the gatherings of the Venetian Republic or a Papal Conclave, although proceedings are always interspersed with Mercurian rituals and bless-



The First Night

INITIATIONS

During the first night apprentice characters who have passed the Gauntlet (the test to determine whether apprentices are ready for transcendence) may be initiated into the Order. Such characters have an opportunity to witness twelve Storyguide characters being similarly initiated. The ritual is overseen by the attending Quaesitor, Protantus, and at least one other member of the master's House. The master must first declare the apprentice's competence. The master declares, proudly or not depending on the master's personality, how well the apprentice has fulfilled studies. Sometimes this pronouncement is even made in a humorous manner. The Quaesitor then asks the apprentice to swear an oath upholding the Order of Hermes, and the Quaesitor clearly states:

ings. These blessings take the form of burnt offerings, usually sweet herbs that burn in the Olympic bowls arranged around the temple. Sometimes pacts between Magi are sealed by the shedding of blood into these bowls. This blood is carefully extracted from the oath-takers' necks, a vestige of earlier traditions of human sacrifice now outlawed. Libation oil is also often poured into bowls to bless a decree or a forthcoming debate.

All these rituals may strike outsiders, particularly those Magi devoted to Christianity, as dubiously pagan. After all, Mercury is considered pagan to the Church. Furthermore, pious Magi may point out that, besides being the patron of knowledge and the magical arts, Mercury is the patron deity of usurers, liars, and thieves: not necessarily a fitting power for Magi to pay homage to. How Doissetep's priests take this criticism is determined by how polite the complaining character is. If the character makes a scene over pagan acts the Magus may be asked and then forced to leave the Tribunal. This is the home Covenant of the Praeco, after all, and he will not have the traditional services of his home criticized. If the complaining character is polite he or she receives an apology for the offense but nothing changes. It's up to the character whether continued pagan ceremonies are too much to bear.

TRIBUNAL SCHEDULE

Addressing those present as "friends," the Tribunal Praeco, Oxioun of House Tyalus, begins the proceedings by determining the schedule of what shall be discussed. Any Magus from Provençal may suggest a topic or motion. Many subjects are touched on, though those of little interest to the Praeco may be given only cursory attention.

The customary first order of business is the initiation of apprentices into the Order. Magi announce at the beginning of the meeting whether they have apprentices to be initiated. Once all topics and rituals of initiation are announced the Praeco determines the order in which they are addressed. If the Praeco wants a particular apprentice to be able to vote, that person receives the ritual of initiation. If Oxioun finds an apprentice or the apprentice's master offensive in any way, the Praeco may specifically delay the apprentice's initiation until other matters have been voted on, denying the prospective Magus a vote.

The nighttime meetings continue until the Praeco disbands each session or until dawn, whichever comes first. On the succeeding night, after dinner, the next meeting begins. The Tribunal as a whole only ends when the Praeco determines that every important issue has been concluded through voting. In this instance the Tribunal takes four nights.

During the four heated meetings of the Tribunal the following issues are discussed:

First Night	Initiations, then news
Second Night	Personal conflicts between Magi
Third Night	Conflicts over land and resources
Fourth Night	Affairs with the mundanes. Special debate: the crusade

Quaesitor Guards

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

Age: 30s

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Quaesitor +1, Obligation (duty to senior) -1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (proclaiming rules) 5, Speak Latin (legislation) 5, Scribe Latin (orders) 3, Magic Theory (translating spells) 3, Hermes Lore (hierarchy) 3, Hermetic Law (legal precedents) 5, Hermes History (legal processes) 4, Church Knowledge (heresy) 3, Diplomacy (negotiation) 3, Intimidation (Magi) 4, Search (hidden evidence) 3, *Parma Magica* (Vim) 3, Broadsword Attack (pursuing) 5, Broadsword Parry (ambushes) 3, Dodge (wild attacks) 4, Quiet Talk (about troublemakers) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Stoic on Duty (young Magi) 1

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Devoted +3

Techniques and Forms: Creo 3, Intéllego 10, Muto 3, Perdo 3, Rego 5, Animal 0, Aquam 3, Auram 4, Córporum 8, Herbam 3, Ignem 5, Imágonem 7, Mentem 8, Terram 0, Vim 6

Spell Casting Speed: -3

Twilight Points: 0

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: Any required Intéllego Mentem spell up to Level 25 and any other required spell up to Level 15.

Wizard's Sigil: n/a

Weapons and Armor:

Ring Mail Hauberk

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +7, Damage +11, Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -3

Disrupting the Tribunal

While in session the Tribunal and its administrators brook no interference in affairs. Magi in attendance are required to remain in the Temple of Mercury until the Praeco draws events to a close. Pardon from a session may only be granted by the Praeco or the attending senior Quaesitor, and reentry is only allowed by permission of the figure who excused the initial exit. If the Praeco or Quaesitor does not want the Magus in question to vote on a matter, permission to reenter can be denied. However, the supplicant can leave her sigil with another to ensure that her number, if not voice, at least counts.

As exiting a Tribunal session can be politically detrimental for Magi, apprentice Redcaps are usually employed as messengers to the outside world. These apprentices cannot be sent on a mission beyond the walls of the Domus Magnus, but can bear messages, such as those from waiting *consortis*, from and back into a session. The availability of a messenger during a Tribunal can be limited, as some Magi make a point of monopolizing a messenger's time to insure that others may not employ him. Also, apprentice Redcaps may be few and far between at the Domus Magnus. Magi attending Tribunal can bring such apprentices with them, though. This year's Tribunal meeting has three Redcap apprentices in attendance, two from Doissetep (who tend to ignore summons from Magi of other Covenants), and one from Bellaquin.

To ensure that no one leaves a Tribunal session without permission, two junior Quaesitoris guard the exit of the temple hall. They are the assistants of the presiding Quaesitor and also run errands for him or seek outside aid if needed. Profiles for these guards are provided in another insert.

Use of magic in Tribunal, except by the Praeco, Quaesitor, or anyone given special permission by the administrators is expressly forbidden. Anyone caught casting a spell is expelled from the Tribunal, as discussed below. If charges of magic use are leveled by one attendant against another and cannot be substantiated, each Magus is ordered silenced (again, as discussed below). Such a threat to both Magi involved acts to deter attendants from making excessive accusations, and helps ensure that Tribunal events run smoothly.

If any Magus repeatedly speaks or acts out of turn or angers the administrators of the Tribunal, that Magus may be silenced. A silenced Magus may no longer speak until allowed to, but may still vote. If the offending Magus continues to disturb the Tribunal or does something else out of turn, that person may be removed from the discussion area. That Magus may leave his or her sigil with another, but has no voice or personal vote until called back, if at all, by the Praeco.

The ultimate punishment that may be delivered upon a Magus is expulsion from the Tribunal. The expelled Magus may leave his or her sigil behind, but cannot be called back into any session. The only way such a person may remain involved in the Tribunal is if the Tribunal is declared void or invalid by the Quaesitor. As the Praeco running this meeting largely respects the Code of Hermes and has some backing from the chief Quaesitor, the Tribunal probably stands.

Complete information on the running of Tribunals may be found in the Order of Hermes supplement.

"I, Protantus, filius of Germanicus, a Quaesitor in good standing, hereby recognize you as a Magus of the Order of Hermes. What shall be the Magus's name?"

The apprentice's master replies, "this is [Hermetic name], filius/filia of [master's own name], follower of [name of master's House]." The Quaesitor then formally welcomes the apprentice to the Order by Hermetic name, perhaps adding a few personal words of welcome.

The apprentice's Hermetic name is officially chosen by the master, though many masters allow their apprentices to choose their names. The master, now a *parens* (Hermetic parent), presents the apprentice, now a Magus and a *filius/filia* (Hermetic son or daughter), with a sigil, a lifetime symbol of the initiate's membership in the Order (unless of course the initiate belongs to House Tremere, in which case the initiate's sigil must be won from the master).

NEWS

The second major event of the Tribunal's first session is the relation of news. Each Covenant, including the characters', must give an account of its latest discoveries and activities. These often boastful accounts are given by the chief representative of each Covenant and provide a tantalizing taste of stories you may prepare for the characters in the future.

Much is said of events in the outside world, especially news concerning the crusade. All told, such news of mundanes is related with a certain air of pessimism. This is so for two reasons: because of the grim threat the crusade poses, and because Covenants try to avoid sounding like they have extensive relations with mundanes, which is frowned upon by the Order. Such news of mundanes is a fine opportunity for you to provide full details on the upcoming crusade, as detailed in the introduction of this book and in the *Ars Magica* supplement *Mistridge*. You may create other events as needed; characters have undoubtedly heard many rumors but may now hear concrete information, as well as many new tales.

After news is shared by each Covenant the Tribunal session of the first night is usually ended by the Praeco, regardless of the time remaining before dawn. This early break offers attending Magi the opportunity to mull over news heard, and decide how it applies to issues they wish to raise on succeeding nights.

The Second Night

Personal conflicts between various Magi are scheduled to be officially resolved on the second night of the Tribunal. Unless the young characters have antagonized or have been antagonized by Magi that are present, they are unlikely to be personally involved in these conflicts.

Other conflicts arise over a plethora of subjects, including accusations of theft, murder, oath-breaking, breaking the Code of Hermes, or merely impugning personal honor. Due to the militant and competitive nature of Doissetep, most of these

conflicts are resolved through spectacular bouts of *Certámen*. If characters in your group are going to be involved in a dispute you should brush up on the *Certámen* rules. A special magic circle 30 feet in diameter, as described under *The Temple of Hermes*, has been created in the middle of the temple for such duels.

If you want characters to get involved in disputes, and therefore *Certámen*, there are several means by which charges can be leveled against them. Here are a couple of ideas:

- Maybe characters disputing within your Troupe's Covenant can only resolve their differences by engaging in public *Certámen*, the loser forever giving up his claim against the other. Such a conflict is prime material for roleplaying and drama.

- Maybe one of the players' Companions originated from the territory of another Covenant and that Covenant claims rights to the Companion. Since mundanes are not allowed to partake in the Tribunal, possession of the *consor* (and therefore character) may be resolved through *Certámen*. Of course, if the Magus defending the Companion loses the battle the Companion character must contend with moving to another Covenant. However, that move and any escape from it provides the genesis of another story.

Regardless of the events of the second night, whether they involve characters in disputes and *Certámen* or not, the characters are at least exposed to the way Magi in the Order behave. It quickly becomes apparent that Magi, though learned and powerful, are still human. Some are little better than children, crying and whining for what they want, some are aloof and unconcerned about petty personal affairs, while some are admirable and try to resolve personal problems fairly.

The Third Night

The third night of the Tribunal is devoted to resolving conflicts over Covenant land and resources. As with personal conflicts, the subject matter of these conflicts varies widely and whole Covenants, like individual Magi, can behave in childish or mature ways.

Certainly several Covenants have grievances to raise against their neighbors. Some are suggested in the text to come but many can be created and described by you for the characters' entertainment; young characters are not likely to be involved in many if any disputes. If you need it, here's an example of a dispute characters can witness: Magi from Mistridge complain that those from Windgraven have been stealing *vis* supplies. As Windgraven, a paranoid Winter Covenant, is not in attendance, the Praeco rules in favor of Mistridge by default and awards the Covenant full rights to the *vis* source.

As with the personal conflicts of the second night, you can create situations in which charges are leveled against the characters' Covenant. Maybe another Covenant is offended by or jealous of the characters and wants something from them. Maybe in your own stories you have already set up a rivalry

between Covenants that may lead to a conflict here. If not, a few dispute ideas are provided below to draw characters into political turmoil.

- The location of the characters' Spring Covenant can threaten the territorial rights of older Covenants. Most of the best locations for Covenants — mountain tops, islands, and places with high magical Auras — are probably already taken by existing Covenants. However, some Covenants are often jealous or resentful of anyone near them, and demand concessions for rights they feel have been infringed on.

- Maybe another Covenant, probably one dominated by Jerbiton Magi, realizes that the characters' Covenant is located on Church land (as discussed in the Introduction of this book). The other Covenant therefore levels charges of fraternization with mundanes. This is probably the first the characters have heard of the location of their Covenant, and the idea undoubtedly seems absurd. To support their claim the Jerbitons produce a map which shows Church lands; the location of the characters' Covenant is clearly within those bounds.

The Jerbitons' charges lose impetus, however, when questions arise as to how the Magi acquired this map and information, and when inquiries are made into the extent of the Jerbitons' involvement in mundane affairs. The case also loses momentum with the intervention of Bellaquin Covenant, which itself is a virtual fiefdom of its local lord. As Bellaquin is located on the land of a mundane, it pressures the Jerbitons into silence, thus protecting both itself and the characters. (This tenuous alliance may also lead to future alliances between the characters and the Magi of Bellaquin — see below.)

Regardless of the origins of disputes between Covenants, all are resolved in the same manner as are personal disputes: *Certámen*. A representative from each Covenant steps into the *Certámen* ring of the Temple of Mercury; the victor wins the dispute.

If the characters don't have a hope of winning a *Certámen* against another Covenant they had better find allies to help them (see *Gaining Allies*, below). Otherwise they may lose important *vis* rights or other privileges. (Ironically, Covenants fighting over the characters' land are actually fighting over land owned by the Church.)

How won or lost conflicts between Covenants affect your Saga is up to you and the rest of the Troupe. The characters' Covenant may gain an important source of *vis*, may gain trade access through another Covenant's lands, or may gain rights to mundane villages for the recruitment of covenfolk. Of course, they may lose these privileges, and many more. Keep in mind the future events of the Saga, though. If loss of a major *vis* source might critically injure the Covenant you should tone down that loss so the characters can at least face the dangers yet to come. They do have a crusade to deal with, after all. Should characters do something truly rash, punishing them with a bitter loss is justified and teaches them a lesson in prudence for the future.

The Fourth Night

On the fourth night of the Tribunal dealings with mundanes are discussed. Everyone at the meeting knows of the impending crusade, and everyone has heard many ideas on how to deal with it. At the Praeco's suggestion all matters other than the crusade are put aside. Even that one subject of debate makes for a long night, and if characters complain that other affairs are being neglected, those characters face a crowded room of cold stares.

FACTIONS WITHIN THE TRIBUNAL

There are several factions forming around the crusade issue; however, two emerge as the most influential.

The Procrustean League

The Covenant of Bellaquin supports one faction, a radical lobby group seeking allies in most Covenants attending the Tribunal. Bellaquin's followers are called the Procrustean League. The Procrustean League believes that only open war with the Church will preserve the Provençal Tribunal and the Order of Hermes from the impending crusade.

The League realizes that the Catholic Church has no real grip on Provençal, and believes the Church can be beaten. There are many heresies at work in Provençal, and the Cathar heresy is very popular in educated circles all over Mythic Europe. Indeed, many nobles support the Cathars, so the heretics have considerable political clout. The League therefore wants to firmly tie the Order's banner to that of Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, a staunch supporter of the Cathars and opponent of the crusade. Such an alliance would come naturally to Bellaquin, for the Count already acknowledges Bellaquin as a feudal vassal and invites its members to his banquets, weddings, and jousts.

The Procrustean League further believes the coming crusade will be the biggest watershed in Hermetic history since the Schism War, striking as it does at the Order's greatest Tribunal. By this logic they justify war with the Church. In Bellaquin's view the Provençal Tribunal cannot afford to be lost. They claim Provençal is the only Tribunal in mainland Christendom to have constant contact with Muslim civilization. This contact, they say, provides the Order with links to such remote countries as Persia and even India. Through this link, exotic merchandise is allowed to pour into Toulouse and western Mythic Europe. The League further claims the Tribunal is a rare medium for foreign and advanced thought, a fragile medium that cannot be jeopardized. With Provençal's political ties, it is said, comes the new philosophy of the Platonist Avicenna, so different from that of Averroes the Aristotelian, and invaluable to Hermetic knowledge. The loss of the Provençal Tribunal would mean the loss of these resources, and maybe in turn the loss of the Order of Hermes.

The League also claims that a final confrontation with the Church will strengthen the Order. Bellaquin claims that Magi can finally come out in the open and, by supporting the persecuted Cathars, gain the support rather than disdain of mundanes. Consultation with the wisest military chiefs shows that the forces of Toulouse, if united, may well triumph over the crusade, but only with the help of wizardry.

Southern French nobility calculate that, with magical aid, they can beat the crusaders. It's guessed that most northern feudal nobility likely to join the crusade will reckon on a normal 40-day sally into the country, after which they will pack up and go home. Forty days is all the military service a non-mercenary knight need give his liege, and it's guessed that few will jeopardize holdings back home for mere glory abroad. It's also assumed that northern invaders will lose their stomach for battle when the south proves resistant. Even in the case of a brief invasion only the plains of Provençal will suffer the brunt of damage, which in the end is inconsequential to the Procrustean League. According to them, only the foolish in the Order would set up a Covenant in an open plain, so not a single Covenant's lands will be touched. The League claims the Order has nothing to lose by joining the mundane armies of the south.

Some members of the Procrustean League further justify war with the Church, claiming the Pope is the Anti-Christ. Thus, they claim, by fighting the Pope the Order will purge the world of diabolism, the greatest curse faced by the Order. Secretly, many of those who believe the Pope is evil also believe Doissetep's shadowy *Consilium Maximus*, or inner council, is made up of diabolists. Magi believing this only admit their suspicions to others who earn their confidence.

Given these convincing arguments, Bellaquin hopes others will follow its suit, take a stand against the Church once and for all, and proclaim the power and right of the Order of Hermes.

(For your reference, not all members of the League are Cathars. Some are Christians, but all Cathar supporters at the Tribunal support the League. Most of the League's members are from Houses Jerbiton, Tremere, and Tylalus.)

Doissetep's Opposition

The second major force in the crusade debate is embodied almost entirely by Magi from Doissetep. These Magi, led by the seven Magi of Doissetep's *Consilium Maximus*, all vote the same; their number makes them a force to be reckoned with.

Doissetep's spy network helps its Magi subtly control almost everything going on at the Tribunal. In truth the *Consilium Maximus* pretends to be the last of the Romans and secretly wishes for Doissetep to be the head of a *Great Pax*, a secret military, civil, social, and cultural force dominating not only the Order, but Christendom itself. They dislike the insecurity of medieval life. Indeed, they have seen all forms of barbarian civilizations pass beneath the shadow of the Pyrenees and don't relish the chaos they've witnessed. The *Consilium Maximus* believes the evolution of mundane man only defies

the *renovatio imperii* they have planned. The leaders of Doissetep despise mundanes, but recognize that now is not the time to act against them.

Rather, the *Consilium Maximus* believes the Order should retreat from the crusade, leaving the mundanes to fight among themselves. After the war is over Doissetep's leaders believe they might take over where only ruins stand. Thus, the Magi of Doissetep vote directly against the Procrustean League.

If characters think about it, they probably realize that hiding from the crusade does them no good in the end. Only powerful, secluded Covenants can hope to distance themselves from the crusade. Young Covenants, like the characters', lack such defenses and will have to face witch-hunters. It's a chilling irony if characters are coerced to vote with Doissetep against their better sense.

Other Magi also recognize what Doissetep is up to. Notably, the outlander Sarimarcus speaks up against Doissetep. Sarimarcus is a visiting Magus from the Rhine Tribunal. He has other business to attend to in Provençal (as the characters soon learn), but does not want to miss the opportunity of watching a foreign Tribunal meeting.

As a solution to the debate Sarimarcus suggests that faeries may assist the Order. He says that faeries have the magical power to cloak wilderness Covenants from the armies of the crusade. He points out that faeries keep their word and if sworn to protect Covenants they will do so. He also adds that faerie magic can be far more powerful than Hermetic, especially when it comes to concealment in the wilderness.

Sarimarcus's ideas are largely dismissed as dangerous nonsense. The characters may see wisdom in Sarimarcus's ideas, though, and may make arrangements with him to protect their own Covenant with faerie aid. Such cooperation forms a bond between characters and Sarimarcus, a bond required to further this Saga in a future story. The extent of the characters' pact with Sarimarcus and his faeries is determined by how much time passes before Sarimarcus is killed by the crusaders (see Chapter Three).

The Magi of Doissetep naturally know that young, weak Covenants will not survive their solution to the crusade. But, that leaves Doissetep with more land and 0supplies to claim, doesn't it?

Remaining Factions

Other factions and allegiances in the crusade debate exist, but have little consequence in the meeting. If characters seek them out, they may find minor alliances among the eleven Covenants attending the Tribunal (see below), the twelve Houses (the strongest being Jerbiton and Tytalus), and among two other factions. These are the "Conservative" (upholding tradition, led by House Bonisagus and the Mercurian "Priesthood"), and the "Plutocrat" (upholding the strength of the powerful for the sake of stability, led by House Tremere). In the presence of the Procrustean League these factions generally dissolve, but might aid characters in situations other than the crusade debate.

Character Involvement

What position the characters take in the crusade debate is up to them. However, as a young Covenant, the characters receive little respect and are likely to have statements cut short by the Praeco or other, more influential, Magi. Ultimately the characters' votes in the debate may be determined by the allies they have made, either in the crusade matter or in other affairs in which they required assistance. Basically everyone at the Tribunal is willing to do characters a service early in the Tribunal in order to garner the characters' votes on the last night. Of course, if favors fail to gain character support, members of alliances are not opposed to using intimidation and outright bribery.

Gaining Allies

Remember that characters from a Spring Covenant can be naive and relatively unaware of local politics, Hermetic or mundane. Allies at the Tribunal can therefore be helpful if not essential, especially in cases of more powerful Magi making challenges that characters don't know how to or cannot face. Without informed allies the characters can be tricked or abused by established Covenants. For instance, characters could be duped into bargaining for sources of vis which dried up years ago, or which have become centers of the Dominion, Faerie, or Infernal powers. Those who have the Enemies Flaw, and discover their Flaw manifest at Doissetep, may particularly require allies.

Allies may be found in many ways. Just as Flaws may provide enemies, Virtues may provide allies. Virtues like Close Family Ties, Prestigious Family, Famous, or True Friend may provide allies when characters most need them. Otherwise, characters must negotiate for aid against individuals and Covenants who conspire against them. Few parties are willing to help characters purely for altruistic reasons. Regardless of where allies come from, they can advise and represent characters at Tribunal, even going so far as to act as *Certamen* champions.

PROSPECTIVE ALLIES

In return for services rendered, members of more aggressive Covenants, such as Doissetep, might demand "protection money" in the form of a tithe of raw vis or supportive votes. As mentioned above, it's more likely that votes will be demanded from characters. Voting is public, so characters who do not follow their "protectors" wishes are noted and may be punished at a more discreet time. This retribution can take many forms, but does not usually involve outright hostility. Hostile actions against other Magi defy the Code of Hermes. Vengeful Covenants instead wait for more opportune moments, setting the characters up to require their aid at a future time and denying that help, or, better yet, charging an exorbitant price for necessary aid. There are plenty of stories that can be set around a vengeful Covenant.

If characters are punished by spurned supporters at the Tribunal, and characters complain about being harmed, the offending Covenant claims ignorance. After all, who is the Quaesitor more likely to believe, an upstart young Covenant or one with an established reputation?

Though votes are certainly a commodity in demand at the Tribunal, not all Covenants may require them for services rendered. The following Covenants have their own motives outside the crusade debate:

- If the characters seek aid or protection from Mistridge, that Covenant provides it in return for comparable services. Mistridge's Magi might want characters to stage some covert raid against Windgraven, Mistridge's enemy, allowing Mistridge Magi to protect themselves with alibis of activity elsewhere. Of course, this little mission makes possible another story in your Saga, and could establish a lasting alliance with Mistridge and enmity with Windgraven.

- Depending on the events of your Saga this is probably the first Tribunal Lariander Covenant has attended. Lariander is a small Covenant immersed in a faerie forest, and thus is even more naive than the characters'. Magi from Lariander are almost definitely willing to ally with their young peers, provided none of the characters are hostile to faeries. An alliance with Lariander, though of limited power, may provide both parties with strength in numbers. An alliance with Lariander may also be very helpful later in this Saga as relations with faeries become important, although the characters don't know that yet.

Unfortunately, alliances with Lariander may inspire hostility on the part of Bellaquin. Unbeknownst to Lariander, Bellaquin has long claimed Shadisrel Forest — Lariander's home — as its private vis hunting ground. No one has ever before challenged Bellaquin's claim; no one but Bellaquin has ever dared face the faeries of the forest. Bellaquin hopes to use the Tribunal meeting as an opportunity to chastise and bully Lariander, so much so that the Covenant leaves the forest. If the characters intervene on behalf of Lariander it may help them to learn that the Magi of Bellaquin are fond of music. Bellaquin's Magi are well-disposed to anyone who knows the art of music and such knowledge adds three to any social roll made toward a Magus of Bellaquin. A Perception + Intrigue simple roll of 8+ discovers Bellaquin's infatuation with music.

ALLIANCE PROGRESSION

Alliances at the Tribunal, particularly with Bellaquin, build gradually during the daylight hours of the Tribunal as seemingly casual relations are established between attendants. The eight Jerbiton Magi of Bellaquin have come to the Tribunal with a purpose. As the first and second days pass they subtly seek support for their notion of a League. Thus, while the first few nights of Tribunal are spent voting over minor affairs, it becomes clear (with a Perception + Intrigue simple roll of 6+) that Bellaquin's time is really being used to assess the relative strengths of Covenants, specifically in regard to the great "crusade debate" planned for the final day.

Aestrius as an Ally

After delivering the characters to Doissetep, Aestrius does not simply disappear. As a Redcap he is allowed to vote at the Tribunal and remains throughout to do so. This being the case, Aestrius can become a trusted ally or advisor of the young characters — assuming they have not offended him in any way, in which case they must win his sympathies to gain his help (Communication + Diplomacy simple roll versus an appropriate Personality Trait roll for Aestrius).

The role Aestrius plays in helping the characters is up to you and what you might like to see occur in the Saga. If you would like to see characters face the crusade directly and stand against the Praeco, you might make Aestrius a supporter of Bellaquin's League. He therefore advises characters to vote with Bellaquin, but the characters need not do so if too much pressure is put on them by Doissetep. Aestrius might be allied with Bellaquin's League because the Covenant has promised him access to their rare libraries, libraries that are also more accessible than Doissetep's.

Aestrius might also be in league with Doissetep and suggest that characters vote to stay out of the crusade. However, such a vote is to the characters' detriment since only powerful Covenants will successfully avoid the crusade. Others, like the characters', will be left out in the cold to deal with the mundane onslaught.

Aestrius might also help characters in deals with other Covenants, advising young Magi against bartering for dried up vis sources, or advising them against other such pitfalls. Keep in mind, though, that characters should not come to rely on Aestrius; they have to make some decisions for themselves. As Aestrius is prone to irritability it's easy to distance him from the characters when it's convenient for you.

What's more, Aestrius does not have to associate solely with Magi. He's interested in people who value knowledge over base distractions. If any Grog or Companions in the group are of that attitude Aestrius might spend time with them, sharing experiences and maybe adventures. Remember, though, that Aestrius has no magical powers. If Magus characters are in over their heads in bouts of *Certamen*, Aestrius can only offer council and strategy.

Voting

Voting in all Tribunal matters is done openly through the use of sigils. Each Magus has one vote and the Magi who carry others' sigils can vote with them, serving as proxies. The only restriction is that the last Magus to vote with another's sigil must return the sigil to its owner and give an account of how it was used.

Results of the Debate

The Tribunal's crusade debate is rowdy and undignified from start to finish. With continued discussion of the Procrustean League's plan for war against the Church Protantus

Attendance Roster

Covenants attending, and potential allies at the Tribunal are:

Doissetep

The most powerful Covenant in the Order.

23 Magi: 6 Tylalus (one of whom is Oxioun, who cannot vote), 2 Flambeau, 1 Bjornaer, 3 Tremere, 1 Mercere, 2 Jerbiton, 3 Verditius, 1 Quaesitoris (Protantus, who cannot vote), 2 Criamon, 2 Merinita (for complete information on the Covenant see the Covenants sourcebook).

Bellaquin

A Summer Covenant growing in power and envied by Doissetep.

12 Magi: 8 Jerbiton, 1 Tremere, 1 Ex Miscellanea, 1 Bonisagus, 1 Criamon (see Covenants).

Bentalone

8 Magi

Berinator

7 Magi

Lariander

An inexperienced Spring Covenant

5 Tremere Magi and 1 Merinita Magus (see Covenants).

Mistridge

A strong Summer Covenant, almost as strong as its friend Bellaquin.

5 Magi: 1 Bonisagus, 1 Tremere, 1 Criamon, 1 Ex Miscellanea, 1 Jerbiton (for complete details see the Mistridge supplement).

There are three other Covenants containing a total of 13 additional Magi. Depending on how many Covenants you have located in Provençal, the characters' may be one of these three.

Val-Negra and Windgraven, paranoid Winter Covenants, do not attend the Tribunal. Also note that only three-quarters of the Magi listed from different Covenants actually attend the Tribunal and bear votes. The exceptions are Bellaquin and Doissetep, which ensure all their members' votes count, if not by presence then by sigil.

grows increasingly concerned (Perception + Folk Ken simple roll of 4+ to notice). Protantus eventually has to threaten the assembled Magi that intervention in the crusade, such as the League proposes, is in direct violation of the Code of Hermes. He explains, "*the oath 'I will not interfere with the affairs of mundanes' is central to the Code, and if opposition to it is pursued I may be forced to declare this meeting illegal!*"

This move comes as quite a shock to the Magi of Bellaquin, who usually rely on the friendship of the Quaesitoris. Perhaps, coming from Doissetep, Protantus is unfairly biased, preferring to remain isolated from the mundane world.

