

Swashbuckling
ADVENTURES™

Knights & Musketeers™





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A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*™.

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Introduction

Charouse, 1667

Ignoring the dozens of couples dancing around him, Ambrose Doré stared into the eyes of the beautiful woman he held in his arms and smiled encouragingly. He was a short man, with tousled hair and the grace of a wolf. She gazed back at him with thinly-disguised anticipation as he moved them in time to the music through the final intricate moves of the dance currently favored in the court of l'Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne. As his hand twisted her around in a tight circle, she seemed to float for an instant. Then the final chords were struck, the dance ended, and the Musketeer bowed deeply to her.

Out of the corner of his eye, Ambrose noticed a familiar silhouette climbing the stairs to a balcony that overlooked the gardens. He brushed his lips across the back of his partner's gloved hand, straightened with an apology and a quick bow, and moved towards the stairs. The other dancers parted before him when they saw his tabard emblazoned with the insignia of the Musketeers of Montaigne.

His hand dropped to the sword at his side as he caught the attention of the young Musketeer already on the stairs, who nodded in response. Moments later, both Musketeers strode up the steps and emerged onto the balcony.

The full moon hung over the ivy-laden walls of the royal garden's famous hedge maze and bathed the balcony in pale light. Ambrose gazed down its length on either side and was about to turn away when he noticed a tall figure standing at the far end. Wrapped in shadows, the thin figure of the Comte de Longueville stared down into the hedge maze. A pale foppish man in his early thirties, the nobleman sported the formal garb of a Montaigne courtier with a white powdered court wig that seemed to glow slightly in the darkness. Following his gaze, Ambrose saw a dozen Castillian men gathered in a dead-end of the maze directly beneath the balcony. They clutched rapiers and pistols and muttered in low tones as they peered through a small opening in the hedge towards the garden's gate. Smiling to himself, Ambrose turned to alert his fellow Musketeer when her voice rang out.

"Compte Denis de Longueville, I arrest you in the name of l'Empereur Léon." The words were clear and precise, punctuated by the sound of drawn steel.

The thin nobleman turned towards them and for a single moment his eyes blazed with anger. Then he took a deep breath and stepped forward into the light. He held an ornate box in one hand.

"Mademoiselle Lechat, is it not? Arrest me? What are you talking about, child?"

She bristled at his condescension. "Your ambush has failed, Your Excellency. You must surrender!"

The Comte shook his head sadly. Turning towards Ambrose, he asked, "Do you want to explain to her or should I?"

Ambrose reached out and placed his hand upon Musketeer Lechat's arm. "No, Jacqueline. We have no proof of treachery on his part."

"No proof? Open that box, Your Excellency."

De Longueville raised an eyebrow at the young woman's imperious tone but complied nonetheless. Within the velvet lined box lay a pistol. Engraved and bejeweled with the emblem of the Sun King, its beauty merely served to enhance its lethal power. "A gift. For

our beloved monarch. I was taking a few moments in the evening air before His arrival."

"So you admit to lying in ambush for Empereur Léon?"

De Longueville smiled. "We all wait upon His Imperial Majesty."

Ambrose stepped in front of Jacqueline and lifted the pistol out of the box. Sliding the chamber open, he noted, "It is not loaded."

"No one is allowed to bear arms in the presence of our monarch save his Musketeers. Surely you did not think I would attempt to do so?"

"Of course not, Monsieur le Comte. I was merely pointing out to my headstrong companion that this weapon poses no threat to l'Empereur. Unlike those ruffians in the garden below." As Ambrose spoke, he opened the pouch at his side, took out his own bag of black powder and a pistol ball, and began loading his weapon.

"Yes, I had noted their presence. Someone should definitely deal with them."

Jacqueline shook her head emphatically and declared, "It is obvious he is involved, Ambrose. Let us arrest him and then deal with his rabble."

Ambrose looked up from the pistol and said softly, "It is not that simple, my friend. Do you remember what I told you when you joined the Musketeers?" His protégé looked confused. "We are merely the agents of justice. We bring criminals to the courts, but the justices decide the cases. If we arrest a nobleman and friend of l'Empereur and he is found not guilty, our positions are forfeit and the honor of all the Musketeers is tarnished.

