

The Order Of

# St.J

Saint Jerome



## MONOGRAPH #0303

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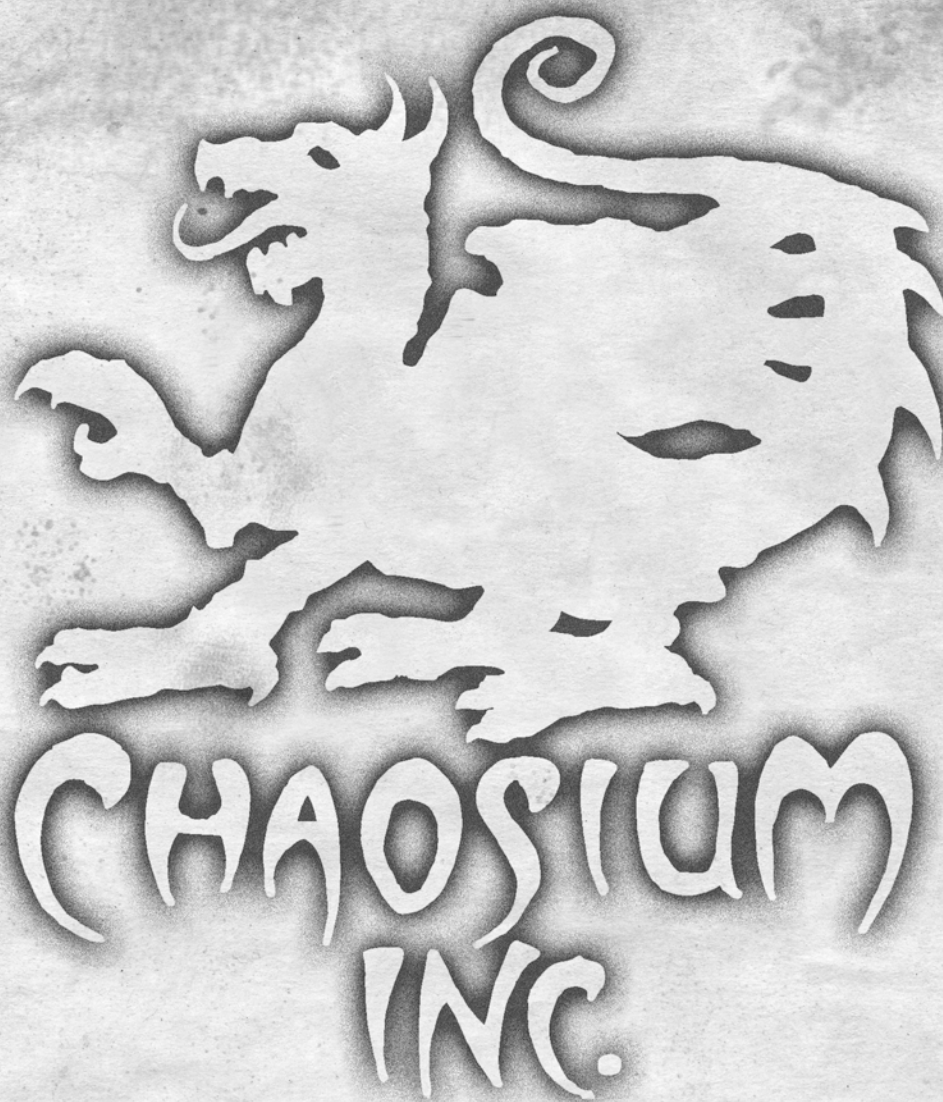


# The Abbey



## RESOURCES FOR CTHULHU DARK AGES





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# **SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S ABBEY And Other Excerpts**

A Monograph for Chaosium's Cthulhu Dark Ages by Michael Patty

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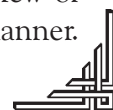
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## **Introduction**

This Monograph is a work in progress. It is being presented in this format as a preview of things to come for those who cannot wait for it to be published in a more complete manner.





# Introduction

The work you hold is made up of three parts. Together, they may provide you with a place to begin play, a regional setting to explore, and a Sacred Order with which characters may ally themselves.

The first Section details of the “French” St. Bartholomew’s Abbey in the year of our lord 962 AD. This monastery is an excellent place to begin your Cthulhu Dark Ages campaign and will figure prominently in future CDA releases.

The second section is an overview of 10th century France. It is intended to provide you with a region and back drop in which to begin play.

The third section is The Order Of The Sword Of Saint Jerome. This Organization can be an invaluable resource for players and Keepers alike. Within it’s ranks Characters can find allies in their fight against the Darkness. This Order will be given more detailed treatment in upcoming releases.

We hope that you the reader will find the material contained here in of value as we all explore the world of Cthulhu Dark Ages together.

For more information about Chaosium, Cthulhu Dark Ages, and Dark Ages Europe, please visit our web page at [www.chaosium.com](http://www.chaosium.com)

Dustin Wright  
Cthulhu Dark Ages Line Developer  
February 2004



# SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S ABBEY

Saint Bartholomew's Abbey is an autonomous Benedictine monastery situated along the Lot river. The Abbey is nestled below the Cévennes mountains within the Massif Central region (a mountainous area dominating most of south-eastern France).

As with many of the monasteries of the tenth century, Saint Bartholomew's is located in a fairly remote area. The monks of the Abbey are not completely cut off from civilization, however, as the small village of Vallés is less than a mile down-river, while the city of Mende is just over 15 miles to the north (a lengthy distance to someone in the dark ages).

The Abbey of Saint Bartholomew owes no allegiance to a local lord (hence the term "autonomous"), which is something that can-

not be said of many of the monasteries of the period. The monks of Saint Bartholomew's owe allegiance only to the Benedictine Order and the Vatican.

## INDUSTRY

The hard working monks of Saint Bartholomew's have several industries to support themselves, some of which are more successful than others. An efficient water-mill alongside the Lot grinds grain for local farmers, of which the Abbey gets a portion as payment. The monks of the order also produce cheese and wine from local products. The cheese is

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It is worth noting that the French form of the name Bartholomew is actually "Barthélemy" (roughly pronounced bar-TAY-le-mee). Since the fictional Abbey of Saint Bartholomew referred to in this segment is located in France, the French form of the name would be the obvious choice to use. However, since this material has been written for a mostly english speaking audience, and since the actual individual in question was neither English nor French, the english version was deemed more appropriate. Keepers who prefer a more realistic linguistic/historical touch should feel free to incorporate the French version instead.

On a related topic of possible interest, the biblical name Bartholomew actually

translates in Hebrew to "son of Talmi." Thus, the name commonly used for the saint is actually not his name at all, but a description of who his father was. The given name associated with Saint Bartholomew is Nathaniel (not to be confused with the artisan monk named Nathaniel mentioned in various places in this manuscript; that monk was born much later than the Apostle Nathaniel, and was named for him).

superb, while the wine is not quite so impressive (though it does keep the monks of Saint Bartholomew's warm on cold winter nights). In most years, there is sufficient surplus that the Abbey is able to trade grain, cheese and even wine for other necessities.

## HISTORY OF THE ABBEY

In the period of chaos that followed the breakup of Charlemagne's empire in the eighth and ninth centuries, there arose a number of "robber barons." Palos le Saevus was such a baron. Little more than a mercenary leader with a ruthless reputation, Palos set out to carve himself a noble title by force of arms. There were few to appose him so he was largely successful, accumulating a great deal of wealth in the process. To commemorate his ascension in status, Palos ordered that a fortress keep be built from which he could rule and defend his domain.

Palos' fort was all but finished when he had five unusual visitors. All of them were monks of the Benedictine Order, but with them (so they claimed) was a relic from one of the original twelve apostles. A very unusual relic. The monks claimed to be carrying a portion of skin from Saint Bartholomew. Written in blood upon the holy relic were what the monks proclaimed to be the last words of the dying saint, recorded in Aramaic (an informal version of Hebrew in common usage at the time of Jesus). According to the story told by these five mysterious monks, while most of the saint's remains went elsewhere, this singular relic had been guarded for centuries by his loyal followers and their descendants. It had fallen into the hands of the Benedictines only recently, upon the death of the relic's last guardian.

Of the five mysterious monks, only one of them is named in the surviving records of the time. The other monks referred to him as L'épine de Dieu (The Thorn of God). L'épine

requested sanctuary for himself and his fellow brothers. He was said to have been a very persuasive man. Moved by their tale, Palos took them in. Over the course of the next six months, Palos would undergo a remarkable change. Turning away from his former life of violence, Palos declared the relic to be genuine and promised to protect it with his life. He spurned his former preoccupation with the accumulation of wealth and power, and spent much of his remaining life traveling as a pilgrim and visiting holy sites. During his travels, his keep was left in the charge of the five monks, his only trusted friends.

Five years later, upon his death bed and having sired no heir, he bequeathed his fortress and its surrounding grounds to the Order of Saint Benedict and to the five monks under his protection. In 837, 14 years after Palos' death, the Forteresse de Palos was officially added to the rolls of the Benedictine Order as Saint Bartholomew's monastery. Three years later the Vatican would likewise sanction the monastery name and status. Neither of the two authorities, however, chose to recognize the relic of Saint Bartholomew. As a result, it's authenticity continued to be called into question over the intervening years. Despite this, the presence of even an alleged relic from one of the martyred apostles continued to draw many to the site, and the monastery grew. In 891, the monastery was granted a Papal commission for expansion. Construction of the Chapel was begun in this period, replacing the massive barracks building of the old fortress. In 894 the monastery was given the title of "Abbey."

With the authenticity of the relic of Saint Bartholomew still under question, Prior Volair in 897 initiated a policy of silence on the issue. From that point forward, the monks of the Abbey were forbidden to discuss the topic of the disputed relic. The plan worked. By the middle of the tenth century, the rest of the world had largely forgotten about the relic's existence. Over time, the injunction against discussing the relic has been relaxed. But most

of the monks of the monastery continue to be secretive on the subject, and few outsiders are granted permission to view it.

## SAINT BARTHOLOMEW & THE RELIC

Dark age monasteries were often founded around the relic of a saint or holy person. Such relics most commonly involved the saint's mortal remains. The relic of Saint Bartholomew's is unusual in several ways, however. Aside from the unpleasant nature of the remains, and the unfortunate manner of the Saint's demise (he was said to have been flayed alive and crucified), it also seems to possess some unearthly characteristics. Those who have seen it describe an aura of foreboding that surrounds it. The relic is said to increase wisdom in those who touch it or are touched by it, and it is also said to possess remarkable healing powers.

Strangest of all, perhaps, is the odd illegible writing upon the relic. According to the tale, this writing records the last words of the saint, written in Aramaic in his own blood. However, scholars who have previously examined the relic have been unable to translate it. Tradition amongst the monks of the Abbey holds that, with his last breath, Saint Bartholomew recited the last words of Jesus himself. Thus, the words written upon the relic would be "And Jesus said, 'Forgive them Father, they know not what they do.'"

The skin of Saint Bartholomew is stretched taut across a crude wooden frame. The relic is said to be remarkably well preserved (it has been described as still being soft and supple, like living tissue, and warm to the touch). It is kept in a closed and guarded vault in the cellars of the Abbey. Those few who have been allowed to enter this vault and view the relic describe the vault as an unadorned room, with a raised dais upon which sits the relic.

The relic is of significant importance to the monastery, and is guarded by at least one monk at all times. Only the Prior of the Abbey has a key to the vault, and only he can authorize anyone to enter. There is a legend which tells of unusually long life-spans and uncanny good health on the part of the monks that guard the vault. True or not, this is likely the reason that even the older and more senior monks take a turn at guarding the relic.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Saint Bartholomew's Abbey is often filled with an interesting assortment of characters. What follows is a listing of some of the more notable of these characters.

### Basile

POSITION/PROFESSION: Prior (or Abbot)

AGE: 59

STR 11

CON 12

SIZ 14

DEX 10

APP 13

SAN 80

INT 17

POW 16

EDU 19

Idea 85

Luck 80

Know 95

Damage Bonus: none

Hit Points: 13

Magic Points: 16

Skills: Accounting 20%, Art (sculpture) 30%, Craft (Woodworker) 35%, First Aid 40%, Insight 60%, Library Use 60%, Natural World 20%, Occult 20%, Other Language (Britonian) 50%, Other Language (Latin) 50%, Own Kingdom (France) 65%, Own Language (French) 95%, Persuade 55%, Science 20%, Spot Hidden 45%, Write Language (Latin)

Saint Bartholomew's Abbey – 5

70%, Write Language (Greek) 55%, Write Language (Arabic) 30%.

Brother Basile is outwardly a jovial and friendly man, but he often keeps his true thoughts to himself. At the age of 54 he was elected to the position of Prior of the Abbey. Basile leads through the earned respect of his fellow monks. While he runs a fairly tight monastery, he is willing to bend the rules on occasion if necessity dictates (this is a marked contrast to his departed predecessor, brother Clémence, who was notoriously inflexible regarding the rules). Basile prefers to be informal, insisting that even fellow monks call him by his given name rather than his title. Most of his fellow monks call him simply “brother Basile.” Only on the most formal occasions does he insist upon the full title of “Father Prior” (and even then usually with a smile and a sly wink).

Although the position of Abbey Prior is an elected one, it is granted for life. During his five years in the office, Basile has achieved a great deal. Construction of the Chapel bell-tower was finally completed three years ago under his leadership, and the past four years have seen a plentiful surplus in stores (allowing the monks to not only provide for themselves, but to provide for the local poor as well). Ironically, one of Basile’s concerns is that the monastery is doing too well, and that his brethren might fall prey to over-indulgence and idleness. To counter this, Basile is always up in the very early hours of the morning, exhorting his fellow brethren to a hard day’s labor by way of example.

### **Father Arnaud**

POSITION/PROFESSION: Sacrist

## **PLOT IDEAS INVOLVING THE RELIC**

The Relic of Saint Bartholomew is at once a sinister and holy object. It is also an artifact of great mystery. As such, it provides an excellent source for a number of interesting plot ideas. Below are a few examples. Keepers should feel free to expand upon these ideas or develop their own.

- **A PRAYER FOR HEALING:** One of the player characters is the victim of a terrible wasting illness. The relic is their last hope. The players must either earn the Prior’s trust and convince him to open the vault, or they must gain access to it by stealth.
- **-DREAD WARNING:** The player characters uncover a blasphemous manuscript which claims that the words written on the relic are neither Aramaic, nor are they the last words of Christ. They are a dark and cryptic warning, foretelling great evil. To

thwart this evil, the player-characters must view the relic and translate the words written upon it.

- **STOLEN:** Someone has stolen the relic. Fearful lest word of this terrible tragedy get out, the Prior asks the player characters to investigate the theft and return the relic to it’s rightful place.
- **THE RELIC AND THE BEAST:** The relic has a darker side, and one of the senior monks has succumbed to its power. The relic has been used to summon a terrible beast that now stalks the land. Only by unraveling the mystery of the relic can the beast be stopped.



AGE: 51  
STR 10  
CON 15  
SIZ 15  
DEX 12  
APP 14  
SAN 85  
INT 14  
POW 17  
EDU 20  
Idea 70  
Luck 85  
Know 100

Damage Bonus: +1D4  
Hit Points: 15  
Magic Points: 17

Skills: Insight 40%, Library Use 70%, Listen 45%, Occult 10%, Other Kingdom (Italy) 40%, Other Kingdom (Germany) 20%, Other Language (Italian) 30%, Other Language (German) 30%, Other Language (Latin) 60%, Own Kingdom (France) 65%, Own Language (French) 100, Persuade 70%, Status (Church) 35%, Write Language (Latin) 80%, Write Language (French) 60%.

Arnaud is referred to as “Father” only by the villagers of Vallés or visitors to the Abbey. Although he is a full fledged priest, he is referred to simply as “Brother Arnaud” by his fellow brethren at Saint Bartholomew’s. Arnaud, a strong willed and charismatic man in his early fifties, is the Sacrist of the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew. As such, his duties include conducting ceremonies for the Abbey, including the daily mass. The Sunday mass is always his favorite, as it is on this occasion that folk from the surrounding region attend. Nothing makes Arnaud happier than “Taking the Word of God to the People.” Once a month, Arnaud takes a trip down the mountain, preaching the gospel to the people of the region who are too far away to attend mass regularly.

Most of those who meet Arnaud find him likeable enough, so long as the topic doesn’t wander into the realm of improper behavior. Arnaud cannot abide sin or un-virtuous living, and will never miss a chance to administer a stern lecture when he deems that someone has acted outside the realms of righteous Christian conduct. Not even Basile is free of the occasional lecture. It’s no secret that Arnaud considers himself to be a much better candidate for Prior (he was something of a protégé of the former Prior Clémence). Thus far Basile has managed to defuse the occasional dispute between the two.

## Nicolas

POSITION/PROFESSION: Librarian

AGE: 87  
STR 9  
CON 13  
SIZ 14  
DEX 13  
APP 11  
SAN 40  
INT 18  
POW 10  
EDU 25  
Idea 90  
Luck 50  
Know 125

Damage Bonus: none  
Hit Points: 14  
Magic Points: 10

Skills: Craft (Bookbinding) 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Insight 25%, Library Use 90%, Natural World 20%, Occult 60%, Other Kingdom (Italy) 40%, Other Kingdom (Germany) 40%, Other Kingdom (England) 20%, Other Kingdom (Fatimid Caliphate/Jerusalem) 40%, Other Language (Latin) 80%, Other Language (German & Italian) 30%, Other Language (Britonian) 20%, Own Kingdom (France) 60%, Own Language (French) 125%, Science 60%, Write Language (Aramaic & Hebrew) 55%, Write

Language (Britonian, German & Italian) 35%, Write Language (Greek) 30%, Write Language (Latin) 70%.

Old Nicolas is by far the eldest of the Benedictine brothers of the Abbey. Well into his ninth decade, Nicolas is amazingly fit and healthy. He attributes his good health to virtuous living (others attribute it to the fifteen years he spent in close proximity to the Relic of Saint Bartholomew while attempting to translate the writing upon it). Nicolas has been the Librarian of the Abbey for the last 39 years, which is more than a good number of the brethren have been alive. As such, he is a figure of great respect. When Prior Clémence died five years ago, Nicolas was one of those held up for possible election to the position. As he had on the four previous occasions he was offered the position, Nicolas refused. Old Nicolas prefers to deal with his books, and wants nothing to do with any position of authority greater than that which he already has.

The title of “Librarian” is not an official one within the Rule of Saint Benedict (the set of rules established by Saint Benedict regarding monastic life). It was granted to him informally by Prior Simon in 946 AD. None of the four Priors since that time have seen fit to revoke the title, though Nicolas cares little for it or any other title.