To finally resolve matters (as it undoubtedly seems an acceptable compromise will never be reached) Oxioun declares the Tribunal's official response to the crusade. It is decided that Covenants will remain hidden (because serious opposition to the idea has been invalidated), regardless of

what the characters and others vote. The presiding Quaesitor supports the movement. If the crusade does come it is hoped Covenants' magical secrecy will protect them from destruction.

The heavy-handed influence of Doissetep is resented by many. Numerous Magi return to their Covenants grumbling that the Tribunal was unjust. Accusations range from a corrupt Quaesitor to a conspiracy presided over by the *Pontifex Maximus* of Doissetep. Many believe the true elder of Doissetep, Vancasitum, would have kept the Tribunal fair. In truth, it is only nostalgia that paints Vancasitum in glowing colors. Though many are angry at Doissetep, no one dares make waves for fear that future help from Doissetep against the crusade might be denied to any who protest now.

Recognizing the danger they're in, the characters, upon returning to their Covenant, may well go to the canons of Foix to discuss the crusade. At this point in time the canons, though sympathetic to the Cathars, cannot defy the Church; they say they will support a crusade. (That changes, though, as discussed later).

Furthermore, if characters approach the canons at this time, the canons have by now learned of the Covenant's location on Church lands and make plain the politics of the situation (as discussed in Chapter Two). However, the characters are more likely to approach the canons at the end of Chapter Two, when the crusaders actually arrive in Provençal.

Tribunal Attendants

There are dozens of Magi attending the Provençal Tribunal and Magus characters have an opportunity to meet several if not all of them. Described below are the most notable attendants of the Tribunal, along with some others you may introduce depending on what characters do, or simply to entertain the Troupe.

THE PRAECO, OXIOUN OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Oxioun, as *Pontifex Maximus*, is nominal leader of Doissetep. His opinions generally represent the will of the *Consilium Maximus*. Oxioun is a decrepit and cantankerous old Magus whose mind is definitely going, if it isn't already gone. He sits hooded and stern upon his throne; his Familiar, an owl, perches beside him. Oxioun has passed through several Twilights and has an idiosyncratic favoritism for handsome young Magi. He is a master of the Form of *Córporem* and is not averse to necromantic practices.

Oxioun took over his present position from an incompetent old Magus named Vancasitum. Vancasitum, although the oldest Magus in the region, has been effectively excluded from leadership of Doissetep by the powerful Magi of the Covenant, and has now lost any esteem he previously enjoyed. Vancasitum does not attend the Tribunal.

Oxioun

Characteristics: Intelligence (wily) +1, Perception (arrogant) -1, Strength (decrepit) -2, Stamina (delicate) -3, Presence (wrinkled) -2, Communication 0, Dexterity (stiff jointed) -1, Quickness (arthritic) -3

Age: 106 (born 1101)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Affinity (Córpoem) +4, Lack of Concentration (cannot cast Ritual magic or have Concentration Ability) -2, Sheltered Upbringing (-3 to social rolls) -2

Abilities: Finesse (Córpoem) 4, Penetration (Perdo) 2, Diplomacy (negotiation) 5, Intimidation (subtle) 4, Intrigue (plotting) 2, Leadership (engendering faithfulness) 6, Chirurgy (internal organs) 7, Hermes History (legal processes) 5, Hermes Lore (politics) 3, Magic Theory (potions) 2, Occult Lore (undead) 4, Medicine (physicianry) 5, Speak Greek (ancient forms) 5, Scribe Arabic (history) 4, Scribe Greek (deity lore) 6, Scribe Provençal (personal letters) 2, Debate (Hermetic law) 3, Speak Latin (orders) 5, Scribe Latin (orders) 5, Quiet Talk (summoning guards) 5

Confidence: 5

Reputation: Respectful/Doddering (young/experienced Magi) 1

Personality Traits: Cantankerous +2

Techniques and Forms: Creo 8, Intéleigo 12, Muto 16, Perdo 16, Rego 16, Animál 0, Aquam 2, Auram 5, Córpoem 28, Herbam 0, Ignem 0, Imágonem 7, Mentem 10, Terram 0, Vim 5

Spell Casting Speed: +1

Twilight Points: 14

Effects of Twilight: Favorable toward handsome young Magi (modifier of 6 in their favor in social rolls).

Spells Known: All Córpoem spells, *Incantation of Summoning the Dead* (ReMe 25) +23, *Summon the Haunting Spirit* (ReMe 25) +23, *Duel of Minds* (ReMe 20) +23, *The Burning Mark of Shame* (PeCo 10) +45. (See the Order of Hermes supplement, p.115, for these last two spells.)

Wizard's Sigil: Skin wrinkles even more when spells are cast.

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak -3 (3 Action), Fatigue -3

Oxioun leads the Provençal Tribunal with a misleading air of compromise and pragmatism. He speaks of his humble duty, trying to find counsel for the peril of the Order among strangers from distant lands. He cannot vote, but in exchange for this loss has three rights: to silence Magi at the Tribunal (except the ruling Quaesitor), to remove Magi from the discussion area (except the ruling Quaesitor), and to eject Magi from the Tribunal. He is not averse to making full use of these privileges. In fact, Oxioun may use his powers to prevent discussion of certain topics, such as starting a war with the Church, or to let only certain Magi speak (i.e., those of influence or those from Doissetep).

However, a "vote of procedure" can overrule any action taken by the Praeco (being silenced does not prevent one voting, although it does prevent one calling for a vote of procedure). Two-thirds of the Magi present must vote to overrule the Praeco or the Praeco's order stands.

PROTANTUS, THE RULING QUAESITOR

Protantus is a dark and sinister Magus of Doissetep — much like every other Doissetep Magus. He is tall and thin, with jet-black hair. Protantus's gray, penetrating eyes are capable of both concealing and conveying subtle thoughts and passions. Even while asking the most innocuous questions his provocative eyes can make one blanch and stammer.

Placed before Protantus at the Tribunal is one of Doissetep's famed skulls. It can recite anything spoken in its presence, thus verifying the exact context, inflection, and meaning of anything said at the meeting. Lesser Quaesitoris act as Protantus's consultants and servants, following his orders and guarding the temple doors during Tribunal meetings. Outside the meetings these two servants can be seen prowling corridors, spying on the conversations of other Magi.

The ruling Quaesitor cannot vote. He oversees the Tribunal to make sure the laws of the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code are followed. Protantus has the irritating habit





of delving into great details of historical prerogative for each of the codes, dwelling with relish on the lessons to be learned from fables of the Schism War. Protantus's Quaesitor consultants may not vote either, but may let others use their sigils. The ruling Quaesitor's one power at Tribunal is to step in at any time and judge the Tribunal invalid. The decisions of an invalid Tribunal are no longer legally binding.

As a further check on the Praeco's power, at the end of the Tribunal's fourth night the Quaesitor calls in those Magi who have been removed or ejected and asks them if they wish to hold the Tribunal again, this time under the administration of the next oldest Magus (after Oxioun). No one can be silenced during the ensuing discussion. If at least three-quarters of the Magi present vote in favor of holding the Tribunal again, the Praeco becomes just another participant (and may vote), while the next oldest Magus present becomes Praeco. However, such a vote is very rare, and in the case of this year's Tribunal is unlikely to occur.

SARIMARCUS

Sarimarcus is a middle-aged Magus with a curly brown beard, brown hair, and brown eyes. He wears a long red cape which reaches from his robust shoulders to the ground. The cape is decorated with hundreds of symbols. When traveling in the outside world Sarimarcus often covers this cape with the simple gray robes of a scholar. Sarimarcus also carries a small wooden panpipe which was given to him by faeries. The

Protantus

Characteristics: Intelligence (astute) +3, Perception (penetrating) +3, Strength (frail) -2, Stamina 0, Presence (manipulative) +2, Communication (clearvoice) +2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (sedate) -2

Age: 39 (born 1168)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Quaesitor +1, Piercing Gaze +2, Dutybound (to the Codes of Hermes) -1, Fragile Constitution (-2 to on rolls to heal wounds and disease) -1, Faerie Enmity -1,

Abilities: *Certamen* (Mentem) 3, Penetration (Intéllego) 1, Concentration (during arguments) 2, Guile (elaborate lies) 4, Folk Ken (Magi) 5, Subterfuge (manipulate by argument) 6, Diplomacy (etiquette) 6, Intimidation (intellectual) 4, Intrigue (slander) 5, Hermetic Law (Tribunal etiquette) 5, Speak Provençal (terms about mundanes) 4, Scribe Latin (laws), Speak Latin (laws), Hermes History (Tribunal events) 4, Hermes Lore (politics) 5, Provençal Lore (mundane events) 3, Broadsword Attack (lunge) 3, Dodge (thrusts) 2, Quiet Talk (pointing out offenders of Code) 4

Confidence: 4

Reputation: Intimidating (Magi) 3

Personality Traits: Hatred (Moors) +4, Patient +2, Biased (toward Doissetep) +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 4, Intéllego 15, Muto 8, Perdo 9, Rego 6, Animal 5, Aquam 6, Auram 12, Córporum 15, Herbam 5, Ignem 7, Imágonem 8, Mentem 11, Terram 6, Vim 14

Spell Casting Speed: -2

Twilight Points: 0

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: All Intéllego Imágonem spells to Level 20 (+23), *Eyes of the Past* (InIm 25) +23, *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (InMe 20) +26, *Chain that Links the Minds* (InMe 25) +26, and *The Oath of Truth* (PeCo 25) +24. These last two spells may be found in *The Order of Hermes*, p.104.

Wizard's Sigil: Protantus's eyes temporarily glaze over when he casts a spell.

Weapons and Armor:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +7, Damage +7

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

characters must meet Sarimarcus in Chapter One, as he is an important factor in events to come. He draws characters into situations that involve crusaders and faeries, and events which further the Saga.

Sarimarcus is from the Rhine Tribunal and is present at the Provençal Tribunal meeting as an invited observer and representative of House Merinita. Though he cannot vote on matters, Sarimarcus may advise and side with the characters in a debate or other such confrontational roleplaying scene, especially if one of the group is a Merinita Magus.

Sarimarcus

Characteristics: Intelligence (clever) +3, Perception (probing) +1, Strength (large build) +1, Stamina (weather-hardened) +1, Presence 0, Communication (loner) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (lumbering) -1

Age: 67 (born 1140)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talents +1, Faerie Magic +1, Faerie Sight (see through faerie illusions like Second Sight Ability) +1, Wild Magic (extra Botch die with magic) -2, Life-Linked Magic (permanent magic only lasts as long as Sarimarcus lives) -1

Abilities: Finesse (grace) 4, Penetration (Herbam) 2, Faerie Magic (understanding it) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 2, *Certamen* (Herbam) 2, *Parma Magica* (Rego) 5, Survival (forests) 4, Speak Provençal (satire) 5, Speak German (travel information) 5, Faerie Lore (paganism) 8, Play (pipes) 6, Speak Latin (faerie terms) 5, Scribe Latin (travel accounts) 5, Direction Sense (forests) 3, Chirurgy (animals) 3, Dagger Attack (forests) 2, Dodge (among trees) 4

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Faerie Expert (Magi) 3

Personality Traits: Optimistic +1, Extroverted +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 8, Intéllego 16, Muto 15, Perdo 6, Rego 15, Animal 5, Aquam 4, Auram 6, Córporum 4, Herbam 15, Ignem 4, Imágonem 15, Mentem 5, Terram 5, Vim 2

Spell Casting Speed: +3

Twilight Points: 4

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: All standard MuHe (+31), InHe (+32), and ReHe (+31) spells up to Level 25. All standard MuIm (+31) and InIm (+32) spells to Level 20. *Breath of Invigoration* (CrCo 15) +13, *The Weavling's Revenge* (MuCo 20) +20, *The Feast of Delights* (Mulm 20) +31, *Mask of the Beast* (MuCo 25) +20, *Gaze of the Thousand Pinches* (PeCo 5) +11, *The Faeries' Touch* (MuMe 20) +24. (See *The Order of Hermes* for details on these spells). Also, *Corpse Candle* (CrIm 15) +27, as described in its own insert.

Wizard's Sigil: Spells have full effect but behave erratically.

Weapons and Armor:

Dagger Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +6, Damage +5

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

In a quiet moment at the Tribunal Sarimarcus explains to characters that he wishes to study a festival at a village named Plaplean, which lies in the Val du Bosque. If this village is not located near the characters' Covenant, choose another village that is (one with a forest nearby). Sarimarcus plans to live incognito with the villagers to find out more about the faeries believed to dwell near them. He tells the characters this so they are not offended should they later encounter him operating near their Covenant without permission. He assures characters



Corpse Candle (CrIm 15)

Spell Focus: A faerie firefly (+3)

R: Sight, **D:** Conc./Sun

This spell, devised by Sarimarcus, creates the image of an *Ignis Fatuus* or "foolish fire" which hovers above the head of any target within line of sight. As long as concentration is maintained the light remains over that subject, though the subject is allowed a Magic Resistance roll.

Regarded as an omen of death the floating faerie spirit is known by any of the following names: corpse-candle, dead-candle, Billy-wi'-t'-wisp, Hobbledy's lantern, Jenny-burnt-tail, Kitty-candlestick, and pinket. The light radiating from this source creates an aura of doom and dread in a 15-pace radius. Those in the light acquire the Personality Trait, *Morose* +3. These people also look pallid and deathly. For others to approach them requires a Bravery roll of 4+.

that he has no wish to steal their vis supplies. In fact, Sarimarcus humbly asks for advice about Plaplean and the faeries of the area.

If the characters are offended by Sarimarcus's plan or otherwise refuse to allow him to settle in Plaplean, the Merinita Magus attempts to bribe the characters. He offers to share whatever information he learns about the faeries, and even offers up any vis supplies he might find. Sarimarcus is more



interested in the enigma of the faeries than he is in material gain. If the characters are still opposed to Sarimarcus's plans, he goes ahead without the characters' sanction.

DEMETRIUS OF HOUSE CRIAMON

Demetrius is a withered old Magus, bent under the weight of his years. His skin and hair are a pallid white. Demetrius is an entertaining character. His apocalyptic pronouncements, made in a majestic voice, help liven up the debate by putting the fear of God into those present. Omens recognized by the priests of Mercury, as discussed under Temple of Mercury, above, have a tendency to reinforce or add a degree of authenticity to Demetrius's pronouncements. For example, if Demetrius warns that war between the Church and Order will bring about the destruction of Hermes, a mumbling spreads amongst the priests. When the Praeco inquires about their concern, one priest explains how an eagle was seen to kill a sparrow near the

Covenant on the previous Sunday, a Church holiday. As the sign occurred in the western sky it is believed to have a bad connotation.

Demetrius is a reclusive Criamon Magus, emerging from the wilderness for the first time in seven years. He could corner a Companion or Grog from the characters' Covenant and babble warnings of impending doom.

TOLOMAE OF HOUSE JERBITON

The leader of the Procrustean League, Tolomae is one of Bellaquin's most able Magi. His connections in the higher echelons of mundane society are widespread. He is proud of his aristocratic pedigree and is likely to become violent if his heritage is slandered. He aids the Cathars against the crusade regardless of the Tribunal's decision.

GAUMADRAS THE ANATOMIST

A Companion of Doissetep Covenant, Gaumdras lost his position as a Fellow of the Paris College of Physicians when his work on human anatomy questioned the efficiency of God's creation. However, Gaumdras has since become the pupil of Oxioun, and has discovered much of benefit to humankind.

ADOLPHO

The master of the bath halls is a genial and knowledgeable Companion of advancing years. He is still hale and hearty, happy in his job. His only sin is to habitually dress in rich purple or royal blue, a mark of kings. Adolpho washes Magi and eminent consortis alike, gives them sweatbaths and rubdowns, bleeds them, scrapes off their dirt with strigils, cuts their hair, and rids them of fleas, all the while innocently eavesdropping on their fascinating conversations. Adolpho is a master of "quiet talk," the secret sign language of Doissetep.

LYSANDER

Once the squire of a Gascon knight, Lysander is now a famous member of Doissetep's Grog turb, the winner of many awards for bravery and success in Doissetep's competitive events. Despite his great athletic prowess, Lysander is modest;

his duty to Doissetep is his foremost concern. Wrestling, boxing, and other gladiatorial contests are common in Doissetep. Lysander often trains contestants.

NYSAKEAN OF HOUSE TYTALUS

A Magus of Tytalus, Nysakean often travels Provençal, concerning himself with the affairs of mundanes. He is secretive and cunning, always traveling incognito. Sometimes he passes himself off as a friar, sometimes as a Magus from another Covenant. He is always prudent, never revealing his powers in public. He searches throughout Provençal for an apprentice. Frequenting many almshouses, he hopes that among the beggars and chained lunatics he may find one blessed with the Gift. To Nysakean the search for an apprentice is a contest in which his ability to hide among the "enemy" is tested.

CEREBUS FACTO

Cerebus Facto is a Merinita Magus of Doissetep Covenant who has become fascinated by subterranean faeries. Every year he delves deeper under Mount Celidar, seeking lost tribes of faerie folk. So far his explorations, though fascinating to him, have proved fruitless and sometimes fatal for his Companions and Groggs. Rumors spread that Cerebus is mad and that his endless delvings will only result in his own death, and possibly that of everyone else. Cerebus has recently heard tales of subterranean faeries in the vicinity of Mistridge Covenant, and plans to visit there soon.

HEROT OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Another Tytalus Magus, Herot is old, gnarled, and twisted with his years. His face is ravaged by pox scars, he has scarcely any hair, and he has grown thin and fragile. He is an alchemist, spending most of his time in the laboratory. He occasionally recruits small groups of Groggs to seek out rare and precious ingredients. His only real friend is his Familiar, a huge toad-like creature that lives in the sump, where it feeds on scraps and liquids sent down from the kitchens above.

EGEUS

A venerable translator of ancient Middle Eastern languages, Egeus's stubbornness and senility have both worsened in recent years. This dark fellow, of Greek and Saracen blood, perceives Doissetep as a refuge against the many enemies of his homeland. However, he still longs to be buried in Greece, the land of his forefathers?

QUINCE

Once a master carpenter in Foix, Quince's works were unsurpassed. However, his relationship with the woodwrights' guild became intolerable as his envious colleagues plotted against him. Quince's famous talents were soon recognized by the spies of Doissetep and he eventually came to work at the Covenant, where his creations are highly treasured. Quince assists Alexander Du Quill, a Magus of House Verditius, "in creating works of great beauty."

Other Tribunal Events

Though the Magi attending Provençal Tribunal have plenty to do, and their activities probably dominate your roleplaying time, mundane characters should not be neglected. Indeed, the activities of Companions and Groggs who have come to the Tribunal should be accounted for. If the rest of the Troupe agrees, you can simply designate Grog and Companion activities during the Tribunal and pursue them no further. The better alternative is to tell short stories about these characters, thus allowing a break from the events of the meeting itself.

Several story ideas are offered below to occupy characters not directly involved in Tribunal meetings. Ideally these events can be attended to during lulls in Tribunal meetings.

- Another Magus's Groggs put on a show of power, attempting to intimidate the players' Groggs or Companions. Maybe the opposing turb belittles a male Grog or insults a female Grog with lewd remarks. Such an encounter is a good test of the victim's self-control and loyalty to his or her master (who may want no unnecessary distractions or complications). Any foolhardy shows of military might made by the characters probably end in trouble for them, not least from an embarrassed master. However, if the mundane characters don't save face in some way they may gain a bad reputation among other Cov-

enants' inhabitants. Remember, Doissetep has an army of over 300 Grogas at its disposal to infuriate and deal with rowdy guests.

- A Magus wants to hire a character who displays high skill in a particular field. The Magus is willing to pay good wages or provides other incentives for the character. If the character has been badly treated by the remaining characters the job may be accepted. Such action challenges the player to roleplay the character's personality and make decisions in a way which seem right in a personal sense but may cause the rest of the characters hardship.

- A strange hag offers to tell a character his or her fortune. If rejected she curses, spits at, and insults the character. If the character agrees to hear the forecast you must try to ad-lib a reading of the future. What you come up with could be very misleading or entertaining, based on the character involved and future stories you intend to tell.

- A cat, the Familiar of a Doissetep Magus, spies on the characters. Panicked by the sudden movement of one of the characters, it flees, but its presence may make the characters uneasy and wary. This paranoia may be furthered by allowing one of the characters to recognize Doissetep covenfolk communicating silently, apparently about the characters themselves! What the characters do about this revelation is up to the players.

Epilogue: The Crusade is Declared

Months after the Tribunal meeting, on January 14th, 1208, a crusade is declared by Pope Innocent III against southern France. Officially, the crusade is a reprisal against the Cathars for the assassination of a Papal Legate. However, the crime was actually committed by an unknown anticlerical rebel with no Cathar affiliations whatsoever. (In truth, it was committed by a knight of Count Raymond VI of Toulouse). Some within the Order of Hermes believe the assassination was perpetrated by Magi angered at the decision of the Tribunal. No evidence is available to support this theory, though.

Regardless of who assassinated the legate, the murder provides the needed provocation for the Pope to attack the Cathars. Indeed, Rome has grown distinctly alarmed by the popularity of Cathar beliefs. Furthermore, the Pope is fully aware of the envy which northern Mythic Europe's barons harbor for the rich lands and cities of the south. This envy can be readily exploited, with northern imperial lords constituting the Church's powerful right hand.



By the spring of 1209 a large force gathers at Lyon under the ruthless leadership of the Norman commander Simon de Montfort. To protect himself Raymond of Toulouse quickly comes to terms with the Church, so crusaders have to content themselves (in the summer) with invading the lands of Raymond's vassal, Roger de Trencavel, Viscount of Beziers and Caccasone. However, the crusaders are only temporarily sated by their small conquests.

Throughout the spring rumors and news of crusade events reach the characters' Covenant. The main crusader army marches through Montelimar, Orange, Avignon, Nimes, and Montpellier to Beziers (which is reached in July). See the County of Toulouse map for details.

THE PROTECTION OF GODFROI DE FERRERS

Although the characters are currently distanced from the crusade it still comes to their door. In a short story that you may interject early in the crusade, the characters are forced to choose their position in the crusade.

Within weeks of the Papal declaration, the characters are approached by a local Cathar, or another mundane contact, who asks them to smuggle a wounded Cathar nobleman from his hiding place in the town of Minerve (or any other town that is near your Covenant). This contact asks the characters to nurse the refugee back to health at their Covenant until it is safe for him to return to society. The characters are free to accept the task or refuse it, but by refusing they alienate themselves from many of the local Cathar mundanes and jeopardize their chances of survival, especially if the characters must call upon mundane help sometime in the near future. Characters with the Common Sense Virtue realize the danger of turning the Cathars down.

Though they have no wealth to offer in return for the characters' help (for material wealth is considered evil by them), the Cathars also suggest that the refugee in need of help might be grateful. In fact, rather than go to prison the nobleman is willing to join the characters' Covenant as a captain of the guard. For characters of a young Covenant to turn down this offer is pure foolishness. Of course, characters showing altruism are also exalted in the eyes of God, a definite reward for the pious among the characters, even the orthodox.

Characters sympathetic to the Cathars may well rescue the fugitive regardless of the Covenant's official response to the request. If the sympathetic characters save the Cathar they must then hide him within the Covenant. Keeping the man hidden from Magi and other covenfolk is difficult indeed, but

Godfroi de Ferrers

Characteristics: Intelligence (shrewd) +1, Perception 0, Strength (athletic) +3, Stamina (iron constitution) +2, Presence (noble) +1, Communication (rash) -2, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 24

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Prestigious Family +1, Enemies (Dominic) -1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (courtly terms) 4, Brawl (fair fights) 1, Scan (game) 2, Survival (on the run) 1, Leadership (soldiers) 4, Ride (mounted combat) 2, Dodge (charges) 3, Broadsword Attack (mounted) 4, Broadsword Parry (mounted) 4, Charm (ladies) 3, Stealth (hunted) 3

Confidence: 0

Reputation: "A Just Man Wronged" (Cathars) 2

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Reliable +2, Leader +2, Just +1, Pious -2

Weapons and Armor:

Chainmail Hauberk

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +8, Damage +13, Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 2

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +14 (21 Action), Fatigue +0

makes for many interesting subplots. Certainly the rescue is right up a Grog's alley, involving a short nighttime escapade and subsequent scuffle with the town watch or crusaders.

Though saving the refugee is valuable to the future Saga, it is not imperative. Any services that the man can provide can be provided by other sources, so if characters choose not to save the man, don't force them to.

THE REFUGEE

The nobleman and Cathar sympathizer, Godfroi de Ferrers, has lost his inheritance, Lacaune Castle (located in the vicinity of the town of Minerve), to crusaders. When the crusade was declared an opportunistic French mercenary named Dominic independently decided to attack Godfroi's castle at Lacaune. Having recently returned from the wars in Normandy this mercenary-cum-brigand chose to attack the castle, not because it was a "bastion of heresy," but because it provided a billet for

his troops and treasure to boost flagging morale. (For more information on Dominic and his followers, see the *Ars Magica* supplement *Mistridge*.)

De Ferrers's small, poorly defended castle fell easily to the surprise attack. Godfroi's relatives were murdered, while he escaped by a secret exit known only to a select few. To appease Bishop Merdici and the local nobility the mercenary Dominic eventually left the castle and settled in a pleasant townhouse in Foix. Many of his men followed him, becoming the hated Foix town watch. As it was technically taken by efforts of the crusade, Lacaune Castle fell under the jurisdiction of Bishop Merdici, who reserved its use for his own employee William of Hagen (see Chapter Two).

Physically, Godfroi is a handsome young knight, blond-haired and keen to fight despite his recent injuries. He has a strong sense of justice, and if healed is greatly indebted to the characters, as are his many friends. However, Godfroi harbors secret prejudice against those who do not speak Provençal or Latin, seeing them as barbarians.

Despite his youth Godfroi fought as a squire in the Fourth Crusade of 1202 to 1204. The crusading army's ignominious looting of Christian churches in Constantinople fouled all the notions of idealism Godfroi had, so much so that he has lost much of his respect for the powers of the mundane world, including the Church.

Godfroi understandably bears a terrible hatred for the mercenary Dominic, now captain of Foix's town guard. Godfroi's desire for revenge against Dominic may be the impetus behind many stories set in Foix, and Godfroi's knowledge of the secret way into Lacaune is invaluable at the climax of this Saga. Since Godfroi has such presence and has such a strong personality he makes an ideal Companion character for any player. Otherwise, he may be played by you as an important figure at the characters' Covenant, or at least in your Saga.

RESCUING GODFROI

The events of Godfroi's rescue are for you to develop fully, though many suggestions are offered here.

After the capture of his ancestral home Godfroi bought passage to the town of Minerve. Once there he had to steal in order to pay for shelter in the cellar of a tavern under the protection of a portly servingwoman (with whom he had to ingratiate himself in the first place). Now, hiding in the tavern, Godfroi is sought by the local town guard, who want him for

theft. Godfroi is also sought after (without his knowledge) by a small band of Dominic's crusaders who want to make sure the nobleman is silenced.

Regardless of these dangers Godfroi still managed to get a message sent to friends near the characters' Covenant, asking for aid. If they respond, the characters must face the same dangers as Godfroi, for the town guard and crusaders are closing on their quarry. If characters are truly clever they might goad the two search parties into a struggle over Godfroi, during which the rescuers can escape.

Tales of the Crusade

Depending on how much time you want to pass, you may have several opportunities to lead characters into the crusade. It's suggested that at least two stories about the crusade precede the telling of Chapter Two so the characters and players have a complete understanding of the attitudes behind the crusade, and an idea of the destruction that results. Ideas for these stories are provided here.

- A character at the Covenant has friends or relatives in danger from the juggernaut army and briefly goes out to rescue them. Perhaps friends or family have been captured by the crusaders and a breakout must be organized. A breakout need not involve a clash of arms alone. Many crusaders are mercenaries and have little religious conviction for their work; they can thus be coerced or bribed.

- The characters must root out an assassin who has been hired by Raynard, the Papal Pontiff, to kill the Magi. To do this characters must investigate the local villages seeking informants to help them find the assassin before he finds them. Of course, the characters must simultaneously avoid a reputation as intimidating ruffians. The characters may also seek the assistance of Ramon d'Uverre, one of the Bishop's canons, in finding the assassin. If the characters do so Ramon makes plain his position as their "landlord." The assassin may well seek sanctuary from the sorcerous characters in a church. In such a situation the only way to root him out is to speak to Ramon or Dietrich.

The assassin, posing as a peddler of quack medicines, hopes to poison the Magi with one of his herbal panaceas. This is an ill-fated plan; the Magi, unbeknownst to Raynard, have no need for such items. They are able to produce their own.