Monsieur le Comte de Longueville possesses both friends and charms enough to ensure that only absolute proof will convince the court. In this situation, armed with only an unloaded pistol, his guilt is far from certain. Even if it were, despite his appearance, Monsieur le Comte is quite skilled in the martial skills. Were I to arrest him and leave him in your custody, he would likely kill you and then attack me."



The Musketeer continued. "We shall simply allow him to rejoin the party. I will bring this situation to the notice of our superiors myself, although I doubt that the matter will proceed any further. Now I'm afraid that you must apologize to His Excellency."

"What!?"

"You have accused a nobleman of Montaigne with treason and threatened him with a drawn blade. He has graciously not made an issue about it, but he may change his mind if you continue being so pig-headed. Now apologize, sincerely."

For a moment, Jacqueline Lechat's expression wavered between insolence and contempt. "My apologies, Your Excellency. I should have been more careful of my accusations."

The nobleman smiled. "I am certain that you meant every word of that charming little apology, my dear. I will, of course, not mention this again so long as it goes no further."

Ambrose calmly responded. "It would be best if you returned to the party now, Monsieur le Compte. Things are about to become a trifle... messy." The older Musketeer paused. "Oh, I am afraid that I will need to hold onto this weapon as evidence, with your permission, of course."

The nobleman nodded and permitted Ambrose to remove the splendid pistol. Clutching the empty box, the Compte stepped past the fuming Jacqueline. As he reached the bottom of the stairs, Ambrose called after him quietly. "De Longueville."

The slender nobleman turned and looked back at the Musketeer. "I will see you hang one day."

The two Montaigne gentlemen stared at each for several heartbeats and then the Compte shook his head. "Ah, mon ami, I regret that you will not. Despite your hatred of me, you know that both of us serve l'Empeur in our own ways." The Compte bowed and then descended the steps. Ambrose stared after him for a moment.

A trumpet call near the garden gate heralded the arrival of a nobleman's coach. General Montegue emerged from the carriage, then helped his pregnant wife descend from the vehicle. The two began the long stroll towards the palace entrance.

Ambrose turned to Jacqueline and said quietly, "Perhaps we should deal with these Castillians before the man who defeated them gets any closer, eh?"