### **Humbert “the Bold”**

POSITION/PROFESSION: Warrior Monk

AGE: 59

STR 12

CON 12

SIZ 14

DEX 10

APP 13

SAN 75

INT 17

POW 15

EDU 19

Idea 85

Luck 75

Know 95

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Hit Points: 13

Magic Points: 15

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 24%, Dodge 30%, First Aid 50%, Insight 60%, Library Use 45%, Listen 35%, Occult 50%, Other Kingdom (France) 40%, Other Kingdom (Italy) 30%, Other Kingdom (Spain) 20%, Other Language (Arabic) 20%, Other Language (Latin) 45%, Other Language (Spanish) 30%, Own Kingdom (Burgundy) 60%, Own Language (French) 95%, Ride 40%, Spot Hidden 35%, Write (Latin) 40%. Fighting Skills: Shield Parry 50%, Sword (Long) 70%, Spear (Long) 50%.

Though he has no official capacity within the monastery, and is not of the Benedictine Order, brother Humbert is a regular fixture at Saint Bartholomew’s. If asked, he will freely tell any questioner that he is a member of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome. His advancing years and an old injury, he says, have forced him into retirement. The brethren at Saint Bartholomew’s have provided for him a place to live out his final years.

Brother Humbert is not a lay-about, by any means. He is often seen hard at work around the monastery; his still-muscular frame reveals the massive man he must once have been. Despite his excellent health and fitness, he walks with a pronounced limp, which clearly pains him at times.

If asked about his past, Humbert will gladly fill the questioner’s ears with tales of his many adventures as a sword of God. The astute listener, however, might note that certain details of his stories are curiously omitted. When asked for details on the items he has omitted, he often becomes evasive and quick to change the subject. Brother Humbert no longer carries a sword, though his hand strays there from time to time as if by instinct.

Because of his status as a monastic brother of another order, Humbert has claim to one of

the upstairs guest rooms set aside for guests who are fellow monks. Humbert, however, is more than happy with a small corner in the Chapel cellar, and it is there that he sleeps most evenings.

## Lothaire

POSITION/PROFESSION: Grounds Keeper

AGE: 37

STR 18

CON 15

SIZ 17

DEX 14

APP 9

SAN 55

INT 14

POW 11

EDU 14

Idea 70

Luck 55

Know 70

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Hit Points: 16

Magic Points: 11

Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 35%, Craft (Woodland Lore) 54%, Drive Horses 32%, Hide 25%, Listen 45%, Natural World 30%, Own Language (French) 70, Pilot Boat 40%, Repair/Devise 35%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 45%, Track 45%. Fighting Skills: Axe 60%, Bow 50%.

A mysterious figure, Lothaire is seldom seen by visitors to the Abbey. On the rare occasions when he spends a night inside the Abbey proper, he hides away in the damp cellars. Lothaire spends most of his nights in the open, preferring the company of his two huge hunting hounds (Berthol and Samual). He cares for the grounds surrounding the Abbey, a charge he prefers to accomplish under the cloak of the early morning mists.

There are all manner of mysterious rumors that surround Lothaire (he is half wolf, he is the son of a brother at the Abbey, he bears the

mark of the evil one, etc.). It is known that Lothaire was himself a brother of the Abbey. At some point, for unknown reasons, he was cast out (some have said that he was also excommunicated from the Church). If any of the elder brothers know the truth of these rumors, none of them are willing to speak of it.

Those unfortunates that chance to encounter Lothaire will find a bitter man, easy to anger, and possessing a foul disposition. His hounds are even less friendly, though they are extremely loyal to him. Lothaire speaks only in terse sentences, using as few words as possible. His gruff manner puts most people off, which is fine with Lothaire. He'd rather have just the company of his hounds in any case.

## Thibault, son of Mathis

POSITION/PROFESSION: Merchant

AGE: 25

STR 11

CON 10

SIZ 12

DEX 10

APP 13

SAN 60

INT 14

POW 12

EDU 11

Idea 70

Luck 60

Know 55

Damage Bonus: none

Hit Points: 11

Magic Points: 12

Skills: Accounting 65%, Bargain 76%, Drive Horses 60%, Fast Talk 65%, Insight 25%, Own Language (French) 65%, Persuade 45%, Pilot Boat 40%, Write Language (French) 10%. Fighting Skills: Staff 50%.

Thibault's father, Mathis, is from a prominent merchant family in the city of Mende. Mathis moved to the village of Vallés in order to set up

## HUMBERT & THE ORDER OF THE SWORD

Player characters who are members of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome may find Humbert to be a very useful contact. Due to his advancing years, Humbert rarely gets involved in missions for the Order directly. He is more than willing to grant members of the Order the benefit of his years of experience, however. He may also be able to aid them in other ways, so long as this assistance not does not violate his oath to the Order and his loyalty to the Pope. Humbert always

keeps a careful ear out for information that the Order might find useful. Keepers should find Humbert to be a useful character through which to pass along information or plot hooks to the player characters.

The Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome is outlined in greater detail elsewhere this publication.

his own business without competing with other family members. As Mathis' third son, Thibault is charged with bringing in trade goods for the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew. He visits the monastery twice a week on this task.

Lately, according to local gossip, he has been taking unscheduled visits to the Abbey. Rumor has it that the young man is wooing one of the shepherds daughters on the far side of Saint Bartholomew's, and that the extra visits to the Abbey are just an excuse to head in that direction. Whatever Thibault's real reasons for the increased visits, he keeps them to himself.

### Emeline “the Wild Woman”

POSITION/PROFESSION: Mysterious young woman of the wood

AGE: unknown

STR 08

CON 10

SIZ 10

DEX 16

APP 17

SAN (?)

INT 16

POW 20

EDU 12

Idea 80

Luck 90

Know 60

Damage Bonus: none

Hit Points: 10

Magic Points: 20

Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 55%, Craft (Woodland Lore) 35%, Hide 40%, Listen 45%, Natural World 50%, Occult 15%, Potions 52%, Sneak 60%, Spot Hidden 55%, Swim 45%, Throw 50%, Track 40%.

Emeline is the child of one of the last “wise women” of the region. While Christianity has gained a strong hold on southern France by the tenth century, there is still a notable sense of respect for the “old ways.” To the locals, Emeline's mother Brunhild was a figure of fear and respect. Many of the locals visited her for cures, simples, or a foretelling of the weather.

Ten years ago, while Emeline was still but a small child of eight years, her mother Brunhild fell under suspicion when a strange sickness struck some of the herds. The affected shepherds brought her to the Abbey to be charged with heresy. Before the charges could be

addressed, however, she escaped into the wild. Her body was found a month later, hanging from the tree upon which she had been tortured and killed. It was her daughter, Emeline, who found her body. The child never recovered from the terrible shock, and has spoken not a word since. A year later the child vanished, and was not seen again for five years. For the last four years she has been seen off and on stealing food. Where she sleeps at night is a mystery to the locals. The monks of the Abbey take mercy on her and leave food and warm clothing out for her to “steal.” They have tried several times to coax her into the warm confines of the Guest House, but she is now as feral as a wild animal. She is also as stealthy and cunning as a fox, and has thus far eluded attempts by Basile to capture her for her own good.

### Lord Alphonse de Vallés

POSITION/PROFESSION: Minor Lord

AGE: 34

STR 13

CON 12

SIZ 16

DEX 12

APP 14

SAN 55

INT 13

POW 11

EDU 15

Idea 65

Luck 55

Know 75

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Hit Points: 14

Magic Points: 11

Skills: Library Use 40%, Other Kingdom (Burgundy) 30%, Other Language (Latin) 20%, Own Kingdom (France) 80%, Own Language (French) 75%, Persuade 55%, Ride 65%, Science 10%, Status 70%, Write Language (Latin) 10%. Fighting Skills: Shield Parry 55%, Spear (Long) 60%, Sword (Long) 65%.

Lord Alphonse inherited the minor mansion and fief of Vallés from his father, Raoul, only five years ago (the family mansion is located a little over a mile from the village of Vallés). Unlike his father, who supported the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew with generous endowments (never questioning their autonomy), Alphonse is less than pleased that the monastery pays him no tithe. In his view, the Abbey should be his in the same manner as the village of Vallés is his. Watching the significant tithes of Saint Bartholomew’s go straight to the Vatican, with none of it coming to his coffers, leaves him less than enthusiastic about supporting them. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. Alphonse has tasked his uncle, Henri (a Roman Cardinal), with undermining the monastery credibility. His hope is that, once the leadership of the Abbey is in question, subtle suggestions that it would be better managed under his care will fall upon receptive ears. “After all,” he would argue, “are not most of the monasteries of Christendom under the patronage of a secular lord? Is not tradition superior to chaos and disorder?”

Alphonse rules his fief in the name of the Count of Rodez, an arrangement that is quite common in the current feudal age. It is unlikely that Count Rodez has even heard of Alphonse and his very minor holding. This could change, however, if Alphonse could add Saint Bartholomew’s to his domain. The lands of Vallés have been the fief of Alphonse’s family for only a relatively short while. His great grandfather, a captain in the army of Rodez, was granted title to domain after many years of loyal service. Alphonse dislikes the undignified brevity of this family history, and has sought to “refine” it and eradicate the original. To this end, he has hired the services of a scholar and poet, Paule le Noir, to doctor up his noble history.

Alphonse rarely visits the town that is his by right of birth. He probably couldn’t even name more than one or two of the villagers. The family’s faithful servant, Grimoald, over-

sees all such matters, leaving Alphonse to pursue more important things (such as the enrichment of his purse and the enlargement of his domain).

## Paule le Noir

POSITION/PROFESSION: Scholar and Poet

AGE: 45

STR 9

CON 10

SIZ 12

DEX 11

APP 9

SAN 50

INT 14

POW 15

EDU 18

Idea 70

Luck 75

Know 90

Damage Bonus: none

Hit Points: 14

Magic Points: 11

Skills: Art (Poetry) 90%, Bargain 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 08%, Fast Talk 45%, Insight 25%, Library Use 46%, Occult 55%, Other Language (Greek & Latin) 40%, Other Language (German) 35%, Own Kingdom 50%, Own Language (French) 90%, Persuade 40%, Write Language (Greek) 30%, Write Language (Latin) 70%.

Once, the name of Paule le Noir was fairly well known in Paris. He was a scholar of some note, best known for his satirical poetry which gently pointed out the excesses of certain prominent leaders of the Church (from the safety of literary allusions, of course). He paid a price for his temerity, so the tale goes, when the Devil paid him a visit and dragged him off to Hell for a short stay. Regardless of whether the story of Paule and the Devil is true, it is known that the man vanished suddenly from his modest home in Paris. When he returned five years later, he was a changed man. It was then that he was given the descriptive “le Noir” (the Black). For

he never again smiled, and his very presence was said to inspire gloom and despair. His poetry, like its author, became dark and terrible. The changed timbre of his writings did not fare as well with the aristocracy of Paris as his satire had, and he rapidly fell from favor. Over the last ten years he has wandered southward across France, taking occasional positions as a scribe or recorder until his manifest aura of gloom would once more drive him onward.

Paule has recently been hired on by Lord Alphonse de Vallés, who has charged him with crafting a more noble and lengthy family tree for the house of Vallés. Paule can be seen, on occasion, wandering the region on foot and muttering incomprehensibly to himself.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

Some of the characters of the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew and the surrounding area, while not sufficiently colorful to warrant a detailed description under NOTABLE CHARACTERS, are of significant importance to be mentioned. What follows is a list of such characters, along with a few major details.

### THE ABBEY

Theuderic, Sub-Prior, age 64

André, Cantor (leader of chants and music), age 43

Childeric, Cellarer (in charge of provisions and stores), age 59

Florentin, Refectorian (head of the Refectory), age 49

Gilles, Kitchener (head of food preparations), age 48

Hector, Novice Master (in charge of novices), age 40

Phillip, Infirmarian (First Aid 80%, Medicine 60%)\*, age 62

Léontine, Assistant Infirmarian (First Aid 60%, Medicine 20%), age 26

Benjamin, Guest Master (in charge of caring for guests), age 29

Ambroise, Almoner (in charge of alms for the poor), age 46

Étienne, Matricularius (assistant to the Sacrist), age 34

Gaston, Treasurer (in charge of contributions to the Abbey), age 65

\*Phillip may, at the Keeper's discretion, know the Healing spell from the Unnamed Scrolls of Saint Bartholomew.

## THE VILLAGE OF VALLÉS

Mathis, Merchant (runs a shop in Vallés), age 45

Sébastien, Baker (runs a shop in Vallés), age 39

Lucas, Smith (runs a smithy in Vallés), age 40

Grimoald, Overseer of Vallés, age 54

## INSIDE THE ABBEY

### GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the Abbey proper is fairly dark and gloomy, owing to the fact that there are no windows on this level. This unfortunate fact is the result of the Abbey's original history as a military fortification. The first floors of the Guest House and the Infirmary do have windows, but they are small, and commonly kept shuttered except in the warmest months.

**THE GUEST HOUSE:** The laws of hospitality are very important to those of the Benedictine Order. The Rule of Saint Benedict expressly requires a house for guests which is separate from the monastery so as to cause the monks therein the least amount of disruption. The Guest House of the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew is a simple one story structure,

connected to the Abbey by a narrow corridor leading to the Refectory. Guests are not normally allowed past the entry to this corridor, but the corridor allows the monks to stay warm in the cold winter months as they provide for their visitors. The Guest House consists of a common room, where meals are taken, and where the poorer guests sleep, as well as a number of simple rooms where guests of importance sleep. A stable is provided for guests against the western wall of the Guest House. Guests within the Clergy do not normally stay at the Guest House, but are instead offered one of the rooms for such visitors on the second floor of the Abbey.

**THE ENTRY HALL:** This room was the defensive bailey of the original fortress. It is now filled with various works of religious art, either manufactured by past monks of the Abbey, or contributed by wealthy patrons. Statues of various saints (there are 9 dedicated to Saint Bartholomew) are placed in such a way as to hide the kill-holes and arrow slots that reveal the room's original purpose.

**THE TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION:** The Abbey's mysterious founder, L'épine de Dieu, ordered the construction of this odd tower. His intentions for the tower are not entirely known. He was well versed in astronomy, however, and had an extensive collection from the classic philosophers on the subject. It is assumed by most that he intended the tower to be a place from which he could observe the heavens. Unfortunately, he died eight years before its completion. The lowest floor of the tower is now used as an almonry during the colder months of the year (a place where the Abbey provides charity for the poor). Foodstuffs and other items for the poor are stored here.

**THE REFECTORY:** This floor of the Abbey contains the refectory, where the monks take their meals, share daily prayers, and engage in the various industries that support the Abbey. The Lavatory, where the monks wash their feet

and hands just before meals, is located to the left of the main entry door.

**THE KITCHEN:** Just off the Refectory is the Abbey's main kitchen. Here the meals for the monks and guests of the Abbey are prepared. The kitchen is placed conveniently near the stairs to the Abbey's cellars.

**THE NOVICE CLOISTER & REFECTORY:** As is the tradition with monasteries in Europe, new initiates to the mysteries of the Benedictine Order are kept away from the other brethren and guests until they have "tried their spirits if they be of God." The term of a novice's separation from the rest of the Abbey usually lasts around a year, at which time they take their vows and join their brethren. The Novice Cloister is both a refectory, where meals are taken and labors performed, and a place where the novices sleep. The novices even have their own kitchen, where they take turns preparing their own meals under the watchful eyes of the Novice Master. At present, there are only four novices residing here.

**COURTYARD/GARDEN:** The courtyard of the Forteresse de Palos, once an open area where warriors trained, has been converted to a much more peaceful use through the hard work of several generations of Benedictine monks. The area is now a well maintained garden, where useful herbs are grown, and vegetables of various types are cultivated. The enclosure walls help to protect the sensitive plants from the biting winds. In the center of the courtyard is a well, which is the primary source of water for the Abbey. The courtyard is often used as an almonry during the warmer months of the year.

**THE MILL HOUSE/BOAT HOUSE:** Unconnected to the Abbey itself, the Mill House is located between the river Lot and the steep hill upon which the Abbey stands. The building is kept above the flood line of the river by a supporting structure of wooden pillars. Both the Mill House and the connected Boat House are partially set into the stone of the hill

behind them. The large wheel projecting from the Mill House into the river provides the force for grinding wheat, while the Boat House and the small dock allow the grain to be easily moved along the river.

**THE INFIRMARY:** This simple stone building is where the sick and injured are treated. The Abbey's Infirmarian, Phillip, sleeps in this building with his assistant, Léontine. Following common practice, the Infirmary is separate from the main compound to avoid the spread of "ill humors."