• An enterprising and liberal nobleman and Cathar, who recognizes the powers the characters have, approaches them to request aid in battle as the crusade is about to destroy his lands. If the characters can preserve his lands the nobleman offers them sanctuary on those lands and rewards them with feudal

privileges (allowing them to levy taxes on the local peasantry). However, open battle with the crusaders in a situation other than self-defense is a direct breach of the Code of Hermes, and defies the ruling made by the Tribunal of 1207. Who knows: the crusaders may even have mercenary Magi on their side.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



CRABTREE

THE ARRIVAL OF CAPTAIN HAGEN CHAPTER TWO



he torchlight was dim and feeble, but nonetheless it burned Tyler's eyes as he was roughly hauled up and into the courtyard. Tyler stood on wobbly legs, sucking in the relatively pure air like Communion wine, conscious only of the fact that he was away from the stink and the squealing of the rats and the gibbering of the rat-like prisoner with whom he had been bound for God knew how long.

No sooner had he begun to get his bearings than he was knocked to his knees by a blow from behind that rattled his spine and snapped his head, first back, then down into the hard earth. Despite himself, he moaned and clutched the small of his back. Weakly, he rolled over like a defeated dog. Above him towered one of the soldiers, brigandine dull and ruddy in the torchlight. The soldier grunted something in an unknown tongue, waving the spear-butt which had felled Tyler for emphasis. Tyler understood. He staggered to his feet, dimly noticing that the rest of the turb, and the thrice-damned thief, had likewise been pulled from the pit.

They were herded across the snow-covered yard by the soldiers, trembling with exhaustion and the bite of the winter wind on their nearly naked frames. Roughly urged on by the guards, the prisoners staggered through a gate, a narrow foyer, and into the main keep. The keep was a somewhat cramped hallway only slightly warmer than the wintry courtyard.

Seated behind a table at the end of the hall was the man who had ordered their capture. Even if Tyler had possessed the strength to hurl himself at his captor, the sight of the six guards who stood about the room, spearpoints held at the ready, would have deterred him. A woman, evidently of noble standing (though her garb, Tyler noted even through the haze of fatigue, was far from modest), stood beside the man, right hand resting on his shoulder affectionately — or possessively.

The man scanned the lot of them, his eyes gray and dead as rocks in the torchlight. His nose wrinkled in disgust. Without turning his head he spoke, his Provençal nearly choked under a raspy

northern accent. "You may go, an you wish, Mother. I would not have you defiled by this offal." He indicated the prisoners with a sweeping gesture of his callused hand.

Mother? Tyler thought. Before God, he's seen thirty winters at least, while she's no more than five-and-twenty, or I'm a goat!

"Nay, dearest William." The woman's voice was thick and sweet as honey, and her eyes transfixed Andre, Tyler's shield-mate, with unmistakable intent. "I would see you dispense justice to these craven robbers." Her gaze met Andre's, and she smiled.

The seated man, William it seemed, visibly tightened, his face darkening with displeasure. He turned to the group and spoke in a gravelly voice, "Know you, then, that the penalty for unlawfully hunting your lord's deer is the loss of a hand. What have you to say? You first." He indicated the pale and shaking Roland. Tyler wished, not for the first time, that he had remained in England...

Summary

Chapter Two presents the characters' first significant encounter with the crusade. The Chapter establishes Captain Hagen as the characters' enemy and introduces the mysterious figure of his mother, Alicia. During the events of this Chapter a relationship undoubtedly develops between Alicia and a character, preferably a Grog or Companion. Indeed, the story of this Chapter is best told with Grog and Companion characters only, specifically those with no or limited magical abilities.

The events of this Chapter should be staged within the first year of the crusade, probably in the winter, a season which reflects the death that approaches.

THE BRABANÇONS

When the crusade is declared by the Pope a forward detachment of mercenary soldiers is sent to Bishop Merdici's diocese. Other detachments are sent elsewhere to prepare for the coming armies. That troop arriving in the vicinity of Foix is led by Captain William of Hagen, a mercenary knight from Imperial Brabant (modern-day Belgium). Brabançon mercenaries are infamous in both France and the German Empire for their speed on foot and ferocity against civilians. The Brabançons are also better trained in the latest techniques of war than are the general run expected to answer the Pope's call to arms. As the mercenaries are foreigners the Bishop believes them unlikely to have any local secular ties or allegiances which might

History of the Brabançons

Brabançon soldiers have long-established, infamous reputations in Provençal. They speak very little Provençal; their native tongue is Frankish (a Germanic language including modern Dutch, Flemish, and German). Like other less prestigious mercenaries employed in the region (those others being Navarrese, Gascon, and Basque mountain men) the Brabançons are barbaric by the standards of the Languedoc, indulging in petty whoring and brawls. The northern marches of Iberia have become associated with wandering brigand armies comprised entirely of unemployed or semi-employed mercenaries such as the Brabançons. Indeed, the term "brigand" comes from the light chain hauberk, known as a "brigandine," these rogues wear.

Twenty years ago, in A.D. 1182, a popular and austere religious movement was created to rid the land of these mercenaries-turned-brigands. Many local people were members of the movement. These folk were called Capuchonnes, from the distinctive white capuchon or hooded cloak they wore. However, as it posed an irresistible opportunity for employment, the movement eventually became comprised of more villainous rogues than the brigands it was created to eliminate.

prompt them to defect or do other than commanded. Thus, he employs them, but leaves their command to his canons, as he does all things.

Realizing this militant force could undermine his missionary work, Canon Ramon d'Uverre (on behalf of the absentee Bishop) places the captain as far from the centers of population as possible. He believes that, billeted in a remote location, Hagen can cause no real harm. Indeed, Merdici's canons realize that mercenaries seldom confine their operations to what they are hired to do, and understand that the warriors may refuse to cease military activities when the crusade is over. Now that the mercenaries have been forced upon them, the canons realize they must handle them cautiously.

Captain Hagen is therefore granted the small, remote castle of Lacaune, the castle that belonged to Godfroi de Ferrers. This is the same nobleman who offers to become a Grog captain in the epilogue of Chapter One. From this castle Captain Hagen begins dispensing crusader "justice" by bullying the locals. Hagen probably does not yet know about the Magi; if he does, he initially assumes them loyal to the Bishop, as they are located on the Bishop's lands.

Caught Red-Handed

On a winter's day one or more of the players' Grogs and some covenfolk spot a wily poacher (named Roland) attempting to steal poultry from the Covenant. The characters and covenfolk are probably familiar with the man, having dealt with him before. If a more likely associate of the Covenant is available, he can be spotted instead by the Grogs. Although he probably does not know the Covenant is magical in nature, Roland is ready for trouble and thus is likely to be aware of approaching characters before they catch him (see his hearing

Perception score!). Indeed, Roland runs from pursuers right through the nearest forest, and right into the hands of Captain Hagen and his men.

Captain Hagen, six of his men, and four foresters — all on horseback — have been hunting in the area with a pack of hounds (characters pursuing Roland may make Perception + Alertness simple rolls of 8+ hear the dogs ahead). A train of commoners assists in transporting the meat back to Lacaune, which may well be far away. It is not unusual for noblemen and their retinues to hunt for many days, many miles from home.

Hagen is dressed in leather hunting armor. His horse is caparisoned in a protective quilted head piece (Protection 3). Hagen's profile is provided at the end of this Chapter. Hagen's soldiers wear quilted leather gambesons for armor. They all carry short spears. The foresters and retinue are unarmed and unarmored.

When Roland runs into of the hunting party its members are at first shocked but quickly grab the troublemaker. If pursuing Groggs fail the Perception + Alertness simple roll described above they too run straight into Hagen and his men. Covenfolk involved in the pursuit are bound to be captured. The Groggs are held at spearpoint and are chased down if they try to flee. Any skirmishes between soldiers and Groggs may be played normally, but someone is bound to be captured, even if it's only the ordinary covenfolk.

Hagen's Soldiers

Characteristics: Intelligence (unimaginative) -1, Perception (unconcerned) -1, Strength (brawny) +2, Stamina (hearty) +4, Presence (crude) -1, Communication (brutal) -2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (fleet-footed) +1

Age: 20s

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Frankish (insults) 3, Brawl (dirty tricks) 2, Alertness (traps) 2, Dodge (missiles) 3, Folk Ken (terrorizing peasants) 2, Drinking (quickly) 4, Spear Attack (peasants) 3, Spear Parry (peasants) 3, Shield Parry (close quarters) 4, Scan (opponents) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Cruel (peasants) 3

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Cowardly +2, Vicious +3, Charming -3

Weapons and Armor:

Leather Hauberk

Short Spear Totals (1h): First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +8, Parry Defense +4 (10 Action)

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 1

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action), Fatigue +3



Lacaune Dungeon

Though the Groggs may claim they were chasing the poacher, their words have little impact on Hagen. He declares he has legal jurisdiction, as the poacher was contravening "Forest Law." (Actually, he knows he's on Church lands and has no official power, but enjoys throwing his weight around and thus exceeds his authority.) Hagen also assumes the Groggs are poachers and are lying to him. Being in the depths of the forest in midwinter is evidence enough for him of the characters' crimes. After all, according to Hagen, "no one has need of being here at this abysmal time unless he seeks to hunt the Count's deer."

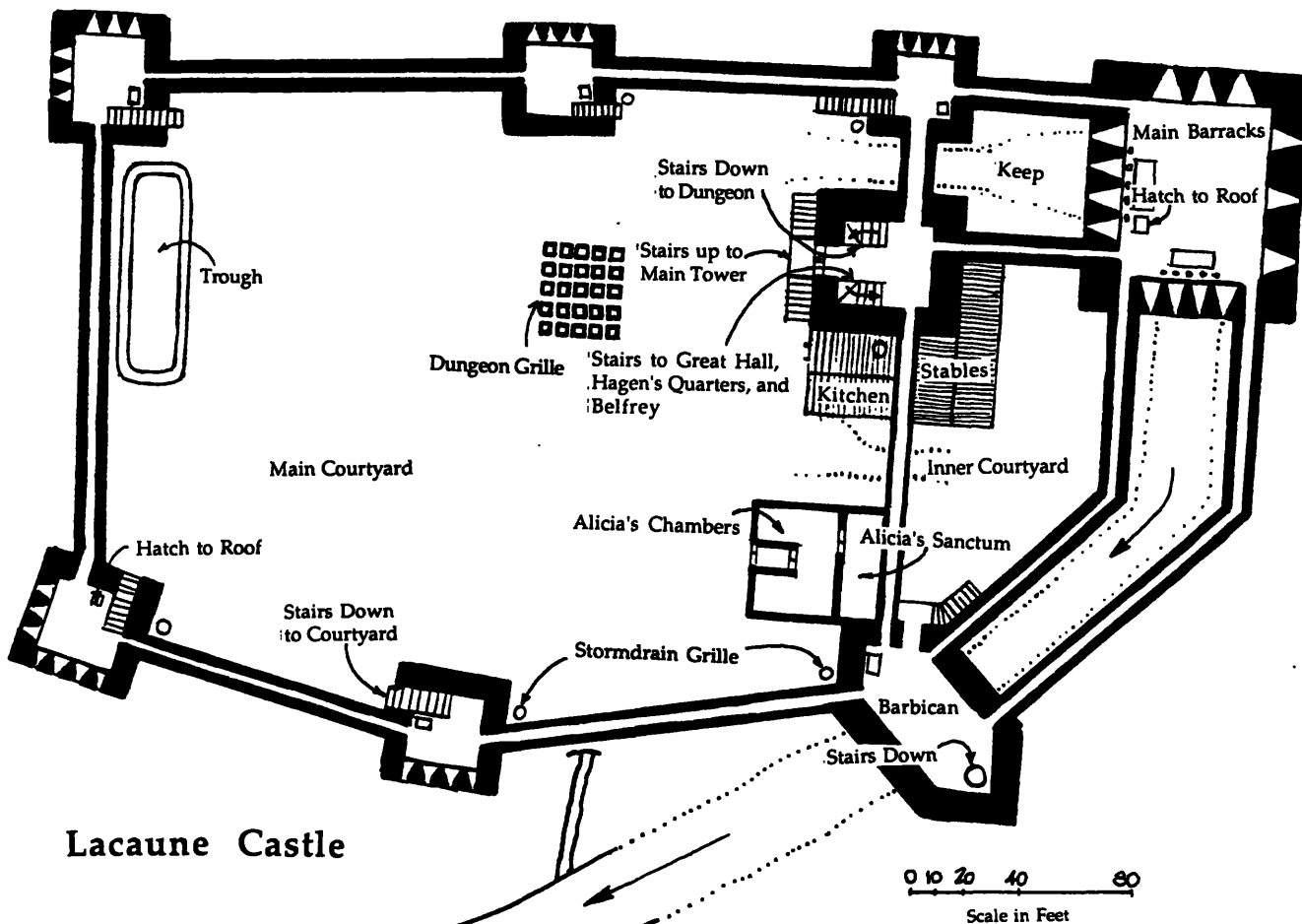
Of course, if the Groggs explain their true occupation they risk revealing the true nature of their Covenant, and you should make this plain to the players. Characters who discuss their home pique Hagen's interest in it — "Apparently there is a den of poachers about!" Even if the characters convince Hagen they were trying to capture Roland, Hagen claims they have no right to lynch the man, and he tries to take the characters into custody for usurping the church's legal authority.

Indeed, regardless of what the characters say or do, Hagen and his men take them into custody. At spearpoint, the soldiers strip the characters and Roland of their possessions and take them back to Lacaune Castle to be tried. Of course, the characters can put up a fight. Even if they escape capture, other covenfolk, who also chased Roland, do not. These covenfolk are certainly brought to Lacaune, so if free characters want to see their friends again they had better follow the crusaders back to Lacaune.

The Groggs and Roland are herded across the courtyard and locked into the dungeon of Lacaune Castle. (For the layout of the castle see its two maps.) The dungeon is a typical one: a pit five paces long, five wide, and 12 feet deep. It has stone walls and floor. Its ceiling is made of planks with a single trapdoor set into it. The dungeon is entered from the courtyard by a ladder, which is taken up when the guards leave. The only other entrance to the dungeon is an old iron-shod door that has swelled over the years, rendering it immovable. The door leads to the subterranean level of the castle's keep, beneath the keep's main floor. This door has no window.

The dungeon is filthy, dank, and bitterly cold, particularly in winter. When the characters arrive there is only one other prisoner in the hold, a crazy old man who collects, dries, and carves his own feces into the shapes of animals, primarily rats as they are the only animals he has seen in years. The old man is quite convinced there's no way to escape the pit and wants no part of escape plans.

There is not enough room in the pit for all prisoners to lie down or even sit comfortably at the same time. With nothing to do but stare at the grille above, characters are largely left to occupy their time among themselves. Before long feces carving starts to look entertaining. Those who lie under the trapdoor get the best air, and fights may break out for the privilege. More



resourceful characters may talk with Roland and learn his background. However, most characters probably want to kill Roland for getting them in this predicament in the first place.

You should not overly edit the duration of this scene. It is a great situation for the development of inter-character relationships. In such close quarters characters' eccentric flaws become increasingly irritating to others. Indeed, the full spectrum of the dungeon's ugliness is not realized unless one believes, by spending a long time there, that escape is impossible.

Characters must take it in turns to sleep, sit, or stand. They must decide which corner is the latrine and which is bearable for sleep. After a few days the prisoners' ears grow accustomed to the silence; they are able to pick out footsteps in distant chambers, and strange-sounding Brabançon conversations. From these conversations the characters may be able to make out details of Hagen's crusading past, assuming characters can speak Brabançon and make a Perception + Brabançon stress roll of 8+. If these rolls are Botched the content of the conversation is completely misunderstood. Conversations are usually devoted to filthy tales of Shulammite harems raided and blasphemous atrocities committed in the name of God.

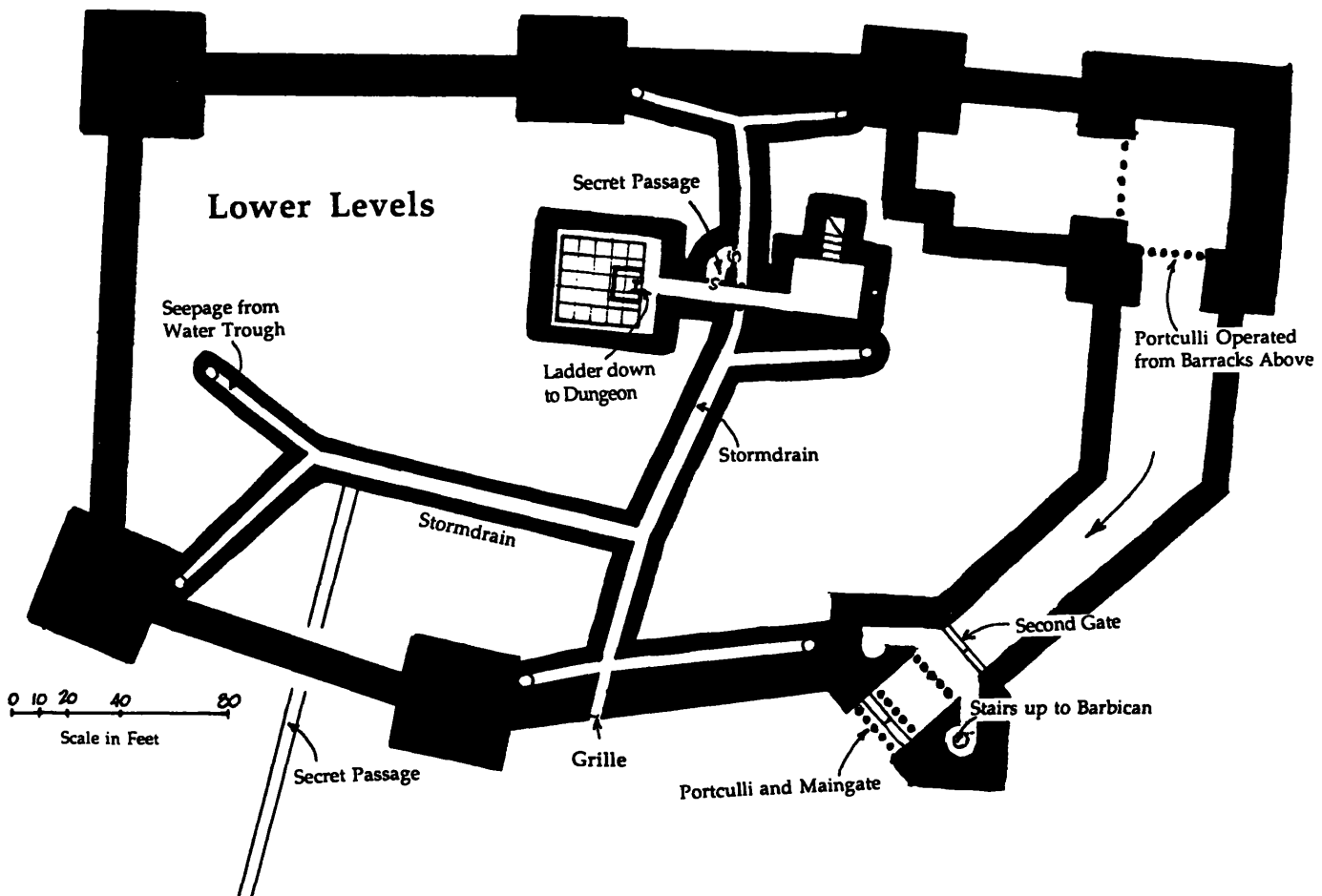
ESCAPING

The characters and Roland are held in prison for three days, to break their spirits and make for an easier trial. For each day of imprisonment the characters must make a Brave Person-

ality Trait stress roll of 6+. If a character does not have a Brave score, another Personality Trait can be used that reflects the character's relative resistance against losing hope. For each failed roll a Confidence Point is lost. If a roll is Botched two points are lost.

If, after such demoralization, the characters are still determined to escape, they may make their attempt. The roof of the hold is held shut by a wooden board that slides between two iron braces, wedging the trapdoor firmly to the ground. Sliding the board back from inside the dungeon requires a Dexterity + Contortions stress roll of 15+. A total of three attempts are allowed for the whole group over the entire three days. Each failed attempt after the first increases the Ease Factor of the next escape attempt by one (representing bloody fingers and ruined improvised tools). Thus, the third attempt has an Ease Factor of 17. If an escape attempt ever Botches all further escape attempts automatically fail; the sliding board is wedged in more firmly instead of loosened.

Brute strength can also be used to move the roof, as long as one person rides another's back. A Strength stress roll of 15+ is needed to force the door. Again, three rolls are allowed. Failures increase the Ease Factor of further attempts by one (representing strained muscles). If a Botch is ever rolled, both characters involved in forcing the door automatically lose a Body Level and the prison door is only wedged in more tightly, ruining other escape attempts.





The same Strength rolls are required to budge the old, swollen door. The tunnel beyond it leads to a basement level of the keep; stairs lead up to the main level. As this door is jammed in too tightly to be opened with finesse, attempts to "pick its lock" automatically fail.

Almost no guards tend to the dungeon; the Brabançons are too lazy to bother with guard duty. The only guard that comes along drops food through the roof grate, but even that is a rare occurrence. Water that accompanies a meal is simply poured into the hold, where characters must drink it from the filthy ground.

It's unlikely, but if characters do escape before their appointed trial time, they can make their way out of the castle by fighting only a few guards. The characters have no weapons, though, and suffer a -2 modifier to all rolls due to hunger and stiffness. For the first few moments of freedom they are also blind in the outdoor light, be it day or night (rolls made while blind suffer an additional -3 penalty). For the sake of the story, Roland is recaptured during his escape, and the madman of the hold remains behind. The recaptured Roland is still made the spy described below. (Don't worry if the characters kill Roland in the hold. This Saga can be perpetuated without him.)

If free characters penetrate the castle to rescue imprisoned friends they have to bypass a handful of guards. If any guards encountered are left alive, or others spot the characters (Perception stress roll versus the characters' Dexterity + Stealth

Alicia's Desires

Alicia, Hagen's mother, is a woman of fiery passions and craven lusts. As soon as the characters enter the main room of the keep one of their number catches her eye. She is physically attracted to the male with the highest Presence score, the character with the most striking features (though not necessarily attractive ones), or the character who seems to exude the most power and authority. In terms of the story, a character who would respond favorably to her advances is also a good selection. Perhaps a character who rarely receives the attentions of the opposite sex is best.

Alicia decides to have this person spared from punishment in order to make him her plaything. The object of Alicia's affections, and the other characters, may recognize her desire. On a Perception + Folk Ken roll of 4+ the characters realize that Alicia has amorous intentions for the chosen character; she stares at him incessantly and with yearning in her eyes.

stress roll), the alarm is raised. The alarm summons a dozen men and Captain Hagen to the main courtyard. Unless rescuers act fast they too are imprisoned.

If characters escape or break their friends out Hagen files an official complaint with the Bishop's canons. He's too lazy to bother pursuing mere poachers over several miles, but expects the canons to administer justice in his stead. Of course, the canons promise to take action but do not pursue his request. In fact, the canons recognize that Hagen had no real jurisdiction in the case in the first place, so escaped characters are allowed to get away scot-free.

The Trial

Eventually, with all the speed of the medieval legal system, the characters' case is finally heard (assuming they haven't escaped beforehand). They are hauled to the first floor of the keep and brought before Hagen, who sits at a large table. Beside him stands his mother, Alicia, whom the characters have never before met or seen. Standing about the room are six guards. Hopefully the characters have developed a defense while in the pit because now is the time they need one.

Hagen pursues no niceties at the trial. No one even keeps records of statements. Hagen first demands to hear Roland's story as Roland was captured first. Roland swears that abject poverty drove him to the woods in search of food, an excuse which fails to sway Hagen's grim heart. He commands his men to have Roland's hand cut off, but Alicia, Hagen's mother, intervenes. She whispers to Hagen that Roland may be a helpful spy with which to root out "heretics and witches" (though unless the characters have some way of overhearing they have no idea what is said). Hagen responds: "Of course; you are correct as always, mother." He then turns to his guards, "Cut off his hand and put fire to the wound. I'll dispense with him later." Roland is then dragged off, screaming. The characters do not see him again until Chapter Three.

As Alicia intends, the poacher becomes Hagen's regional informant. Despite the harsh punishment for his poaching crime, Roland knows better than to defy Hagen; that would cost his life. Luckily, Roland doesn't yet realize that the Covenant is a place of magic. This is understandable given the Covenant's young age and probable lack of reputation with the locals. Even if the Covenant has a magical reputation, Roland is very naive about matters of magic and doesn't yet attribute the characters with magical ways.

As they watch Roland being dragged off, the characters probably feel a collective lump rise in their throats. Turning to the characters, Hagen demands their defense: "Why were you in the Count's forest attempting to lynch a defenseless serf?" By this time the Grog no doubt have a dominant spokesperson. Regardless of the excuse given, Hagen is unimpressed and prepares to order the severing of each character's hand.

However, his mother steps in again. As described in the boxed text, Alicia's *Desires*, Alicia craves one of the male characters in the group. Alicia again whispers in Hagen's ear, asking that the chosen man be spared. Naturally, Hagen is curious about his mother's request. She replies, "It merely pleases me to have him spared!" Her motivation is purely selfish and egotistical. She gets great satisfaction from using men and discarding them as she pleases. She also likes to irritate her son by consorting with other men. She realizes that through jealousy, Hagen's respect and love for her only grows stronger.

Hagen begrudgingly grants this second favor to his mother. Alicia then commands two of the guards to take the chosen character to her chambers (though not her sanctum). She follows after the guards and man have left.

Thus, the remaining characters are left to defend themselves before Hagen. At this tense moment it might be effective to have Roland scream in pain somewhere in the castle. Angered by his mother's constant interventions, Hagen intends to punish the characters harshly. He elects to have them thrown in the prison again. After another three days of that torture he plans to have them each whipped and relieved of a hand.

ESCAPING PUNISHMENT

The characters can escape Hagen's punishment in many ways.

They may attempt to escape the hold as discussed above. The same three-attempt limit is applied for each means of escape — contortions or brute strength. The characters may also lose Confidence Points as before.

The character desired by Alicia might use his influence with her to have his friends freed. Of course, the character is in no real position to make demands, but might promise particularly exuberant services in return for spared friends, or might offer information about the region. Alicia's response to the character's membership in a Covenant is discussed under *Alicia's Plaything*, below.

Finally, characters back at the Covenant probably become concerned for their missing allies and set out in search of them. From local rumor (with a Communication + Social Ability simple roll of 6+) the characters discover their friends have been arrested by crusaders. The characters know the crusaders are in the employ of the Church, and may seek justice from the canons of Foix.

In this situation the canons agree that Hagen was out of his jurisdiction because he was on Church lands. Even if they have not been approached by the characters before, the canons now know that the characters' Covenant is on Church lands. The canons haven't really been concerned with the problem, though, given the greater concern of the coming crusade. (They only become concerned with the Covenant's locale later in the Saga.) In truth, the canons are somewhat opposed to the crusade and are thus willing to help the characters to some degree. However, they don't want to oppose Hagen directly for fear that he might complain to the Bishop in Italy. Thus, they arrange to send a neutral messenger to Lacaune to have the captured Grog released. As an employee of the Bishop, Hagen cannot justifiably resist Church orders and must release the prisoners.

For the sake of suspense, you may have this messenger arrive just as the imprisoned Grog are being tied up for their floggings, or if you're feeling particularly nasty, after the floggings but before the amputations. A character who has been flogged acquires the Disfigured Flaw (*Ars Magica*, p. 77) and loses one Confidence Point (if any remain after prolonged imprisonment). Flogged characters also require three weeks of rest to recover from their wounds (treat as Medium Wounds for the first two weeks and Light for the last). Characters who actually have a hand removed acquire the Missing Hand Flaw (*Ars Magica*, p. 77) and also require three weeks to recover (they are at Medium Wounds for two weeks).

Alicia's Plaything

In this scene, Alicia expresses her intentions for the chosen character. To run the scene it's suggested that the player in question be taken aside. Ideally the scene can be played after Hagen has judged the remaining characters and has elected to have them thrown back in the cell to await punishment. Thus, the players of those characters can be left alone for a short while, a period representing their characters' continued imprisonment.

The character chosen by Alicia is led from the keep and taken to her chambers, followed by the woman. Once there the guards are commanded to leave. The woman's chambers are built in a large wooden hall, lit by a warm fire, with tapestries and fine linens to keep out the cold. Alicia invites the character to enjoy a bath, to be comfortable, and to partake of food and drink (which is hard to resist after days of imprisonment and foul food — Stamina or relative Personality Trait stress roll of 9+ to resist; the character will eat to grotesque excess on a Botch). Alicia then makes discreet inquiries about the character's background and origins: what he does for a living, the nature of his comrades, and his story of the escapade in the forest. You



should also describe the beauty and elegance of Alicia, along with her playful personality and seemingly merciful nature, to which the character is indebted.

If the character maintains a believable cover, portraying himself as a commoner, Alicia maintains her purely sexual intentions for him. However, if the character ever angers Alicia in any way she is fully prepared to dispose of him as efficiently as possible. Alicia is not opposed to killing the character or leaving him maimed and maddened in the wilderness around the castle.