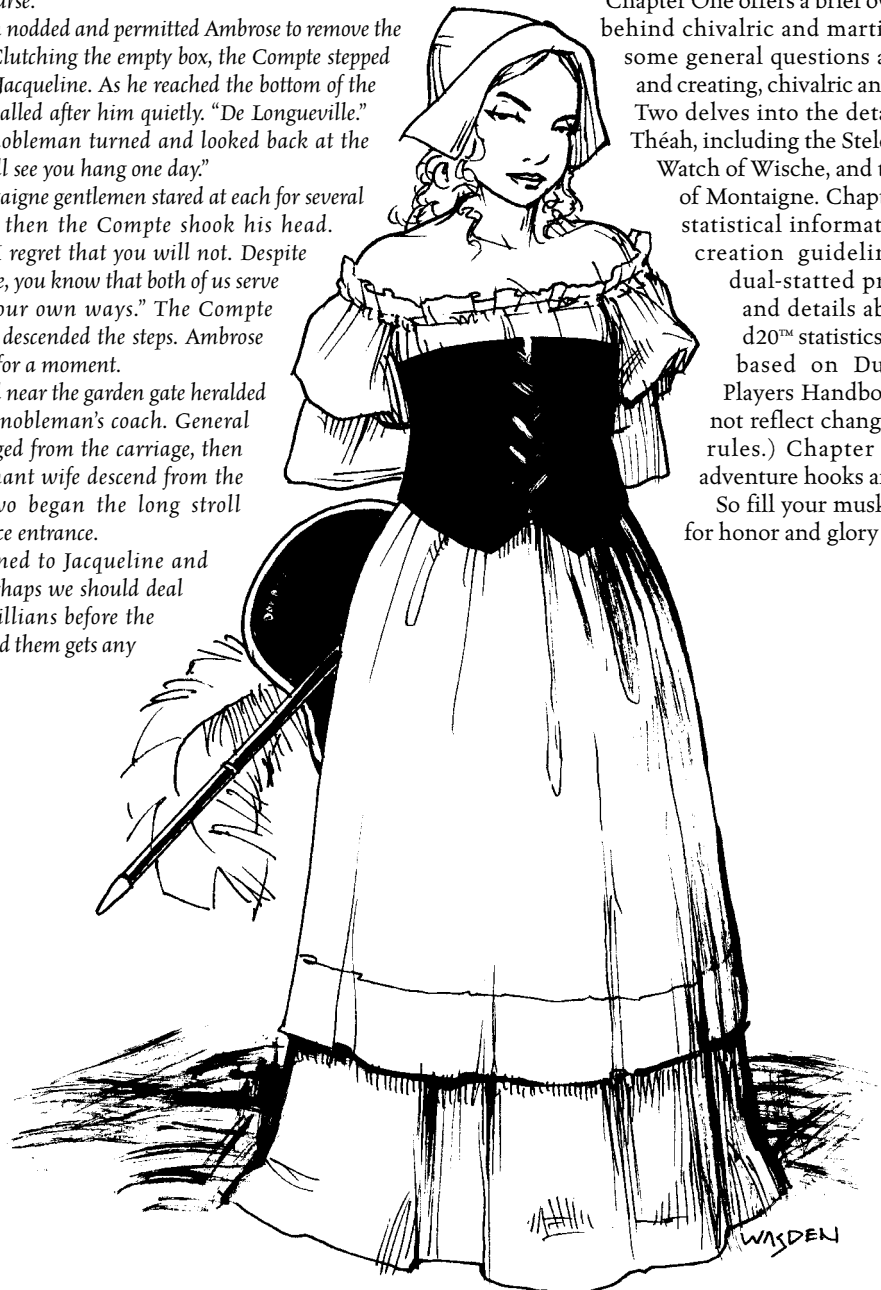
The two Musketeers stepped up onto the stone railing separating the balcony from the garden below. Ambrose transferred the pistol to his left hand and drew his rapier with his right while Jacqueline retained her sword. Twenty feet below them, the Castillians had not yet spotted Montegue approaching or the Musketeers standing proudly above them. With a shout, Jacqueline Lechat and Ambrose Doré leapt from the balcony towards the foes of Montaigne...

Introduction

The material in this book presents information about the knightly and martial orders in western Théah, including the famous Musketeers of Montaigne. Information herein deals with events both pre- and post-Montaigne Revolution without intent to favor one side or the other of the timeline, but rather to provide GMs and players with sufficient opportunities to enjoy adventures that reflect their choice in this matter.

Chapter One offers a brief overview of the philosophy behind chivalric and martial Orders and addresses some general questions about firearms, enemies, and creating, chivalric and military orders. Chapter Two delves into the details of specific Orders in Théah, including the Stelets of Ussura, the Citizens Watch of Wische, and the dreaded Tabards Noirs of Montaigne. Chapter Three, as always, gives statistical information including character creation guidelines, charts and tables, dual-statted pre-generated characters, and details about firearms. (Note: the d20™ statistics provided in this book are based on Dungeons and Dragons® Players Handbook, Third Edition and do not reflect changes in Version 3.5 of those rules.) Chapter Four offers a range of adventure hooks and campaigns.

So fill your musket and polish your blade, for honor and glory await!





CHAPTER ONE: *The Way of Order*

You may ask why a swashbuckling world needs knights and Musketeers. Surely there are enough people of good and honorable character (including the PCs themselves) to maintain law and order throughout Théah. Would that it were so, but such turns out not to be the case. The minions of evil — human and otherworldly — are everywhere!

A variety of chivalric and military Orders have been offered in previously published material as both NPC and player character types, allies, or enemies. Regardless of nationality or leadership, they have certain elements in common: a history, specific duties to perform, an organizational structure, laws and oaths by which they live, and a code of conduct that marks them as defenders and protectors.