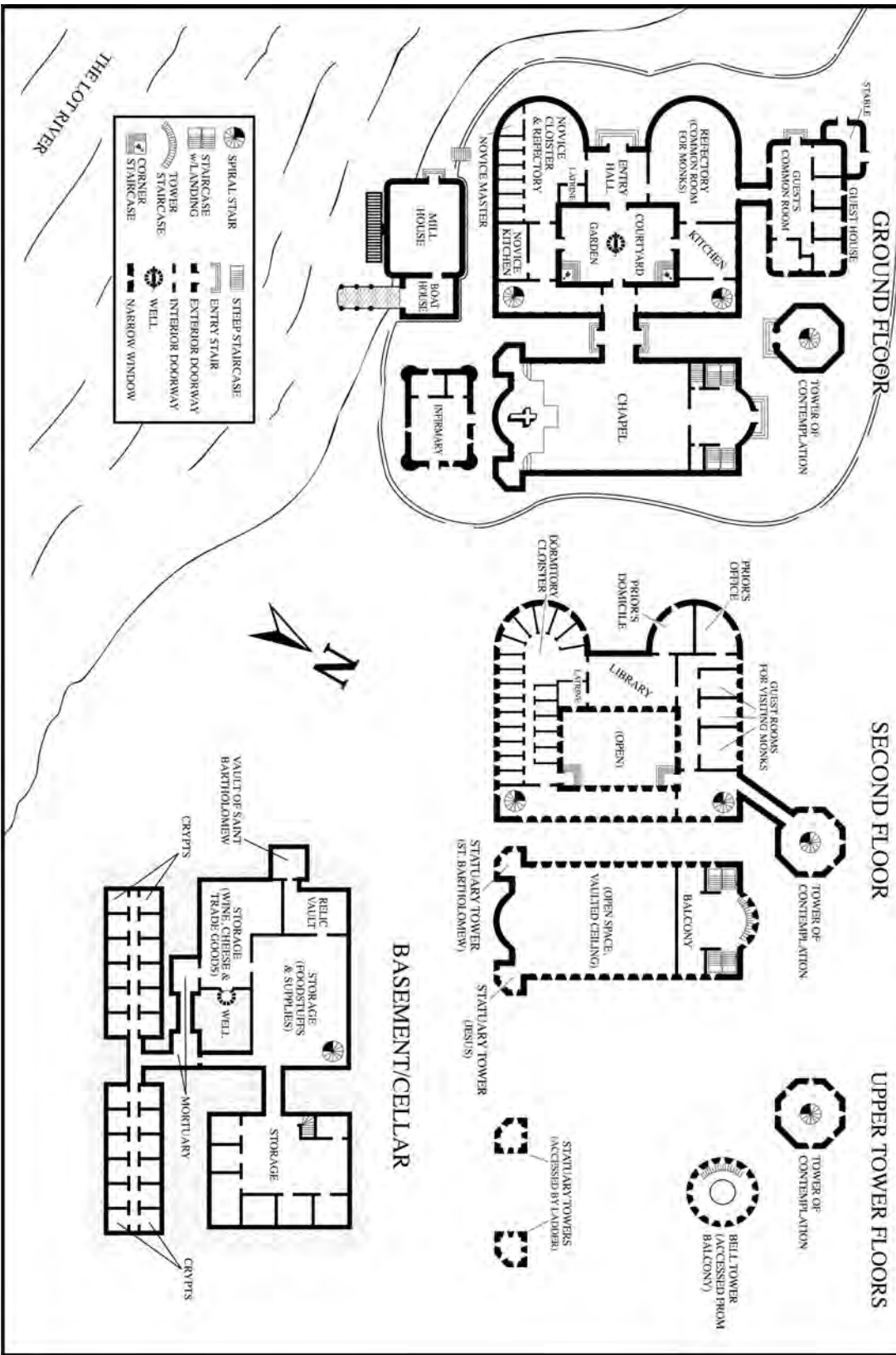
**CHAPEL:** This building is the crowning achievement of Saint Bartholomew's Abbey, requiring 39 years to build (891-930). Construction of the Chapel's bell tower began in the year 950 AD, and was only completed three years ago. The north-western end of the Chapel is open to the public during services, while the south-eastern end contains the "choir" (an area reserved to monks and novices only). The Chapel is quite beautiful, with a simple vaulted ceiling. At the far end of the Chapel, past the alter platform, are the Statuary Towers. The northernmost tower contains a statue of Jesus the Savior, while the southern tower contains a statue of the Abbey's patron saint, Bartholomew. These statues were crafted by brother Nathaniel in 936, and were completed only two years before his death in 941. Nathaniel was considered by many to have been a master artisan, though almost all of his work was for the Abbey.

## SECOND FLOOR

**DORMITORY CLOISTER:** Within this area the monks of the Abbey take their rest in solitude. When originally built, the Dormitory was designed to hold twenty monks, with each monk assigned his own cubicle. The rapid growth of the Abbey in the previous century forced the sharing of cubicles, a practice which continues to this day. Numbers have been on the decline for the last 40 years, however, so



# Saint Bartholomew's Abbey



some of the senior brothers are again allowed their own cubicle. At present, there are 28 Benedictine brethren residing in the Dormitory.

**LIBRARY:** Here are stored the collected or copied works of the Abbey. The collection is fairly extensive in comparison to other contemporary monasteries, and the site has gained some modest fame amongst scholars for this reason. The contents of the room are under the charge of Brother Nicolas, who holds the unofficial title of Librarian. A few of the oldest tomes are kept in a locked case, away from prying eyes. If asked about this by curious visitors, Nicholas simply informs them that the books therein are too old and fragile for idle handling by those outside the Abbey (see MYTHOS AND OCCULT TOMES).

**PRIOR'S OFFICE & DOMICILE:** Within his office, Prior Basile and his Sub-Prior, Theuderic, conduct the day-to-day business of running the Abbey. Though larger than the space allocated to most monks, Prior Basile's quarters are simple and have no exceptional decor. The Sub-Prior typically spends the night with the other monks in the Dormitory.

**GUEST ROOMS:** These rooms are reserved for guests of the Abbey who have taken vows (the vows of a Christian monk or priest). Such status allows them to take their rest within the Abbey proper. Guests who have not taken formal vows normally stay in the Guest House or the Infirmary. When not in use, these rooms are sometimes used for short-term storage.

**THE TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION:** The second floor of the tower is used by the monks of the Abbey as a scriptorium (a place for copying texts), as well as a place for study and contemplation. There are a number of desks and several kneeling benches for contemplative prayer.

**THE CHAPEL BALCONY:** This section of the Chapel is reserved for guests of distinction (nobles, Church officials, etc.). As such, it sees

few visitors (Alphonse, lord of the neighboring town of Vallés, only attends on special occasions). Nevertheless, it is kept in excellent repair by the monks of the Abbey. Stairs along the wall on this level lead to the bell tower. The ropes from the tower hang down to the balcony level, allowing the bell-ringer to sound the bells without ascending the tower.

## UPPER TOWER FLOORS

**THE TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION:** The uppermost floor (just below the "battlements" at the top of the tower) is the domicile of the Abbey's aged librarian, Nicolas. His room is mostly filled with books and scrolls, and usually is kept in quite a clutter. The battlements above this (accessible by ladder) are open to the elements, with a gorgeous view of the surrounding area. It is said that on certain nights one can see much farther from the tower-top than is natural.

**THE CHAPEL BELL TOWER:** This level holds the bells of the Chapel, and is normally only accessed for maintenance and repair (the bells are rung using the ropes on the Chapel Balcony). There are two bells: The greater bell and the lesser bell. The lesser bell is rung a number of times each day to call the brethren to church prayer. The greater bell is rung to call the faithful to Sunday mass, and to commemorate holy days or events of religious significance. In the event of an invasion or other threat to the people of the region, both bells can be rung in tandem to sound the alarm.

**STATUARY TOWERS:** These towers rise nearly to the same height as the Tower of Contemplation (the tallest structure in the Abbey). While the two statues at the base of the towers face into the Chapel, two larger statues look outward from the Chapel at its uppermost level. Like their smaller counterparts below, the southern statue is of Saint Bartholomew, while the northern one is of Jesus. Both are the work of Brother Nathaniel.

The two upper statues are earlier works. They lack the detailing of the lower statues, since they were only intended to be viewed from the ground below. Access to the upper statue level is only possible via a narrow ladder that ascends each of the towers from the ground floor.

## THE CELLARS

**THE ABBEY STORAGE ROOMS:** The monks of the Abbey store food and supplies in the largest room of the Abbey Cellars. The farther room is used to store the cheese, grain and wine intended for trade. These rooms and their contents are under the strict control of the Abbey's Cellarer, Brother Childeric.

**THE CHAPEL STORAGE ROOMS:** The storage rooms under the Chapel contain various items important to the sacraments of mass. As such, they are under the charge of Brother Arnaud, the Abbey's Sacrist.

**THE RELIC VAULT:** This locked vault contains the minor relics and holy objects of the Abbey. Few outsiders are allowed to enter this room, and it is kept locked at all times.

**THE VAULT OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW:** Within this locked and guarded vault resides the great relic of the Abbey's patron. The Vault of Saint Bartholomew is always guarded by at least one monk.

**MORTUARIES:** These two rooms are where the Abbey's dead are prepared for burial. Each of the dark rooms contain two tables for mortuary preparations and shelves filled with various mortuary tools

**CRYPTS:** Within these vaults lie the remains of the monks of the Abbey. All brethren of the Abbey, from L'épine de Dieu onward, are laid to rest here. The bitter cold of the region makes burial difficult, so the crypts were built even before the fortress officially became a monastery. The mortal remains of Lord Palos are the only remains kept within the Crypts that are not those of monks. Following the tra-

dition set by Palos and L'épine, no remains are given any special treatment or place of honor within the Crypt. "All are equal under the eyes of God."

## MYTHOS & OCCULT TOMES

The Abbey of Saint Bartholomew provides an excellent retreat for scholars and collectors of rare texts, as it is one of the few monasteries of the era to possess a full library. Some of the volumes stored therein are quite old, and some contain dangerous knowledge. These tomes are stored in a locked case in the library, to which only brother Nicholas has the key.

**IMPERMISSUS SYLLABA** -- "Forbidden Verse." *In Latin, Collected by Marcus Petronius, 440 AD.* Collection of horrific tales in metered verse. Pages are loosely bound. Translated from the earlier works of various authors. Most copies lost in the sack of Rome [455 AD]. Two copies known to still exist. *Sanity loss 0/1D2, Occult +2 percentiles, Cthulhu Mythos +1 percentile, average of two weeks to study and comprehend.* Spells: none.

**IL DIARIO DI MARTIN DI FRATELLO** -- "The Journal of Brother Martin." *In Italian, by Brother Martin [Benedictine Order], 703 AD.* Simple leather-bound journal. Details the author's journey to a mysterious mountain in a distant eastern land. Unique work; no copies known to exist. *No sanity loss, Occult +3 percentiles, average of one week to study and comprehend.* Spells: none.

**SECRET DU ROYAUME D'ESPRIT ET AU DELÀ DE** -- "Secrets of the Spirit Realm and Beyond." *In French, by Chlodomer de Minot, 775 AD.* Bound in dark leather of unknown origin. Unique work; no copies known to exist. *Sanity loss 0/1D3, Occult +3, Cthulhu Mythos +1 per-*

centiles, average of three weeks to study and comprehend. Spells: none.

Locked within the Abbey's relic vault, in the dark cellars below the monastery, are the most dread works in the possession of the Brothers of Saint Bartholomew's. These works consist of three ancient scrolls, stored in the relic vault to keep them from the hands of those who might abuse the knowledge they contain. A secondary reason for storing the scrolls in such a secure location is to avoid the prying eyes of the Vatican (which might confiscate them for the good of the Church). Brother Nicolas believes that these scrolls could prove a vital key to translating the inscription upon the Relic of Saint Bartholomew, and for this reason the brothers of the Abbey have risked the wrath of the Papacy to conceal it. Brother Humbert is aware of presence of the scrolls, and is party to the effort to conceal them (which may explain why he spends his nights in the cellar).

UNTITLED SCROLLS OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW -- *In Aramaic, author unknown, date of writing unknown [1st century AD?]. Three Scrolls, preserved in slender cases of bone, no markings. First two scrolls tell of visions experienced by Saint Bartholomew (the apostle Nathaniel) in the weeks prior to his death, third scroll is an account of his execution and efforts by his loyal followers to preserve the Relic of Saint Bartholomew. Sanity Loss 1D4/1D10, Cthulhu Mythos +10 percentiles, average of 12 weeks to study and comprehend. Spells: Deflect Harm, Unmask Demon, Healing.*

In the guest room occupied by the poet Paule le Noir, at the mansion of Lord Alphonse de Vallés, is the original copy of Paule's collected works. This collection as a whole is considerably more sinister than each work is individually, providing dark insights to the reader.

COLLECTED POEMS OF PAULE LE NOIR - *In French and Latin, by Paule le Noir, 948 AD to present. Written on vellum sheets, roughly*

*bound within a wood and cloth cover. Sanity loss 1/1d4, Cthulhu Mythos +4 percentiles, average of one week to study and comprehend.*

## THE VILLAGE OF VALLÉS

About three quarters of a mile from the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew, within a small but fertile river valley, lies the village of Vallés. The people of the village are mostly farmers, though there are a number of sheep herders that call the surrounding region home. Vallés is the main trading partner with the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew, though the merchants of Mende trade heavily with both.

Vallés is small, having a population of somewhere around 200 souls (perhaps 300 if one counts the neighboring sheep herders). There is a small mercantile, run by Mathis, a merchant from Mende. Sébastien the Baker keeps a small shop toward the center of town, and Lucas the Smith runs a smithy behind his home on the outskirts of the village.

Because of its proximity to Saint Bartholomew's, the folk of Vallés attend mass at the Abbey's Chapel. The village has no priest of it's own, and relies on the Abbey to provide this service.

## PLOT IDEAS

- **HUNTING FOR EMELINE:** The player characters are hired by Mathis, the merchant of Vallés, to locate and capture the young wild woman Emeline for her own good (see **NOTABLE CHARACTERS**). In actuality, he strongly suspects that the girl is his daughter from a dalliance he once had with her mother many years ago. His conscience has become more than he can bear.

What neither the brothers of the Abbey nor the townsfolk of Vallés know is that Emeline spent the first years after her disappearance in the realm of dreams (she calls the place the Faerie Realm, as her mother raised

her on such folklore). But in the last four years, the dreamlands have become more of a nightmare for her than a place of safety. A terrible creature has darkened her pleasant dream-world, and slain many of her magical friends. She has returned to the waking world in a desperate quest to find a way to stop the evil creature of her dreams. It will be up to the player characters to uncover her secrets and save her from the perilous entity that stalks her. In the process, they may well discover her mother's murderer as well.

- **MURDER MOST FOUL:** A visiting official of the Church is found dead in the courtyard. Lothaire, the mysterious grounds keeper, is accused of the murder (he is found hunched over the body, with the murder weapon in his hand). Basile approaches the player characters and asks them to prove Lothaire innocent. This should prove more and more difficult, as Lothaire's past comes back to haunt him.

It seems that Lothaire (See **NOTABLE CHARACTERS**) has killed officials of the Church before. Many years ago, a priest stayed for a time at Saint Bartholomew's. Before long, he began to have an unnatural influence upon the brothers of the Abbey. All of them fell under his spell, except for poor Lothaire, who was at the time a lowly novice. The details are hazy, but when all was done, Lothaire had slain the sorcerous priest and freed his brethren. But the Order refused to accept his story of sorcery, and insisted that he be tried for murder. Fortunately, he was tried by his own brothers at the Abbey. They could not find him innocent, for no proof remained. Instead, he was cast out of the order and excommunicated. A fate which, to him, was worse than death. Now he stands charged with murder yet again. And this time he will not be able to avoid the headsmen's axe if he is found guilty.

- **MYSTERIOUS LIAISON:** Who is it that young Thibault visits almost every day in the direction of the Abbey? (See **NOTABLE CHARACTERS**) The mystery deepens even

further when the player characters are approached by a village girl claiming to be his lover. But she has no more idea where he goes than do they. She tearfully pleads with them to search out the truth, for she fears he has fallen under some sort of spell. The young man does, indeed, seem unnaturally preoccupied.

What lies in wait for the unsuspecting investigators is a terrible revenant that haunts the nearby woods. A revenant possesses the features of the wise woman Brunhild, who was killed in a dreadful fashion in those woods long ago. It is this revenant which has bespelled young Thibault. But is the creature truly a vengeful spirit, or something even more foul? The player characters must uncover the truth if they are to save the village of Vallés.

- **THE CURSED ORE:** Grimoald, village overseer of Vallés, approaches the player group with a problem. It seems that a strange sickness has been striking the people of the town lately, causing lethargy and listlessness in adults, and extreme fever and death in some of the children. Grimoald wishes to hire the player characters to find out the cause for this dreaded illness (which he feels is more curse than sickness). If questioned, a number of the townfolk report having experienced strange dreams of a hideous and terrifying pillar of sickly green flame.

The illness has unknowingly been spread by Lucas the smith. He recently acquired some iron ore, at a very good price, from a passing merchant. Unfortunately, the ore is from a cursed cave in the Cévennes, where the twisted followers of Tulscha worshipped their malevolent god long ago. The ore has now been tainted with the essence of the outer god Tulscha. If enough children are consumed by this taint, then Tulscha will be summoned, and will undoubtedly lay waste to the land. Long before this, the curse will cause strange and unnatural things to occur: plants and crops will become twisted and misshapen, a pale green mist will haunt the night, and eventually, the

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MEDIEVAL MONK

The life of a medieval monk was harsh and uncomfortable. They lived in communal dormitories, or in single bare cells, which were hot in summer and freezing in winter. Between praying up to seven times a day and working, a monk got little sleep, averaging approximately five to six hours of sleep a day if all went well.

The importance of penance led to a culture of self-mortification where monks performed rituals designed to test their faith and endurance, and to show how humble they were before their God. These included fasting, manual labor and could include sleeping on hard benches or stone slabs without any blankets. Medieval monks were intent on purging their sins and proving their faith, which is why penance played such a large role in their lives.

As with many of a monk's daily activities, meals were a solitary and silent affair, not to mention infrequent. Some monasteries only allowed one meal a day during the wintertime and two in the summertime. (Saint Bartholomew's allows two simple meals a day, except during Lent, a time of fasting leading up to Easter). In most monasteries monks were not allowed to talk during mealtimes, instead developing a sophisticated sign language to compensate. Their main foodstuffs included vegetables such as turnips or salad, simple breads, porridges, an occasional fish, cheese curds, beer, ale, mead or wine. Essentially, whatever was most plentiful at the time. As a rule, monks did not eat meat except if they were ill and on special occasions (meat was believed to have curative powers, and was reserved for those who fell ill).

Mass and the worship of God formed the heart of a monk's life. Communal

prayers averaged about five hours per day, while private prayer and contemplation could take up to four further hours. A monk's day began with the ringing of bells, some time between midnight and two a.m., signaling the first prayers of the day, which included hymns, psalms and readings. After a short nap, prayers were again held at sunrise, and then at three-hour intervals throughout the day.

The 6 AM prayers were called Prime. Around 11:45 AM the monks would conduct the Chapter Mass, which is similar to the Catholic service of today. In the early evenings the friars chanted Vespers in the monastery chapel. As each psalm came to an end they stood up and bowed in praise of God. On Sundays the Psalms were sung in one or other of the eight plain chant modes.

If anyone was late and missed processing with the other monks, he would have to come in alone to the chapel and stretch himself out on the floor in the middle of the choir, as a sign of apology for being late. When the sub-prior gave a signal, the late-comer was allowed to rise and go to his place.

Alongside the official liturgy, private prayer, especially mental prayer, always held an important place, with the monks spending many hours in personal contemplation of God and their faith.

Once every one or two weeks, depending upon the traditions of the monastery, the monks would be ritually bled by the Infirmarian or his assistant. This, it was believed, cleansed the body of the "ill humors" which caused sickness and corrupted the soul. Laden as it was with unpleasant influences, the resulting blood was disposed of a good ways outside, where it could not corrupt the sanctified grounds of the monastery proper.

dead children will rise from the grave. The only way to stop this terrible sequence of events is for the player characters to collect all of the tools and objects that Lucas has repaired or made using the ore. These items, along with the remainder of the tainted ore, must be buried deep under the ground so that their unnatural aura can do no more harm.