If the character lets slip that he works for a Covenant, Alicia's interest is piqued. Where she initially looked at him as a toy, she now perceives him as a tool. Even if the character angers the woman she will not dispose of him so easily, preferring to bear with him to obtain information about and access to the Covenant. Indeed, she continues to ask apparently naive questions, pretending to be ignorant of magic and the Order of Hermes. She even uses any local rumor about the characters to suggest her naiveté (e.g., "You mean you're from that tower of astrologers I've heard of?") She wants to know how many Magi live at the Covenant, how powerful they are, and what their intentions are in the crusade.

Alicia's intent, whether she knows the Grog belongs to a Covenant or not, is to offer the character a physical encounter. As a gift to follow the encounter Alicia offers her medallion (see her profile, below), which she passes from her own neck to the character's. If the character refuses the encounter or the medallion, Alicia subtly uses her Mentem magicks to coerce him into the affair and into accepting the medallion. To resist the woman's magical charms requires a Magic Resistance roll of 20+. A Natural Resistance roll is also allowed. An Intelligence stress roll of 10+ is required to resist the woman.

Once the medallion is accepted the bearer keeps it a secret; he becomes addicted to Alicia's company and affections, and is the woman's pawn. If the other characters inquire about what happened to the enchanted character, the Grog lies and explains that the woman wanted sex but was refused it (if that response is in keeping with the character's personality; otherwise a more appropriate, innocuous one is given). Aside from being obsessed with Alicia, the character behaves normally and may be roleplayed normally.

However, repeated trips to Lacaune Castle do become a necessity for the enchanted character, regardless of duties back at the Covenant. In fact, to make some rendezvous the entranced character probably has to sneak out of the Covenant, and may eventually be followed by concerned friends or authority figures. The character does not fight friends to see Alicia, but makes concerted efforts to be with her.

If the Grog manages to resist Alicia's charms she does not force the medallion on him, as she does not wish to expose her magical abilities. She does invite the character back, though, without his friends. The character is then free to leave the castle, and may request the release of imprisoned friends as well.

A character repeatedly returning to Lacaune Castle becomes well-known to the Brabançons and hated by Hagen. Hagen may eventually confront the character, treating him with contempt and perhaps even challenging him to a duel if patronized or otherwise offended. Hagen's jealousy eventually becomes evident to the character. In his mother's presence Hagen is sociable, but may make subtle hints about his displeasure with his mother's relationship, possibly even walking out of a meal and leaving his food untouched when affections are displayed between mother and lover.

Scenes in which the character meets Alicia can be organized by any means you feel comfortable with. As the affair may continue over several Chapters of this Saga, be sure your method of running the encounters is effective and doesn't disrupt the normal game. Otherwise the remaining players may be prematurely warned of trouble. To run events you and the single player might find time together outside the usual gaming session, or you might stage casual breaks in the normal game session for a character rendezvous. On occasion such breaks might involve other players as their characters notice or try to interfere with the primary character on his way to Lacaune.

Ultimately, Alicia does not want a confrontation between herself and the character's Covenant. Her outlaw status from the Order (see her profile) means she wants nothing to do with the Order; she fears she may be hunted down. However, she does want to know what the Covenants in the area are doing in order to avoid them, and to help her son in his crusade. Of course, she doesn't tell William about the character's Covenant as his attack on it would end her relationship with the Grog. However, she might direct her son against the Covenant if her lover ever turned on her.

Returning Home

After having spent some time away from the Covenant the characters (most of them anyway) who pursued Roland finally return from their ordeal. They now know that the crusade has arrived, and that their Covenant is in peril. The characters might also know that their Covenant is located on Church lands, putting them somewhat at the mercy of the canons. If the characters know what's best for them they had better remain in the Church's good graces.

By remaining alert the characters might also realize that one of their number returns home changed, restless and less reliable. Depending on how much of a personality change this entails, others may notice the change right away, or only after some time has passed.

Events After the Trial

After the characters go on trial before Hagen, his crusading spree continues. Though the characters might not encounter him personally, they hear of Hagen's brutal activities. These

rumors can be heard from mundane contacts, from Foix's canons, or by eavesdropping on others. Rumors are best heard during other stories you run between Chapters, or during characters' pursuit of more mundane events, like the acquisition of provisions.

The characters hear of Hagen's carousing, brawling, and witch-hunting throughout the County of Toulouse. When he and his men have not gotten drunk and destroyed some inn, they have rooted out Jews, heretics, and "witches," killing them. Furthermore, Cathars who attend public disputations with Catholics, with the promise that the Cathars will be left unharmed, are noted by Hagen's spies and later lynched. Furthermore, Hagen's soldiers are not opposed to highway robbery to boost their meager wages.

While characters may be incensed by such news of Hagen, direct action against him is dangerous. Confronting Hagen only draws attention to the characters and their Covenant, bringing the crusade directly to them, and runs the risk of making Hagen a martyr, intensifying the crusade. Acting against Hagen also runs the risk of angering other Covenants in the Tribunal, like Doissetep; the Domus Magnus of Provençal is an enemy the characters don't need.

Like Hagen, Alicia is active after the characters' trial. She migrates from court to court and castle to castle, enjoying the upper-class social scene of Provençal. On her trips she seduces powerful noblemen in her quest to attain more wealth, influence, and comfort. Characters belonging to the nobility might encounter Alicia but have little reason to act against her publicly. Acting against her in public only brings the combined anger of the male noble class against the characters. However, the character entranced by Alicia might be more eager to confront her and demand an explanation for her promiscuity.

If, at this point, you want to tell stories involving Hagen and Alicia some ideas are provided here:

- Hagen's men are holding a local friend of the Covenant for suspected heresy. The friend is in Lacaune Castle's dungeon and if tortured may well reveal the nature and location of the characters' Covenant. The characters must rescue their friend.

- A male character (aside from the one already in love with Alicia, and, if possible, of noble background) becomes interested in Alicia, seeing her carriage in Foix. The character must be brought to his senses by the other covenfolk or face the potentially violent jealousy of Captain Hagen. Maybe the character already in love with Alicia also becomes the enemy of this new rival.

- While collecting mundane supplies in a local village the characters overhear tales about Hagen and his "witch." Characters who were not imprisoned at the castle may visit Lacaune. They are treated with the hospitality due scholars and wealthy people of learning. However, if the characters reveal their magical background they are bluntly told to leave. Alicia does not want a direct confrontation with the Order at this point, while Hagen wants to deal with the characters as heretics. He therefore has them followed to discover the location of their Covenant. Hagen's spies may easily be lost by the characters,

but more may come, and Hagen's men may search intensely for the Covenant's whereabouts. Regardless of subsequent events, an encounter in Lacaune gives characters a chance to assess Hagen and Alicia.

You are invited to tell stories after the characters' trial, with one caveat. Hagen and Alicia are the characters' primary adversaries in this Saga. If they are killed or frightened off before future story events, this Saga suffers. You are therefore advised to keep stories involving the pair on a small scale. Ideally, these stories remind the characters that Hagen and Alicia are still out there and must be dealt with one day.

Adversaries

There are three major people whom characters encounter in this Chapter: Roland, Hagen, and Alicia.

ROLAND

Roland is a wily coward. He would sell his own mother to make a quick denier. Alert and fidgety, he has a tendency to smile and wink when nervous. The filthy thief lives in the forest and obtains most of his food by killing deer and other game — game he knows has, since Carolingian times, been reserved for the Count's own huntsmen.



Roland

Characteristics: Intelligence (cunning) +1, Perception (wary) +3, Strength (rugged) +1, Stamina 0, Presence (obsequious) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness (rough terrain) +2

Age: 26

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Common Sense +1, Compulsion (drinking) -1, Missing Hand (after trial; -3 to appropriate actions) -2

Abilities: Speak Provençal (underworld slang) 4, Brawl (strike) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 4, Scan (woodlands) 1, Dodge 3, Guile (lying to authority) 5, Pretend (friendliness) 2, Subterfuge (bluff) 3, Survival (woodlands) 4, Track (woodlands) 4, Legerdemain (filch) 2, Stealth (woodlands) 6, Knife Attack (surprise attacks) 5, Self Bow Attack (beasts) 6

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Poacher (peasants) 1

Personality Traits: Brave -3, Reliable -1

Weapons and Armor:

Knife Totals: First Strike +8, Attack +9, Damage +8

Self Bow Totals: Rate 2, Attack +9, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Roland hates the injustice of the system. He claims that poor innocent men like himself, who desperately need to eat, are prevented from doing so by the privileges of rich foresters, who are legally allowed to kill poachers who resist arrest. In reaction Roland has become a professional poacher. He has made the theft of livestock a full-time criminal profession, and thus gains little sympathy for his complaints. Not even paupers, who like him are barefoot, ragged, callused, and scarred, condone his activities since they are not legally allowed to follow suit.

Roland accepts work with Hagen out of fear for what Hagen might do to him if he refuses. Though Roland hates Hagen with a passion for amputating his hand, Roland dares not defy the man, even if characters promise protection. Roland would sooner run away than face Hagen.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM (GUILLIUM) OF HAGEN

Captain Hagen is a tall, dark-haired, heavily-built veteran of the Middle Eastern crusades. He is tanned, scarred, and wears the best armor available, riding in full chain in the war saddle of his strong cob.

Hagen's mother, Alicia, raised him with a hatred for all users of magic, except herself. He guards Alicia from the prying eyes of the Church and the Order of Hermes, allowing her to

William of Hagen

(before the curse of Cernunnos)

Characteristics: Intelligence (practical) +2, Perception (obsessed by mother) -1, Strength (strong grip) +1, Stamina 0, Presence (self-confident) +2, Communication (commanding tone) +1, Dexterity (steady hand) +1, Quickness (swift) +1

Age: 28

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Leadership +3, Well-Traveled +1, Obsessed (witch-hunting) -1, Infamous (witch-hunter) -2

Abilities: Speak Frankish (native tongue) 5, Speak French (the language of northern France) 4, Speak Provençal (knightly terms) 4, Speak Arabic (war terms) 3, Morning Star Attack (mounted) 8, Morning Star Parry (unarmored) 4, Shield Parry (mounted attacks) 5, Lance Attack (small targets) 4, Animal Handling (horses) 3, Brawl (punching) 3, Intimidation (violence) 6, Leadership (mercenaries) 4, Ride (charging) 4, Church Lore (knightly duties) 3

Confidence: 4

Reputation: Ruthless (peasants) 2

Personality Traits: Hatred (magic users) +3, Brave +3, Melancholy +1, Proud +1

Weapons and Armor:

Leather Hauberk*

Full Chain Mail

Morning Star Totals (1h): First Strike +5/11*, Attack +11, Damage +17, Parry Defense +5 (11 Action)

Lance Totals: First Strike +5/+11*, Attack +7, Damage +13

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 7/1*

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -6/0* (0/6* Action), Soak +14/+3* (21/9* Action), Fatigue -7/-1*

* when hunting



Furthermore, in Provençal wits are appreciated as much as valor. Wits are rarely inherited, and Hagen realizes that a lowly-born man can rise to great heights on his own merits.

In his new occupation as a crusader Hagen has already gained a reputation as a witch-hunter. While protecting his mother from the Church he has hypocritically sent many to the pyre, accusing them of necromancy, maleficia, and other unspeakable crimes.

ALICIA

Alicia de Pahn is a 50-year-old Magus from the Rhine Tribunal. She was forced into apprenticeship at a Brabançon Covenant but was never interested in the affairs of the Order, and never visited other Covenants. Preferring the worldly life of mundanes, she fell in love with a local villager. The affair was illegal according to the strict charter of her Covenant, which stated that a Magus's *amici* should have no sexual relationship with the Magus lest it affect her work. Rival Magi also resented Alicia and her "common" lover. Eventually Alicia became pregnant, bearing a child named William. After the birth Alicia was outlawed from her Covenant and her lover deserted her. She was therefore forced to raise William in poverty, bullying the infant because she saw his father and him as the cause of her expulsion from the Order. Such treatment instilled in the bastard child a fearful devotion to his mother, as well as a hatred for other magic wielders.

practice her magic in secret. He treats all other women with disdain. He loves his mother and is very jealous if she consorts with other men.

During the third Middle Eastern crusade, Hagen fought with the forces of Richard the Lionheart. In this campaign he gained a reputation as a ruthless and efficient warrior. Captain Hagen is more than simply a greedy career soldier. He is socially ambitious and eager to prove himself as worthy as any local vassal knight.

Although a foreigner paid by Bishop Merdici to enforce Papal edicts, Hagen is interested in settling permanently in the Provençal community. Unlike Brabant, his cold homeland, Provençal offers many opportunities to men of common social estate. Indeed, Hagen has seen knights of Provençal who take part in civil money-making commerce, living in plush fortified townhouses. Also, to Hagen's advantage, the distinction between vassal knight and paid mercenary is blurred in Provençal.



Alicia's Spells

The following are additional spells known by Alicia:

Medallion of the Enchanted Heart (ReMe 25)

Spell Focus: A ruby inset into medallion (+1)

R: Special, D: Special

This spell must be cast on a medallion, and the medallion must be worn for the spell to have effect. The medallion binds the heart of its wearer to the maker, giving the wearer the Love Passion as a Virtue, particularly with regard to the caster of the spell. Otherwise, the wearer behaves normally. However, the wearer fights to retain the medallion once it has been voluntarily accepted. The spell is broken if the medallion is destroyed. This spell is not gender-biased. It can operate between people of the same or different sexes.

Ligature (PeCo 5)

Spell Focus: A Slaughtered Cockrel (+1)

R: Special, D: 1 to 10 days

In order to cast this spell the user must possess an Arcane Connection to the target, such as a necklace, a shoe, a staff, a coin, or a lock of hair. With this Connection the spell has an unlimited range. The target of the spell suffers sexual impotence for one to 10 days (randomly rolled) after the spell is cast. The spell can only be cast once through a single Arcane Connection (so a single Connection can only strike a victim impotent for up to 10 days).

Alicia de Pahn of House Ex Miscellanea

Characteristics: Intelligence (scheming) +4, Perception (intuitive) +2, Strength (gentle) -3, Stamina (delicate constitution) -1, Presence (elegant) +3, Communication (eloquent) +3, Dexterity (calm) +2, Quickness (short steps) -2

Age: 50

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Affinity (sexual passions) +2, The Gentle Gift (no -3 penalty to social rolls) +1, Special Circumstances (+3 to nighttime spells) +1, Noncombatant (-2 on all attack and damage scores) -3, Small Frame -2

Abilities: Speak Frankish (modes of address) 4, Speak French (courtly language) 4, Speak Provençal (ballads) 4, Speak Latin (poetry) 4, Scribe Latin (letters) 3, *Certamen* (Mentem) 4, Magic Theory (magic items) 5, Hermes Lore (mundane relations) 1, Hermes History (Houses) 1, *Parma Magica* (Creo) 4, Sing (love songs) 2, Play Flute (dances) 2, Chirurgy (broken limbs) 2, Meditation (controlling emotions) 1, Concentration (long periods) 3, Charisma (groups of men) 3, Charm (nobles) 6, Folk Ken (jokes) 1, Diplomacy (courtly) 1, Leadership (William) 2, Intrigue (courtly) 4, Church Lore (crusades) 1, Penetration (Mentem) 2, Bargain (mercenaries) 2, Sexual Passions Affinity (nobility) 4

Confidence: 4

Reputation: Noble Lady (courtly men) 2, Manipulator (courtly ladies) 2

Personality Traits: Calculating +2, Determined +2, Lustful +3

Techniques and Forms: Creo 10, Intéllego 5, Muto 0, Perdo 5, Rego 15, Animal 1, Aquam 5, Auram 5, Corporem 5, Herbam 0, Ignem 5, Imágonem 10, Mentem 15, Terram 0, Vim 5

Spell Casting Speed: -2

Twilight Points: 4

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Subtle Taste of Poison and Purity* (InAq 10) +9, *Chamber of Spring Breezes* (CrAu 15) +14, *Thief of the Stolen Breath* (PeAu 10) +9, *Soothe the Raging Flames* (PeIg 10) +9, *Light Shaft of the Night* (ReIg 10) +19, *Phantasmal Fire* (CrIm 15) +19, *Taste of the Spices and Herbs* (Mulm 5) +9, *Wizard's Sidestep* (ReIm 20) +24, *Rising Ire* (CrMe 15) +24, *Subtle Shift of Heart* (MuMe 10) +14, *Sight of the Transparent Motive* (InMe 10) +19, *Enchantment of Detachment* (MuMe 15) +14, *Ward Against Faeries of the Woods* (ReHe 15) +14, *Waiting Spell* (ReVi 20) +19

Wizard's Sigil: The scent of roses

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

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

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

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -1

Despite her separation from her Covenant Alicia continued testing her talents. She also learned much about the mundane world she had been sheltered from. Indeed, she used her abilities to gain herself a position in the local dukedom, a position higher than that normally available to one of common birth. Alicia became accustomed to a life of luxury; cloth-of-gold and rich silks suited her taste. To ensure her comfort she used romance and subtle magical arts (mainly her medallion) to control and manipulate men around her. She was courted by several noblemen, all of whom she refused, all of whom worked hard to please her, and all of whom Hagen resented.

When Hagen gained Lacaune Castle as the gift of Dietrich von Braden, Alicia came to the castle with him. Her private chambers have become her sanctum, accessible to none but her most trusted handmaidens. Even Hagen must ask permission to enter Alicia's boudoir, but once inside is granted many favors. Hagen's new employment also ensures that Alicia enjoys a lifestyle of opulence greater than that of many local noblewomen. Indeed, she has a wardrobe stocked with the latest court fashions.

Alicia enjoys living in Provençal, a peaceful, literate, and wealthy land. In Provençal she can enjoy high levels of status and security, pleasures unknown in the barbaric north. She

lives at ease and enjoys her leisure. Furthermore, many of the castles of Provençal are no longer isolated fortresses, but have genuine social contact with each other. Nobles pay each other visits and such gatherings are often places where a woman's domain is supreme. It is also the habit of local nobles to leave their castles and establish themselves in townhouses for part of the year, usually in winter. Here they meet not only their peers, but also rich merchants, whose refinements draw close to those of the nobility. Alicia has become so involved in these local politics that, until the characters enter her life, she has not paid attention to the affairs of the Order of Hermes. Even her vis supplies are low.

Alicia is more than the stereotypical man-eating hag common to medieval literature. She uses her devoted son's protection to shelter herself from the Order of Hermes. She is a determined, unpredictable, self-confident woman with a strong sense of ambition. As such she is disliked by many men. As the old saying goes, "*Varium et mutabile semper femina*" (a woman is an inconstant creature).

In appearance Alicia is a desirable, mature woman. A veil covers her graying hair and a wimple frames her face, hiding her over-ample chin.



MASSACRE AT HORN'S HILL

CHAPTER THREE



he cry shattered the murky half-sleep that Tyler had fallen into. He jerked awake, knuckles locked on the shaft of his boar-spear. Quickly scanning the frost-litten landscape, he realized that the frightful scream had come from the farms below. He ran down the slope of the hill, searching for the source of the disturbance. He

did not have far to go.

Tyler was no woodsman, but the tracks were easy to see, even in the fading light. He was no herdsman, but he knew the prints of a goat when he saw them. And while he was not renowned for his quick wits, he knew beyond a doubt that the tracks before him were made by a two-legged creature.

A satyr? He recalled the marble statue he had seen in the alcove at Doissetep, Grimgroth's distracted reply to his query. The Magus had said that creatures of that ilk had little spleen, caring more for drinking and wenching than fighting. Tyler prayed Grimgroth was right. Breath misty in the twilight, he reluctantly trotted off in the direction of the noise, steadfastly refusing to listen to the corner of his heart that whispered doubts about the nature of that half-heard scream.

Whatever it was, it made little attempt at craft. The tracks led straight through the snow to the edge of a farmer's fields. Tyler could see all too clearly where his quarry had gone after that, for the pile of flinders that lay strewn in the snow had obviously been a section of a wooden fence. He thought of the smiling sculpture, those willowy arms smashing the stout planks before him like jackstraws, and shuddered. He thought of his spine in place of one of those planks and shuddered further.

Stepping gingerly over the ruins of the fence, he continued into the fields. The moon had begun to rise, weaving a ghostly pall over the fallow earth. Each step was an effort, though the thought of what felix would more than likely do to a deserter urged him forward. His spear at

the ready, he advanced for maybe a few rods, then froze still. A faint but clear sound, a tearing or crunching of some sort, reached his ears. The sound came from behind the snow-covered arbor.

The creature squatted in the moonlight on goatish hooves. Once again Tyler remembered the stone satyr of Doissetep. But this could be no satyr, for the face of the statue was that of a handsome youth, not the tusked and furry horror that faced him. Nor did the delicate fingers, carved by some forgotten artist of Greece, end in cruel hooked talons like those of the thing before Tyler now. And the lips of Doissetep's faun were wrapped around pipes, not bloody rags of flesh such as dangled from the mouth of this creature — flesh torn from the shapeless lump which sprawled at the creature's feet, and which had very clearly been a man only minutes before.

Tyler had no time to raise his spear to block the monster's charge. It leapt upon him, covering him like a black cloud of fur and claws and tusks...

Summary

In this Chapter, Sarimarcus, the Merinita Magus met by characters at the Tribunal of 1207, and his work are destroyed by the activities of Hagen. As a result the curse of the pagan deity Cernunnos is unleashed. The characters must therefore face new threats to their livelihood: a Celtic god's revenge and angry faeries. Hagen, the harbinger of the destruction, is established as the Covenant's major enemy.

This Chapter presents the Saga's first major opportunity for full-scale conflict with the crusaders. It also presents an opportunity for suspense as characters encounter an elusive and possibly significant beast.

This Chapter occurs in the late spring and early summer. Though it may be told in the season following the last Chapter, it is best told a few years after Chapter Two, allowing the characters and Covenant time to mature somewhat with your own stories.

Sarimarcus's Research

Sarimarcus is the Merinita Magus who approached characters at the Provençal Tribunal, asking permission to investigate faeries near their Covenant. In particular, he wanted to go

incognito among the commoners of the village of Plaplean (or any other village that suits your Saga) to get the mundanes' perspective on local faeries. The precise details of Sarimarcus's request are discussed in Chapter One, under the profile of the Magus. He has been in Plaplean since the Tribunal. Plaplean is located on the color map inserted into this book.

Sarimarcus plans to ingratiate himself with the villagers in order to become involved in their clandestine solstice festival. Although Plaplean's May Day feasting festival is well known, a subsequent festival (on June 21st) is very secret. The May Day festival, a vestige of the ancient Celtic feast of Beltane, has lost most of its religious significance, now being a simple source of entertainment for all but the oldest villagers. That's why the Church is willing to overlook its celebration. However, the village's secret Summer Solstice festival is held in an altogether more earnest manner.

Horn's Hill

The villagers conduct their secret ritual at Horn's Hill, an ancient pagan shrine. This mound is a hollow hill which belongs to a faerie named Coffa. Coffa is the embodiment of the inhabitants' "memory" of the ancient Celtic god of the forests, whom the Romans called Cernunnos, or Carnun. The Hill is surmounted by a great oak tree. Beneath the tree is a structure



Gillet

Characteristics: Intelligence (bright) +1, Perception (insightful) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (nagging cough) -2, Presence (warty) -1, Communication (intriguing voice) +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 52

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent (Sense Holiness & Unholiness) +1, Faerie Sight (see through faerie illusions as per *Second Sight*) +1, Magic Susceptibility (-3 to rolls versus magic) -1, Driving Goal (converting the people to Cernunnos) -1.

Abilities: Sing (solo) 1, Leadership (peasants) 4, Craft (carpentry) 7, Craft (farming) 5, Faerie Lore (Celtic deities) 5, Legend Lore (faerie creatures) 2, Folk Ken (peasant beliefs) 2, Storytelling (religious tales) 5, Sense Holiness & Unholiness (threats from Hill) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Caring (peasants) 1

Personality Traits: Considerate +3, Pious +2, Humble +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2

that takes many forms, depending on the realm of Faerie currently occupied by visitors. (The Hill is fully detailed in the *Ars Magica* supplement *Mistridge*.)

The Hill is the site of two different levels of Faerie *regio* (rated one and three), realms of Faerie power occupying the same space. Each realm is more powerful and true to Faerieland than the last. These realms and the Hill itself are shown on the *Horn's Hill* map. The concept of supernatural *regio* is discussed in the Realms Chapter of the *Ars Magica* rules. The rules presented there also discuss how people may enter, leave, and understand *regio*.

THE MUNDANE LEVEL

Beneath the *regio* levels of the Hill is the mundane world. If a visitor does not or cannot pass into the Horn Hill's Faerie realm the mundane level alone is visited, and the hill appears relatively ordinary. At the top of the hill stands a great oak tree. Its branches have been garlanded by villagers with wreaths of withered flowers and tattered ribbons. Located beneath the tree's branches are the remains of a makeshift shelter which shows signs of recent vagrant occupancy.

THE FIRST LEVEL (AURA 1)

The first level of the Faerie *regio* exists just "above" the mundane world and has a Faerie Aura rating of one. The hill on this level assumes a different appearance than on the

mundane level. This level is occupied by a shrine, housed by a sturdy wooden hut and tended by the local villager Gillet and his family, who respect the ancient powers of the Hill.

Gray-haired and balding, dressed in humble clothing, Gillet is a simple freeman, scratching a living from fields on the edge of Plaplean. He tends the shrine as his father did before him, believing his offerings are received by faeries who safeguard the fertility of the village. Gillet and his family also sometimes sleep at the shrine in hopes of receiving prophetic dreams. Gillet will readily tell visitors of these dreams. He believes by doing so he maintains an ancient oral tradition. He tells of how his "faerie god" saved the village in times past, and of how the "Briga" (Celtic "Hill") was a shrine of the ancient Convenae tribe. He also explains the nature of the secret Summer Solstice festival to anyone interested. However, Gillet doesn't understand how he and his family are able to enter and leave the Faerie *regio* and shrine at will.

The shrine itself is simply a table bearing an ancient pair of antlers and Gillet's offerings.

THE SECOND LEVEL (AURA 3)

"Above" the Faerie level that houses Gillet's shrine is a realm of more potent faerie power. Here the massive oak is stronger but more gnarled than on the lower levels. Furthermore, a sturdy wooden hall, not a shack or shrine, is sheltered beneath the tree's branches. The hall is 15 paces long and seven paces wide, with a ceiling 15 feet high at its peak. Knot-work patterns decorate the hall's wooden walls. The hall is the home of Coffa.

The hall contains simple Celtic furniture, including a patterned table laden with food, a table which corresponds to the altar on the lower *regio* level. If Coffa removes any of this food some of Gillet's offerings disappear from the lower shrine. While he is rarely interested in eating, Coffa often throws food to the forest animals who live around the hall. These animals possess an uncanny intelligence, but, despite their musculature, seem old and weary. The "leader" of these animals is a venerable stag named Mawredd.

Coffa

Coffa appears to be an ancient, haggard man, clad in rags and wearing a heavy gold torque about his neck. His appearance and power reflect the peoples' reverence for Cernunnos. When Cernunnos was worshipped by many, Coffa was a tall warrior-god, with fair skin and long blond hair. Now that Cernunnos's worship barely exists with the overwhelming influence of Christianity, Coffa fades as the people forget him. However, as worship of Cernunnos determines Coffa's fate, the shawl (see the boxed text) of the hill also affects his fate. If the shawl is ever returned to reverent use, Coffa is resurrected.

Coffa

Faerie Might: 25

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence (ancient knowledge) +4, Perception (disinterested) -2, Strength (brawny) +2, Stamina (tough) +2, Presence (compelling) +3, Communication (captivating) +3, Dexterity 0, Quickness (casual) -2

Reputation: None (in current society)

Personality Traits: Lethargic +1, Miserable +1

Confidence: 1

Combat Totals:

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

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

Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +2 (8 Action), Fatigue +2

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Speak Provençal (somber terms) 4

Powers: As the peoples' memory of Cernunnos, Coffa has access to the full range of the old god's powers, but has only a fraction of the god's might.

Curse, PeHe, PeCo, PeMe, PeAn 30, 4 points — Can inflict a curse; this is treated as the -3 Flaw, *Cursed*.

Communicate with Animals, InAn 20, 0 points

Shapechange to Animal, MuCo(An), 2 points — It takes a Round to change. Physical statistics for the animal assumed are used, though Fatigue and Body Levels remain the same. Other powers function normally.

Control Animals, ReAn 25, 3 points — treat as the ReAn spell, *Mastering the Unruly Beast*.

Control Strength, PeCo, CrCo 15, 1 point — A victim loses or gains 3 points of Strength. To gain Strength, a Stamina simple roll of 3+ is necessary. To avoid losing Strength, a Stamina stress roll of 12+ is necessary. Modified Strength reverts to normal after the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first.

Fertility, ReCo, ReAn, ReHe 40, 5 points — A victim is cured of infertility or stricken barren. Stamina stress roll of 15+ needed to resist infertility.

Vis: 3 Mentem, in torque

In return for the respect local villagers afford Cernunnos, Coffa blesses their land. He enjoys the villagers' company, but, since the true Cernunnos retreated into Arcadia, Coffa has never truly conversed with anyone but Gillet. Even to Gillet he only speaks in dreams.

Coffa is mercurial in character, passing quickly from joy to sorrow and from sorrow to rage. He is also proud and touchy, with a strong sense of his own dignity. He is apt to be belligerent in preserving his dignity.