Knights and Musketeers in Théah

If you have done any adventuring in a world like Théah, you know that things are not always as they seem. Knights are not always honorable, pirates are not always dastardly, and not all Musketeers can shoot straight; a Musketeer can be as swashbuckling as a pirate and a pirate can be as noble as a knight. Personality (the player) and circumstance (the GM) determine what path the character follows.

There are certain “standard” elements, if you will, that usually come to the fore when playing a knight or a Musketeer. The first thing is the pledge and adherence to an Oath, which is quite often a statement sworn more or less publicly prior to or upon admission to the Order. Oath

swearing has its roots in religious practices and in fact, the oaths sworn by a number of Orders still make reference to pledging before Theus or some variation of a higher power.

Another element of these Orders is conduct determined by a code. While pirates have a Code and swear an Oath, they are not included among the ranks of knights or Musketeers because their goals are more often than not self-serving and not infrequently violent and rapacious.

A Musketeer bears the trust of a monarch and a nation. He follows a course of study for his martial art and raises his weapon only to defend those who need his help and protection. He is supported by his faith, his commitment to the Order, and the comradeship of his brothers and sisters-at-arms. Even if he is not in direct fealty to a monarch, those whom he serves usually are, and thus he draws additional support from this relationship.

More than a Musketeer, a knight pledges himself completely to his liege lord or lady, to protect and defend with his body and soul. A crusader for honor and justice, the knight lives to serve his liege, his nation, and his faith through his deeds, often at the cost of his own goals and desires. In both Théah and the real world, there are many examples of Orders that follow an esoteric branch of faith involving sacred rituals and knowledge protected by a vow of complete silence about such matters. For some of these Orders in Théah, there is an almost apostolic succession dating back to the early days of the Numan Empire.

Let us consider for a moment the various Orders of Knights and Musketeers in Théah. Avalon boasts the Knights of Elaine, an order of some 200 ladies and gentlemen (both Sidhe and human) whose lives are completely devoted to the service of their beloved Queen

Elaine. In addition to rigorous training, each prospective knight takes a vow and confirms that pledge by drinking from the sacred Graal. Should his heart waver or his motives be impure, this act will reveal his perfidy for all to see. The Knights of Elaine, regardless of national origin or racial background, honor Avalon, fight for justice, and defend the defenseless.

The O'Bannon, the *ard ri* (High King) of Inismore, has a guard of staunch and hearty followers called the Fianna. Given that they are under the protection of this mad master of powerful Glamour sorcery, only a fool (or an O'Toole) takes them lightly.

Every Eisenfürst forms an Iron Guard whose members are charged with protecting their leader at all costs. Although specific duties and training methods vary from region to region, these Guards represent the best of the best Eisen has to offer (given what remains from the devastation of war.) Responsibilities and duties are based on performance, which results in promotion, and an enterprising fighter can make quite a career for herself as a member of the Iron Guard.

who claim that the origins of the "Black Crosses" goes back much farther than that, perhaps even to the Numan Empire.) Theirs is a lonely and dangerous life because they have chosen to guard Théah in the shadows, whether it is a dark corner at the end of an alley or the dreaded corridors of the Dark Paths. To join die Kreuzritter is to offer one's personal life as a sacrifice to the greater cause.

In direct contrast to the shadowy Black Crosses is the Order of the Rose + Cross. The Order began as a secret band of heroes devoted to bringing justice to the unjust, protecting those who could not protect themselves, and pledging unswerving devotion to their fellow Knights. Like die Kreuzritter, there are those who say that the Order of the Rose + Cross traces its origins back to the terrible night that the Numan senators made the Bargain that changed the course of Théah's history.

As for the Musketeers, one word will suffice: Montaigne. Renowned across Théah and respected even by their enemies, the Musketeers of Montaigne are beloved throughout their homeland (at least by the people.) Before the Revolution, the Musketeers were empowered to exercise



In Ussura, one finds the Stelets, the elite ranger guard sworn to enforce the Gaius' laws and Matushka's will throughout the land. They also serve as the militia for Pavtlow and more importantly, as the personal guards for the Gaius and his family. Perhaps one of the fiercest of all military Orders in Théah, their initiation rite is severe. The Stelets pride themselves on that fact that not one of them is weak, unfit, or devoted to anything or anyone other than the Gaius and Matushka.