## Introduction to 10th Century France

In the tenth century, France (or West Francia as it would more properly be called) was a chaotic and dangerous place. Throughout most of the country, Lothar the King of France rules in name only. Powerful dukes rule parts of the realm as virtual monarchs in their own right. The wealthy and powerful Duke of Aquitaine, for example, rules considerably more of France than the French King. In other regions of the realm, lawlessness prevails, and robber barons have risen up to run their small fiefs with little or no loyalty or obedience to the crown.

Even the Church is not immune to this chaos; local bishops and rival claimants are in constant dispute, often completely ignoring edicts from the Vatican. Many Church leaders in France simply pursue their own agendas.

In this dark and terrible setting, many adventures await. It is a time of unsettling discord and unrest. These troubled times make France a perfect setting for a dark campaign of Cthulhu: Dark Ages™. Few are the places of safety and solace. Evil stalks the land in many guises, and a cruel death awaits the unfortunate at every turn. Between the many plagues that ravage the land, the cruel and heartless lords of the region, the brigands that harass nearly every road and route, the constant threat of invasion, and countless other perils; there is little hope left to the battered people of France. But hope can spark in the most unlikely of places, and perhaps there are yet in this land a daring few willing to fight the tide of evil that stalks the land.

## THE GREAT FEAR

Underlying this time of tribulation throughout France is a terrible fear. A fear that seeps like a dread poison into the collective consciousness of French Christendom. As the year 1,000 A.D.

### TIMETABLE OF A TYPICAL MONK'S DAY

01.45 AM - Wake up  
02.00 AM - Church Service  
03.30 AM - Sleep  
04.00 AM - Church Service  
05.00 AM - Private reading and prayer  
06.00 AM - Church service then breakfast  
07.00 AM - Work  
08.00 AM - Church Service  
09.15 AM - Work  
11.45 AM - Church Service

12.00 PM - Midday Meal  
01.00 PM - Private reading and prayer  
01.45 PM - Sleep  
02.45 PM - Sleep  
03.00 PM - Work  
05.45 PM - Meal  
06.00 PM - Church service  
07.15 PM - Private reading and prayer  
07.45 PM - Church service  
08.00 PM - Bed and sleep

marches inexorably closer, the thousand years predicted in biblical writings are about to come to an end. And with that ending, it is thought, Lucifer and his legions will be released from their hellish prison to stalk the land. The apocalypse is close at hand, and scholars and Church leaders mark the calendar with a sense of foreboding.

Nowhere else has this great fear found a home in the hearts of men as it has in France. For nowhere else are there such clear signs of the final days. Chaos and evil run rampant and unchecked throughout the realm. Clearly the Devil and his servants are already at work. The portents are clear. While few speak of this fear in the open, it has given rise to a host of underground cults and secret orders preparing for the final days.

There are sinister rumors regarding some of these cults. Many may well have fallen under the sway of far older and more nefarious orders. Who leads these mysterious elder orders is unknown, but their subtle influence over the newer millennial groups appears to be growing. An ill-favored wind blows through France, and it may yet herald the coming of something far worse than the Devil.

## THE RISE OF THE FRANKS

The Germanic people known as the Franks originally inhabited the lands at the mouths of the Rhine and the Scheldt rivers. In the fourth century, they were granted “federati” status under the Roman Empire. This meant that, while they maintained some of their independence, they had ultimately become a part of the Empire. Under the terms of this status, they were allowed to settle into the lands south of the Rhine (in an area which is now the Netherlands and northern Belgium).

After the fall of the empire, the Franks began to slowly expand outside the lands granted to them under the Roman Empire. In 481 AD, a young Frankish Chieftain named Clovis consolidated the Franks under his rule through a shrewd policy of murder and intimidation, and established the Merovian dynasty (named after Clovis’ grandfather Merovech), which would rule Frankish lands for around three centuries.

In 496 AD, while preparing for battle with the Burgundii and their pagan Germanic allies, Clovis found himself in a military situation in which defeat was more than possible. Always a shrewd and calculating man, Clovis had himself Baptized in order to obtain the assistance of Rome and make himself a more palatable ruler in this mostly Christian region. It worked, and as the first of the Germanic Kings to adopt Christianity, he founded an alliance between the Franks and the Catholic Church which would last for many centuries.

Over the intervening centuries, the Franks would continue to expand their rule over more and more of the old Roman Empire, and even beyond. Over time, the Merovian line became decadent and weak. The true power came to be held by the noble who held the title of “Mayor of the Palace.” Such a man was Charles Martel. When the Muslim Saracens from Gaul threatened, it was Charles who broke the Saracen army in 733 AD and added Aquitaine to the Frankish lands. His son, Pepin “the short,” was declared King of the Franks. Pepin’s son, Charlemagne, would become the most famous King in all of Europe when he forged an empire that rivaled that of ancient Rome (see THE CAROLINGIAN ROYAL LINE). In so doing, he would also establish the institution of the Holy Roman Empire.

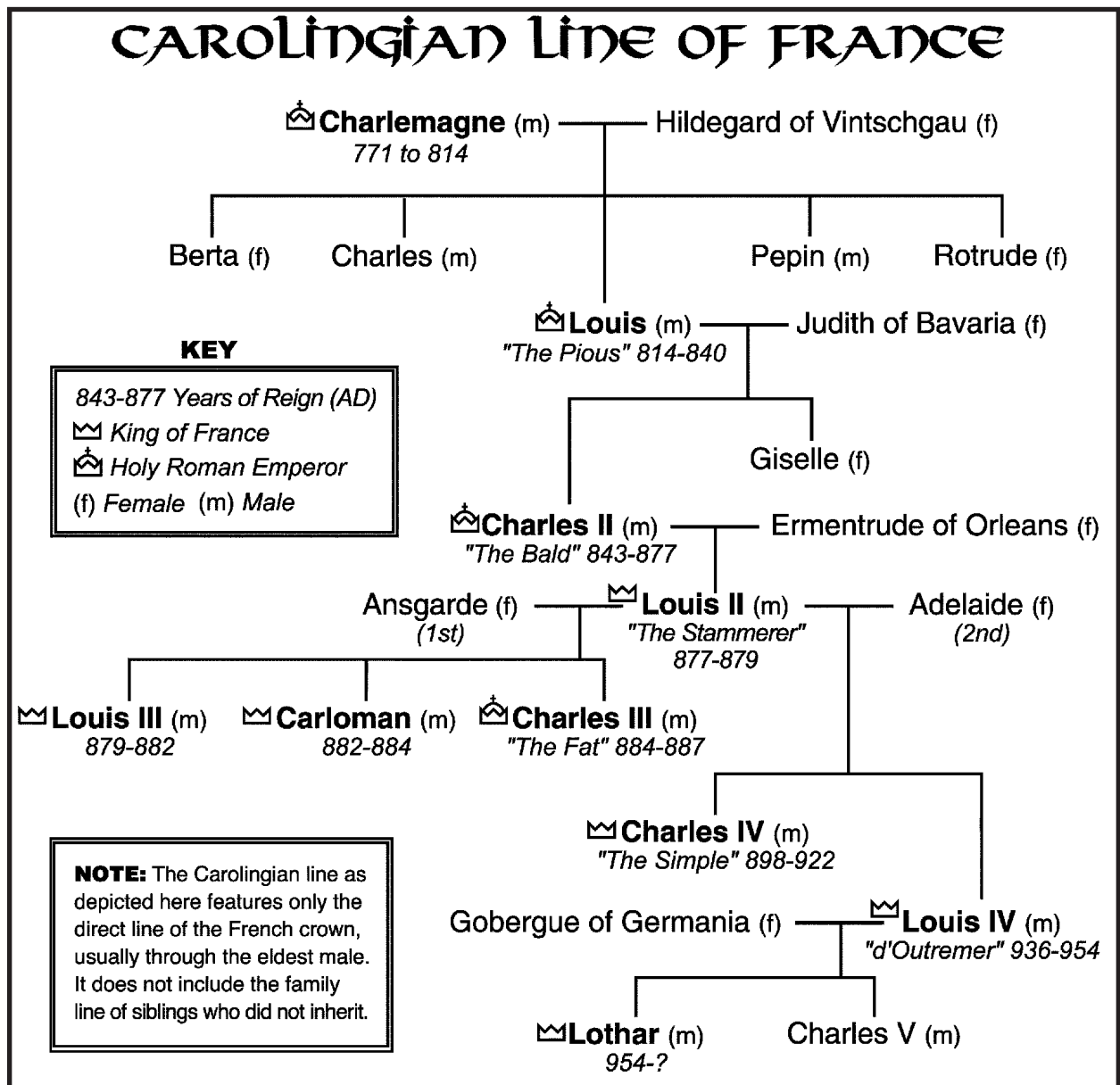


# THE CAROLINGIAN ROYAL LINE

In the late eighth century, there arose such a king as the western world had never seen. Christened "Charles," and called by many "Charles de Magne" (Charles the Great), he would go on to conquer an empire that extended across the breadth of the old Western Roman Empire and beyond. On Christmas Day, in the year 800 AD, Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope as "Charles Augustus, Emperor of

the Holy Roman Empire." Those were heady days for the Franks, particularly for the Carolingian line to which Charles belonged.

Alas, such greatness could not last. Subsequent generations would tear down the great empire that Charlemagne built. His sole surviving son at the time of his death, Louis, would hold his realm together for a time. But with the unfortunate practice of Frankish Kings to partition their domain amongst their sons, Charlemagne's hard won empire was eventually parcelled out and broken up. Over time, the Frankish tradition of partitioning was replaced



with that of primogeniture, where only the eldest son inherits. This change helped hold together the remnants of Charlemagne's empire, and laid the foundations for the feudal system.

The current Carolingian descendant of Charlemagne, Lothar, officially holds title to all of the lands of West Francia (France). His rule is in title only, however, as the nobles and lords of France pay little heed to his authority.

## THE LANDS OF FRANCE

The following section is intended to provide some details on the regions of France in the 10th century. Owing to space considerations, not all provinces could be fully detailed. The region descriptions that follow have concentrated mostly on the areas important to adventure setting included in this publication. Future publications will likely add detail to other regions.

### ROYAL DOMAINS

These are the lands under the direct rule of Lothar, King of France. Since these are some of the wealthiest lands in France, they provide the King with a semblance of the wealth and power which is his due. They are small, however, in comparison to the land area of other counties. The Royal Domains are the sole lands in France that support the King's authority completely, and in all things.

The Royal Domains hold a number of estates, forts and castles for the King's personal use, as well as many excellent hunting preserves (the penalty for hunting in these preserves without the King's leave is grave indeed). Unlike the rest of France, the King's domains are well patrolled, and the lawlessness of other regions of the country is not tolerated.

The capitol of the Royal Domains is Paris, a bustling, busy city with a great deal of history. William, Archbishop of Paris, is a close ally and

friend to King Lothar, and often embroils his diocese in efforts to advance the King's cause.

### LOYAL FIEFS OF THE CROWN

While much of the French nobility ignores the authority of King Lothar, there are some regions that still hold themselves bound to him in fealty. These counties, mostly in northern France, would obey a call to arms by the King. Their loyalty in other matters, however, is questionable.

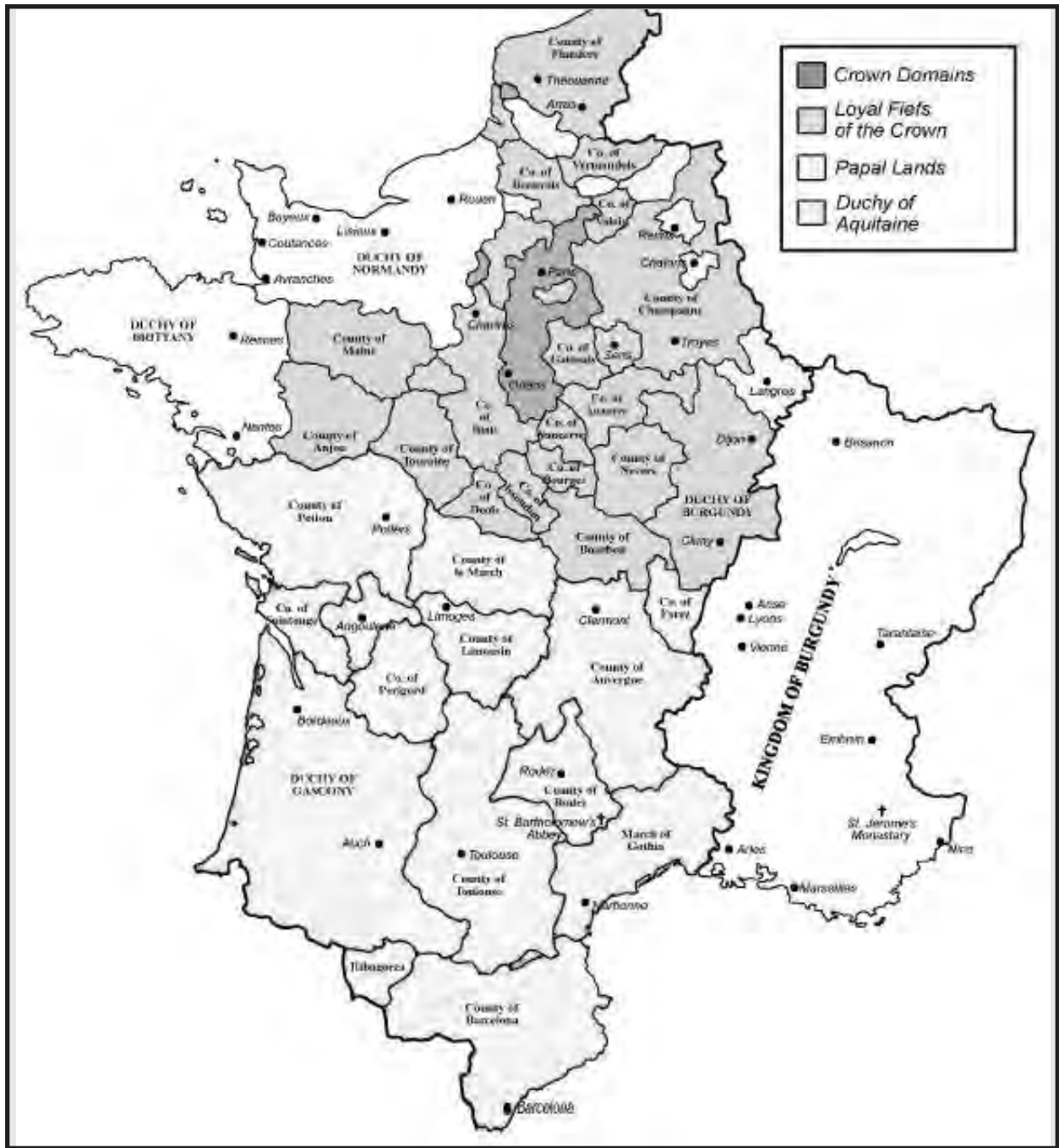
### PAPAL LANDS

Dominion over these lands belongs to the Papacy in Rome. In a tradition that will continue for some time, the Pope is the ostensible ruler of these regions. Each county is ruled in his name by a Bishop. In actual fact, these Bishops are often as loyal to the Pope as the southern lords are to the King of France. While they claim to hold authority from the Vatican, their edicts reflect their own desires more than those of the Pope or Mother Church.

For pagans, or Christians who hold to unorthodox beliefs, the Papal lands are not comfortable places to be. While pagan traditions still have a powerful hold on the people of France, in the Papal lands such traditions are followed only in deepest secrecy. There is little tolerance for those with beliefs outside those of the Church of Rome.

### DUCHY OF AQUITAINE

The most powerful duchy in all of France, Aquitaine stretches from Barcelona, at the southern-most tip of France, to the County of Poitou. By the middle of the tenth century it dominates over half of France. The counties of this region owe loyalty more to Duke William II, Count of Auvergne and Poitou than to Lothar, King of France. But the fealty of these counties to the Duke of Aquitaine is already growing fragile. The masterful structure of allegiances built by William's Grandfather is slowly coming unravelled. Southern France is showing



strong signs of following the example of the north and descending into anarchy.

Historically, the borders of Aquitaine are loosely based on the Roman province of Aquitania. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the region came to be ruled by the Visigoths in the 5th Century. In 507 AD, the Franks defeated the Visigoths and the region came under their rule. In the year 725 Aquitaine briefly fell to the muslim conquerors of Spain. The

Frankish leader Charles Martel (grandfather to Charlemagne) crushed these invaders in 733, and Aquitaine became part of the Carolingian empire. Over the course of the 9th century, the leading counts and other nobility freed themselves from royal control. Bernard Plantevelue, whose power was based in Auvergne, declared himself Duke of Aquitaine. By 962 AD his grandson William II holds the title, inheriting a shaky empire.

COUNTY OF AUVERGNE: This wealthy county is the seat of the Duchy of Aquitaine in the 10th century, which makes its lord, William II, the most powerful man in France. Even the power and authority of the French King pales in comparison.

By 962 AD, the County of Auvergne is a hotbed of occult activity. According to legend, the area was first settled in pre-Roman times by the Averones, a people who came from a far western land which sank beneath the sea. The Averones brought their own pagan gods and lore to their new home. By the time of the Roman Empire, the region was greatly feared due to the presence of the many cults that held power there. These cults heavily infiltrated the Frankish settlers that came later. In the intervening centuries the Church has attempted to harshly suppress these cults, but their efforts have proved largely unsuccessful. Though Auvergne has assumed the mantle of Christianity, it is often only skin deep. Witchcraft and the practice of strange pagan rituals continues. The power of the ancient cults of Auvergne is said to have spread to the ruling houses. Even some Church leaders are rumored to engage in dark and unnatural practices. The Vatican, far off in Rome, holds little actual authority in Auvergne.

The capitol of Auvergne is Clermont, the busy city from which Duke William II rules all

of Aquitaine. The city is filled with corruption and vice, and things fouler still. It is not a safe place for the unwary. The court of Duke William can be even more dangerous due to the never-ending intrigues and convoluted plotting of the ruling houses.

Clermont is also the seat of the Archdiocese of Auvergne, which is ruled by Archbishop Jérôme. Despite his elevated status, little detail is known about the Archbishop's past life. His appointment came directly from the Vatican, and it is said that he served a monastic order prior to assuming the mantle of Archbishop. His edicts have been few in the last decade, though those have been memorable for their harshness. There are rumors that, rather than clearing out the cults of Auvergne as was his holy charge, the Archbishop has fallen under their influence. Speaking such things aloud, however, can be quite dangerous.