SARIMARCUS'S PROGRESS

Sarimarcus's efforts to ingratiate himself with the villagers of Plaplean and become involved in their festival are successful. In fact, he wins Gillet's favor and learns some of the village's

secrets. Gillet reveals, in his own naive way, that the yearly festival confers potent faerie blessings on the village. Given the pair's mutual appreciation of faeries, Gillet also leads Sarimarcus to the first level of the Hill's faerie *regio*. From the knowledge gained Sarimarcus concludes that further levels exist and goes in search of them on his own.

One misty evening, with his faerie influences about him, Sarimarcus goes to the Hill and finds his way to the highest of the *regio* levels. Coffa, sensing Sarimarcus's faerie nature, comes forth from the hall when summoned. Having the Virtue of Faerie Sight, Sarimarcus, like Gillet, is awed by Coffa's ancient power and majesty. Over the short time the two spend together Coffa becomes contented with Sarimarcus's company, seeing the mortal as a potential shaman. In turn, Sarimarcus devotes himself entirely to his conversations with Coffa and is drawn to the old Celtic ways. Thus, Sarimarcus returns to the world in preparation to become one of Cernunnos's ancient priests reborn. He is to fulfill the dream of all Merinita Magi, to become one with Faerie.

Hoping to make Sarimarcus his permanent disciple, Coffa proposes to bestow his horned shawl upon the mortal at the upcoming festival. With a small margin of renewed faith for Cernunnos on earth, Coffa intends to garner even more by actually showing his true form to the mortals at the festival, something he has not done in several decades.



The Shawl

Optimistic locals sometimes dig holes in Horn's Hill looking for a treasure rumored to be buried there. This treasure exists, but not in the form treasure hunters imagine. The Hill's treasure is an ancient "shawl." No flighty garment, this garment is the stag-horned hood of Cernunnos's ancient shaman priesthood. In the past Cernunnos chose shamans as "disciples," representatives of the people who communed with him. Magi would call these disciples "Gifted." Gillet is the last of these individuals, but he bears no shawl. Though Cernunnos is virtually forgotten in the Christian world, Gillet maintains worship of the deity, and preaches respect for the spirit among local villagers, who would dare not cross such an impressive power.

During the summer solstice festival the shawl is brought out from under the hill and consecrated by Coffa. This consecration imbues the shawl with various forces, especially with spirits (the ghosts of ancient shamans and woodland beasts). By merely donning the shawl the wearer may automatically enter the first level of *any* Faerie *regio*, or the highest level of the Hill's *regio*. The shawl also imbues the wearer with a personal Faerie Aura of three. Any Hermetic spells cast while wearing the shawl are therefore interfered with, but rolls involving faerie magic are benefited (see the *Realm Interaction Chart* of the *Ars Magica* rules, p.308).

The shawl is made out of flayed animal skin with fur lining the inside and cured flesh on the outside. Rings of faerie iron hang from the shawl, each representing a mythical animal. A cloth mask covers its wearer's face. A copper pectoral hangs down on chains at the front of the hood. A faerie iron cap is also attached; a majestic pair of stag antlers sprout from the top.

The shawl is integrally linked to the fate of Coffa and is worth 15 pawns of Muto vis.



recognize, on a Perception simple roll of 6+, an intense faerie energy within the Magus. Sarimarcus now effectively has the +2 Background Virtue, Faerie Blood.

Sarimarcus has a simple message to deliver: "A festival is planned at Plaplean to celebrate the old, true ways. You are invited to join us as my guests for I am to receive a special honor. I am to be bound to the old ways, to take the path Quendalon himself did. All who bear no malice in their hearts are welcome. The festival is in one week, on the solstice."

Sarimarcus is also willing to share any more information he has about the impending festival, and about his union with "old powers." However, if he fears the characters have ill intentions he might keep some knowledge to himself. If certain characters seem a threat to the festival, Sarimarcus asks that they be watched closely by their friends, if such potential troublemakers are invited at all. On the whole friendly relations between Sarimarcus and the characters should prevail, for Sarimarcus bears no malice. Clever characters might even realize that allying with Sarimarcus would be beneficial. If he is to become one with the faeries of the forest his influence might mean easier access to vis supplies in the wood.

Though he might stay a night at the characters' Covenant, Sarimarcus remains no longer, having duties to attend to back at the village.

Sarimarcus's Invitation

Given the significance of the upcoming ceremony, Sarimarcus deems it appropriate that the characters be invited to the secret festival. He comes to their Covenant to thank them for their hospitality (for any help given toward integrating him into Plaplean). If the characters never condoned Sarimarcus's activity in the area, and he took action anyway, he invites them to the ceremony to prove that he never had malicious intent.

Sarimarcus approaches the characters' Covenant on foot, arriving a week in advance of the festival. He expects to be met by Groggs and simply asks that they summon their masters to receive him. Though dressed like a peasant he still possesses his Hermetic sigil, proof of his identity, though anyone who met him at the Tribunal of 1207 probably remembers him (Intelligence simple roll of 4+ to do so). If characters do not remember him they do when he prompts their memories. Those who have met Sarimarcus before are entitled to a Perception + Folk Ken simple roll as well. If the result is 5+ the characters recognize something different about the man: an unidentifiable aura. Those with the Faerie Sight Virtue or Second Sight Ability

The length of the characters' journey to Plaplean is determined by the Covenant's distance from the village. You may certainly stage stories along the road, but those told should not delay the characters from arriving for the June festival.

Characters' Inquiries

Sarimarcus insists that visitors not bring weapons or armor, though Magi are certainly still armed with their spells. To wear arms and armor would not only offend the villagers but would embarrass Sarimarcus, and maybe even anger Coffa. If characters do carry armaments, they should be small (no larger than short swords) and slight (no armor heavier than a hard leather cuirass). Some characters may find this condition distasteful, but the prudent among them recognize the importance of its observance. Still, if the characters don't trust Sarimarcus, or have any doubts about his information, they may certainly research his story's validity.

The characters can undertake this research at their own library if they have books on Faerie or Celtic Lore rated 3+. Of course, the young Covenant's library might be very limited. The best alternative is to visit another Covenant or the library of the renowned University of Toulouse.

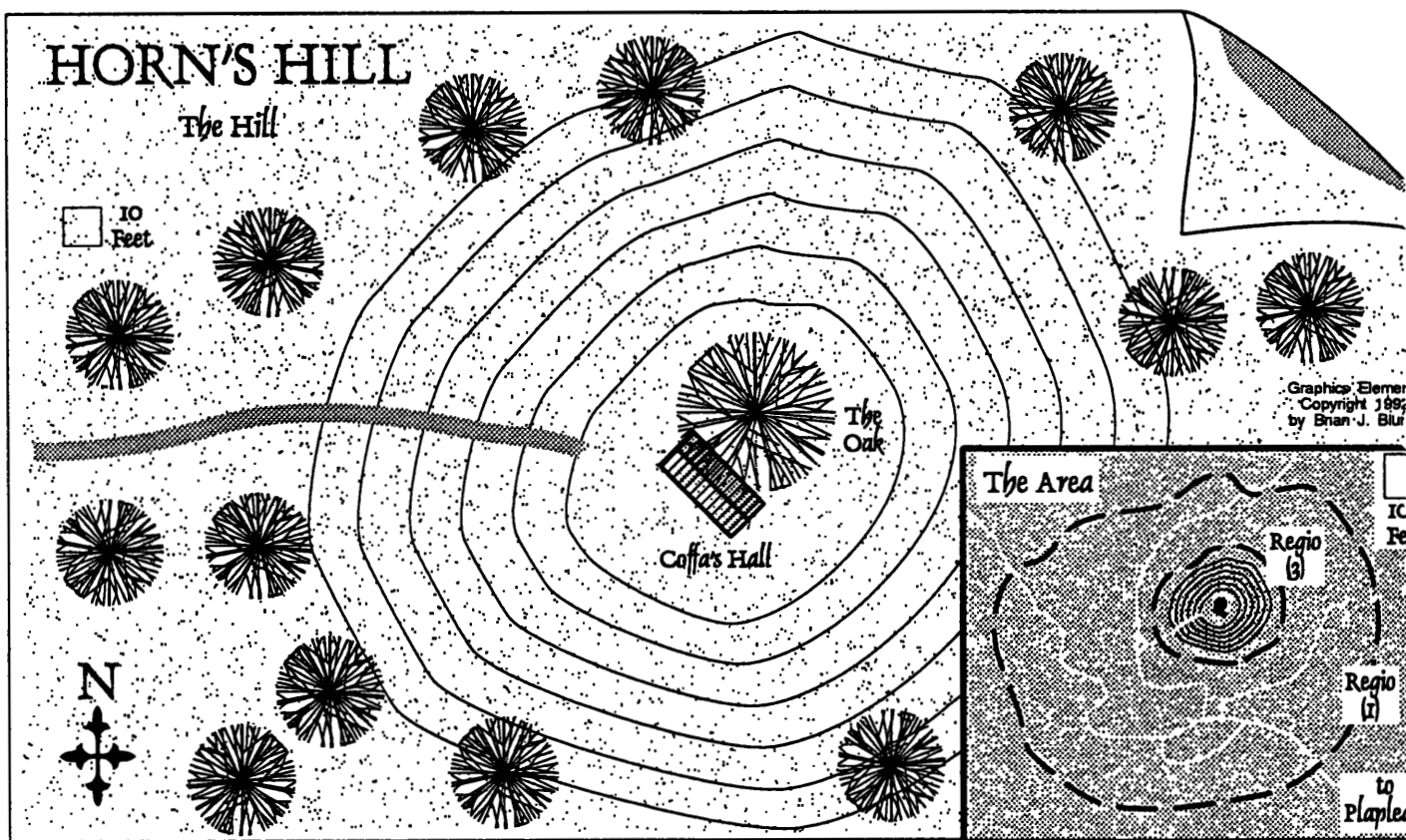
If characters pursue knowledge at another Covenant, keep in mind their relations with that Covenant, particularly after the Tribunal of 1207. Though Doissetep has the best library in the Order, access to it is almost certainly denied if characters voted with the Procrustean League in the crusade debate.

However, if characters established good relations with Lariander Covenant, which is located in a faerie forest (and that Covenant has thus far weathered the crusade), characters might go there for information.

As for the University library, it is headed by a priest named Theodore of Calais, who is happy to welcome wealthy intellectuals. He has a fine collection of Roman histories; indeed, his interest in the classics, as well as heretical works, has brought him into conflict with the Pope's envoys. Scholars at the University are also likely to have rare copies of the "Histories" of Livy, Herodotus, or Polybius, or *The Conquest of Gaul* by Julius Caesar. Any such book and an Intelligence + Scribe Latin simple roll of 8+ elucidates the probable background of Coffa, and gives a basic description of the Celts. The higher the roll, the more information is gleaned. At the least, any research, no matter how successful, proves that some Celtic force known as Cernunnos was once said to exist, and that force had an agent called Coffa. Sarimarcus's story therefore seems valid, regardless of its improbability.

An Uninvited Guest

While Sarimarcus has been ingratiating himself with the villagers of Plaplean, so has someone who bears the villagers ill intent. The poacher Roland has been moving among the villagers and learning about their secret festival on the summer



solstice. Of course, he immediately turns this information over to Hagen. Now Hagen hopes to capture the pagan revelers at their devilish act.

Learning about pagan affairs at Plaplean, Hagen makes further assumptions about the villagers' corruption. If at any point in the Saga the characters have secretly used magic against Hagen — if Hagen has suffered any magical attack of unknown origin — he incorrectly assumes the "pagan" villagers are responsible. His ferocity against the villagers is therefore twofold. While he seeks revenge, Hagen also hopes to get in the good graces of his superior, the Bishop. He seeks a better post, less isolated from society and the battles of the main crusade.

Upon the night of the festival Hagen and his men go to Plaplean. They are dressed in full battle gear, with Hagen mounted and his men dismounted. They discover the village to be deserted. However, they spot a trail of torches leading into the woods. They follow these lights, and as the other villagers were transported by the Faerie power of this night (discussed below), the crusaders are also transported to the third *regio* level of Horn's Hill. From the cover of the wood the crusaders surround the pagan hall and, on Hagen's signal, charge the building, killing everyone within reach of spear and sword.

THE FESTIVAL

The secret festival of the summer solstice occurs on the third level of the Hill's Faerie *regio* and is staged in Coffa's hall. Virtually all the villagers of Plaplean attend, not to mention the characters and Sarimarcus. The villagers celebrate the solstice throughout the day, beginning their revelry at dawn with song, dance, music, and food. As dusk falls a trail of torches leading from the village to the Hill are lit and all villagers make their way to the hall. This is the first time in generations that the villagers as a whole have seen the Hill in all its splendor; but, after all, this is the first time in generations that a priest has been initiated under Cernunnos.

Characters may turn up at Plaplean at any time. Upon arrival they are recognized and greeted by Sarimarcus, who is having a particularly good time. He is already thoroughly drunk and perspiring from dancing. The characters are invited to partake of all the festivities. This is a good opportunity to let characters relax and pursue their personal desires; there's excess aplenty to be pursued — food, drink, and companionship.

When the torches to the hill are lit — by Gillet — and the villagers follow them they are astonished at the sight of Coffa's hall where they expected only a ruined hut. The great oak of the Hill is also heavily draped with ribbons where the locals expected only a few tattered ones. Small animals also abound in the forest surrounding the hall, and many are quite tame, approaching small children for food. (If characters are alert — Perception + Scan simple roll of 8+ — they might also spot the stag, Mawredd, patiently watching events from deep in the woods.)

The Faerie Aura on the Hill is particularly strong on this night, but also different from the usual Aura. The Aura is attuned to the Celtic faerie power of Cernunnos. Magic used on the Hill that is not Celtic in origin — Hermetic magic is not Celtic — is therefore impeded. The Hill's Aura is rated six, so spells cast suffer a -6 modifier to their rolls.

Sarimarcus and Gillet assure everyone that the hall is safe to enter, and the villagers do, renewing their festivities within. Activity continues for a short time within the torchlit hall until the sounds of animals outside suddenly cease. A billowing fog then flows in across the floor and everyone falls silent. It is at that moment that the ominous, impressive figure of Coffa enters the hall. He is somewhat younger, appearing as a middle-aged man of some stature and prominence rather than as a decrepit old man. Upon Coffa's head is the shawl intended for Sarimarcus.

Turning his gaze slowly around the hall, Coffa addresses the crowd: *"Welcome, my children, followers of the dwindling light of Cernunnos of the Wood. The Great One smiles upon you this night and is thankful for your tribute. Yea, this eve marks the turn of the breeze, as the crude new ways of the world are awash with the truth of the past. On this night the old ways come to the fore. On this night we celebrate the renewed worship of the Great One. On this night we have a priest again!"*

With this speech Coffa beckons Sarimarcus to him. Sarimarcus kneels before the ancient man. A long, gnarled branch appears in Coffa's hand and is held toward Sarimarcus, who accepts the free end. The two then enter a trance-like state in which they alternate lilted, poetic chants in ancient Celtic. Characters who understand that language can try to comprehend what is said with an Intelligence + Speak Celtic stress roll of 8+. The song is one of the spirit and unity of the forest, in which a natural, logical social order exists under the supreme command of Cernunnos. It is to preserve this rule that the shamans exist, and Sarimarcus vows to protect and uphold the natural laws of the forest.

Gillet signals the villagers and characters to dance to the rhythm of Coffa's and Sarimarcus's chants. A ring forms about the entranced pair as people laugh and sway to the alternating voices.

The Crusaders Attack

It is during Sarimarcus's initiation that Hagen and his men, under cover of the woods, surround the hall on the Hill. Hagen sends Roland to the building to spy on activities within. Roland sneaks up to the broad, open doors of the hall and peeks inside. Even though naive about matters of magic, he knows a pagan affair when he sees one, especially one of such passion. Characters have a chance of spotting Roland. A contest stress roll is required: Roland's Dexterity + Stealth versus the characters' Perception + Scan. If the characters Botch they miss Roland entirely and are in turn recognized by Roland, who returns to Hagen to inform him that pagans, and his former cellmates, are within the hall. If Roland Botches he stumbles and makes his presence known to all characters.

Hagen's position is such that he can see Roland at all times, so if Roland disappears or is attacked, Hagen signals his men to charge the hilltop. If Roland returns with news of the event within, Hagen signals the same charge, ready to deal death to pagans.

Characters with acute senses might be forewarned of the charging soldiers (Perception + Alertness, Premonitions, or any other appropriate Ability stress roll of 8+). Otherwise, characters are taken as much by surprise as the villagers. Even if characters are alerted to trouble, the villagers are slow to respond to any warning. They are so caught up in their festivities that they don't hear or don't understand the characters until the crusaders have arrived at the hall doors and begun killing.

There are as many crusaders in the attack as you deem appropriate. A reasonable number is 10 for every character attending the festivities. They are led right into the hall by Hagen, still on horseback (the doors and ceiling are high enough to accommodate him). Hagen barks orders at his men to block the doors and kill everyone. In particular he singles out Gillet, Coffa, Sarimarcus, and the characters whom he has met before. Many villagers are put to the sword as they attempt to flee the hall. Many more are killed before they get a chance to move. The crusaders make no concessions for men, women, or children. As Gillet is a defenseless old man, he is quickly killed. Sarimarcus and Coffa, still locked in their trance, are also defenseless. Sarimarcus is killed first, if not by sword stroke then by crossbow bolt, alerting Coffa to the dangers around him. Even if the characters defend Coffa and the other two, they cannot contend with the onslaught of all the crusaders.

Coffa's Response

Only when Sarimarcus is slain does Coffa realize with horror the events unfolding in the half-light before him. However, it is too late for Coffa to use any of his major powers before being slain himself. While he can, Coffa commands tree roots to burst from the ground. They drag Sarimarcus's murderers down into the mound and entangle others, wrapping around legs with lightning speed. The wooden weapons (like spears and axe handles) of the crusaders also warp and twist, rendering them useless. Branches whip at soldiers' faces, blinding and forcing some to flee madly into the woods. However, Coffa does not survive for long (maybe three or four combat Rounds) before being felled by several crossbow bolts.

When Coffa is killed the enchantment of his hall is broken. Roots and branches under his command wither and die. Weapons warped into uselessness return to normal shape. Ultimately, the hall vanishes and everyone in or around it is dropped out of the regio. In fact, the regio now ceases to exist. Everyone on the site finds themselves back in the mundane world. The great oak is now ugly and gnarled and the shack that represented Coffa's hall has collapsed. However, the Hill still retains its Faerie Aura of six for the remainder of the night.

The Characters' Reaction

Characters attending the festivities are allowed to respond to the crusader attack in whatever way they please. They may fight or flee, but are probably poorly armed and armored, and are certainly outnumbered. Aside from Coffa's desperate effort, fighting characters pose the only opposition to the crusaders and must bear nearly the full weight of the crusaders' assault.

Characters who are wounded and cannot flee are likely to be killed by the crusaders. Hagen wants no prisoners, so survivors found by the crusaders are killed immediately. If fleeing characters want to save friends left behind they had best act quickly.

Of course, Magus characters are still armed with their spells and can try to use them. However, the Hill's unusual Faerie Aura of six seriously hampers magical efforts.

Regardless of what characters do, certain events must happen during the crusaders' attack. Sarimarcus, Coffa, and Gillet must die. Hagen must survive, though he can certainly be wounded. In fact, if Hagen is wounded his men are likely to rescue and deliver him to the safety of Lacaune Castle. The crusaders must also take possession of the shawl that Coffa wore and intended to pass onto Sarimarcus. Hagen can pick up the shawl as proof of the pagan ritual staged at the village, and also as a trophy of his success at the hall.

If the characters are resourceful enough to drive the crusaders away, the crusaders should still acquire the shawl. Roland, who hides throughout the attack on the hall, might grab the shawl and escape with it. He takes the shawl in a gambit to please Hagen and to barter for his freedom from the crusader's service. (Shortly after that he flees Hagen's service for good.)

The Aftermath

As the characters are outclassed, outnumbered, and poorly equipped, the crusaders probably win the battle. With his victory Captain Hagen orders a bonfire built around the trunk of the great oak — on the mundane level of the regio, of course. At the fire's center the crusaders burn the bodies of Sarimarcus, Coffa, Gillet and all the slain villagers. Indeed, the dead are disposed of without Christian burial, in accordance with their pagan acts. As the fire rises the hollow hill itself shudders and collapses, exposing the naked rock beneath. The crusaders back off, leaving the fire to continue burning. Their next task is to burn the village of Plaplean to the ground.

After destroying the Hill and village, the crusaders, probably still strong in number, return to Lacaune.

As a final note, the stag Mawredd, who resides near Coffa's hall and was once one of Cernunnos's companions, leaves the mortal realm after the destruction of the hall. Mawredd was, from the beginning of Sarimarcus's initiation into the priesthood, unconvinced that the old ways would return. The ancient stag therefore remained aloof from events at the hall. When the crusaders attacked, Mawredd simply gave up and left man's world for the realm of Faerie.

TO THE VICTOR THE SPOILS

A few days following the assault on Horn's Hill, even if he was forced to retreat from the scene, Captain Hagen reports to the Bishop's canons at Foix. He claims to have routed a heathen sect in the area and produces the horned shawl as evidence of evil witchery afoot. The Captain proposes to repeat his successful raid on other such dens. The canons, shocked by the notion of further violence, insist that the best way to stop paganism is to minister to the population.

The canons therefore order Hagen to build a church in Plaplean as soon as possible. They believe the task will concentrate the minds of the locals and the Captain upon a common goal. The task is hoped to keep the Captain occupied with a peaceful pursuit while simultaneously guiding the flock, leading them from paganism to peaceful conversion. A church will also, the canons believe, be a symbol of the Church's authority, to remind the Captain not to overstep his boundaries again. (As far as the characters are concerned, the task of building a church also distracts Hagen from hunting any of them down, particularly those who were put on trial in Chapter Two and were present at Horn's Hill.)

Attacking Crusaders

Characteristics: Intelligence (unimaginative) -1, Perception (unconcerned) -1, Strength (brawny) +2, Stamina (hearty) +4, Presence (crude) -1, Communication (brutal) -2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (fleet-footed) +1

Age: 20s

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Frankish (insults) 3, Brawl (dirty tricks) 2, Alertness (traps) 2, Dodge (missiles) 3, Folk Ken (terrorizing peasants) 2, Drinking (quickly) 4, Weapon Attack (peasants) 3, Round Shield Parry (close quarters) 4, Light Crossbow Attack (peasants) 3, Scan (opponents) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Cruel (peasants) 3

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Cowardly +2, Vicious +3, Charming -3

Weapons and Armor:

·Leather Hauberk

Short Spear Totals (1h): First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +8

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +12

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +6, Attack +7, Damage +11

Light Crossbow Totals: Rate 1/2, Attack +3, Damage +10

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 1

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action), Fatigue +3

After meeting with the canons the Captain returns to Lacaune Castle with his trophy—the shawl—for a celebratory feast. He hopes alcohol will relax the battle lust of the previous night. Only after the festivities does Hagen announce the crusaders' new, disappointing mission of church construction.

To preserve his dignity with his new task, Hagen decides to wear the captured shawl as a trophy and sign of his previous success. Of course Alicia is apprised of recent events, but for the moment she is more concerned about Hagen's prize. She realizes it has faerie powers but dares not take it from her son for fear of breaking his spirit. She therefore comforts him and secretly investigates what the shawl's powers might be.

News of Hagen's report to the canons, and their plan for a church in his future, can be heard by characters in many ways. Such information is only available to the characters a few days after the battle on the Hill. Characters' contacts in the Church might relate it, as might survivors from Plaplean who hear a proclamation of a church to be built. Characters might also learn about Hagen's report and new mission from the canons themselves. Certainly Curate Ramon approaches the characters in the next Chapter, though an earlier meeting might be arranged. Maybe the characters plant a spy among Hagen's men and even learn about Hagen's strange obsession with wearing the shawl. Ultimately, any character maintaining an affair with Alicia may learn about the report to the canons, the church task, and about Hagen's behavior at Lacaune itself.

COUNTERATTACK

Though characters might want to stage a reprisal against Hagen after his attack, doing so at this point is very dangerous. With his success Hagen has won the respect and support of crusaders in other areas of Provençal and therefore develops allies abroad. If action is taken against Hagen he can call upon powerful forces to strike back against the characters. A counterattack is best staged after Hagen has suffered a defeat of some kind, an opportunity which soon arises.

If the characters do plan a counterattack you might also have a timely messenger arrive at the Covenant. The messenger is a Redcap, maybe even Aestrius, delivering a warning from Doissetep. The Praeco, Oxioun, wants a report of what happened at the village of Plaplean as Doissetep's informants (spies) report that Sarimarcus was residing there. Aestrius also relates that Oxioun wants the characters to remain out of further crusade activities under threat of lost Covenant land rights and maybe individual Wizard Wars. As a word for the wise Aestrius reminds characters that, "*Doissetep has spies throughout the Order and even among mundanes. For you to pursue plans against the crusaders now could mean your ruin. I suggest you bide your time. The mundanes will always be there and one day Hagen will make a mistake that you can use to your own ends.*"

In the end, even if characters still plan decisive action against Hagen, their efforts may be interfered with by the more pressing matters of Chapter Four.

Epilogue: Hunting the Beast

A short time, maybe a season or two, after the attack on Plaplean, word comes to the characters from frightened villagers. They implore the characters to investigate nighttime attacks staged on livestock and some unfortunate villagers. Several people report seeing a wild, horned beast stalking homesteads. This mystery superficially appears unrelated to the main plot. However, perhaps hoping to gain the beast's vis, or to help friends among the mundanes, the characters may agree to hunt the beast.

The beast is actually the transformed Hagen, suffering a curse put on him by the shawl he wears. The faerie spirits within it are angry for Hagen's destruction of Horn's Hill and murder of Coffa, and they torment the man by changing him into a beast. Complete details on the shawl's curse are provided in Chapter Four. An encounter with Hagen in beast-form now foreshadows the events yet to occur.

ON THE TRAIL

Investigating the sites where the beast was reported, the characters find nothing but the hoofprints of a bipedal creature. These prints are visible to any character with a Track Ability score of 3+. Following any set of tracks for any distance requires a Perception + Track simple roll of 9+, given the age of the prints (anywhere from five days to two weeks old). The tracks seem



The Beast

Faerie Might: 20

Vital Statistics: Size +1, Cunning (crafty) +3, Perception (wary) +2 (+7 for hearing), Strength (sinewy) +5, Stamina (tireless) +5, Presence (bestial) -4, Communication (grunting) -2, Dexterity (instinctive moves) +2, Quickness (galloping stride) +4

Virtues and Flaws: None

Reputation: Killer (peasants) 1

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Bloodthirsty +3

Confidence: 2

Combat Totals:

Horn Totals: First Strike +8, Attack +10, Damage +14, Parry Defense +8

Bite Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +8, Damage +8

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

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

Dodge Defense: +8 (14 Action), Soak +13 (19 Action), Fatigue +4

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Ferocity (hunted) 4 (+4 to Attack and other rolls of rage)

Powers: None

Vis: 10 Muto, body

to move back and forth just inside the forest treeline, suggesting that the beast paced back and forth, possibly spying on a homestead or flock. In each case, though, the tracks move deeper into the woods and finally disappear.

A character making an Intelligence + Track or Intelligence + Faerie Lore simple roll of 6+ might assume the tracks are those of a satyr, for they are of the appropriate shape and distance of stride for such a faerie. Another Intelligence + Faerie Lore roll of 6+ tells a character that while it is unusual for a satyr to be out hunting alone, it is not impossible. Perhaps the satyr has been ostracized from his pack.

Regardless of characters' tracking efforts, however, further sightings of the beast fail to arise. Given the lack of results in the mystery, characters are bound to lose interest eventually, probably assigning a small detail of Grog's to the case to keep watch on local villages. If players don't consider this option, you might suggest it to them in an apparent effort to alleviate any problems they're having. In the end a sighting will occur, but if Magi characters are involved Hagen might be captured prematurely, so Grog's are best suited for the sighting.

THE SIGHTING

A character (and probably a bored character) keeping watch for the beast is surprised one night by a tortured scream. Racing in the sound's direction, the character is horrified by the sight of a creature crouching over the dead body of a villager. The creature has the legs of a satyr, stag's horns, and the head of a boar. The beast's mouth is covered with blood.

The character may be able to approach the beast, but only with a comparison stress roll between the Grog's Dexterity and Stealth total and the beast's Perception (+7 in hearing) and Ferocity (4 + 1 for being hunted), for a total of 12. As explained in the *Ars Magica* Second Edition supplement *The Medieval Bestiary*, Ferocity is a score added to creatures' rolls when their wild natures are taxed. If the character Botches the beast is immediately alerted to the character's presence. If the beast Botches it remains unaware of the hunter.

If the beast is alerted to pursuit it flees. A small vestige of Hagen's mind remains within the beast's and demands escape from the humiliation of being seen. If a character is fast, quiet, or lucky he or she may be able to attack the beast, but Hagen is not likely to be badly hurt. Once injured the beast again escapes immediately.

Any mark or wound delivered to the beast remains in like shape upon Hagen when he changes back into human form. Alicia uses her Chirurgy skill to heal any major wounds, although she does not understand where Hagen gets such wounds and he refuses to explain.