Although not covered in detail in this book, the Sultán of the Crescent Empire has his own guard of highly trained swordsmen and swordswomen, as does the Celestial Empress of Cathay. (See *Crescent Empire™* and *Cathay™*.)

There are two Orders unconnected to a nation that figure prominently in Théah. One is die Kreuzritter founded during the Crusades in the Crescent city of Zafara. (There are those

their authority anywhere and over anyone, by virtue of having received their mandate directly from l'Empereur. The Revolutionary Council does not regard them with quite the same degree of reverence but rather sees them as a most visible reminder of the monarchy. On the other hand, they make a good militia that does not require specialized (expensive) training and the people seem to do what they say. Despite their relatively humble origins, even in post-Revolution Montaigne the Musketeers are seen as a force for justice, a compassionate hand to shelter the righteous and strike out against wrongdoers, and one of the finest and most honorable military orders in the world. They remain the protectors of Montaigne regardless of her political situation, serving as a shield for her citizens and the judges of wrongdoers no matter their rank or station.

The Authority of Musketeers and Armed Guards

Most organizations of size and/or wealth maintain armed guards as protection for important places (markets, banks, homes) or persons (merchants, bankers, nobles). The merchant guilds of Vendel have well-trained and well-paid mercenaries charged with guarding the guildhalls, the merchants and artisans, and the merchandise. Towns and villages across Théah each support a local militia or constabulary. Most nations have an Army (and where needed, a Navy) to protect its borders. The Church has guards to protect its vast properties and expensive accoutrements.

There are particular “common” areas that require the employment of a trained and cohesive military order. The safe passage of goods is of particular interest so people manning the town gates are a necessity. Their duty it is to inspect all imports and exports and levy taxes, which sometimes brings them into direct conflict with the merchant guards who are charged with getting an entire consignment intact to its destination.

Tension between armed retainers of the nobility often reflects the tension between their respective employers, although this is largely dependent on the degree of loyalty a noble commands; conflict between the armed retainers of the nobility and the city constables is unceasing. Dueling is often forbidden, roundly condemned — and omnipresent. In most nations, dueling by the aristocracy is well regulated and private; dueling by the gentry is common but considered “social climbing;” and dueling amongst the common folk is called “brawling.” In Montaigne, for instance, duels involving members of different social classes are a social impossibility.

This situation allows for — indeed creates — a great deal of overlapping authority with no well-defined legal means for resolving conflicts of jurisdiction. With each militia ready and willing to take up the sword in defense of its employer’s best interest and good name, the everyday business of protecting and moving goods, persons, and property has become extremely volatile in many places, due to both internal and external conflict. Unlike the real world, there is no universal council or legal system charged with hearing international grievances (and even if there were, undoubtedly many would still resort to arms to resolve conflict.) The closest thing is either the Inquisition of the Vendel League but neither was designed for that express purpose.

The Use of Muskets

One of the first questions players ask about Musketeers is “Where are the muskets?” Stories abound showing the Musketeers as masters of the sword, but precious few songs about the glory of gunpowder. First and foremost, shooting people at long range (whether singly or in numbers) is hardly the stuff of legend; swordplay is much better suited to tales of personal heroism, not to mention cinematic role-playing.

Nonetheless, the musket is an essential item in the Musketeer’s martial arsenal. The rapier is a perfect weapon for a self defense and putting a quick stop to a tavern brawl or thwarting a small group of highwaymen (unless they are brandishing firearms). When faced with a rioting mob, a determined gang of well-armed pirates, or a trained force of foreign agents, one must sometimes forgo the glamorous and do what is most efficient.