COUNTY OF POITOU: The ancestral home of the current Duke of Aquitaine. It's capitol is the city of Poitiers. From 843-868, the region was the subject of a series of Norman invasions from which the people of Poitou are still recovering. The dislike and resentment of the Frankish locals for those of Norman decent is palpable. Visitors of such lineage have been known to mysteriously disappear without a trace.

## “FRENCH” IN THE TENTH CENTURY

For convenience's sake, the author of this publication has treated the language spoken in Western Francia as “French,” when in actual fact it resembled modern French about as much as Old English resembles Modern English (which is to say that it would be mostly incomprehensible to modern French speakers). As with many languages of the region, the Frankish spoken at

the time bore more similarity to other Germanic tongues, with some heavy Latin influences added, than it does to any modern language. The choice was made to refer to the language as “French” in order to allow modern players to draw a greater connection to an era which is already rife with sufficient differences to sow confusion. Likewise, and for the same reason, the realm which would be more properly termed the “West Francia,” is referred to throughout this publication by the more modern name of “France.”

The city of Poitiers is far smaller and less populous than Clermont. Duke William, however, is fond of the homeland of his youth, and the lords of Poitou have ever been his friends and allies. For this reason and little else, the noble houses of Poitiers have more power and respect than would otherwise be accorded them based on their wealth and station.

Bishop Vincent of Poitiers, a pious man, is an outspoken critic of the “dangerous heresies” rampant in Auvergne. In 944 he founded the Brotherhood of Saint Hilary expressly to counter pagan and occult influences. There are rumored to be close ties between Vincent, the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, and the Vatican. Lately some of the Bishop’s more exuberant followers have initiated a campaign to eradicate perceived footholds made by the cults of Auvergne into Poitou. Whether the existence of such cults in Poitou is real or not, the campaign to eradicate them is inarguably real. Many have been driven from their homes, and their properties confiscated. Far worse things are rumored to have occurred. The leaders of Auvergne have petitioned the Pope in Rome and Duke William to rein in the Bishop’s enthusiasm, but thus far both have ignored their entreaties (William likely considers the matter to be of insufficient importance to bother with, since most of his efforts are currently devoted to holding his fragile duchy together).

COUNTY OF RODEZ: Ruled by the young Hugues de Rodez. Hugues is not a particularly outstanding lord, but he is certainly less dangerous than most. He and his family have, for the most part, established some semblance of law and order (which is more than can be said for most regions of France). The major roads near population centers are regularly patrolled, allowing profitable trade with the neighboring counties of Auvergne, Toulouse and the March of Gothia, despite the disorder in those regions.

Roughly in the center of the county is the City of Rodez, from which Hugues rules his fief. The city is not incredibly sizeable, even by the

standards of the era. But the people of Rodez are better off than most in France, owing mostly to the trade routes and a Count who is wise enough to not tax them into oblivion.

In the south-eastern portion of Rodez sits the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew. This Benedictine monastery has earned some small amount of notoriety for an unusual relic of its patron saint, said to be in the possession of the monks there (a scrap of skin from Saint Bartholomew, rumored to have mystical powers). The authenticity of this relic is in question, as the Pope has yet to place the Vatican’s seal of approval upon it. Making the situation worse, the Bishop of St. Bartholomew-in-the-Island, near Rome, has strongly denied the legitimacy of the relic, claiming that all of Saint Bartholomew’s remains reside on the island. For this reason, the monk’s of Saint Bartholomew’s Abbey mostly keep the relic from public scrutiny.

Fifteen miles to the north of Saint Bartholomew’s Abbey is the city of Mende. Originally a Roman settlement, Mende is actually little more than a town. But as the seat of the Diocese of Rodez, it has considerable influence. The Bishop of Rodez is a odious and fat man by the name of Gausbert. It is said that he is very protective of his power and station, and adores pomp and ceremony. The Diocese has required assistance from the Count’s purse on a number of occasions because of his excesses.

## DUCHY OF BRITTANY

Little is known about the earliest settlers of this region. The only remnants of their civilization are the mysterious stone circles they left behind. Whoever they were, their culture was eventually overshadowed by that of the proud Celtic folk. The Romans conquered the region in 56 BC, and named it Armorica. In the fifth and sixth centuries AD, the Bretons (Romanized Celts from Britain) settled in the region, fleeing the Saxon invasion of their Island home. Breton culture and language eventually came to be dominant, and the title

of the region changed to Brittany (“Little Britain”).

The lords of Brittany struggled long to hold for themselves an independent Kingdom, but with their position on the doorstep of so many greater powers, this dream was all but impossible. For a brief time, this miracle actually came to pass when Nominoë, governor of Brittany under the Holy Roman Empire, revolted and successfully established an independent Kingdom in 846 AD. Unfortunately, the dream could not last. In the early part of the tenth century (907 AD), a massive Norman invasion broke the Breton lines and ravaged the region. The Kingdom of Brittany was undone, never to recover.

In 937 AD, Alain “the Short-Beard” defeated the Norman invaders in the name of the French Crown, and established the region as a semi-autonomous French Duchy. The traditional capitol of Brittany has always been in Rennes, but after his victory, Alain established a new capitol in Nantes. In 958, Conan of Rennes was established as Duke of Brittany, and the capitol reverted at that time to its old location. Nantes and Rennes, both wealthy trading cities, have developed sharp rivalries, and blood has been spilled on more than one occasion because of this. The counts of the south (with closer ties to the French Crown) are already pushing to have Hoël, count of Nantes, succeed Conan (which would move the capitol yet again).

The Breton folk of Brittany are a hardy people, and very proud of their traditions and history. Although Christianity is prevalent, many still follow the old ways. Owing to the fact that some of the nobles of Brittany remain defiantly pagan, the Archdiocese in Nantes, headed by Archbishop Mansuetus, must show at least some degree of tolerance.

## DUCHY OF NORMANDY

Normandy was formed in 911 AD out of the concession made by King Charles “the Simple,” of France, to the Viking Rollo. The Duchy is  
28 – Saint Bartholomew’s Abbey

ruled from the town of Rouen at the mouth of the Seine river. Between 911 AD and 933 AD, Rollo, and later his son William “Long Sword,” expanded the Norman dominion over the whole territory of Rouen. This expansion would turn into one of the most powerful principalities of the Kingdom of France.

Many Normans still retain the trappings of their pagan, Nordic past, despite being an ostensibly Christian realm. The Viking traditions still continue, and the occasional foray into other lands for the purpose of pillaging and looting still occurs.

With every able-bodied man a proud potential warrior, the folk of Normandy represent a potent military force, and a dangerous threat. The “Normandy problem” is ever on the mind of the French king, as well as those other nobles whose lands lie alongside its borders. In particular, the rulers of Brittany look upon Normandy with no small degree of trepidation, having been a victim of their Viking traditions in the past.

The current ruler of Normandy is Richard. Inheriting his title young in 942 AD, Richard was forced to fight for his position and title. For a time, King Louis IV of France and Hugh, Duke of the Franks and Count of Paris, held sway over the Duchy. Between 945 and 947, Richard managed to take back control of his father's land. In 960 he solidified an alliance with the Duke of the Franks by marrying Emma, Hugh's daughter.

The Archdiocese of Normandy is headed by Richard's brother, Robert, appointed by Richard himself over the objections of the Vatican and a number of local Bishops. As a result of his unorthodox appointment, the Archbishop is not well liked by his fellow leaders within the Church. It is likely that, were it not for the firm support of his brother, Richard, his edicts would mostly be ignored.

Richard's capitol at Rouen, though it has grown greatly since the time of Rollo, is still little more than a town by the standards of other more developed regions. Despite this, it is a

bustling community that retains many of its old Nordic traditions.

## THE KINGDOM OF BURGUNDY

Although independent of France by the tenth century, the Kingdom of Burgundy shares a significant cultural identity with the people of Western Francia. The language spoken in Burgundy is a dialect of that spoken in France (a person speaking French could be understood there in the same manner as a person speaking American English could be understood in England today).

Burgundy has a rich and colorful history. The area was originally settled in the fifth century AD by a Germanic people calling themselves the “Burgundii.” After a brief period of war with the Roman Empire, the Burgundii eventually became “federati” of the Empire, much as did the Franks before them. After the fall of the Empire, the Burgundii forged a Kingdom of their own, often referred to as the “Old Kingdom.” This first Kingdom of Burgundy lasted until the growing empire of the Franks overwhelmed it. Under the Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne, the region became a province of the Frankish Empire. During this period, the culture and language of the original Burgundii were largely supplanted by that of the Franks. Only the name of the region remains as a link to the original people of the land.

As the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne was broken up, and the lands parcelled out amongst the King’s sons, the realm of Burgundy came to be ruled by a separate Carolingian line from that which ruled France. Further division resulted in the northern portion of Burgundy being ceded to the King of France as a Duchy. Despite this separation, the southern portion of Burgundy retains its independence.

The current King of Burgundy is Conrad “The Peaceful,” whose capitol is in the city of Arles. This fabulous city is rich with history, and controls a highly profitable eastern trade route to Italy and beyond. The Kingdom of

Burgundy has been spared the misfortune of most of the Viking raids that have plagued the rest of developing Europe, and the nobility and merchant houses of Arles have become fat with wealth and prosperity (as might be imagined, little of this prosperity has been passed on to the common folk). Those in power in the Kingdom of Burgundy are only now beginning to use their wealth and power to exercise influence outside their realm.

The Archdiocese of Arles has been vacant for the last year, awaiting the selection of a new Archbishop after the death of Martin “The Just.” Bishop Jean Baussan, head of the Diocese of Marseilles, seems the most likely candidate, though his appointment is being mysteriously and quietly resisted by some within the ruling aristocracy. Earlier in the year, Jean arrived in Arles to “clarify the rule of the Archdiocese,” and he has been effectively running it since that time (with the tacit support of Conrad). There are rumors that his life has been threatened, and that attempts on his life may well have already been made. Such rumors have been quickly put down by the office of the Archbishopric.

## COMMON NAMES OF WEST FRANCIA

While most english speakers know a number of Anglo-Saxon names, and some might even know a few foreign ones, these names are often inappropriate for characters in the Dark Ages. The names commonly used in that era, particularly in France, were often quite different than those used today.

One difference of particular note is the modern tradition of surnames. While those of us in modern times take surnames for granted, it wasn’t always so. In the Dark Ages, many people had only one name. To differentiate them from others of the same name, they might

be called by their profession (e.g., “Justin the Smith” or “Evrard the Merchant”), or they might be associated with the name of their father (e.g., “Evrard, son of Leon”). Others might gain notoriety for a particular trait or feature and gain a moniker such as “Gérald le Valiant” (Gerald the Valiant) or “Marcel la Barbe Rouge” (Marcel Red Beard). Those of higher station would be associated with the domain they ruled, such as “Edward de Hautville” (Edward of Hightown). In later times, these noble surnames would become a carefully protected prerogative of the head of the House, even if the original locale that the name was based on no longer existed.

Another modernism that mostly did not exist in the Dark Ages is the tradition of shortening names (e.g., Robert becomes “Bob,” Richard becomes “Rick,” Edward becomes “Ed,” etc.). If you called someone “Liz” instead of Elisabeth, she and her family would likely consider it an insult.

As opposed to having a host of characters running about in the Dark Ages with modern names, a much fuller role-playing experience can be had with properly historical names. A host of such names exists in various lists and history books, and a little research can really flesh a character out.

The name lists that follow are provided to aid players in quickly choosing culturally appropriate names for their characters. For those who like to go that extra mile for period flavor, a little research on the derivations of a chosen name can yield very interesting results. That said, enjoyment of your character is the most important criteria. Use these lists to get a feel for the kind of names that might be appropriate for the period, but don’t feel bound by them. Don’t worry overly much about pronunciation or spelling (such things are often matters of conjecture in any case). Use the name that takes your fancy in whatever manner you wish.

The names that follow are categorized by culture, rather than by locale. This is due to the fact that there was a great deal of cross-border

settlement going on at the time (often at the point of a sword), and borders tended to be a much looser affairs than they are today. A character could easily be born in Brittany, for example, and yet be culturally of Norman or Frankish decent. In parenthesis to the right of each culture are the actual locales in which that culture is dominant.

**WESTERN FRANKS** (France, Burgundy): France and Burgundy share enough common history that, even though in 962 they are separate countries, their cultures are very similar. Because of this shared Frankish history, the two realms share a similar language, which includes names. The name of someone born in Burgundy would likely be familiar to people in Anjou, France, though their pronunciations would differ.

Male Names: Aimon, Amis, Amyon, Andre, Aurel, Beaudonnier, Begon, Begue, Bernier, Brunehaut, Charles, Childeric, Clovis, Doolin, Elie, Eustache, Evariste, Evrard, Fabien, Fabrice, Felicien, Felix, Ferdinand, Fernand, Fiacre, Fierbras, Firmin, Florentin, Florian, Franck, Francois, Frederic, Gabriel, Gaetan, Gaspard, Gaston, Gautier, Geoffroi, Georges, Gerald, Gerard, Geraud, Germain, Gervais, Ghislain, Gilbert, Gilles, Godelieve, Gratien, Gregoire, Guillaume, Gustave, Guibert, Guy, Harde, Hector, Henri, Herbert, Hercule, Herve, Hilaire, Hippolyte, Honore, Horace, Hubert, Hugues, Humbert, Ignace, Irene, Isore, Isidore, Jacques, Jean, Jean-Marc, Jeannot, Jeremie, Jerome, Joachim, Joel, Joseph, Josue, Jourdain, Jules, Julien, Juste, Justin, Lambert, Laurent, Lazare, Leandre, Leon, Leonard, Leonce, Leopold, Lionel, Lothaire, Louis, Loup, Luc, Lucas, Lucien, Marc, Marcel, Marin, Marius, Martin, Mathieu, Mathis, Matthieu, Maurice, Maxime, Maximilien, Michel, Milon, Modeste, Modestine, Narcisse, Nazaire, Nicholas, Nicodeme, Nicolas, Noe, Noel, Odilon, Olivier, Onesime, Papillion, Pascal, Paschal, Patrice, Patrick, Paul, Pepin, Perceval, Philbert, Philibert, Philippe, Pierre,



Pons, Prosper, Quentin, Raimon, Rainier, Raoul, Raphael, Raphael, Regis, Remi, Remy, Renard, Renaud, Rene, Reynaud, Richard, Robert, Roch, Rodolph, Rodolphe, Rodrigue, Roger, Roland, Romain, Samuel, Sebastien, Serge, Severin, Simon, Stephane, Sylvain, Sylvestre, Telesphore, Theo, Theodore, Theophile, Thibault, Thierry, Thomas, Timothee, Toussaint, Tristan, Turpin, Ulrich, Urbain, Valentin, Valere, Valery, Vespasien, Victor, Vincent, Vivien, Xavier, Yves, Zacharie.

Female Names: Adeline, Agnes, Alais, Alicia, Alienor, Ameline, Aude, Basina, Beatrix, Belle, Brunissent, Catherine, Cecilia, Clarissa, Clotilda, Elisabeth, Eulalie, Eve, Evette, Fabienne, Fabiola, Faustine, Felicie, Felicienne, Fernande, Flavie, Florence, Florette, Florianne, Francine, Francoise, Frederique, Gabrielle, Gaetane, Genevieve, Georgette, Georgine, Germaine, Gervaise, Ghislaine, Gigi, Gisele, Helene, Heloise, Henriette, Hermine, Hippolyte, Honorine, Hortense, Hyacinthe, Ines, Irene, Irene, Isabel, Isabelle, Jacinthe, Jacqueline, Jeanine, Jeanne, Jeannette, Jeannine, Joceline, Joelle, Jolie, Josee, Josephine, Josette, Josiane, Judith, Juliane, Julie, Julienne, Juliette, Justine, Laure, Laurence, Laurentine, Laurette, Lea, Leonie, Leonne, Leontine, Liane, Lisette, Louise, Luce, Lucie, Lucienne, Lucile, Lucille, Lucinde, Lucrece, Lunete, Lydie, Madeleine, Madeline, Marceline, Marcelle, Marcellette, Marcelline, Margot, Marguerite, Marianne, Marie, Marielle, Mariette, Marine, Marise, Marthe, Martine, Mathilde, Melanie, Melissa, Michele, Micheline, Michelle, Mignon, Mirabel, Mireille, Monique, Morgaine, Morgane, Muriel, Myriam, Nadia, Nadine, Natalie, Nathalie, Nicole, Nicolette, Nina, Ninette, Ninon, Noelle, Noemie, Oceane, Odette, Odile, Olivie, Olympe, Oriane, Orianne, Osanne, Ouida, Ozanne, Pascaline, Paule, Paulette, Pauline, Penelope, Perrine, Regine, Reine, Renee, Rochelle, Rolande, Romaine, Roselle, Rosemonde, Rosette, Rosine, Roxane,

Roxanne, Sabine, Sacha, Salome, Sandrine, Sebastienne, Seraphine, Severine, Sibylle, Sidonie, Simone, Solange, Stephanie, Suzanne, Suzette, Sybille, Sylvaine, Sylviane, Sylvianne, Sylvie, Therese, Valentine, Valerie, Violette, Vivien, Vivienne, Yolande, Yseult, Yvette, Yvonne, Zephyrine.

BRETONS (Brittany): The language of the Bretons of Brittany, with its roots in old Celtic, would likely seem very strange to modern English speakers. Likewise, Breton names are intriguingly unusual.