Characters trying to chase Hagen must make comparison stress rolls of their Quickness + Athletics (for moving through a forest) versus the beast's Quickness + Ferocity (being hunted, for a total of 9). A roll is made for every Round of the chase. The side that accumulates a total of five points over the other party either catches or escapes the other. A Botch from either party means tripping and being caught or losing the beast entirely. If the beast is caught, it fights its way out of custody, which shouldn't be a problem given the limited number of opponents.

The chase also involves Short-Term Fatigue stress rolls. Each party must make one Fatigue roll for each Quickness roll of the chase. Successive loss of Fatigue Levels penalizes a party's ability to keep moving. If a Fatigue roll Botches, two Short-Term Levels are lost. The Ease Factor for all Fatigue rolls is six.

If characters follow the beast's fresh tracks they must make Perception + Track stress rolls of 8+. Three such rolls are required. On a Botch the track is lost entirely. Although characters might successfully follow the track they eventually lose it. Hagen retains enough of his mind to move down a stream and thus eliminate tracks.

Thus, though characters don't catch the beast now, they know something is out there. When, in later Chapters, the beast turns out to be Hagen, the characters' lives come full circle.



CRABTREE

THE VEANGANCE OF THE FEY CHAPTER FOUR



*F*lapean lay stark and dead under the blank blue sky. Unobtrusively, so as not to attract the Magus' attention, Tyler clutched the small wooden cross that hung about his neck. The scent of decay hung in the still air. The unnatural growth which blighted the valley was at its strongest here. Tendrils of ivy and vines gripped cottages and barns the way the kraken of Northmen's tales was said to grasp ships. Tyler half-expected the buildings to be pulled down into the earth at any time. He prayed that, should the Judgment be nigh, his truck with fiends not be held against his soul.

Fiends such as Felix. The gray-robed Magus was truly in his element, for scattered throughout the broken stones were corpses of all stripes. Masons, Brabançons and laborers alike lay locked in death, impaled on tree limbs and roots. It was as if some enormous shrike had left its prey here to rot. The Grog studiously ignored him as he flitted from body to body, prodding, pinching and otherwise defiling God's work.

The skeleton of the half-finished church stared down upon the grisly scene like a dark shepherd. So overgrown with weeds was it that it hardly resembled a thing wrought by man. Even the power of God seemed helpless before the forest's onslaught — Tyler quickly put such blasphemous thoughts from his soul, praying for forgiveness. The turpitude of his employers was infecting him.

From the corner of his eye Tyler caught a glimmer of motion. A twisted shape hurled itself from the ruins at Felix as the Magus stooped over his subjects. Tyler interposed himself between Felix and the erstwhile assailant. By the time Felix turned, the Grog had already gripped and pinned the man — for man it was, albeit so decrepit and emaciated as to barely be recognizable as such. The frothing lips, surrounded by a scraggly and obviously lice-infested beard, gibbered at the Magus in an unknown tongue. The scrawny, rag-clad frame writhed this way and that in Tyler's grip.

Felix stood and scrutinized the captive. "What have we here — and what uncouth tongue does it speak?" The captive continued to shriek and gibber. "Be silent," the Magus muttered, and spoke a few bizarre syllables. The stench of death grew stronger still, and Tyler knew that Felix had evoked magic. He shuddered and tried to stay calm.

The captive continued to wail in his strange tongue, but Felix now appeared to be listening to him. "Yes...yes...not surprising," the Magus muttered. "They...who do you mean by 'they'?" "Ah, I see," Felix continued. He then turned to Tyler. "The fool is useless," he said. "Release him."

Glad to be rid of the madman, Tyler turned him loose. A demented grin on his face, the man ran to the nearest corpse and began to stroke it lovingly...

Summary

This Chapter details the effects of the curse of Cernunnos, and the attempts of the characters to discover ways to end it. During this Chapter the cursed Hagen grows steadily insane. Chapter Four should primarily be used to build suspense for Chapter Five. The growth of faerie forests and the coming of the crusade should, by the end of this short Chapter, goad the characters into resolving tensions with the faeries and confronting Hagen for the last time.

The events of this Chapter occur shortly after those of the last Chapter, maybe within a Season or two. However, the events of Chapter Four can be spread out over a long period as characters become fully aware of the damage the attack on Horn's Hill has caused. Ideally, events of Chapter Four can be integrated into stories of your own creation, outside the established plot of this Saga.

Results of Destruction

Though the canons of Foix mean well, their plan to have a church built in the ruined village of Plaplean only backfires. True, villagers who survived the crusaders' attack eventually return to their burned and ransacked homes. True, they try to rebuild their homes and bury their dead. However, the villagers cannot justify the building of a church among them. They feel the Church has done them wrong and agree that Church money should go toward rebuilding peasant lives, not to the

construction of yet another stone monument. Thus, the people of Plaplean see the new church as a symbol of uncaring Roman authority, and are driven further from Church loyalty.

THE CURSE

As if anger against the Church isn't problem enough, the death of Coffa only brings about further hardship. Without Coffa, the living embodiment of Cernunnos's memory, the people of the Val du Bosque forget Cernunnos. Without the deity's memory, infertility sweeps the land. Within the space of one Season, the men, women, and animals of the valley are stricken incapable of producing young. Likewise, fields go barren.

The curse of Cernunnos does not end there, though. It affects the individuals directly involved in the death of Coffa. This means all the villagers of Plaplean, the Brabançon soldiers who attacked the Hill, and all the characters who were present at the attack are individually cursed. Yes, the vengeance of Cernunnos is harsh and somewhat arbitrary. At least there's some justice: as the leader of the crusaders and thief of Coffa's shawl, Hagen is doubly cursed, as alluded to at the end of Chapter Three and expanded upon here in Chapter Four.

The curse felt by individuals affects the strengths and virility of its victims, and is the equivalent of the -4 Flaw, Curse (see the Supernatural Virtues and Flaws lists in the *Ars Magica* rules). At important moments — such as at desperate times in combat — curse victims become weakened or exhausted. Unless a Stamina stress roll of 7+ is made, a victim automatically loses three Strength points and temporarily drops one Long-Term Fatigue Level. Lost Strength is regained when the lost Fatigue Level is regained. If the Stamina roll is Botched, the victim is also stricken permanently infertile. Any male creature touched by an infertile curse victim is in turn stricken infertile for one year. Even if the curse victim is successful on the Stamina roll, a Short-Term Fatigue Level is temporarily lost.

Intéllego Vim or Córpoem magic of Level 10 or higher may divine the origins of the curse. If the characters realize from whence the curse originates, they may attempt to use magic to lift it. The infertility aspect of the curse is virtually impossible to break with Hermetic magic, for it stems from ancient, natural faerie powers. Those powers are not only great in themselves but particularly great in matters of fertility and vengeance. The weakening effects of the curse (i.e., Strength and Fatigue losses) can be counteracted by a Perdo Vim spell of Level 30+. Counteracting this aspect of the curse requires devoting lab time to the creation of an appropriate spell (*Ars Magica*, p.239), or the creation of a Spontaneous spell. Depending on how high the Magi's Lab Totals are, creation of this spell might be impossible, or might take a long time.

Depending on how nasty you're feeling, you might make the characters suffer under the effects of the curse for a long time, maybe even permanently. However, the characters are free to seek aid from fellow Magi of greater power. A foreign

Magus could invent the spell characters need. Unfortunately, asking for the valuable lab time of another Magus puts the characters deeply in debt, assuming the characters have an ally capable of creating the needed spell. Payment of the characters' debt may well provide the impetus for another story.

Though characters' limited magical powers might not be very effective against the curse of Cernunnos, the Covenant's Aura and the Magi's powers do have one benefit. These powers allow all characters to retain memory of Cernunnos. While the peasants of the Val du Bosque forget the ancient deity, the characters do not and may work to restore Coffa's memory and life.

THE GROWTH OF THE FOREST

Any problems with faerie powers the characters already face in the Val du Bosque only intensify with the construction of the church in Plaplean. The faeries of the valley hear of Coffa's death from the valley's animals. Naturally, the faeries are irate, but when masons, brought by Hagen from Foix to work in Plaplean, unwittingly make use of stone from the site of Horn's Hill, the faeries vent their wrath.

To avenge themselves upon the mortal world, the faeries of the Val du Bosque expand their forests over the next few months. This expansion results in an alarming loss of vital farmland; the forests even encroach upon the characters' Covenant.

In terms of more immediate effects, the masons and Brabançons building Plaplean's church are caught up in the enchantment. The villagers find them dead at their work, entwined in plant growth. Many villagers flee Plaplean, spreading rumors that it is a cursed and ruined place. None of the villagers that remain in their homes willingly enter the half-constructed churchyard.

EFFECTS ON THE COVENANT

The incursion of the forest on mundane and Divine lands is seen by many members of the Provençal Tribunal as a sign that faeries are trying to destroy the decadence of the Dominion. Some, particularly those of House Merinita, see this as a joyous tidings, although none publicly claim Cernunnos should replace Christ.

The precise effects of the forests' spread toward the characters' Covenant is up to you, based on the nature of your Covenant. In general, covenfolk suddenly discover the lands around the Covenant covered with oak saplings. No more than



two or three feet high at first, these trees grow larger in a matter of a few weeks. The saplings are deeply rooted and, if tugged, prefer to give up their bark rather than their grip on the earth. Also note that destruction of saplings is taken into consideration by local faeries. Trees that grow thereafter grow much more quickly and move deeper into Covenant territory until saplings, at the forefront of the forest wave, actually creep up through the mortar of Covenant floors.

Investigation of other lands in the Val du Bosque reveals similar forest growth, with tall trees growing beyond former forest boundaries, and thousands of saplings sprouting up some distance from old boundaries. Continued growth promises to turn all the Val du Bosque into a tremendous wood.

If Magi use the spell *Converse with Plants and Trees* (InHe 25) on the forest, they hear only a faint but steady chanting sound. If anybody dares to use the infamous spell *Treading the Ashen Path* (PeHe 30) against the growth, the faeries strike back with a fury. Trees destroyed grow back overnight and tree growth at characters' Covenant is increased tenfold. Maybe the Covenant's very Magical Aura is reduced by an increasing Faerie Aura!

Indeed, the characters' Covenant can feel the effects of tree growth in many ways. Here are some ideas on how it might:

- Local villages, which provide the Covenant with mundane supplies, struggle to survive. Fields left fallow become overgrown with scrub, and those planted with crops are

strangled by weeds. Crops this year will be scarce, if they can be harvested at all. With their fields ruined many villagers turn to vagabondage, perhaps seeking shelter on Covenant lands if those lands seem more hospitable. In the end this means characters' mundane supplies are lost.

- Trees sprouting through Covenant stone might cause leaks in storerooms and subterranean Covenant levels, destroying supplies and food.

- Unnatural tree growth convinces some Church officials that vile magicks are being performed in the Val du Bosque, bringing the crusade there *en masse*.

- Requests for an impromptu Tribunal meeting to solve the valley's problem are refused. Magi are too busy dealing with the effects of forest growth at their own Covenants to waste time in petty bickering. This leaves the characters relatively on their own.

- Vis sources might be jeopardized if already located in a forest, becoming well-nigh inaccessible. Alternately, vis supplies formerly outside the forest might be ruined by sudden forest expansion.

With all these problems arising, characters have little choice but to try and solve the forest problem. However, that leaves little time for dealing with Hagen. The characters have to decide what is more important to them, imminent destruction or vengeful satisfaction. If the characters are clever, they might realize that the two problems can be dealt with at one



time. However, that's a matter of concern for Chapter Five. Chapter Four simply describes events that culminate toward this Saga's climax.

HAGEN'S MADNESS

While the Val du Bosque's forests are growing, and characters are occupied with that problem, Captain Hagen grows more paranoid and introverted. Alicia's "lover" may notice a change in the man during clandestine journeys to Lacaune Castle. Hagen's madness can also be related by any spy planted among the crusaders, or by a Magus using magic to spy on Hagen.

Not only has Hagen become infertile but he often wakes up in the middle of the night haunted by visions of a horned woodland apparition. In truth, these are dreams of his transformation into a nocturnal beast, in which form he scours the land in search of victims.

Hagen also has nightmares of Celtic headhunters. He sees human heads fastened to the gates of his castle. He often shocks Alicia, his men, and Alicia's lover by screaming out loud in the feasting hall, when he sees hallucinations of Sarimarcus's bloody head on the table.

These dreams, visions, and transformations are brought upon Hagen by the curse of Cernunnos and the shawl Hagen possesses. He is slowly, painfully, being driven mad. He tells Alicia about his visions. She implores him to give her the shawl so it cannot affect him but he refuses to give it up, becoming violent when she tries to take it. Hagen's spy, Roland, has also vanished, a mystery which adds to the Captain's fears. (Actually, after the attack on Horn's Hill and the ensuing tree growth, Roland decided to flee the valley altogether. He doesn't get far, though, as is seen in Chapter Five.)

HAGEN'S PUBLIC CONFESSION

Hagen believes his visions are omens of his own impending death, which in a sense they are. He therefore resolves to confess his sinful dreams to Brother Simon de Casse at a public confession in Foix. Public confessions are the original basis for Christian penance. The penitent kneels down in front of a congregation of "those dear to God," and beseeches "all brethren to be my ambassadors, to hear my deprecatory supplication before God." Many commoners, the characters perhaps among them, are in the public gallery to witness this bizarre and entertaining confession. Hagen is absolved of his sins and pays a small donation of atonement to Brother Simon and the other priests.

With this confession rumors soon spread through the Val du Bosque that Hagen is mad. If characters are not present in Foix to witness Hagen's confession (maybe they're there to acquire other sources of mundane supplies), they hear tales of the scene on a Communication + Folk Ken simple roll of 4+, assuming they have any contact with mundane relations.

Madness and the Mercenaries

Hagen's behavior also has a distinct, adverse effect on his men. They leave him in the castle to himself, to his mutterings and fitful sleeps. Indeed, the group's crusading activities decline to nothing, and without active leadership and the profits thereof, some mercenaries desert. Those that remain become slovenly and lax. Ultimately, Alicia takes control of the castle, becoming a true chatelaine. However, some soldiers cannot come to terms with female leadership and even more desert.

Characters could meet such out-of-work soldiers and gain information from them. Groggs from the characters' Covenant may well meet them in taverns and learn about Hagen from the mercenaries' drunken, disgruntled mumbblings. Perhaps mercenaries formerly under Hagen are even willing to work for the characters as covenfolk. They are undisciplined Groggs but make up for their shortcomings with ruthlessness in battle. Such Groggs might also know of the secret entrance into Lacaune (see Chapter Five), the one Godfroi de Ferrers, from Chapter One, knows of. If Godfroi has since died or left the Covenant, these new Groggs can take his place in furthering the Saga's development.

The End of Madness

In the late stages of his madness Hagen's mind and body regularly transform into those of a carnivorous beast. Against Hagen's will, his instincts become those of a predator and he nightly prowls the woods of Lacaune, returning unseen before dawn. His shapechanging is not quite instantaneous, taking a combat Round to occur. The transformation happens as often as you deem appropriate. Bear in mind that Hagen is gradually becoming more and more bestial.

Characters can learn of renewed sightings of the familiar beast from different villagers or other contacts. The growth of the trees and resulting displacement of commoners and herds makes an ideal hunting ground for the beast.

Depending on how you want events to develop in the Saga at this point, and depending on how much free time characters have, you can stage several small stories during which characters see or meet the beast. As before, encounters with the beast are best staged with non-magical characters, both for reasons of drama and story continuity. In the end, though, the characters should only face Hagen/the beast in the final Chapter of the Saga, so rendezvous between characters and the beast at this point are best kept small in scope, maybe as a subplot involving the first character who met the beast.

Alicia's Defenses

Taking control of Lacaune Castle with the recent decline of her son, Alicia realizes the danger posed to the fortress. With crusade activities dwindling and the guard deserting, Alicia recognizes that defensive reinforcements are needed to protect



the castle, not only from Cathar supporters and Magi of Hermes, but from simple peasants outraged at the atrocities committed by the crusaders.

Alicia thus places *Phantasmal Fire* (CrIm 15) spells at the base of each of the castle's towers (as located on the Lacaune Castle maps). She also makes sure at least two men are posted on each of the castle's five outer towers, five men in the barbican, 10 men in the central tower, and the latter half of the remaining 50-man detachment in the main barracks. The magical fires "burn" constantly, allowing guards to see by night and stay alert for intruders. The fires can also be seen at night from miles around, giving the castle a sinister reputation among the surrounding mundanes. Alicia even orders the storm drains under the castle inspected, via the grille covers beneath each tower. However, the mercenaries are reluctant to give more than a cursory inspection to such filthy places, and the secret entrance remains undiscovered.

Alicia's greatest fear lies in her son's madness. She is heedful of his dreams, and fears the spread of the valley's forests is a faerie attack upon her, which it is.

Ramon's Request

After the attack on Horn's Hill, characters are probably busy trying to remedy damage caused by the crusaders, and undoubtedly return to Plaplean at some point. As previously stated, use of magic to detect the source of recent infertility and forest spread indicates Plaplean and the ruined Horn's Hill. Returning to the razed village, characters discover the half-built church and the dead men scattered among its stones. They also meet the survivors of Gillet's family and find inspiration to appease faerie powers. However, for whatever reasons, characters might not return to Plaplean. In that case they are motivated to do so by the requests, and maybe prodding, of Canon Ramon d'Uverre.

Although a dedicated Christian, Canon Ramon d'Uverre acknowledges the existence of pagan and faerie powers in the world. He is convinced that the Divinities will one day rid the world of these blights, but for now Ramon recognizes that he and the Church currently have limited power against faeries and the pagan. For him, proof of this belief lies in the destruction that has followed the attack on Plaplean. Ramon has heard and suspects that the forests are growing as a faerie reprisal for the ruin of the pagan ceremony. To avoid further destruction, and to ease the valley's terrible plight, Ramon decides that people experienced in pagan matters should be consulted, for the greater good. Canon d'Uverre therefore turns to the characters for help. He chooses the characters because he has learned that their Covenant lies on Church lands, and if the characters cannot be persuaded to help out, then they can be threatened to.

Ramon d'Uverre arrives at the Covenant alone, on horseback. (He comes alone to avoid suspicion in the Church and unwanted attention from the Bishop of Foix.) Ramon's horse

wears a long caparison, with a coat of arms emblazoned upon it. When confronted by Grog, he requests an audience with the "astrologers," or whatever other term the characters use to identify themselves. He exchanges greetings, smiles cordially, and behaves with apparent meekness.

Getting down to business, the canon explains: "I believe the church has lost the support of the people in this region. The foul plight that has stricken us turns the people's minds to selfishness and self-pity rather than faith in God. They apparently seek to supplicate pagan spirits of the earth, to renew their crops and stop this infernal spread of the wood. Of course, such action only damns their souls to Hell.

Though a man of God, I am not entirely blind to certain spirits at work in the world. I have seen enough to know that pagan followings still exist, and that faith in them lends power. Though we try to lead common folk, yourselves included, from these spirits, the Church cannot always succeed. With recent events, I fear this misfortune is particularly true here.

Thus, I have come to your door with arms open. The Church requires the services of your unique understanding. I have heard from some people that you are learned in the ways of the wild and might put a halt to the forests' spread and the death which curses us.

I have also heard from my flock that our ill fate only arose with Captain Hagen's action against the people of Plaplean. Though I do not condone his deeds, nor the deeds of the villagers, I believe conflicting values must be put aside to save us all. I therefore ask that you seek out the trouble born in Plaplean and put a stop to it — if not in the name of God then in the name of whatever virtuous human ethic you put credence in."

In terms of further information, Ramon suggests that Hagen is mad. When D'Uverre questioned Hagen about his activities at Plaplean, the captain was evasive about what destruction had been caused and was even oblivious to some questions. He further explains that when he approached Hagen again, this time at Lacaune itself, Hagen had regressed even further, and was now completely oblivious to questions. Ramon adds, "All Hagen could put his mind to was a ridiculous set of antlers worn on his head. His mother said she knew nothing of the affair."

There are many reasons for the characters to look into the recent infertility and growth of the forest, not least because Ramon is their mundane "landlord" and asks them to do so. However, if the characters refuse Ramon's appeal, he warns, "I





remind you of where your home stands. If I were to make it known to other crusader captains that pagans had infringed upon Church lands, they would fall upon you like flies to untended milk."

Journeying to Plaplean

It doesn't take much to realize why the forest is growing and the rest of the Val du Bosque is dying. The growth and death began shortly after the death of Coffa. For whatever reasons, the characters should by now be thinking of going to Plaplean to learn how to save the valley.

On the way to Plaplean, the characters undoubtedly pass through its neighbors, like the villages of Armicstat or Siernami. Many refugees from Plaplean, who fled when the massacre was staged, dwell with relatives in these outlying villages. Some may warn characters not to enter Plaplean. They claim it is, "a cursed place where only tormenting spirits tread, commanding the damned woods to swallow everything. They mean to rob us of everything, including our own young! 'Twas all brought upon us by the damned crusaders and their Hell-sent hatred."

Such warning words from superstitious villagers should build suspense for characters approaching Plaplean, perhaps even frightening characters equally sensitive to superstition. To the villagers the faeries represent all the fearful amorality

and savagery of the villagers' ancestors. The faeries are still revered as dangerous and capricious forces of nature, but their worship, via Coffa, has ceased and been forgotten.

Plaplean

The characters proceed to Plaplean to find the half-built ruins of the church, the area which remaining villagers refuse to enter. (Indeed, those still around remain hidden in their homes with doors latched and pitchforks at the ready.) The church site is overgrown with foliage, even more so than the rest of the village. Perceptive characters may recognize the stone used in the church's construction. Characters may make Perception + Masonry Craft Skill simple rolls of 6+ to realize that the stone comes from Horn's Hill; it has the rough, pitted quality of the stone there.

A large wooden cross towers over the church rubble. It was planted there to bless the construction and form a temporary place of worship. In darker shadows can be found (Perception + Scan simple roll of 4+) the corpses of the masons and Brabançons who died constructing the church. Branches and roots impale the bodies. The workers' iron axes, claw tools, boasters, drags, picks, and punches all lie discarded among the weeds. Their faces of the workers, though pitted and decayed, maintain the sublime expressions they bore when the people died. Around the bodies, half-carved pieces of Gothic masonry jut from the ivy and nettles.

Gerald of Aachen

Characteristics: Intelligence (mad) -3, Perception (obsessed with bodies) -2, Strength (insane power) +2, Stamina (neglected body) -2, Presence (ragged appearance) -2, Communication (blathering) -2, Dexterity (precise) +1, Quickness (doddering) -3

Age: 22

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Frankish (terms of horror) 4, Brawl (to flee) 3, Alertness (faeries) 3, Dodge (branches) 3, Drinking (massive quantities) 2, Craft (gardening) 6, Faerie Lore (terrifying knowledge) 2

Confidence: 0

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Distracted +3, Brave -3, Obsessed with Faeries +4

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2



MAD GERALD

Pottering about amid the masonry is Gerald. Gerald is a gaunt hermit-like man, sporting a long wispy beard and long hair. He wears a leather jerkin and pantaloons. His nose is very small and his eyes have a permanent stare. His teeth are rotten and his face warty.

Gerald was one of Hagen's sergeants and narrowly survived death during the attack on Horn's Hill. He was left behind by the captain to supervise the building of the church. When the faeries discovered Coffa dead they mourned for him. Gerald can recount this sight to the characters. He explains, *"They was all weepin' and lamentin' for their lost soul. They cried out and beat the ground with their hands an' feet. 'Twas then that they turned on us, defenseless afore their charms. The forest itself leapt forward and killed everyone! Oh, that I did not die with them! They spared me only to make me see their true selves. Oh, by God, 'twas terrible, terrible!"*

Venting their spleen over the death of Coffa, the faeries were not content with the deaths of the church builders, defilers of the Hill's remains. They instead chose to drive the only remaining survivor irreparably mad. That survivor is Gerald.

In his insanity Gerald talks and cradles the rotting corpses of the masons. He considers the bodies and the few standing stones to be his garden. He strokes the trees that permeate the area and tends to his "garden," virtually oblivious to anything the characters do.

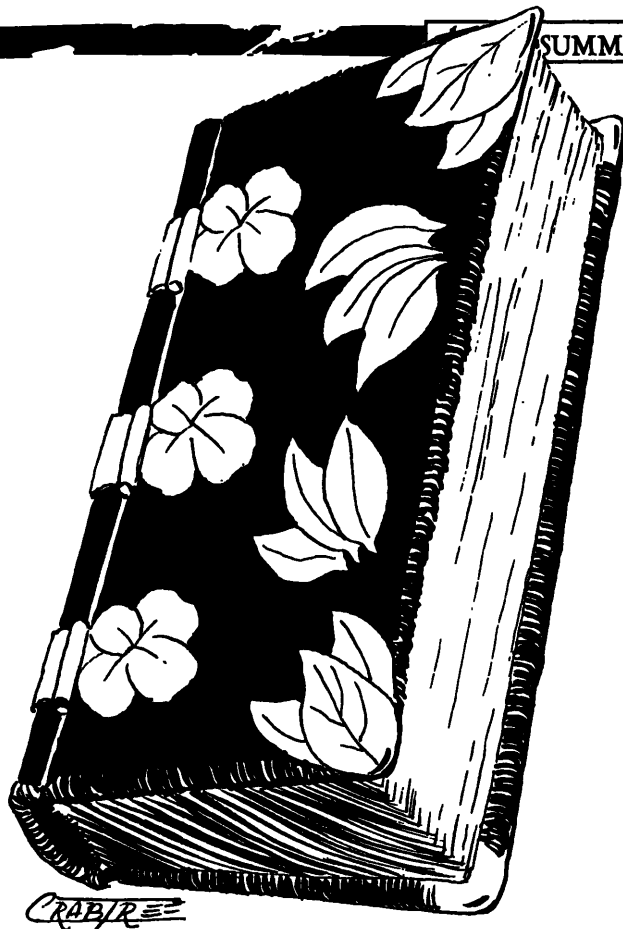
Gerald's rantings are in Frankish, and can only be understood if characters speak that language. Roleplaying Gerald should be fun for you, for not only can you slobber and act in a bizarre manner, but you can give as little or as much information to the players as you think they deserve, including hints about things they may need to know later in the Saga.

FAERIES AT PLAPLEAN

While characters are at Plaplean you might want to insert an encounter with angry faeries. Such a meeting could take many forms. Perhaps satyrs take it upon themselves to hunt the characters, throwing spears from the woods. Perhaps they lure characters away. Characters lured away can meet the others later at the faerie court (see Chapter Five). Although angry at mortals, the faeries are fickle, and do not pursue fleeing characters for more than a few Rounds.

GILLET'S FAMILY

Searching through Plaplean, the characters may encounter some of the villagers still hiding there. The remaining



inhabitants are virtually defenseless and don't put up much of a fight, preferring to scream and run from characters, whom they mistake for crusaders.

Among the remaining villagers are Gillet's wife and children. The family survived the crusader attack, but only ekes out a meager existence now, sustaining itself on scraps of food stolen from the festival remains. The family did not flee the village out of some inexplicable devotion to the area. They cannot remember what it is they cling to, but know that they had some dedication in Plaplean, and that Gillet, the family's head, was killed for the same devotion. (Of course, this devotion is their half-remembered reverence for Coffa and Cernunnos. Presumably, the family's devout faith in the past allows them some semblance of memory now.)

Given an opportunity to overcome their fear of the characters, the family recognizes characters as friends from the festival on the Hill (although even the significance of the festival is now forgotten). Once recovered, the family explains how they have lived, and explain how they also remember Sarimarcus, a friend of Gillet's. If the characters fail to search the family out, the characters might be spotted and recognized by the family. As Sarimarcus's friends, the characters are given his possessions.

Sarimarcus had lived with the family and some of his possessions still remain after the village was sacked. Most important is a journal which Sarimarcus kept. The villagers were amazed that a "commoner" like Sarimarcus could write at

News of the Crusade

If at any point the characters become complacent in their preparation for or opposition to the crusade or the valley's curse, they can be goaded back into activity.

A messenger brings news that the town of Beziers has been destroyed and its inhabitants massacred by the crusader army. The historical date of this assault is July 22nd, 1209. If that date does not correspond with your prodding of the characters, another town can be destroyed or the date of Beziers' destruction can be altered as needed. Regardless of date, the massacre is perpetrated as an example to Cathars, so that terror might spread and other citadels fall more easily.

The assault creates hysteria within the Provençal Tribunal. Powerful Covenants seal their doors to all outsiders, including other members of the Order of Hermes. Smaller Covenants evacuate the region *en masse*. If the characters choose to flee their secret home and seek refuge in another, larger Covenant they are barred from entry. Even close friends refuse them entry. Friendly Covenants claim that extra Magi would make facilities too cramped, and try to persuade characters to return to their own home. Such is the hospitality of endangered Magi.

The character also have the option of fleeing Provençal and setting up another Spring Covenant elsewhere, or of seeking forest faeries' aid. Regardless of what course the characters pursue, inaction spells disaster. If they do nothing, staying in their little Covenant and fortifying it, the characters will be besieged and destroyed. Only a massive amount of magic will protect the Covenant from the juggernaut that approaches, and the young Covenant is not likely to have such power.

The fate of a Spring Covenant is always precarious, and this Covenant is sandwiched between a crusader army and a faerie curse, both of which will destroy the Covenant unless averted.

all, but his friendship with Gillet made the otherwise suspicious man acceptable.

Sarimarcus's Journals

Reading the journals requires an Intelligence + Scribe Latin simple roll of 4+. The books are written in plain language as Sarimarcus bore no malice for anyone, and knew the locals could not read anyway. The journals talk of a faerie court in the heart of the local forest. According to the writings, Sarimarcus visited the court and befriended its members, even writing down the court's location. The faeries allowed him the details of how to find their court, through *regio*, because they trusted him implicitly as Coffa's chosen one. If characters intend to seek out this faerie court, they can use the journals as a guide, as the court seems difficult to find otherwise.

There are other means of learning about and finding the faerie court, though. The villagers are afraid of strangers after the crusader attack, and are afraid of the growing forest, but one of them might know of a strange place in the forest, a place

which could be on the mundane level of the faerie court's *regio*. The difficult part is convincing the local to leave the safety of home to tread the dangerous and frightening forest.

Alternately, the characters may use magic to speak to Sarimarcus's spirit via his ashes, which lie under the oak of the Hill. As Sarimarcus did not receive a Christian burial, his spirit still lingers in the world.

Sarimarcus's spirit remembers the characters, but is tormented by imprisonment between earth and the Reward (since he died in service to Coffa, the magus hears the call of Arcadia). Through his wailing Sarimarcus's spirit reveals even more than his journal does. The spirit implores the characters to return the shawl to the faeries of the wood. The spirit also explains how the faeries can be bargained into protecting the characters' Covenant through the remaining crusade.

Of course, if characters think to commune with Sarimarcus's remains earlier in the Saga, whole episodes of the Saga may be skipped. With the information Sarimarcus offers, the characters learn early on how to appease the angry faeries and avoid the spreading forest and curse of infertility. The characters also learn how to protect their Covenant from the crusade with faerie help. That protection preserves the Covenant throughout the crusade and that protection in itself is enough to allow the Covenant to successfully mature from Spring to Summer.

Don't forget, however, that Sarimarcus has the Hermetic Flaw, Life-Linked Magic. Upon his death his magical items and the spells he has cast fail to function any longer.

The characters now have the means to negotiate an end to the curse on the Val du Bosque. All they need do is face the faerie court near Plaplean, which in turn leads to a final confrontation with Captain Hagen. Those are subjects dealt with in Chapter Five.



RADREE

PACT WITH THE FAERIES

CHAPTER FIVE



hey were marched along a path that spontaneously opened for them among the undergrowth. Gros, consor and Magus alike: all were helpless in the clutches of the forest fiends. Any thoughts of escape Tyler entertained were quelled by a quick backward glance at the grotesque giants who blocked their path from behind.

The shadows of the near-lightless wood were alive with the mocking hordes of nightmare. Flitting sprites, snarled toadstool-folk, gamboling elves and a thousand others danced before, behind and through the captives. All the creatures joined voices in a bizarre chorus, singing the same phrase in an unknown language over and over and over until Tyler thought he would go mad.

Grimgroth walked alongside him, trying to maintain a semblance of poise and ignore the taunting wood-imps. "Milord?" Tyler addressed the Magus.

Grimgroth's head swiveled to face him. "Yes?" the Magus asked impatiently.

Tyler swallowed. "What say they?"

Grimgroth sighed. "They take us to their rulers, there to be judged," he said.

After perhaps a quarter-hour more, the path opened into a bright and sunny glade. In the midst of the glade a motley assortment of beings sat, surveying the newcomers with serene dispassion. Despite himself, Tyler was awestruck by the central figure. Such beauty was surely not that of earth — the long red hair cascading over smooth shoulders, framing the delicately-featured face; the lithe form scarcely concealed by a diaphanous gown. Tyler had never seen such a woman. Surely one so lovely could mean them no harm.

She spoke; her voice was music. "I am Eleri. Pray be seated. We consider it ill-mannered to stand." She glanced to her left, her eyes resting on a certain tree. Tyler followed her gaze, and was overwhelmed with a sudden chill. Half-imbedded in the tree was the squirming form of Roland the poacher. Vines covered his mouth and limbs, but the stump of his wrist gestured frantically at the group and his watery eyes silently pleaded for release...

Summary

In this Chapter the characters take what they have learned about Cernunos's curse and the growing forests and seek a means to put both to an end. Hopefully, in the end, Hagen is defeated and the characters survive to see their Covenant become a Summer one, with all the allies, strengths, and influence that go with that title.

However, this final Chapter is by no means the end of your Saga. It progresses as you wish it to, and the epilogue of the Chapter offers ideas on how to continue your Saga. The *Ars Magica* supplement *The Tempest* picks up where this supplement leaves off and may lead the characters and their Covenant from the Summer to Autumn Seasons.

Getting to the Faerie Court

Having discovered the location of the faerie court (by means of Sarimarcus's journals, a knowledgeable mundane, or speaking with Sarimarcus's spirit), the characters undoubtedly set out for the place.

Having grown a great deal, the forest near Plaplean is extremely thick. Its spread has also fostered an increase in its Aura rating. The forest now has an overall Faerie Aura of three. (This is a "conventional" Faerie Aura, unlike that on Horn's Hill, and thus increases spell casting rolls by one, as explained on p.308 of the *Ars Magica* rules.) The faerie court is set several miles into the wood. Travel to it is ploddingly slow and any damage done to the wood is responded to in kind by faeries.

As the forest faeries are already incensed with mundanes, characters tromping about the wood are in particular danger. Characters entering the forest are almost immediately alerted to the danger they're in. On a Perception + Faerie Lore or Alertness simple roll of 4+, characters hear the rustling and creaking of many branches. They also hear disparate forest noises which grow close and recede without rhyme or reason.

SARIMARCUS'S HELP

If characters travel through the forest with Sarimarcus's journals as a guide, or they mention Sarimarcus at all, the faeries of the wood watch and listen to them with curiosity and only mild suspicion. There are faerie spies throughout the forest, so the journals are recognized immediately and references to Sarimarcus are heard as quickly. With Sarimarcus's help, the characters discover a trail through the wood used by the deceased Magus. The trail was left untouched by the enlarging forest; the faeries respect the memory of Sarimarcus and leave the trail as a reminder of him.

As Sarimarcus was a trusted friend of the faerie court, the faeries simply trail the characters to see what their purpose is in the forest (Faerie Sight or Perception + Scan stress roll of 8+ to see hidden faeries and spies). Any word from the characters

about seeking out the court is immediately transmitted to the King and Queen. If the characters seem inoffensive, they are allowed to remain on their course to the faerie court. The faerie King and Queen or more curious about these brave mortals and their relationship with Sarimarcus than they are in destroying the characters.

INDEPENDENT EFFORT

Characters might seek out the faerie court without the help of Sarimarcus. They might, for instance, have the help of a guide familiar with the forest. Of course, the characters had better have the facilities to travel through faerie *regio* if they want to get to the faerie court, for the court does not belong to the mundane world.

Characters wandering about the forest on their own have a harder time getting around than do those with Sarimarcus's help. No trail through the wood is evident, so an Intelligence + Survival stress roll of 6+ is required to make any headway. Six successes are required to travel the distance to the faerie court. Each roll represents two hours' travel.

For each Intelligence + Survival roll made, characters must also make Fatigue stress rolls against an Ease Factor of 4. If a roll fails, a Long-Term Fatigue Level is lost. If a Survival Roll is ever Botched the Fatigue Level is lost automatically. If a Fatigue check is ever Botched, two Long-Term Levels are lost.

As long as the characters don't act excessively abusive to the forest, they are allowed to maintain their course. As before, word of the characters' activities gets back to the faerie court, and the King and Queen are curious about the characters' motives. Spotting faerie followers and spies may be accomplished by characters as described under *Sarimarcus's Help*, above.

FAERIE RESISTANCE

The faeries become hostile to characters when the characters abuse the forest, its animals, or the faeries themselves. It doesn't take much intelligence for characters to realize that they are on faerie ground, and thus at faerie mercy. It's therefore common sense to avoid building a fire, hacking maniacally at dense branches, hunting, or insulting faeries. Characters deduce this with an Intelligence + Faerie Lore simple roll of 3+. The Common Sense Virtue also imparts this understanding.

If characters fail to heed reason and disrupt the wood, the faeries take action. The faeries aren't hostile at first, preferring to lead characters astray from the faerie court. They do so by confusing directions and changing landmarks. Maintaining a proper sense of direction requires a Perception + Direction Sense stress roll of 8+. If the roll succeeds, the characters may continue with their Survival roll to make headway (as discussed above). Thus, a Direction Sense roll is required for each Survival roll made. Once six successful Survival rolls are made simultaneously with Direction Sense rolls, the characters arrive at the court despite faerie efforts to confuse them.



If a Direction Sense roll fails, the characters start heading in the wrong direction. Only another successful Direction Sense roll, made with the next Survival roll, allows characters to reorient themselves. If characters get their bearings back after having been lost, they have to make up for distance traveled in the wrong direction. Thus, an extra Survival roll to make headway to the court is required for every Direction Sense roll that was failed.

If a total of three Direction Sense rolls are ever failed, successively or not, the characters become completely lost. In this case they quickly find themselves back on the outer edge of the forest, having been led right out of the wood. The same occurs if the characters ever Botch a Direction Sense roll.

While being misled, characters also suffer other indignities at the hands of the faeries. Characters may grow the heads and tails of asses, may flatulate uncontrollably, or may laugh uncontrollably. To irritate the characters, faeries might put particularly fat group members asleep, forcing their friends to carry them through the thick wood. Straps and buckles might also be cut, possibly inducing characters to abandon their gear and even clothes.

FAERIE ATTACK

Should characters persist in being abusive to the forest, or should they make threats against the faeries to leave them alone, the faeries attack the characters. As many faeries strike as you feel are necessary to teach the characters a lesson in

civility. The characters should not be decimated, only bruised. The boxed inserts show faeries you may introduce as the faerie attackers — spriggans — or simply as faerie spies — sprites.

If the characters put up a decent fight against the faeries, the faeries soon back off, disappearing into the forest. Not long afterward, the next wave of attackers strikes.

If the faeries manage to overcome the characters, they tie the characters up and carry them to the faerie court to be interrogated, and possibly killed, by the faerie King and Queen. Only the characters' claim to want to restore Coffa's shawl may sway the court's favor, allowing the characters continued life.

CAPTURE BY FAERIES

Tenacious and hostile characters are faced with a final attack, during which the faeries attempt to capture the characters and bring them before the faerie court. The King and Queen are thoroughly angry with the characters and, before putting them to death, want to know what purpose the characters have in the forest.

The restraining attack staged by the faeries is completely unannounced. Tree limbs and roots, grasses, and shrubs all suddenly leap at and grab the characters. Meanwhile, faeries dance and prance among limbs and plants, egging the forest on. Only a Perception + Alertness, Herbalism, or maybe Premonitions stress roll can foresee the attack. If any character's

Sprites

Tiny in size — a few inches tall — these faeries wear clothing of leaves and flowers. They have insect wings and serve as messengers and spies for the faerie Queen, disappearing and appearing at will. Sprites cannot cause physical harm, but striking a sprite instantly turns the striker to stone (Magic Resistance roll allowed against a Penetration of +10, and Natural Resistance Stamina stress roll allowed against an Ease Factor of 8). The only way to have a character turned back from stone is to give the sprite in question a gift, or to make it a pledge. Sprites enjoy receiving buttercups and other small flowers as gifts, and appreciate pledges to plant vast, untamed gardens of flowers. Alternately, Magi can cast Muto Terram spells of Level 25+ on a changed character.

Sprites have the power of suggestion over mortals. If a sprite commands a character to do something, the character feels an uncontrollable urge to follow through. The commanded action is usually something entertaining for a sprite, but embarrassing for the victim. Commanded actions are never directly harmful.

Sprites leave a mortal alone after they're bored tormenting. If delivering a message a sprite almost never interrupts its mission for mere frivolity.

Faerie Might: 10

Vital Statistics: Size -5, Intelligence (witty) +1, Perception (alert) +2, Strength (tiny build) -5, Stamina (frail) -5, Presence (child-like features) +2, Communication (broad vocabulary) +3, Dexterity (graceful) +4, Quickness (flighty) +5

Virtues and Flaws: None

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Friendly +2, Playful +2, Brave +1, Reliable +2

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Body Levels: OK, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +10 (16 Action), **Soak** -5 (1 Action), **Fatigue** +6

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: None

Powers: Flight (1 Might Point, ReAu 20), Invisibility (2 Might Points, PeIm 35), Command (Intelligence stress roll of 6+ to resist suggestion; 2 Might Points, ReMe 30)

Vis: 1 Auram, wings

stress rolls in order to cast those spells. The Ease Factor of Concentration rolls is 12. For all details on Concentration rolls, see the *Ars Magica* rules, p.180.

If characters stop fighting the forest the forest stops fighting them. Instead, branches and roots entwine characters and trees uproot themselves. The trees then slowly carry the characters toward the faerie court for trial; countless faeries bound alongside, laughing at, threatening, and teasing characters. Characters may realize that capture is the motive behind the forest's attack when faeries are heard cackling, "Seize them, hold them, quiet them! Before the Queen they go! Bind them, tie them, pin them! Before the King they go!" A Perception + Alertness stress roll of 5+ is required by characters to hear this chant.

Characters held and carried by the forest are virtually immobile. Dexterity + Contortions stress rolls of 6+ are required to attempt any action. If this roll fails, the intended action cannot even be attempted. If this roll Botches, the faeries and forest notice the character's actions and the character is squeezed, automatically suffering 10 points of Damage which can be Soaked normally (armor still acts at half value). Magi can also attempt spells, but the Concentration roll discussed above is still required, and spell casting rolls suffer a -5 modifier for immobility. A further -5 penalty is probably imposed for use of a soft voice as Magi heard making noise are squeezed.

Thus, if characters are beaten by the forest, or surrender, they are taken to the very place they seek, the faerie court. However, they are taken there under less than comfortable



foresight roll Botches, no one in the group realizes attack is imminent; maybe the offending character distracts the senses of the others by tripping.

While characters struggle against the attacking forest, the forest attacks back. For each Round of combat between the two, each fighting or spell casting character automatically suffers an attack with a Damage rating of 10, which can be soaked. Armor only provides half normal Protection against this Damage as branches get under steel and leather. Magi who try to cast spells during the attack must make Concentration

Spriggans

Spriggans form the bodyguard of the forest's faerie Queen. These faeries are about three feet high and drag huge clubs behind them. In battle they can grow to a height of 15 feet within three combat Rounds. Spriggans attack characters who demonstrate malice toward other faeries or the forest.

Faerie Might: 28

Vital Statistics: Size -2/+4*, Intelligence (simple) -1, Perception (sleepy) -3, Strength (brawny) +4, Stamina (tenacious) +3, Presence (mottled skin) -2, Communication (slow speakers) -2, Dexterity (clumsy touch) -2, Quickness (fleet-footed) +2

Virtues and Flaws: None

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Queen) +3, Belligerent +4

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Club Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +9, Damage +15

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

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

Dodge Defense +7/-2 (13/4* Action), **Soak** +4/+8 (10/16* Action), **Fatigue** +3

Encumbrance: 3

Abilities: None

Powers: Change Size (costs 5 Might Points to grow, ReCo 25)

Vis: 2 Muto, heart

* Trait score at 15-foot height



characters carried to the court as prisoners automatically enter the *regio*. The court appears to prisoners as it does to characters who enter freely, and the prisoners bodies are dropped before the King and Queen of the glade. The Aura of the faerie court's *regio* is seven.

The faerie court is a Seelie one, set in a bowl-shaped glade. At the center of the glade is a circle of rowan trees. Though slender, these trees seem exceedingly ancient. The faeries of the court sit on the grass around the glade, an arrangement which seems informal to those accustomed to standing in noble courts.

Some of the faeries are naked, some are clothed in human fashion, both ancient and modern, but all are unarmed. The faeries also seem youthful and happy. The King and Queen of the court sit in the middle of the glade, beneath the branches of the rowan trees. Beyond the court's glade, faerie ladies and knights can be seen strolling among the trees.

Flowers dot the whole glade, while forest birds and sprites perch in treetops. For full effect, the ancient beauty of the scene should be contrasted to the atmosphere of Doissetep's Tribunal meeting, where tensions were overtly sinister rather than covertly so.

Despite its rustic setting the faerie court radiates great majesty, ruled as it is by Sidhe nobles who have existed since the world's creation. And yet, the court's Seelie beauty hides alarming powers. In a remote corner of the beautiful glade is

terms. The faerie court's communication network within the forest is widespread and very efficient. Anything the characters have done in the forest is taken into consideration, for good or ill, by the faerie court. The characters probably have to talk fast to avoid being killed.

It's also possible that characters might deliver terrible pain upon the faeries and forest attacking them. However, the faeries are innumerable and the forest is immense so a battle of attrition is bound to be hardest on the characters. The forest just keeps attacking until the characters are captured.

The Faerie Court

The faerie court exists in a *regio* of powerful Faerie Aura, resting "above" the more common forest below (which in itself has a Faerie Aura of three). Those failing to enter the court's *regio* level can still recognize the signs of powerful supernatural presence. The land under the court is depressed, with a stand of birch trees near its center. The trees are significant because they are the only birch in the area.

Characters approaching the court on Sarimarcus's trail automatically enter the court's Faerie *regio*. Characters who find the court's location under their own power must have the means to transport themselves into the *regio* level (see *Entering and Leaving Regio* in the *Ars Magica* rulebook, p.338). Those

a tree. Bound to it is Roland, Hagen's former spy, who was captured by the faeries. Roland had tried to flee Hagen's employ, but didn't get very far before being imprisoned again.

Roland is covered, and even gagged, with greenery. Indeed, the tree is slowly and painfully engulfing him. When she speaks with the characters the faerie Queen, Eleri, occasionally glances in Roland's direction, showing no sign of emotion. This disdain for life reveals the cruelty and ruthlessness which underlies her beauty. As far as Eleri is concerned, Roland's slow torture is just punishment for his crimes against Faerie. Eleri perceives no irony in the contrast between Roland's suffering and the serene beauty of the flower-covered glade she resides in.

If the characters ever attempt to aid Roland, two spriggans standing watch intervene. Such action displeases the Queen and makes bargaining with her all the more difficult. At the same time, Roland begs to be saved and babbles about treasure or any other thing which he hopes will induce characters to rescue him. It's up to the characters whether Roland is worth saving. He might, after all, be useful in helping characters assault Lacaune Castle, indicating where Hagen and Alicia's rooms are, or where the secret passage is. However, he knows nothing of Hagen's full madness, having left the castle before it set in.

RECEIVING THE CHARACTERS

The King and Queen of the faeries want to know the characters' business in the forest. Not only are the characters trespassers, but local humans are by no means in good standing with the court. Indeed, faeries value their privacy, so the characters' intrusion is greatly resented. Keep in mind, though, that faeries vary greatly in personality. Not all are entirely hostile to the characters. In fact, faerie rules of hospitality require that they show some civility to the characters, unless the characters are or have been excessively offensive (which captured characters are automatically considered).

When the characters arrive or are produced at court, the faeries begin to melodiously murmur. Spriggan guards, at full size, appear out of nowhere and block the characters' path. The murmurs cease and the guards move aside with a single gesture from Queen Eleri. Characters who make Intelligence + Faerie Lore simple rolls of 6+ know that it is good manners to sit on the grass with the faeries, not to stand as if superior to them.

Eleri stares intently at the characters for a moment, a look of cruel beauty on her face. She then begins to interrogate the intruders. She is capable of speaking several languages and first uses Celtic, Imperial Latin, Visigothic German, and Basque before resorting to Provençal. If the characters can understand and speak any of the languages which precede Provençal, Eleri is at least impressed with the characters' education and civility. Her questioning proceeds:

"What foolish errand is it that brings mortals into the realm of Faeriekind at a time of war? What need could be so great that life and spirit are sacrificed so quickly? What matter could be so urgent that you would disturb our peace so soon after destroying one of our chosen places? What have you to say for yourselves?"

The characters may respond as they please. One quality of the faerie court that might surprise characters used to mundane courts is the equality of attendants, and freedom of speech. All courtiers are invited to speak and question the characters and soon do so, intrigued or angered by the characters' responses to Eleri's questions.

The courtly faeries, described in the boxed inserts of this Chapter, talk to or question the characters in accordance with their individual personalities. Questions range from, *"If you knew Sarimarcus why did you not save him and save the spirit of Coffa?"* to *"You know magic? May we see some?"* Essentially, the characters are subjected to a barrage of questions which not only confuses, but may also anger them.

THE SHAWL

If the characters anger the faeries by attacking the forest or insulting the court, the faeries prepare to have the characters killed. The characters will be set into trees like Roland. To escape this fate the characters have a few options. If they know of the missing shawl they may volunteer to return it. If they don't know about the shawl, they may ask the faeries what it is that will please them. After learning about the shawl the characters can promise to return it, preserving the Val du Bosque from further forest growth and continued death. The characters can also promise to spread the word of Coffa and Cernunnos, reawakening respect for the Celtic deity in the valley.

If the characters completely fail to pursue the faeries' desires, Roland can pipe up in a desperate bid to save himself. He cries out, *"It's Hagen's hood they want! We stole it from that accursed hill. It's the hood. I know where it is! I can take you there!"* The characters may pursue the shawl issue from here.

The faeries respond favorably to any offer to retrieve Coffa's shawl, or any offer to spread the word of Cernunnos. They momentarily spare the characters' lives to work out the parameters of such offers. Not all the faeries believe the characters' intentions are sincere, and others realize that while faeries always keep their word, mortals often do not. However, Queen Eleri is forced to think of her people and the greater good of Faerie. Though she might be irate at the characters and mortals in general, she cannot afford to let Coffa's shawl remain in human hands. If the faeries can get it back and find a new disciple to take responsibility for it — another Gillet or Sarimarcus — the shawl will restore Coffa's life. Eleri is therefore prepared to put her trust in humans to retrieve what is beyond the reach of her people. As a true sign of good faith, one character might even volunteer to become the shawl's keeper, and therefore the reborn Coffa's disciple.

THE NATURE OF THE PACT

If the characters are familiar with faerie ways (Intelligence + Faerie Lore simple roll of 5+), they know that once a faerie has given its word, that word will be followed through to the end. The same is expected in return. Thus, if the characters promise to return the shawl to the court, they must do so or earn the personal enmity of every faerie in the Val du Bosque. Only the foolish jeopardize their lives by renegeing, and those people acquire the Background Flaw, Faerie Enmity (*Ars Magica*, p.88). Characters breaking their agreement, even by simply failing to recapture the shawl, bring faerie wrath down upon themselves and others close to them. The faeries of the valley declare war on the characters' Covenant, ensuring that it of all things in the valley is destroyed by the spreading forests. In fact, fleeing covenfolk might even be hunted down and tortured, imprisoned, or killed! If characters don't want the fate of loved ones sealed along with their own, they had best regain the shawl.

By committing themselves wholly to the faeries, the characters are at least entitled to make requests of the faeries. In return for the shawl, the faeries are willing to return the valley's forests to their former boundaries. However, the curse of Cernunnos, they say, can be lifted by no one but the deity itself, or by the rebirth of Coffa. Thus, by restoring the shawl, the characters automatically lift the curse of Cernunnos.

The characters may be content with these concessions from the faerie court. However, they can push Queen Eleri further, though it is dangerous to go too far. The characters can solicit the faeries' aid to preserve them from the mundane crusade. This was a suggestion made by Sarimarcus back during the Tribunal of 1207, a suggestion which was generally dismissed by the attending Magi. However, the characters may remember the suggestion and may use it now for their own preservation.

Faerie protection of the characters' Covenant can take many forms. Each possibility has its merits and flaws, but at this point the characters can't be too choosy (and no, the faeries will not extend their protection beyond the characters' Covenant; their agreement is with the characters alone).

- A tentacle of forest can be made to grow around the character's Covenant, encircling it in a protective barrier. However, as the forest has a Faerie Aura the Covenant's Magical Aura might be disrupted somewhat. The characters therefore have to consider which is more important, their Covenant's survival or their Magic Aura. Such continued growth of the forest around the characters' Covenant might also endanger local mundanes, ruining their land and livelihood. Magi of House Jerbiton may therefore dislike the idea, arguing against it and creating Covenant turmoil.

If the forest around the Covenant is created in time, scouts of the crusader armies become lost in such a barrier and lead invading troops elsewhere, sparing the characters' home.

Faerie Sympathies

Though the characters may be hated by some or all of the faeries at court, the characters can still solicit some sympathy from the faeries, and use that sympathy to their favor. Ironically enough, a powerful bargaining chip held by the characters is the curse of Cernunnos. The angry deity has cursed the characters with infertility. Fertility is of great importance to faeries, maybe because they cannot have children of their own. Accordingly, faeries openly ask questions about a person's sexual life, or about the children a person has reared.

If the faeries learn the characters themselves have become infertile, their attitude toward the characters changes completely. The faeries are suddenly all too willing to let the characters go and return the shawl so that fertility may be restored. To protect that renewed fertility, some faeries may even suggest the protection of the characters' Covenant.

A particularly sympathetic faerie, such as Padern, may well represent the characters before the King and Queen.

- The faeries can briefly transport the Covenant to Faerieland. In Faerieland time passes differently than it does in the physical world, and hopefully enough passes to avoid the bulk of the crusade. Of course, this option runs the risk of isolating the Covenant from the real world for too long. However, it allows for a story or two in Arcadia as the Covenant "jumps" forward in time. Of course, on returning to Mythic Europe, characters have to acquaint themselves with a new world. Maybe faeries in Arcadia might even grow to like the Covenant building and refuse to give it back to the characters. After all, the characters' pact is with the faeries of Plaplean's wood, not the faeries of Arcadia.

- The faeries could create a Faerie *regio* around the Covenant, removing it from the mundane world. Strangers passing by would simply move through empty countryside, oblivious to the Covenant. Of course, the Faerie Aura of the *regio* runs the risk of ruining the Magic Aura of the Covenant. Also, long-term exposure to the Faerie Aura could warp covenfolk. However, such an option is a valuable, subtle defense for the Covenant.

- The faeries could appoint a guardian to the Covenant, like a troll or spriggan. The troll could live in the vicinity of the Covenant and chase away troublemakers. This is not a very subtle approach, though, and the guardian could be hard to get along with. For instance, who volunteers to feed the brute and what does it eat?

Faeries in Court

There are several faeries attending court in the forest. Among them are the King, Queen, and many courtiers. There are also many more around, some out of sight. The most important faeries are described here, but you are certainly welcome to detail more as you need them.



Queen Eleri

Faerie Might: 30

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence (clever) +1, Perception (alert) +1, Strength (thin arms) -1, Stamina (small build) -1, Presence (enchanting features) +6, Communication (alluring voice) +4, Dexterity (graceful) +2, Quickness (darting motions) +2

Virtues and Flaws: Leadership +3, Sensitive (to poor manners) -1, Weakness (for attractive young humans) -1

Reputation: Benevolent (forest faeries) 1

Personality Traits: Haughty +2, Friendly +3, Promiscuous +1

Confidence: 4

Combat Totals:

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

Dodge Defense +6 (12 Action), **Soak** +8 (14 Action),
Fatigue n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Alertness (human intrusion) 2, Animal Ken (easing pain) 5, Charm (love) 10, Etiquette (courtly graces) 6, Intimidation (intellectual) 3

Powers: Invisibility (1 Might Point, PeIm 35), Infatuation (5 Might Points, ReMe 25, victim gets Intelligence stress roll versus 6 or becomes enamored with Queen, gaining Enamored +3 Personality Trait), Glamour (1 Might Point, CrIm 25, MuIm 25, can create or change an image of up to Size +2), all Herbam and Animal spells up to Level 30 (1 Might Point per 5 Levels of spell)

Vis: 10 Muto, in hair

King Car-Veor

Faerie Might: 25

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence 0, Perception (daydreamer) -1, Strength (strong legs) +1, Stamina (hearty) +2, Presence (piercing eyes) +2, Communication (quiet voice) -1, Dexterity (even motions) +1, Quickness (slow reactions) -1

Virtues and Flaws: Inspirational (can add +3 to others' Brave and Personality Trait rolls) +1, Poor Memory (Intelligence simple roll of 6+ to remember a face) -1

Reputation: Daydreamer (faeries) 1

Personality Traits: Hedonistic +3, Dreamy +2, Promiscuous +2

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

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

Dodge Defense +7 (13 Action), **Soak** +10 (16 Action),
Fatigue n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Survival (hunting) 7, Animal Handling (beasts of burden) 12, Animal Ken (animal dreams) 7, Drinking (long periods) 5, Enchanting Music (harp) 6, Diplomacy (Eleri) 4, Jongleur (jesting) 3, Storytelling (Arcadian tales) 3, Sing (ballads) 2, Track (animals) 6

Powers: Communicate with Animals (1 Magic Point, InAn 20)

Vis: 5 Animal, tongue

QUEEN ELERI

Eleri is the ruler of this Seelie court. She is a beautiful, young-looking woman with long tresses of red hair that fall to her hips. She is the personification of springtime, with a normally warm and friendly predisposition towards humans. She is sensuous yet aristocratically elegant, and, of course, any rejection of her advances is considered an insult. Eleri proudly mimics the conventions of a mortal monarch, but, although impartial, her nature is still unpredictable to humans.