Male Names: Alban, Alunoc, Annaeg, Aofred, Arneg, Artus, Audren, Avran, Awen, Benedig, Berach, Berin, Breval, Briac, Brian, Brior, Briunal, Bron, Caradec, Colledoc, Conan, Congard, Conmore, Conog, Corentin, Cornely, Cyran, Dagan, Deniel, Denig, Derog, Devan, Dogmael, Donan, Drenwal, Drev, Edwin, Elorn, Emeran, Enogad, Ergad, Ernin, Erwan, Evan, Ewin, Faelan, Fanch, Fiac, Fieg, Finian, Flann, Follan, Fragan, Friard, Gilles, Glen, Gobrian, Gothian, Govran, Gudwal, Guirec, Gweneg, Gwythian, Haelmoren, Henog, Herblon, Herbod, Hermeland, Herveig, Hoel, Harn, Iduned, Ilan, Illec, Iudmoren, Ivon, Jaume, Joavan, Jodoc, Jord, Jos, Judicael, Juhel, Juluan, Juvad, Kadec, Karneg, Kelig, Kieran, Kilian, Konneg, Konogan, Konwal, Korneli, Lan, Lanig, Leri, Levan, Loic, Lorans, Louarn, Lunaire, Lunen, Maden, Madoc, Mateo, Maugan, Maulde, Melaine, Merin, Mikael, Morvan, Nedeleg, Neven, Neventer, Nikolaz, Ninian, Nioreg, Onen, Oudoceus, Padarn, Padrig, Paol, Pasker, Peran, Pereg, Pergad, Primael, Privael, Quay, Riagad, Riowen, Rivold, Riwal, Riwan, Rog, Ronan, Ruaud, Ruvon, Saig, Salomon, Segal, Segondel, Servan, Seva, Sklaer, Stefan, Suliag, Tegoneg, Tenedor, Tierneg, Tinaig, Tininor, Toel, Tremeur, Treveur, Tudec, Urfol, Urien, Uuel, Visant, Vann, Venec, Vougay, Wrmonoc, Yann.

Female Names: Aela, Alana, Alera, Alis, Amelle, Ana, Andrea, Annig, Armela, Audrey, Aven, Awen, Barba, Barban, Beatriz, Bel, Belig,

Berched, Berhed, Bernadeta, Bleunvenn, Bleuzenn, Breched, Brewalen, Chan, Clair, Dahud, Deklan, Delfina, Deneza, Deniela, Derwell, Dogmaela, Dunvael, Elen, Elena, Elesbed, Elizabed, Emmanuela, Enora, Erell, Eryl, Essylt, Euriel, Eurielle, Eved, Fanchon, Gaelle, Glannon, Gwendolina, Gwengunv, Gwengustle, Gwenlev, Gwenn, Gwenna, Gwennaig, Gwenola, Gwenvred, Gwilhamet, Haude, Heodez, Hoel, Ivona, Izabel, Izold, Jan, Janed, Janig, Jenovefa, Jermana, Joela, Josefa, Jutwara, Karadeg, Karel, Karolina, Katarin, Keridwen, Kinnie, Klara, Klervia, Klodina, Koleta, Kristell, Kristina, Laig, Lanwenn, Laora, Laorans, Lavena, Lena, Lenaig, Libouban, Lila, Liza, Lupita, Lusia, Madenn, Maela, Maiwenn, Maria, Mariig, Mikaela, Mona, Morgan, Morgana, Morised, Morna, Morwenna, Naig, Nennok, Ninnoc, Ninnog, Ninog, Noella, Noluenn, Nolwenn, Nonn, Nonna, Norig, Noyala, Oanez, Onenn, Ozvan, Padriga, Paola, Paolina, Paskella, Peronell, Pezen, Piala, Renea, Rivanon, Riwanon, Rozenn, Ruvonenn, Sennin, Sev, Sidwell, Sisilia, Sklerijenn, Soaz, Soazig, Solena, Sterenn, Tedvil, Tekla, Tirid, Trifin, Trifina, Trifine, Tudon, Tunvez, Uriel, Uriell, Veronika, Vinvella, Viviana, Vouga, Yaouank, Youna, Yulizh, Yuna, Yuveot.

**NORMAN** (Normandy): As the Normans put aside some of the trappings of their nordic past, many began to take up names of a more latinized nature. Some of the nordic traditions linger, however, so many of the older names remain.

Male Names: Abel, Adrien, Agnarr, Aimery, Alexandre, Alfonse, Andre, Anthoine, Arnald, Artus, Auguinare, Baptiste, Barek, Barthelemy, Bernard, Blaise, Charles, Claude, Constant, Danyel, David, Denis, Domnall, Dragmall, Edmund, Emery, Emory, Eldgrim, Engenulf, Estienne, Etienne, Etienne, Eudes, Eustace, Farmann, Fleinn, Francois, Gabriel, Galinn, Gallien, Gentian, Geoffrey, Georges, Gerald, Germund, Gibbon, Gilles, Goubert, Guillaume,

Halbiorn, Hallmund, Harald, Herculles, Hugh, Isaac, Isembart, Jacques, Jarl, Jean, Jerome, Josurr, Julien, Kulben, Konrad, Laurens, Laurent, Lofi, Louis, Makan, Matheus, Marc, Marin, Martin, Meinolf, Nikolas, Nikulas, Noel, Ogmund, Orn, Pall, Petr, Petrus, Pomponne, Quentin, Rafn, Ragni, Ralf, Raoul, Rene, Richard, Robert, Rollo, Romain, Sigfred, Simon, Steinn, Tanni, Thomas, Turstin, Ulfarr, Vincent, Vital, Wadard, Walter, William.

Female Names: Ada, Adela, Adelaide, Adisa, Agatha, Agata, Agnes, Albreda, Alve, Amice, Anne, Anthoinette, Arlette, Arndis, Avice, Barbe, Beatrice, Bertha, Birla, Birna, Brynhild, Brunildis, Catherine, Cecily, Charlotte, Claude, Constance, Dagrun, Diane, Dora, Edda, Eleanor, Emma, Felicia, Fleurie, Florence, Florymonde, Francoise, Gauthild, Genevieve, Gersendis, Ginna, Gisla, Gudrun, Halldis, Helene, Hilda, Holma, Hulda, Isabeau, Isabel, Jacqueline, Jeanne, Joan, Jora, Judith, Juliana, Katherine, Katla, Katrin, Laurente, Lina, Louise, Lucille, Lucque, Mabillia, Madeleine, Margueritte, Maria, Marthe, Matilda, Olrun, Rachel, Richildis, Roesia, Rohesia, Sabina, Sarra, Sefa, Sigrun, Solva, Suzanne, Sybil, Unna, Victoire.

## PERILS OF THE ROAD

Travel, in the tenth century, is a dangerous undertaking. This is particularly true in France, where lawlessness often prevails. The leaders of the land are in the habit of sending a number of separate messengers to carry a single important communication. It is not considered at all unusual if several of them never make it to their destination.

What follows is a short list of some potential perils that player characters might face, should they be forced to travel for any great distance. Keepers are encouraged to create their own encounters to augment this list. The use of this list is entirely up to the Keeper, should he

or she consider it to be appropriate. A good rule of thumb is to keep things unpredictable. Player characters might progress unscathed through a dangerous area, only to meet an unfortunate fate in an area they considered far safer.

For Keepers who prefer to let random fate decide, an area that is completely lawless can be considered to have a 50% chance of a perilous encounter, while a modestly controlled area might have as little as a 25% chance. In well patrolled regions, the chance of a perilous encounter can be considered to be as little as 5% or less (although, in some areas, the enforcers of the law are worse than the lawless cutthroats).

Many of the perils listed below can be used again, provided the specifics are modified each time.

**BRIGANDS:** The travelers are waylaid by villainous brigands. Such nefarious folk tend to prefer to outnumber their foes by a comfortable margin before attacking, particularly if their targets are well armed. The typical brigand will probably be armed with a staff, club, spear or knife (if the brigands are particularly established and experienced, they might even be armed with swords and armor). Unlike professional warriors, their skills with these weapons are often lacking. The average brigand might have a 30-40% with their weapon of choice, though an experienced band of cutthroats would likely be more skilled. The brigand leader will often be better equipped than the rest, and will likely possess greater skill and strength. Should the travelers choose to fight, then losing the battle that ensues will mean almost certain death. Should the travelers surrender then they might escape the situation alive (though considerably poorer) with a successful Luck Check. Any character that fails the check the brigands will decide needs killing (a successful Fast Talk check can possibly head this off). For brigands with a taste for killing, there is no Luck check or discussion. Only the welcoming embrace of death.

**CAUGHT UP IN A LOCAL DISPUTE:** The travelers have stopped at a travelers hut, merchant house, or private home for the night. What they don't know is that some of the other guests are fleeing well armed pursuers (perhaps they know something that a local lord does not want getting out, or possibly they have in their possession something he wants). In the early evening, while the inn's guests are eating, the refuge is suddenly attacked. The player characters are mistaken for allies of these other guests, and must defend themselves.

**CULTISTS:** The travelers stumble into dark ritual performed by capering cultists. Some of the cultists are actually important locals, and their secret simply can't be allowed out. The player characters must now flee for their lives in order to survive. But where is safety? How high up does this dark cult go?

**DANGEROUSLY INSULAR LOCALS:** The travelers find themselves a bit lost and off the beaten track. Suddenly they find themselves in a village filled with extremely xenophobic and insular locals. The villagers are have a frightening "oddness" to them, likely owing to inbreeding. They don't take kindly to strangers, though they're good for a snack when times are hard.

**MAD LORD:** The local lord of the lands the travelers are passing through has become seriously deranged, seeing himself as the reincarnation of the Wotanic God Loki. His decrees have become more and more chaotic of late. His men are loyal to the core (those that remain, at any rate), and have cast the strictures of the Church aside for Wotanic traditions. Our mad lord insists (at spear-point) that the travelers must be his guest. There they are handed a puzzle to solve, or a challenge to overcome. Success, they are promised, will result in great rewards, while failure will mean a horrible end.

**MYSTERIOUS BEGGAR:** During a particularly arduous journey, a mysterious Beggar approaches the group and asks them for alms (food, clothing or money). Should they take

pity on the stranger, he will thank them kindly for their aid, and in the morning they will awaken refreshed of all the fatigue of the road, and healed of all injury. If they are seeking something pertaining to the mythos, they will find mysterious signs pointing the way to what they seek. Should the travelers refuse the beggar, then their wounds will fester, and ill luck will follow them until the next full moon. Should they openly revile, harm or slay the beggar, then they will be cursed with ill fortune until they save the life of a beggar.

**ROBBER BARON:** The travelers enter the lands of one of the infamous “robber barons” that still plague France. Unlike Brigands, such robber barons usually prefer to at least pretend to a certain element of legitimacy in their thievery. The men of the self-styled “Baron” of the local environs demand a tax from the travelers. Depending upon how hard up their lord is, and how dangerous the travelers seem, this may be a relatively reasonable amount, or it may be everything they own. Failure to pay is usually rewarded with either a good beating or death, depending upon how much the travelers resist, and what kind of mood the men are in. Should the travelers instead beat the Baron’s men, then they might well turn the tables on him. One less robber baron in the land is probably a good thing.

**TREACHEROUS HOST:** The travelers, tired from their long journey, take their rest in a lonely village along the road. But their host serves darker powers, and this night the travelers have been chosen as offerings to his master(s). Knowing they will not go quietly, he drugs their food (CON vs 15 on the Resistance table). Those affected by the drug awaken tied and gagged, while those not affected may attempt armed resistance. Should they be successfully trussed for the ceremony, then both they and the local worshippers are in for a surprise. For this time, their summoning will actually call something forth.

**TREACHEROUS LORD:** While staying as guests at a local lord’s estate, the travelers are betrayed. Paid well for his assistance by the enemies of the player characters (if they’ve been playing for long, they should have plenty), the treacherous lord locks them in the dungeons under his keep. The travelers must escape his clutches before their enemies come to claim them. Vastly outnumbered by the lord’s men, their only escape lies through an old, damp and highly unstable system of tunnels under the lord’s estate.

**WILD ANIMALS:** While travelling through a forest or woodland, the travelers are attacked by wild animals (perhaps a startled black bear, or a pack of hungry wolves). In the Dark Ages, a time when most of the world was still wild and unsettled, this was a very real threat. Riders will need to make a successful Ride check to stay mounted (failure results in a tumble from a startled mount; the rider takes 1D3 damage). The attacking beast or beasts should be chosen from the Bestiary in the Cthulhu: Dark Ages Core Rule book.

**PLAGUE:** The travelers enter a city stricken with one of the many plague’s that ravage the land from time to time. The city is sequestered, and none may enter or leave upon penalty of death. Unable to leave the city by normal means to pursue their important mission, and threatened by the terrible sickness that afflicts the locals, the travelers must find a way out of the city or face the possibility of an awful death.

# THE ORDER OF THE SWORD OF SAINT JEROME

Sovignor le Lettré stood in the midst of the torrent, letting the rain pour down upon his body. Not even Noah's tempest could wash away the stain of blood left behind by the deeds which had been forced upon him.

He gazed down at his hand where he still clutched the sword with which he had dispensed the Lord's will. His was not a soldier's hand, accustomed to such weaponry. He held it awkwardly, without training or experience. But as he gazed at his hands, hands which had done such terrible work this evening, he realized that he would never again be able to put aside the sword completely. A humble scholar had become God's instrument in the battle against evil. Evil that could take many forms, the worst of these being the form of innocence.

Despite his most earnest desire to turn away, he could not help but look down upon his handiwork. The villagers lay unmoving. Some of them, a horrified part of his mind noted, were women. He dared not think about what had become of the children. The blood of the fallen swirled in the rain and mud. Their souls, Sovignor earnestly hoped, were bound for a more merciful fate at God's hands.

If only he had never found the Lost Canticle of Saint Jerome. If only he had not shared the terrible secrets found therein with others, most especially Brother Hadrin. All this could have been avoided.

But it was God's will that events unfold as they had. Sovignor whispered a brief prayer for forgiveness for his pride in questioning the Divine intent. But how difficult this path was that the Lord had chosen for him. The Holy Spirit had made plain what must be done, but Sovignor trembled and wept, praying that this cup should pass him by.

He stood there for some time in the rain. How long, he could not say. Long enough for his tears of remorse and horror to be washed away. His fellow brethren waited patiently. That they felt the same as he was written plain upon their faces. With a quick motion he gave them the signal to begin the burial rites. By dawn, there must be no sign that death had come to the village of Côté d'Ouest. No sign of the demon that had briefly possessed its inhabitants.

One of the brethren spoke, his voice a soft rasp like stone on paper, "What of brother Hadrin, Father Sovignor?"

"He is brother to us no more, Orin," Sovignor said in a quiet voice. "His soul has begun its eternal penance for congress with the Dark One. He sought power, but he found only damnation. His body must be cleansed and face the flame for his sacrilege."

"And you, Father Superior, what will you do when this night's work is done?"

*“Tomorrow I set out for Rome. The Holy Father must hear of these events.”*

*Thomas, the youngest of the brothers, found the courage to ask, “What will his Holiness say? Can you venture a guess?”*

*“I need not guess, young Thomas, for the outcome has already been made clear to me. What we have done here is but the beginning. There is much more work to be done.”*

*With that, Sovignor walked slowly into the darkness of the night, his sword held tightly in his hand, and a burden upon his shoulders that few men would ever wish to carry.*

## **THE ORDER IS BORN**

The Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome was founded in 891 A.D. by Sovignor le Lettré, Abbot of the monastery of Saint Jerome. Saint Jerome’s abbey was at that time a Benedictine monastery in the Kingdom of Burgundy (Burgundy had not yet become a province of France, and would remain independent until the 12th century). The abbey was built at the foot of the Alps, some distance from any city of note. During Sovignor’s time, the monastery of Saint Jerome was a small facility, barely worthy of mention in the Church’s lists. The small number of dedicated monks that lived there were fairly accomplished scholars, dedicated to preserving knowledge by hand-copying innumerable manuscripts with great care (which is undoubtedly the reason the abbey was so named, as Saint Jerome is the Saint of scholars, students and the keepers of knowledge).

Sovignor had long been interested in the works of Saint Jerome, one of the Founding Fathers of the Church and the author of the Vulgate (Latin) version of the Bible. From a combination of folklore and obscure references,

Sovignor had become convinced that Saint Jerome had written an additional unnamed work that had become lost, perhaps even deliberately hidden. Sovignor spent much of his life seeking this tome, which he deemed The Lost Canticle of Saint Jerome. Many scoffed at his single-minded pursuit, which may have accounted for his seeking the solitude of a small abbey far from the comforts of civilization.

In the year 890 A.D., Sovignor’s search was rewarded. He found the book he sought, hidden in a mountain cavern not far from the monastery of Saint Jerome. How he found it is almost as mysterious as the tome itself. It came to him in a dream. A dream that Sovignor saw as the direct hand of God.

But fortune did not favor the discoverer of the Canticle. When Sovignor delved into the ancient text, he was shocked and horrified by the revelations set down therein. It became clear to him why the tome was hidden. For it told of dread beings, terrible entities, and it called into question some of the foundations of the Church itself.

Not knowing how to deal with what he had read in the Canticle, Sovignor shared the contents of the manuscript with other brethren of the Abbey. He was most eager to have the opinion of his old friend, Brother Hadrin. But Hadrin was corrupted by the power of the Canticle. He copied it for himself, and sought to delve into its dark secrets to obtain earthly power. Brother Olivier, caretaker of the library at the Abbey of Saint Martin, discovered Hadrin in the process of finishing his copy of the Canticle. Hadrin slew him before he could raise an alarm.

Knowing he would soon be exposed for his deed, Hadrin fled the monastery and sought refuge with friends in the nearby village of Côte d’Ouest. There, he set about summoning an entity of dark power to protect him from the Brethren he knew would come for him. But Hadrin learned the ultimate price of making deals with the devil. He and all the folk of the

town were enslaved by the powerful will of the evil entity he had summoned.

Sovignor learned of Hadrin's evil deed in the same way he had learned of the Canticle's hiding place. It came to him in a dream. Knowing that the spread of this evil must be stopped at all cost, and knowing that no help from the Mother Church could hope to arrive in time, Sovignor ordered the old armory opened. The main building of the Abbey had once been a military fortification, and it still contained many of the trappings of its former occupation.

Upon entering the village, Sovignor and his fellow brethren were faced with an awful choice. The villagers, to the last man, woman and child, had become like feral beasts, and set upon the monks immediately. Seeing no choice, Sovignor ordered the brethren to do what needed to be done. Only death would free the villagers, and only the death of Hadrin would cast out the entity that had taken over his body.

It was a terrible battle, and the formerly peaceful monks did their duty by God with tears in their eyes. When all was done, the villagers lay dead, along with four of Sovignor's fellow Benedictine brothers. Hadrin, too, had been slain. They buried the villagers and burned the body of Hadrin according to doctrine.

These events had shown one thing clearly to Sovignor. The Church needed a shield against such evil, lest it be born again anew. Sovignor traveled to Rome and presented his report of these events to the Papal offices. It is to his credit as a diplomat that his entreaty was heard by the Pope within a day of his arrival.