KING CAR-VEOR

Tall and golden-haired with piercing blue eyes, King Car-Veor sits at court with his hound at his feet. He has great respect for his consort, Queen Eleri. He prefers that she make most of the grand judgments at court, and has never needed to question her able authority. Car-Veor is an apathetic dreamer who likes to avoid troublesome complications in his hedonistic lifestyle — and, since faeries are immortal, the problems of succession rarely arise to trouble him. Car-Veor enjoys hunting on horseback with his hawks and Picolet, his hound.

OSRIC

Osric is a human minstrel who lives at the faerie court. He likes the slow casual pace of life in the forest. He came to the forest centuries ago, seeking inspiration for his poems and songs. Once there he met and became so fascinated with the faeries that he decided to stay. When Osric came to the forest the land nominally belonged to the Visigoths. He therefore speaks a bizarre language that may be strangely familiar to characters (Intelligence + appropriate Speak stress roll of 6+ to understand Osric).

Osric can sympathize with the characters' current plight but is not an ally. Being neither a good orator nor a particularly clever man, he is happier just sitting cross-legged, playing his small harp while others discuss the affairs of court. It has been so long since he was last in the mundane world that Osric has lost many of his sane human qualities. He is now very impish. Indeed, he has become a childlike jester, always trying to amuse and entertain. Osric dresses in flamboyant, wide-sleeved silk shirts of brightly patterned cloth.

PICOLET

Picolet is the faerie King's pet wolfhound, capable of growing to enormous size. The hound's fur is short and gray, with a beautiful silvery sheen. He is lean yet muscular, built for speed. Picolet is very loyal to his master and protects him from all attackers. (see next page for his stats)

Osric

Characteristics: Intelligence (confused) -2, Perception (distracted) -2, Strength 0, Stamina (enduring) +1, Presence (chiseled features) +1, Communication (performer) +3, Dexterity (fluid motions) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 738 (30)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Free Expression +1, Common Sense +1, Self-Confident +1, Non-combatant -3, Exceptional Talent +1

Abilities: Speak Visigothic (legends) 4, Speak Imperial Latin (addressing people) 1, Enchanting Music (love) 5, Acting (comedies) 2, Storytelling (prolonged tales) 6, Jongleur (physical humor) 5, Sing (solo) 5, Play (harp) 8, Ride (fast) 2, Swim (rivers) 1, Etiquette (faerie) 3, Faerie Lore (legends) 10, Legend Lore (ancient heroes) 3

Confidence: 4

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Childish +2, Energetic +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1



CARADOC

Caradoc is a faerie of militant attitude when it comes to revenge for Coffa's death. While not evil, Caradoc dislikes humans and wants them to pay for what they did to Coffa. He blames Coffa's "death" on all mankind. To him all humans are the same and not to be trusted. Caradoc attempts to garner favor at court, hoping for wider action against mundanes. He has many notions concerning more active conflict.

While he hates humanity, Caradoc also dislikes the faerie Padern, maybe out of resentment for Padern's fame. Caradoc strives to disgrace Padern in court and always disagrees with the other. He does so more out of a desire for competition than power, though. He sees his rivalry with Padern as a complex and challenging chess game, or harmless duel.

Caradoc has dark hair, green eyes, and a firm jaw. He wears a parti-colored red and white tabard over a green tunic. He is very thin and quite tall.

PADERN

Padern is a quixotic faerie given to solo escapades in the marches of the faerie realm. He has become popular among many of the faeries for his daring deeds, which are recounted in song and story. Padern has never used his popularity to gain power; like most faeries he sees no power in it.

Padern is very sympathetic to the characters' predicament. He is one of the faeries who befriended Sarimarcus and was therefore very angry when the Magus died. Padern knows of the friendship Coffa had with Sarimarcus and therefore doubts that all humans are evil.

Caradoc

Faerie Might: 10

Vital Statistics: Size -1, Intelligence (devious) +2, Perception (prepared) +1, Strength (spindly muscles) -2, Stamina (thin build) -2, Presence (noble appearance) +1, Communication (eloquent) +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (long stride) +1

Virtues and Flaws: Hatred Passion (humans) +2, Minor Discomfort from Iron (-3 to use iron items) -2

Reputation: Mundane Hater (faeries) 1

Personality Traits: Competitive +2, Argumentative +1

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

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

Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +3 (9 Action), Fatigue n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Alertness (humans) 3, Animal Ken (birds) 2, Ride (long distances) 4, Brawl (kicks) 1, Swim (holding breath) 1, Debate (war) 10, Diplomacy (faerie court) 4, Etiquette (faerie court) 6, Intrigue (Padern) 3, Leadership (faeries) 1

Powers: Flight (1 Might Point, ReAu 35)

Vis: 5 Intéllego, brain

Picolet

Faerie Might: 5

Vital Statistics: Size -2, Cunning (wily) +1, Perception (sensitive nose) +1, Strength (muscular) +2, Stamina (tenacious) +1, Presence (fine coat) +1, Communication n/a, Dexterity (indelicate) -1, Quickness (swift) +3

Virtues and Flaws: None

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Loyal +6, Brave +6

Confidence: 2

Combat Totals:

Bite Totals: First Strike +6, Attack +5, Damage +7*

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

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

Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +5 (11 Action), Fatigue +6

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Ferocity (when protecting Car-Veor) 3

Powers: Change Size (costs 1 Might Point per point of Size increase, to Size +3)

Vis: 3 Muto, body

* add 2 for every Size point increase



Padern

Faerie Might: 10

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence (bright) +1, Perception (sensitive) +1, Strength (athletic) +1, Stamina (resilient) +1, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity (instinctive) +4, Quickness (fast) +2

Virtues and Flaws: Honor Passion (chivalry) +2, Weakness (flattery) -1, Oath of Fealty (to the Queen) -1

Reputation: Adventurous (faeries) 4

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Energetic +1, Humble +1

Confidence: 4

Combat Totals:

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

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

Dodge Defense +9 (15 Action), **Soak +8** (14 Action), **Fatigue +6**

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Track (creatures) 4, Debate (value of life) 10, Storytelling (own experiences) 5, Brawl (throw) 5, Swim (swamps) 4, Ride (jumps) 6, Stealth (forests) 2, Diplomacy (faerie court) 2

Powers: None

Vis: None



Padern is a graceful and elegant faerie. He is well-built, with finely defined but compact muscles. His hair is short and spiky, and he wears nothing but a toga-like shawl. This semi-nudity is perfectly acceptable to Padern and other faeries.

Attacking Lacaune Castle

After negotiating with and devoting time to the forest faeries, the characters leave the faerie *regio* to discover that a few days have passed since they entered, regardless of the actual time spent negotiating or feasting. While the characters were away the growing forest encroached still further upon their Covenant, healthy trees growing up within yards of or actually within the Covenant itself.

After the characters have negotiated with the faerie court, they are now undoubtedly obliged to retrieve Coffa's shawl. By now it's well-known that the shawl is in Lacaune Castle. If the characters have arranged for Roland's freedom along with their own, he can help them get into the castle via the secret entrance, assuming Godfroi de Ferrers or some other guide is not available.

Any character romantically involved with Alicia might object to the Covenant's latest course of action. The lover might try to warn Alicia that the characters are on their way, hoping to protect the woman. If the lover does so, Alicia insures that her defenses are ready. Of course, the lover's player decides whether a warning is given, and you should allow the player that freedom.

LACAUNE CASTLE

The castle appears much as it did when characters previously visited, though the defenses described in Chapter Four may be new to characters who have not been around in a while. Maps of the castle are provided in Chapter Two.

Lacaune Castle is a squat Romanesque building situated on a steep sandstone outcropping. A long winding road works its way up to the fortification, crossing a small gully before reaching the castle's barbican. There is no moat; the castle's plateau location prohibits such a feat of engineering. From the barbican the roadway continues beneath the main barracks. From both the barbican and barracks portcullis can be dropped to stop intruders, and boiling oil can be spilled on them. The barbican has two gates, both of which are barred and locked at night. The barracks can only be entered from nearby towers via wide stone ramparts.

Five small towers protect the outer wall of the castle. A flight of stairs leads from the courtyard to the top of each tower, and each tower has a hatch on the roof with a fixed, wooden ladder beneath, leading down into each tower. Each tower's hatch and ground level door can be locked from the inside. The barbican, central tower (keep), and main barracks can be similarly sealed.



The inhabitants of the castle sleep where they work (e.g., cooks in the kitchen — a large outhouse — and grooms in the stable). By day the great hall is Hagen's courtroom. The main floor is cleared of furniture except for his high chair and table, which remain upon a raised dais at the far end of the room. In the evening trestle tables and benches are brought out for the evening meal. At night the tables and benches serve as beds, or people sleep on the floor. Hagen sleeps above the keep's main floor, in his personal chambers.

Whether the characters enter the castle by force or attempt to sneak in is up to them. However, Alicia has anticipated danger by organizing her remaining guards and by creating some magical defenses (see Chapter Four, *Alicia's Defenses*).

The Secret Entrance

Back in Chapter One the characters may have met and befriended Godfroi de Ferrers, the Cathar nobleman who once lorded over Lacaune. He is able to tell characters about the castle's history, and about the secret passage he used to flee the castle's attackers. Characters seeking to infiltrate the castle may use Godfroi's advice and guidance to sneak in. If de Ferrers is not available as a character of the Troupe, and cannot be contacted as an ally of the Covenant, the characters may learn about the secret passage from Roland (who used it to escape Hagen), one of the mercenaries who left Hagen's service after the Captain went mad, or Alicia's lover (who may have discovered it by happenstance). Regardless of how the characters know about the passage, Hagen and Alicia do not, so the characters have them at a disadvantage.

The secret passage is located under Lacaune Castle. Beneath each tower is a grille leading down to a series of storm drains. In heavy rainfall the grilles prevent the courtyard from filling with water. They also function as open-air latrines and as outflows (in the case of the one beneath the kitchen). The drains empty into a small gully beyond the castle wall, near the front gate. An iron grille bars passage into the dumping drain. In summertime the drain's gully largely remains dry, but with heavy rains its waters rise to a depth of two or more feet.

The castle's secret passage connects to this drainage system. On the subterranean level of the castle a secret tunnel allows entrance to the drainage pipes. The pipes can then be followed to a secret passage which leads a mile underground beyond the castle walls to an overlooking hillside.

This secret passage is unknown to the castle's current occupants and is not guarded by soldiers or by Alicia's traps.

CONFRONTING ALICIA

Alicia lives in a wooden hall overshadowed by the barbican. The entrance to the building is guarded by a *Phantasmal Fire* spell when Alicia is absent. Her hall consists of two large chambers; the outer is her living quarters, while the inner is her laboratory. Her living quarters are tastefully decorated and ornate — carpeted and hung with tapestries.

Alicia's sanctum is not what Magus intruders might expect. The room has no laboratory equipment. Indeed, it has no magical books to speak of. Rather, the room is filled with mundane books on chivalrous and courtly love, and books on legends and heroes (rated with a Legend Lore Ability score of 5). Alicia invests more thought into how to influence mundane society with her powers than into increasing her powers. If anything, the room looks like the quarters of a courtly lady rather than a Magus. However, if characters search (Perception + Search stress roll of 10+, Perception + Magic Sensitivity stress roll of 8+, or appropriate spell) they find jewelry and clothes empowered with *vis*, five pawns to be exact. The pawns are numbered and varied as follows: two Muto, one Mentem, one Córporem, and one Rego.

If the characters sneak into the castle Alicia is likely to be reading in her sanctum. They may confront her here, but if they track down Hagen first, Alicia comes to his aid if made aware of intruders.

Alicia does not use magic as a wiz-bang form of artillery. Indeed, she has no real offensive spells in her repertoire. She does use *Wizard's Sidestep* (ReIm 20), to protect herself and to delay characters until help arrives, either in the form of guards or her son.

Rather than attack outright, Alicia prefers to charm her foes into allying with her, turning friends against friends. Such an "attack" may take the form of a truce. Alicia, ostensibly a humble chatelaine, asks the characters to lay down their weapons and talk. She expresses a desire to speak formally and privately with the characters' leader, the Magi. Having lived in a Covenant she knows how much covenfolk rely on their Magi, and therefore directs all her charms against Magus characters. Alicia has aged well for her 50 years, thanks to longevity potions. A sideless gown reveals the contours of her still shapely hips. If she cannot command any male Magus character she at least tries to paralyze him with desire. Alicia leaves castle guards to deal with invading Groggs and Companions.

In her chambers, or some other private place, Alicia uses sensual spells to charm Magi in the group. Spells such as *Rising Ire* or *Subtle Shift of Heart* are attempted with low voice and restrained gestures (-7 to spell rolls). If the characters refuse a discussion or are resistant to spells that influence attitude, Alicia uses subtle Mentem spells to convince her "lover" from Chapter Two to aid her. She may even demand that her lover fight on her behalf, in which case comparison Personality Trait rolls are required of the character. These rolls usually compare the Love score imbued by Alicia's medallion with the character's Loyalty score toward friends.

Of course, Alicia is largely powerless if the characters are led by a woman. However, she still prefers a subtle approach to conflict.

To defeat or capture Hagen, the characters must do the same to Alicia. Alicia protects her son from the characters, but does not fight physically. If hard pressed, she even resorts to offensive spells that have no subtlety at all, like *Flash of the*



Scarlet Flames. Her natural dislike of Magi, coupled with her fear of a faerie conspiracy to murder Hagen, means she has few qualms about killing characters.

CONFRONTING HAGEN

Upon exiting the secret passage into Lacaune, the characters probably seek out Hagen. In his madness, Hagen spends all his time in his private quarters, on the second floor of the keep. Getting to the second floor requires the characters to pass through the great hall, which is always guarded by two mercenaries. At night servants also sleep in the hall. These servants will raise the alarm if disturbed. Hagen, on the other hand, does not sleep because of his nightmares, and thus sits awake and armed at all hours. He responds to any alarm raised in the castle, but the spirits possessing him may not let him remain in human form for long.

Hagen's shawl gives him inhuman powers. He possesses a Faerie Might that protects him from magic attacks as would a Magic Resistance score. The Shawl also imbues him with the equivalent of the Berserk Virtue (see the Physical Virtues and Flaws, p.76) and gives him an Angry Personality Trait score of four. Because the spirits of the shawl delight in bloodshed, they have the power to transform Hagen into his bestial form, but do so more to delight in mindless violence than to see Hagen win a fight. They therefore bring about the change a few combat Rounds after Hagen becomes berserk.



Hagen wears Coffa's shawl when he is in human form. When he transforms into the beast, the shawl transforms with him. Thus, the shawl can only be reclaimed by killing or incapacitating Hagen (whereupon he resumes human form and the shawl resumes its normal form).

ATTRACTING THE GUARD

Guards on duty at the castle are generally lazy, especially now that so much time has passed since they last carried out a crusade mission, and now that a woman — Alicia — commands them. As the guards are so lax, it is easy to sneak by them. A comparison stress roll is required between the characters' Dexterity + Stealth scores and the guards' Perception + Awareness Talents, like Scan. However, the guards automatically suffer a -3 penalty to this roll.

Once intruders are discovered, word is shouted throughout the castle. This call brings all guards in the immediate vicinity within five combat Rounds. Others currently on duty close within 10 Rounds. Those guards off duty do not respond to trouble for a few minutes, while they pull on armor, grab weapons, and generally organize themselves. Remember, there are 50 guards left at the castle. If characters don't act quickly to move, hide, or dispatch attacking guards, they may be overwhelmed by those arriving on the scene.

THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

If the characters are beaten by Hagen, Alicia, or the castle guard, they are quickly disposed of. Hagen wants defeated characters killed because the animal in him craves blood and the remaining man in him craves death for those who have seen the beast. Alicia also wants the characters killed because they have no doubt witnessed her magical powers. The guards fight until the characters are dead, out of sheer boredom and a desire to vent their frustrations.

Yes, the assault on Lacaune Castle is dangerous for the characters. They must be prepared to defeat the castle's inhabitants or lose everything. Such dangers are standard fare for characters of a Spring Covenant, and the players had best understand the risks they take when they plan any assault.

If the first assault party is killed, remaining characters from the Covenant may attempt another raid. However, the castle inhabitants now know of the secret entrance and have it guarded. Alicia may even hire more soldiers to protect the place, and may place more spells about for protection. Overcoming such defenses is a challenge for remaining characters, but one they must overcome or the growing forest will destroy the Covenant once and for all.

Until the shawl is regained the forest's faeries do not help the characters. Doing so would break the agreement made between the two parties. The faeries might even take the failure

of the first group of characters as a sign that the characters did not intend to honor their agreement. In this case the faeries may advance the forest even further, ensuring the quick destruction of the characters' Covenant. However, if the remaining characters can arrange a new pact with the faeries, based on the remaining characters' merits, a temporary reprieve might be arranged.

Of course, the characters' efforts against Lacaune may prove successful, in which case many results may occur.

If Hagen is killed Alicia attempts to escape and exact her revenge later. If all exits from the castle are blocked she might even flee through the characters' secret passage and seek shelter with a neighboring noble. She avenges herself by claiming a band of Cathar supporters attacked her castle. The local nobility, under Alicia's magical influence, then bring the crusade to the area in force. However, if the characters have made a pact with faeries to preserve their Covenant, the Covenant should avoid this assault. If such plans for salvation have not been made, the characters must deal with an army of attackers at their door. At the least, characters who let Alicia get away make a long-term enemy for themselves, one with considerable mundane influence.

If Hagen escapes, he eventually transforms into a beast, permanently. He stalks the lands surrounding the characters' Covenant, pursuing a rudimentary desire for revenge. As the beast he may plague the characters for some time, or may be hunted down and killed with ease. The choice is left to you and the players' efforts to deal with Hagen. Keep in mind, though, that as long as Hagen remains in beast form, the characters cannot return the shawl to the forest faeries. This means the forests continues to grow throughout the Val du Bosque. Only by killing, incapacitating, or restoring Hagen can the characters claim their prize.

If both Hagen and Alicia are killed their soldiers surrender or flee. The Church hires available mercenaries to continue manning Lacaune Castle, and a sergeant is promoted to lead them. These soldiers offer no more trouble for characters. If the characters are interested, they may even hire the mercenaries as Grogs.

Epilogue

After events at Lacaune Castle the characters may return the antler-headed shawl to the faerie court. Receiving the shawl with thanks, Queen Eleri places it upon the ground at the center of the court. As everyone looks on the shawl's horns blossom into a tree. Under the creaking and shifting bark of the tree a human shape seems to take form. Once the tree reaches its full height of 80 feet, Coffa steps forth from the trunk.

With the restoration of the shawl the living memory of Cernunnos is reborn, but he resents renewed life. His "death" only proves to him that mortal man no longer cares to follow Cernunnos, and if man remembers the deity, it's only done in passing. Coffa therefore elects to pass into Arcadia rather than



remain in Mythic Europe. In his place he leaves the tree borne of the shawl as a reminder of Cernunnos. "This tree," Coffa proclaims, "now lives as the standard of the Ancient. Its deep roots reach into the glorious past and its branches vainly reach for what the future might hold. As long as this tree remains, the memory of the Great One does as well. Tend it well, those who would see the past resurgent, and maybe then He will come again."

With that Coffa proceeds to walk off into the wood as the faeries of the court look solemnly to the ground. If any character asks about the curse of Cernunnos, Coffa turns slightly and answers, "That is passed, as all things must one day pass." Coffa then resumes his path and disappears from sight. From that point on the curse of Cernunnos is lifted from the Val du Bosque — fertility is restored. Memory of Cernunnos in the valley is now restored, but that memory is only a shadow of its former self. People still celebrate pagan holidays once dedicated to Cernunnos, but almost no one recalls the holidays' true dedication.

However, Cernunnos's memory is lost and his curse renewed if the shawl's tree is ever felled. If that occurs, the curse of Cernunnos might never be lifted, for the tree was the very last embodiment of the deity's memory. Those who still wish to become the priests of Cernunnos may do so by tending the tree,

ensuring that it is never harmed. Only with years of such dedication may characters receive Cernunnos's gifts, like the prophetic visions into Faerie that Gillet had.

THE FAERIES' AGREEMENT

When the shawl is returned, the faeries cease and recede the growth of the Val du Bosque's forests, as per their agreement. They also heed any agreement made to protect the characters' Covenant. However, the faeries cannot be expected to remain indebted to the characters forever. As soon as the danger of the crusade is abated (according to faerie standards), the enchantment placed on the Covenant may be lifted. Who knows where this might leave the Covenant: maybe in the midst of the Church's final search for heretics, before the crusade is completely called off.

Characters must also be careful of etiquette when fulfilling their pact with the faeries. Characters who make an Intelligence + Faerie Lore stress roll of 6+ know that one never thanks a faerie for a favor. Faeries believe thanks to be a mortal's attempt to trap them into further obligations. If characters fail the above Faerie Lore roll, they don't realize the danger they're in and may thank the faeries of their own accord. If the Faerie Lore roll is Botched, you should point out to the players that the characters are indebted to the faeries and should at least be courteous.

When thanked, faeries become enraged, choosing to either: a) never deal with the characters' Covenant again, or b) remove their enchantment from the Covenant, leaving it open to attack (after all, as the enchantment was in place for a short while, the faeries' part of the bargain is upheld). The choice is yours, based on how grateful the characters are.

You should note, however, that while faeries should not be thanked, there is no prohibition against praising their work. In fact, it is wise to do so and allows for friendly relations in the future.

BLOSSOMING INTO SUMMER

The object of this Saga is to test the characters' Covenant, to determine whether it is strong enough to survive the Spring Season. If the characters fail to appease the faeries of the forest, their Covenant is destroyed by the faeries and their forest. Or, if the characters fail to negotiate with the faeries, their Covenant

may remain exposed to the crusade, and is likely to be destroyed. Success at both dealings feats proves the characters are worthy of higher standing. The characters have now proven they can persevere through the machinations of mundanes, faeries, the Church, and the Order of Hermes itself. Summer is achieved.

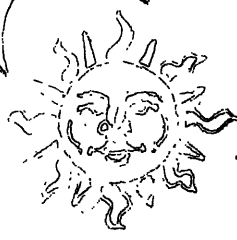
With the standing of Summer, the characters' Covenant undergoes the growth it is entitled to. As a survivor of the crusade the Covenant has considerable influence over the lands surrounding it. After all, what mundane force can stand up to wizards after having spent every drop of blood in a mighty war? The characters probably have the only money around as well, and with it may purchase almost anything. Survivors of war who now have nothing left to fight for might also seek work as guards or consors. The Church might even grant allowances to the Covenant to ensure that people can follow Christianity rather than have another heretical movement begin, this time inspired by wizards. Furthermore, peasants might offer their services as covenfolk in return for food and shelter. Who knows: Roland might even offer to join the Covenant. Covenants that have not fared as well as the characters' might sell magical creations to the characters in return for help with construction. Indeed, the raw materials necessary for a new Summer Covenant surround the characters as they emerge from shelter to enter a war-torn world.

However, you might want to remind characters of the value of humility after their successes in this Saga. For example, Bishop Merdici of Foix might return to his diocese. Although absent for some time, he may claim his return is responsible for the restoration of fertility and the shrinking of forests in the valley. In a public speech he claims he had a divine vision, and in prayer found the means to preserve the land from its evil curse. Merdici therefore claims the characters' success for himself, and receives public praise. Maybe he's even canonized as a saint one day.

If the characters want to dispute the Bishop's claim to fame, his canons quickly remind them of the location of their Covenant. If the characters claim they were responsible for the valley's salvation, the Church may evict the characters, demand huge taxes from them, or bring the Inquisition down upon them. In the face of such adversity, allowing the Church its "victory" is probably the wisest of actions. Denouncing the Bishop of Foix only makes him the personal enemy of the characters, and Merdici might not return to his Italian estates until the characters are dealt with.

By acquiescing to the Church's unfair claims, Covenant and Church reach a deadlock, with neither dominant over the other, and neither with the power to become so. From this status quo friendships may grow.

15 Miles
Foir



Monastery
of San Blas



Marifel

Horn's Hill



Plaplean

River

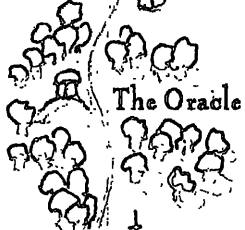


Siernami



Armicstat

Hill of
Mushrooms



The Oracle

Lisc's Regio



Paraguine



Xanec



Castle
D'Uverre



Alopoc



Cariel



Saint Fabia



Cuntarda

River Veis



Shrine
of Fabia

Caves of the
Shimmering Pool

Mt. Tzeone



Manor of
Sir Guifre



Shrine
to Fabia



Mistridge

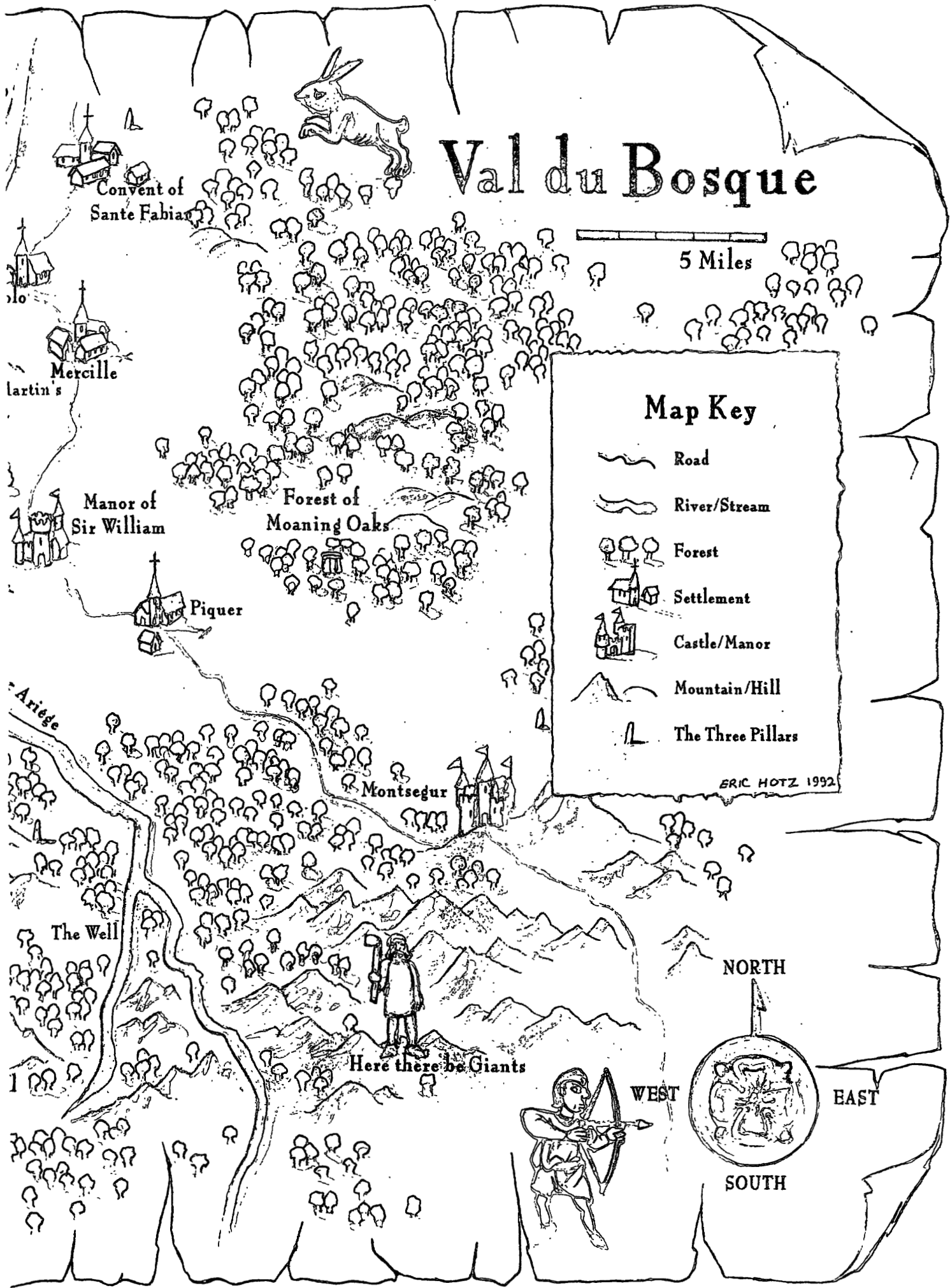
Faerie
Mound

Javielle

Devil's
Nostril

to Andorra

Val du Bosque



5 Miles

Map Key

- Road
- River/Stream
- Forest
- Settlement
- Castle/Manor
- Mountain/Hill
- The Three Pillars

ERIC HOTZ 1992

NORTH

WEST

EAST

SOUTH

Convent of Sante Fabian

Mercille Martin's

Manor of Sir William

Piquer

Forest of Moaning Oaks

Montsegur

The Well

Here there be Giants