Shocked at the terrible events at Saint Jerome's and the mountain village of Côte d'Ouest, and horrified by the contents of The Lost Canticle of Saint Jerome, Pope Formosus declared the text to be heresy, and placed it under a Ban. Not satisfied with this action, he further commanded that a new order be founded. This order would search out evil wherever

it hid, and in whatever form it took, and destroy it. The new order was further charged with the a Papal commission to protect Christendom from the pollution of heretical works by searching out any and all texts deemed "unsuitable" and consigning them to the flame (the Order was given unusual autonomy in deciding what met the criteria of "unsuitable," though any excessive zeal would need to be explained to His Holiness). An exception to this Papal charge was to be made for a single copy of each heretical work, which would be stored in a special, heavily guarded collection deep under the Vatican. None would be allowed to see the contents of this collection without the direct permission of the Pope.

In reward for his services to Mother Church, Formosus called upon Sovignor to found this new order, and to choose for it a proper title. Sovignor chose to call it the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, and many of the monks of who had fought side-by-side with him in the village of Côte d'Ouest became its founding members.

Formosus had one final charge for Sovignor and the Order. One which was not recorded in any Papal records, and which is known only to members of the Order itself. Formosus charged the members of the Order to "Preserve the purity and innocence of others from the necessities of the war against evil." In other words, to keep the secrets of what the order does and what it learns from the rest of the world. This last pledge has been kept by the Order since its founding. The rest of the world knows of the Order as merely scholars and monks who collect heretical writings and artifacts for the Vatican. Few are those who know the terrible nature of the evils that these "scholars and monks" must constantly face. The Order has guarded that secret well through the years.

## A FALL FROM GRACE

It was not long after the creation of the Order that it ran into trouble. Sovignor and his followers had barely begun to recruit brethren who were up to the task of rooting out evil, when the Order was dealt a terrible blow.

In the last decade of the tenth century, Pope Formosus secretly invited King Arnulf, a German king, to oust the current Holy Roman Emperor, Guido of Spoleto (Guido was considered something of a threat to the Vatican, and some within the Order have said that Sovignor advised Pope Formosus to take this course). Arnulf answered the Pope's call, and was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 896. But Formosus died in the same year he had crowned Arnulf, and Arnulf himself was forced to end his Italian campaign when he was suddenly and inexplicably stricken with paralysis. A pall of suspicion fell on both unfortunate events, and for a time, those within the Order spoke of witchcraft. The leaders of the Order kept silent on what they knew on the matter. Events turned for the worse when an old nemesis of Formosus assumed the Papacy as Stephen VI.

Stephen and Agiltrude, the wife of the deposed Emperor Guido, plotted a dreadful spectacle. The body of Formosus was exhumed, and the dead man was put on trial for his "misdeeds." Rumors abound about this terrible event: whispers of dark and blasphemous acts performed by Agiltrude and her Papal ally (one such account, from the journal of a scribe who claims to have been present at the event, states that "the rotting corpse twisted with dark necromantic energies, and a multitude of worms came forth to writhe at his feet with unholy glee"). The truth of such rumors is unknown. When the trial was over, Formosus was posthumously found guilty of numerous crimes against the Church, and was retroactively stripped of all titles and authority (as if he had never been Pope). This put in jeopardy all the titles and orders which had been conferred

by him. All were forced to apply to the new Pope for a reinstatement of their legitimacy. Notably absent from the roll of orders eligible to be reinstated was the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome.

Matters grew worse when, a few months after the "trial" of Formosus, Stephen VI officially declared a Ban on the Order. This Ban effectively forbade the Order from carrying out their Papal charge. Sovignor refused, declaring that "the rot of evil has infused even the Holy Church, and the Holy See itself has fallen under the spell of the witch, Agiltrude." Stephen subsequently declared Sovignor and his followers to be heretics, blasphemers, and enemies of the Church. The Order was forced underground.

What followed was a terrible time for the Order. They were hunted and persecuted without mercy. Over two thirds of their number were slain. Sovignor himself was killed in a desperate and daring attempt to remove the "Dark Pope," as they referred to Stephen. Sovignor's body was dragged through Rome, then hung up on display from the city gates. The Order seemed all but finished. But a determined handful of Sovignor's followers clung to their holy charge.

Then, like a divine miracle, a new leader came to the Order. All of the surviving brethren shared a dream of him on the same night. That morning, he visited them in the flesh, and, according to the thirty-second passage of the Annals of the Order, "they knew him instantly as the one chosen by God to lead them." This mysterious man gave no name, but took the name of the martyred leader of the Order as his own, a tradition that all subsequent leaders of the Order have followed. In this way, Sovignor would be as eternal as the Order itself.

The tables would turn once again for the Order. Like his predecessors, Stephen VI met an untimely death. In 898, John IX assumed the Papacy. John called a holy synod on the topic of Formosus. With the backing of the



Cardinals of the synod, John officially reversed the decisions in the strange trial against a dead Pope, despite the vehement objections of Agiltrude (whose son had, by that time, become the Holy Roman Emperor). He also reversed the Ban other declarations of Stephen VI against the Order, though he did so quietly, and with considerably less fan-fare. This low key semi-secrecy would remain a tradition of the Order in its dealings with the Vatican and the rest of the Church.

## THE PRESENT ORDER

When Abbot Sovignor founded the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, he chose as its home the monastery of Saint Jerome. Isolated as it was, it was perfectly positioned to act as a front for the secret operations of the Order. Laboring for 15 years, the brethren of the Order carved out a 2 mile tunnel leading to the hidden cavern in which the Lost Canticle of Saint Jerome was found. The original entrance was covered over. This cavern is now a training ground for the Order, as well as the location of the Order's hidden library and archive. Over the years, the cavern has been expanded to such a degree that only close inspection gives away the fact that the winding tunnels and echoing halls were once natural.

The Order is divided into five major septs (sub-orders). These are: the Apertum Malus (those who search out evil wherever it hides), the Armaria (librarians, archivists, keepers of the records and texts), the Cryptoria (masters of the rites of the dead, guardians and keepers of the tombs wherein the fallen brethren of the Order are laid to rest), the Gladius Fraternus (sword brethren, the warriors of the order), and the Infirmaria (those that care for the sick and treat the injured).

Rarely is a task outside the monastery assigned to just one of the septs, as this encourages competition and rivalry. Typically, when

the Order assigns brethren to a task, they are chosen from multiple septs to provide a variety of skills. A member of the Apertum Malus often leads the group, though not always. The Cryptoria are often vital to perform last rites and insure that a person's physical remains and eternal soul remain uncorrupted after death. The strong arms of a Gladius Fraternus are also a common part of any assignment, as is the medicinal expertise of an infirmarian. When a group of brethren proves notably successful at working together, they are often called upon for future tasks as a group. These groups are informally referred to as a "familia" (e.g., "our familia will set out immediately after we break our fast").

Officially, the Order is supported by a stipend from the Vatican. It also earns a small amount of income by hiring out it's brethren as advisors or scholars. Unlike most monastic orders, however, the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome has no industry to truly support itself. Despite this, it spends more than any other Order of an equivalent size (though it does so discreetly enough that few outside the Order itself are aware of it). Where it obtains the income to maintain these expenses is one of the many mysteries about the Order. Some assume that the Pope is providing additional funding from his privy purse. Others suggest that the Order has one or more wealthy benefactors. There are always rumors of other less legitimate sources of income. These suppositions are largely unprovable, and members of the Order usually prefer not to delve too deeply into such matters.

## TENETS OF THE ORDER

The Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome has only three major tenets. While there are numerous "low" rules regarding the day to day lives of those within the Order (The Order mostly follows the Rule of Saint Benedict

regarding monastic life), this trinity of tenets forms a vital foundation that guides its members and leaders.

**THE FIRST TENET --** Evil is everywhere. Only with purity, faith in God, and loyalty to the Church can mortal men hope to overcome this evil. Because theirs is an eternal war, the faith and loyalty of those within the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome must be stronger than other mortals. Those that follow the way of the sword of Saint Jerome must remain pure in heart, unquestioning in faith, and unshakably devoted to the Order and to Mother Church.

**THE SECOND TENET --** Knowledge is precious. It can be good or evil. Knowledge which is good and righteous in the eyes of God and Church must be preserved. Knowledge which is evil must be condemned to the flames. Because those that do battle with evil must know their enemy, one copy of any proscribed work shall be allowed to exist, and is to be consigned to the special collection at the Vatican. **NOTE:** In 907, the portions of this tenet regarding good and evil “works” was extended to include artifacts and relics.

**THE THIRD TENET --** No secrets of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome may be allowed to fall into the hands of those outside the Order. Even the nature of the evil with which the Order wages eternal battle must be held as a closely guarded secret. Of those outside the Order, only the Holy Father himself may share in its secrets. **NOTE:** Over the intervening years since the founding of the Order, because of the frequent turn-over of the Papacy, the Order has become “guarded” even with its reports to the Pope, often telling him only what they think he needs to know. Bitter experience has made them untrusting even of their fellow clergymen.

## **MEMBERS OF THE ORDER AS PLAYER CHARACTERS**

### **RAISED WITHIN THE ORDER**

Within the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome are a number of brethren who have lived most or even all of their lives as part of the Order. These few are raised by the Order from childhood. They grow up within the confines of the outer monastery where they are tutored in literacy and numerous other subjects. Upon reaching the age of 14, if they are deemed worthy, they are invited into the Order itself, where they learn its inner secrets and are trained for their role in the war against evil. At this time they must choose which of the septs they will join.

Below are listed the skills for characters raised within the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, according to the sept they chose as their path. No starting money is listed, as the Order provides all that is needed.

### **APERTUM MALUS**

The Apertum Malus are the investigators and eyes and ears of the Order (i.e., spies), and are also trained to lead. Members of the Apertum Malus are often chosen for exceptional leadership abilities or cunning intellect.

**Skills:** Insight, Library Use, Occult, Other Language: Latin, Persuade, Sneak, Spot Hidden, and Write Language: Latin.

**Starting Equipment:** Prayer book, simple robe of the Order, other clothing as appropriate to any role that must be assumed (e.g. scribe, traveling merchant, etc.) and one ordinary weapon of choice (if skilled in use).

## ARMARIA

The Armaria are the keepers of the Order's hidden library and archives. They are experts on literary works, and make an essential part of any mission to recover a heretical book. Armaria tend to be studious, and when not on a mission, their noses are most often deep into one tome or another.

Skills: Library Use, Natural World, Occult, Other Kingdom, Own Kingdom, Other Language: Latin, Science and Write Language: Latin.

Starting Equipment: Prayer book, simple robe of the Order, The Holy Bible (Vulgate edition), quill and ink, 10-20 sheets of parchment and a leather-bound journal.

## CRYPTORIA

This sept is charged with the keeping of the Order's dead, as well as the sacred rituals and sacraments that protect the body and souls of the dead from demonic corruption after their mortal existence is ended.

Skills: Drive Horses, Insight, Natural World, Library Use, Occult, Other Language: Latin, Write Language: Latin, and one other skills as a personal specialty.

Starting Equipment: Prayer book, simple robe of the Order, mortuary tools (for treatment of the dead), holy water and sacred oil, the Holy Bible (Vulgate edition) and one ordinary weapon (if skilled in use).

## GLADIUS FRATERNUS

These brave warriors are the defenders of the Order, as well as being its martial arm when the war against evil turns into a literal battle.

Skills: Dodge, Fist/Punch, Head Butt, Occult, Ride, one weapon skill, Other Language: Latin, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Starting Equipment: Prayer book, boiled leather armor, simple over-robe of the Order,

one ordinary weapon of choice and one medium shield (if skilled in use).

## INFIRMARIA

The noble brothers and sisters of the Infirmary perform the vital duty of caring for the sick and injured. They are trained in the medicinal arts of the time, such as they are (nothing like a good bleeding to cleanse the soul of unwholesome spirits).

Skills: First Aid, Library Use, Natural World, Other Language: Latin, Potions, Science: Medicine, and two other skills as personal specialties.

Starting Equipment: Prayer book, simple robe of the Order, medical tools (for bleeding and applying poultices), bandages and an assortment of herbs, potions and medicinals for treating various ailments.

## JOINING THE ORDER FROM AN OUTSIDE PROFESSION

Most of the members of the Order are not so lucky as to have been raised from childhood under its protection. Such brethren are recruited from other orders and functions within the Church. In some cases, laymen are allowed to join, but only if they take the vows of the Order (essentially becoming clergy themselves).

The following is a listing of the various Cthulhu Dark Ages professions that would be suitable for the recruitment in the Order, along with the sept(s) that would be most suited to them. This list is also an excellent list of potential professions for allies of the order (see LAYMEN ALLIES OF THE ORDER).

CLERIC† -- Armaria

GUARD† -- Gladius Fraternus

HEALER† -- Infirmary

MERCENARY† -- Gladius Fraternus

MONK/NUN\* -- Apertum Malus, Armaria or Infirmary

PILGRIM† -- Any, as appropriate to skills

PRIEST -- Apertum Malus, Armaria, Cryptoria or Infirmary

SCHOLAR† -- Apertum Malus or Armaria  
WARRIOR† -- Gladius Fraternus

†While all would-be brethren must pledge vows to the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome to enter its ranks, a layman from one of these professions must first serve a period as a novice prior to taking these vows. This period usually lasts from one to five years. Laymen such as this are almost always recruited from those who have already served a number of years as loyal allies of the Order (see LAYMEN ALLIES OF THE ORDER).

\*Women are allowed into the Order, but are restricted in the roles they may assume (see WOMEN IN THE ORDER).

## CTHULHU MYTHOS

While most of what those of the Order know about the Cthulhu Mythos is colored by a misrepresentation of mythos entities as good or evil biblical figures, they do pick up a few true bits of the Mythos over the years. Characters who have been with the Order for five years or more at the time of their creation may start with a small amount of Cthulhu Mythos at the Keeper's discretion. This starting amount is based upon their time with the Order, as well as the sept they have chosen.

Those raised by the order should treat their age minus fourteen as their time with the Order. Their childhood was spent in the monastery in blissful ignorance. Those not raised by the Order should consider their age minus 20 as a maximum amount of years with the Order. Even if the character went straight to the Order as a young adult, he or she would spend a number of years as a novice.

### STARTING CTHULHU MYTHOS

APERTUM MALUS: 3%, plus 1% for every 10 years with the Order.

ARMARIA: 3%, plus 1% for every 10 years with the Order.

CRYPTORIA: 2%, plus 1% for every 10 years with the Order.

GLADIUS FRATERNUS: 2%, plus 1% for every 10 years with the Order.

INFIRMARIA: 1%, plus 1% for every 10 years with the Order.

The table above is strictly for starting characters. Once a character is actively in play, the amount of Cthulhu Mythos gained is determined in the usual fashion. A member of the Order will simply tend to have more exposure to it. Cthulhu Mythos gained upon a character's creation should be treated in the same manner as it would be if gained from any other source (e.g., it reduces the character's maximum Sanity by a like amount).

### NEW SKILL -- MORTIFICATION

Since the first century of its founding, the Church has encouraged mortification as one of the methods to train the soul to "virtuous and holy living." The term originated with Saint Paul, who claimed a connection between the mortal suffering of the crucifixion and the purity of the divine (the more a mortal suffers, the closer he or she comes to god). The skill of Mortification covers a broad category, from simple hardships such as fasting to self-flagellation (ritual beating or whipping to inflict pain and cleanse the soul). The belief of practitioners becomes a powerful influence in their mental self-image, giving them a sense of greater purity and purging them of perceived evil influences.

With a successful skill check against Mortification, a pious character can recover 1D3 Sanity after a week or more of fasting. Greater hardship requires less time, while lesser hardships require more time. The use of Mortification cannot raise a character's Sanity above his or her Power x 5. Keepers are advised to mostly limit players to the use of this skill between adventures. Keepers may, at their discretion, allow more than one check against the skill if time permits (e.g., if the character spends a month fasting faithfully, the Keeper might allow two checks against Mortification), or simply increase the amount of Sanity gained if the term of mortification is longer than normal.

# LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES OF THE ORDER

The Special Collection at the Vatican, a collection of proscribed texts accumulated by the Order, is only accessible to those with special Papal dispensation. It is rumored that the masters of the Order have a permanent dispensation to visit the collection at any time. The collection is said to contain some of the most vile works ever written by man (some are even said to have been penned by inhuman authors). This collection also includes numerous artifacts and relics deemed by the Church to be heretical or blasphemous.

The Library of the Monastery of Saint Jerome is an exceptional collection of authorized works. Though this library contains nothing that Mother Church would not approve of, it has garnered its own renown as a scriptural archive of some note. Some of the works are very old, while some of the illuminated texts are works of art in and of themselves.

The Hidden Library of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome is a truly amazing collection, containing some works that are older than the Roman Empire. The collection is divided into two sections: the lower section is available to all sisters and brethren who have taken the vows of the Order. It contains great works on the occult, as well as numerous accounts of occult events. The upper section is kept locked, and is generally only open to the masters of the order (each master has his own key). At need, Master Octavian (the Librarian and Archivist of the Order) can open the door to allow access for a lower member of the Order to a particular tome. Such access is closely restricted, and the fortunate individual is usually carefully chosen for their trustworthiness and mental stability. Within this closed collection, it is said, are many works disturbing to the psyche. Books that reveal glimpses of the awful

truth regarding the dark enemies of the Order. Few get more than a glimpse, as Master Octavian watches all visitors to the collection very closely.

The Archive of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome is a collection of the Order's history since its founding, as well as a detailed accounting of each mission upon which brethren have been sent. It also includes a listing of any works of importance that were gathered or destroyed. Like the upper Library, this archive is off-limits to those below master level in the Order. However, dispensation for access is granted considerably more often to this collection than to the forbidden section of the library.

## LAYMEN ALLIES OF THE ORDER

Just as the Church itself relies heavily on laymen (those that are not of the clergy), so too does the Order rely on a number of "allies" from the laity to assist it in accomplishing its vital goals. These laymen allies come from all walks of life, from peasant farmers that help gather the harvests to free warriors and mercenaries that help defend the monastery. Occasionally the Order finds itself without sufficient warm bodies to send on a mission, or perhaps the mission requires skills that the brethren are not trained in. Regardless of the reason, the Order has in the past been forced to send laymen along with brethren to accomplish a task.

Laymen allies rarely have any idea of what they are up against, and are usually kept in the dark as much as is possible. This is easier than it sounds. In the Dark Ages everyone is acutely aware of their place, and for the vast majority that place is pretty low on the scale of authority. The common folk of this period are

used to being told what to do and where to go, often with little or no explanation.

Allies of the Order are usually treated well, and if they show themselves to be loyal and worthy, they may even on rare occasions be invited to take vows and join the order. In a world of chaos and strife, where most peasants live desperately from one meal to the next, this is no small reward. An established place is something greatly desired by most commoners.

Even those laymen who never assist in anything more dangerous than gathering wheat or digging latrines are treated considerably better by the Order than they would be performing the same tasks for a lord or wealthy merchant. The Order takes good care of its own, even those that are not truly part of the fold.

## LEADERSHIP OF THE ORDER

The leadership of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome is a strange and mysterious thing. Few who know of the Order could actually tell you who currently leads them. The enigmatic nature of the Order's leadership is deliberate. If the leaders of the Order are not known, they cannot be endangered. Those of the Order itself, however, are aware of the essentials about the leadership of the Order, though a few mysteries remain even for them.

Abbot Francis is the spiritual head of the Monastery of Saint Jerome. Abbot Francis, a devout man of God and a 47 year old veteran of the Benedictine Order, runs an orderly abbey. Under his leadership, the monastery has garnered its own renown as a scriptural archive of some note (a fact of which Abbot Francis is quite proud).

Abbess Lovinia, a noble woman of some standing before she took her vows some 30 years ago, serves as Mother Superior of the Sisters of Jerome (see WOMEN IN THE

ORDER). Under her leadership, the Sisters have become a powerful force within the Order. This is a considerable change from the very minor role played by the Sisters prior to this. Unlike Abbot Francis, Lovinia and her fellow sisters at Saint Mary's Convent keep a low profile (as is only proper in medieval society). Few even know of the convent's existence.

Brother Gregori, a jovial old monk of 59, is the cellarer (procurer of supplies) for the monastery of Saint Jerome, as well as for the Order as a whole. Gregori loves to regale any who will listen with old tales, ballads and a few bawdy jests if he thinks the listener is of a mind to not take offense. Brother Gregori has traveled much of Europe, and has gone as far east as Constantinople.

Sister Helena, a forceful personality even at 55, is the cellarer of the convent of Saint Mary. She and Brother Gregory have had a friendly rivalry for many years. Her cleverness at procuring supplies is legend (many is the tale of a mid-winter supply train bound for Saint Jerome's, but finding its way to Saint Mary's instead).

Father Antoni, a quiet gentle man of 61 years, is the sacrist of both the Order of the Sword and the outer monastery of Saint Jerome. As such, he is charged with leading the mass and services for the brethren. Officially he knows little about the Order's secrets. But as the confessor of even the masters of the Order, he undoubtedly knows a great deal more than he would be willing to tell. Fortunately, such privileged information is protected under the Seal of the Confessional, and not even the Pope himself can demand it.

Master Javier, a dark skinned 43 year old man from Spain, is the master of the Apertum Malus. His friendly exterior masks an incredibly clever mind. It is said that to engage in a battle of wits with Javier is to cross swords with a master swordsman. His mind is as sharp as the sharpest blade, and he is an expert at ferreting out the truth.

Master Octavian, a bookish man of 71 years, is the master of the Armaria. As part of this position, he is also the official Librarian in charge of all collections in the monastery and the hidden collections of the Order. In an order of scholars, this makes him a powerful man. Despite this, he generally stays out of the politics of the Order, preferring to delve ever deeper into the accumulated lore at his disposal.

Master Ganelon, a dark and secretive man in his fifties, is master of the Cryptoria. His is the charge of protecting the souls of the dead and the mortal remains of the Order's fallen. As is perhaps fitting for the man in his station, Valente is a master of the mysteries of death and the spirit world. Some say he even knows something of blasphemous arts such as necromancy, though no one would be so bold as to say it. Master Valente runs the Cryptoria like an army: discipline is rewarded, while disruptions and disorder of any kind are punished severely.

Master Valente, an aging ex-soldier, is the master of the Gladius Fraternalis. At the age of 57, he can still beat most men half his age in combat. His is the charge of defending the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, and bringing the Sword of God to the enemies of the Church. Valente is a bullish man of few words. Despite this, his intellect is exceptional. He plays chess with Master Javier, and manages to even win one out of three bouts.

Master Dominic, at 39, is master of the Infirmaria and the youngest master of the Order. Dominic is a kind and gentle soul, who gives to others selflessly. Despite this, he has a powerful inner strength. During his time as an active brother in the field, he was a valued member of his familia.

Grand Master Sovignor Sebastian, a mysterious figure of unknown age, is the current titular head of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome. Like all Grand Masters of the Order before him, he has taken the name of the founder as his own. The Grand Master is traditionally aloof from the rest of the Order, and is

seen by the majority of the brethren only on the rarest of occasions. Even then he is cloaked in mystery and shadow. It is rumored that the Grand Master has accumulated not only great wisdom, but great power as well. It is also whispered that the reason he is so seldom seen is that he is somewhat mad, and spends much of his time wandering as a hermit. Regardless of what truth, if any, lies behind such stories, the masters of the Order run things in his name.

## WOMEN IN THE ORDER

Evil cares very little about the sex of those it corrupts. Members of the Order have learned the important lesson of "Eve and the Serpent." Men can often be blind to the evil perpetrated by women. For this reason, the Order allows women into its fold, but only under strictly regulated conditions.

Women of the Order, whether young or elderly, live wholly separate from the men, in the little-known mountain convent of Saint Mary's (a very common name for convents throughout Europe at the time). They are also trained separately. Only when assigned to a mission or when they become part of a regular familia do they have regular congress with male members of the Order. Even then, the rules for their conduct (and for the conduct of their male brethren) are very strict.

This is not to say that women in the order are protected or fully "cloistered" as would be the case in a normal nunnery. These sisters undergo as rigorous and thorough a training as the men, in some cases even more so. They are exposed to men during the course of this training, as many of their instructors are men. Likewise, the priests that take their confessions and say mass for them are men. These exposures are carefully regulated.

Women are forbidden from a role in the Cryptoria or the Gladius Fraternalis. All the other septs are open to them, though they may

not perform religious services reserved to the priesthood. Women of the various septs observe their own traditions, rituals and schedules, separate from their male counter-parts. The sisters of the Armaria must, of necessity, share the libraries and archives with the brethren of the Order. Sisters of the Order are particularly encouraged to join the Apertum Malus, as they make excellent spies (men of the period tend to ignore women and treat them as little more than furniture; a fact that the women of the Apartum Malus have used to their advantage on numerous occasions).

Women are barred from positions of upper leadership within the Order. The Sisters of the Order of Saint Jerome have their own leadership within their convent. Mother Superior Lovinia (see LEADERSHIP OF THE ORDER) is a respected figure within the Order. Her guidance and wisdom is often listened to.

In 946, Lovinia's predecessor as Mother Superior obtained authorization for a tunnel to be constructed from the Convent of Saint Mary to the mountain hideaway of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome (a distance of just under three miles). The tunnel is still under construction in strictest secrecy, but the project is nearing completion. Most of the work is being completed by brothers of the Order, but the final few feet will be completed by the sisters themselves to preserve the purity of the convent.

## HOW THE ORDER IS PERCEIVED BY OUTSIDERS

While most within the clergy would have at least heard rumors of the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome, very few know much about them. A certain level of mystery is deliberately encouraged by the Vatican regarding this unusual order. Laymen (those outside the cler-

gy) often fail to recognize members of the Order at all, often confusing them with members of the Benedictine Order. Those that do know of the Order are aware, only vaguely, of what they do. They might recall that their work has something to do with collecting proscribed texts for the Vatican.

To aid them in maintaining a low profile, most sisters and brethren of the Order encourage the confusion between themselves and other orders. The Apertum Malus actively masquerade as members of other orders at times, to help them in their task of ferreting out evil.

The location of the Order's center of operations is one of their most closely guarded secrets. Very few know of the connection between the Monastery of Saint Jerome and the Order of the Sword of Saint Jerome (Saint Jerome is a common patron saint of scholars, so no one would even think twice about a minor monastery of scholarly monks named after him).

As obvious members of the Clergy (with the exception of Apertum Malus masquerading as laymen), those of the Order can expect hospitality and even respect from other Christians. Out of deference to their clerical status, most hosts will politely deflect pointed questions. But a certain amount of mystery accompanies the arrival of any members of the Order, and those within the Order have become adept at answering such questions with simple and vague statements.

## PLOT IDEAS

What follows are a few kernels that Keepers can use to develop scenarios for player character groups within the Order. Keepers should feel free to use these plot ideas as a starting point. They are not intended to stand alone, and will require further development.



## A BEAST IN THE FOLD

A nearby village has requested the help of the player characters. The villagers know nothing about the status of the characters as members of the Order, but they can clearly see that they are representatives of the Church. The villagers will tell of being plagued by a terrible “unearthly beast.” This creature should be described as a legendary monster, such as a werewolf, vampire or ogre. In truth, the beast is a Hound of Tindalos. A number of the villagers saw the Hound kill a passing trader, and now it is hunting the witnesses down one by one. The party should stumble upon a method of blessing their weapons or otherwise defeating the Hound in order to save the villagers (it is immune to normal weapons).

## THE FALLEN PRIEST

The player characters are sent to deal with a priest who has started to preach blasphemy to his small village parish. The priest has promised his flock that, with their help, he can summon forth the Holy Spirit to grant them eternal blessing. The unfortunate priest has fallen under the sway of the cult of Tulscha, who seek to manipulate he and his villagers into aiding them in summoning their “Dark God of the Green Flame.” The players should be given specific instructions by the Order to try and uncover WHY the priest is preaching blasphemy, and not to just slay him out of hand (a good plot device would be to let them know that he has powerful relatives that would be upset if he were harmed). If the player characters uncover the cult without harming the priest, they should gain an extra sanity award.

## A DREAD MANUSCRIPT

The Apertum Malus intercepts a communication between a powerful noble and a scribe in a major city. The note reveals that the scribe is in possession of a few fragments of a copy of the Al-Azif. The noble, a collector of mythos and occult texts, has paid him to copy the nearly

illegible fragments. The noble has friends in high places, and is pretty much untouchable; the scribe is another story. The player characters are assigned the task of recovering the fragments of the heretical tome (along with any copies the scribe may have made). They are also charged with bringing the scribe back alive to a higher ranking member of the Order for questioning. This will prove interesting, as the noble will use his (or her) considerable occult and mythos power to stop them from delivering the scribe and the fragments.

## THE DRAGON SWORD

There is a legend known to the Order of a pagan sword named “Draco Mortis,” an artifact of great age, enchanted to slay dragons. The sword is said to have been lost when the last of the dragons outwitted its wielder and slew him instead. The item is said to be a powerful pagan relic, capable of unleashing great evil. Recently, while expanding the cavern to accommodate a new tomb, the Cryptoria discovered a small hidden chamber. In it they found a map with the location of the last dragon’s lair. The Order assigns the player characters to recover the Draco Mortis from the lair. They are fairly certain that the dragon, a beast of terrible evil, must surely be dead by now. In actuality, the “dragon” is actually a particularly old and unusually cunning Shantak, and it is very much still alive (after a fashion). The power of the sword was used to confine the creature in another dimension. By removing the sword, the player characters will free it. They will then have the unfortunate task of dealing with the creature as it rampages across the countryside. The sword might help, or it might do more harm than good.

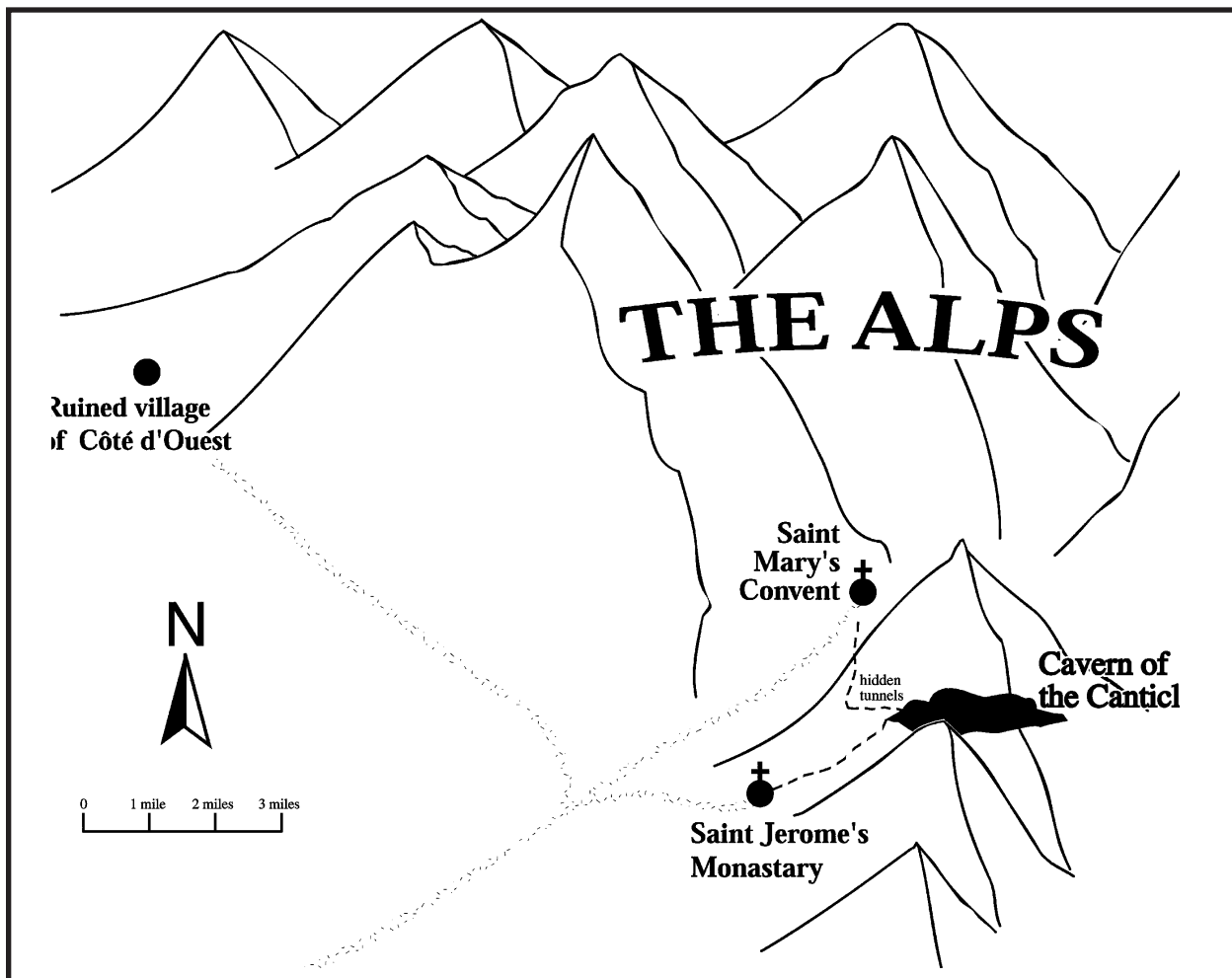
## THE PLAGUE

A strange plague has stricken a nearby city, causing violent madness that can be cured only with death. The city has been quarantined by order of the Church, and the player character’s are trapped along with the city’s other inhabi-

tants. To make matters worse, the son and heir of the local ruler has taken to acting rather strangely. He has abandoned his duties, and now has an awful tendency to stroll amongst the people of the stricken city, muttering incomprehensibly. His father has put guards on him, but he has demonstrated an uncanny knack for evading them. Desperate lest his son fall under the “ill humors” of the plague, the local lord asks the player character’s to find out what’s wrong with his son. The heir is actually under the temporary control of a member of the Great Race of Yith, who has taken over his body in order to observe the events in the city (the princeling now sits in the body of the Yithian in the distant past, and will return pretty shaken by his experience). The plague is the work of the Cult of the Black King (Nyar-lath-otep), who seek to sow chaos and loosen the Church’s hold on Europe.

## A DARING RESCUE

This mission requires that the player characters be in Spain (the Kingdom of Leon or Castile). A sister of Apertum Malus has been captured by the forces of the Emirate of Cordoba just across the border. She is charged with burning one of the libraries of the Emir, and is scheduled to be executed. The player characters are tasked by the Order to mount a daring rescue, with as few casualties on either side as possible (the last thing the Order wants is to start another war between the Christian and Muslim portions of Spain). Undoubtedly the captured sister of the Order was destroying heretical texts, and the one who placed those texts there will likely get involved.





Investigator Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_  
 Language \_\_\_\_\_  
 Religion \_\_\_\_\_  
 Afflictions \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

### Characteristics & Rolls

STR \_\_\_\_\_ DEX \_\_\_\_\_ INT \_\_\_\_\_ Idea \_\_\_\_\_  
 CON \_\_\_\_\_ APP \_\_\_\_\_ POW \_\_\_\_\_ Luck \_\_\_\_\_  
 SIZ \_\_\_\_\_ SAN \_\_\_\_\_ EDU \_\_\_\_\_ Know \_\_\_\_\_  
 99-Cthulhu Mythos \_\_\_\_\_ Damage Bonus \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sanity Points

Insane 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48  
 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65  
 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82  
 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99

### Magic Points

Unconscious 0 1 2 3  
 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11  
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27  
 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35  
 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

### Hit Points

Dead -2 -1 0 1 2 3  
 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11  
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27  
 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35  
 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43



### Investigator Skills

Accounting (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Art (05%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bargain (05%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Climb (DEX+STR%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Conceal (15%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Craft (05%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cthulhu Mythos (00) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dodge (DEX x2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Drive Horses (20%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fast Talk (05%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 First Aid (30%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hide (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insight (05%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jump (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Library Use (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Listen (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Medicine (05%) \_\_\_\_\_

Natural World (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Navigate (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occult (05%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Kingdoms (01%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Language (01%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Own Kingdom (20%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Own Language (EDUx5%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Persuade (15%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pilot Boat (01%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Potions (01%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Repair/Devise (20%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ride Horse (05%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Science (01%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Sneak (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spot Hidden (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Status (15%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Swim (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Throw (25%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Track (10%) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Write Language (01%):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Skills  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Weapons

weapon	skill %	damage	hand	range	#att	shots	hp
<input type="checkbox"/> Fist (50%) _____	_____ %	1D3+db	1	touch	1	1	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> Grapple (25%) _____	_____ %	special	2	touch	1	1	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> Head (10%) _____	_____ %	1D4+db	0	touch	1	1	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> Kick (25%) _____	_____ %	1D6+db	0	touch	1	1	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> Small Knife (25%) _____	_____ %	1D4+db	1	touch	1	1	10
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____ %	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____ %	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____ %	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____ %	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

### Armor

Type \_\_\_\_\_  
 Armor Points \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shield \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Armor Points \_\_\_\_\_





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