Muskets are dangerous at both ends. While the relatively enormous range and penetrating power of a gun is indisputable, the musket is an unreliable weapon, almost as likely to misfire, fizzle, or even explode in the hands of the gunner as it is to take down a distant opponent. The technology is improving as Théan gunsmiths work ceaselessly to improve the accuracy and trustworthiness of their weapons, but at present, it takes bravery (some would say foolhardiness) and fortitude to put one’s faith in guns.

The expense of manufacturing these weapons on a large scale, and training and supplying the gunners, restricts the use of muskets to the national military and the wealthiest of the nobility.

Thus, the Musketeers should be trained and ready to act as a substantial national defense against major uprisings and incursion. The assembled Musketeers on a border might not be able to hold off an invading army, but they could (and would be expected to) provide a major delaying action (at the cost of their own survival) until the full might of the nation’s army can be brought to bear. (See *Chapter Three* for more details.)

Foes

Knights and Musketeers are among the most intelligent, best trained, most honorable, and most stylish of people in Théah. Their task is a relatively simple one: to protect the interests of a monarch or regime, guard the downtrodden, deliver justice, rescue the helpless, and prove that they are the best sword fighters in the land. ‘Tis all in a day’s work.

What could possibly convince the best to serve their country? In part, it is the sense of duty and honor that permeates the institution. However, another reason is best summed up by a quote from the noted philosopher Scarovese: “A measure of a man’s greatness is the enemies he has accumulated.” The Musketeer wants to prove both to himself and to others, that he has greatness within him so what better way than to pit himself against those capable of opposing an entire nation?

The villains these heroic Orders face are (or should be) among the most dangerous in the world. While they come in many different forms and identities, they usually have certain characteristics in common. Two of the most important are deviousness and intelligence. The villain does not need to be a scholar but he should be adept at conceiving complex schemes and manipulations with ease. He eschews wicked solutions in favor of far more complicated and devious methods, often using subtlety and connivance (and dirty tricks) to prevent anyone from noticing his villainous nature. This makes it far more difficult to discover who is truly responsible for his crimes and allows many of his plans to escape notice.

Hand in hand with intelligence is the ability to maneuver deftly around courtly antics and political intrigue, regardless of the nation in which she finds herself. For a true villain, manipulation and deceit are as easy as breathing and require almost the same amount of effort, which is to say, very little. She can easily convince others to act on her behalf, which often involves them being completely unaware of what they are doing. This also makes her extremely capable of talking herself out of any difficulty and convincing others of her innocence. Even when her true goals are obvious, her skill in the social arts is usually sufficient to ensure that she will never be convicted of her crimes.

Another reason for the villain's apparent invulnerability is that many possess a high political standing. He might be a nobleman, a high ranking church official, or simply a well-connected courtier. Regardless of his station, he can use his political clout to deflect any investigations from himself and protect those around him. Often he can call on numerous allies and friends who can be counted upon to help him to fulfill his plans and to ensure that any action against him will be fraught with difficulty. A good example would be a high ranking Inquisitor. While many would like to see him dead, none dare move against him for fear of retribution from his Order. It is even possible that he has obtained knowledge that if publicly revealed would destroy his enemies and given it to a minion who will reveal it upon his death.

Another trait of this villain is that he is utterly ruthless, which plays off beautifully against the sense of honor and duty that the knight or Musketeer espouses. All men have agendas and goals, but a villain is willing to go to extreme lengths to achieve his, using methods that would make a lesser man weak in the knees. Also if someone is unwilling to acquiesce to his demands, he may use terminal methods to convince them to do so. For example, if a minor nobleman with deep spheres of influence seeks an elevation to ducal status, he might petition the Crown for such an honor. If the request is refused, he might allow the matter to drop but he is, after all, a villain. He knows the monarch might grant the petition under other circumstances – in exchange for disgracing a rival, during wartime, or perhaps if certain specific incriminating information were made public. The fact that starting a war to obtain a promotion would likely cost the lives of hundreds of men means nothing to him. A true villain is willing to go to these lengths and even further. In dire situation, the villain might simply arrange for the monarch's assassination, believing that the next monarch might be more reasonable. Murder, torture, kidnapping and even causing wars are part of a villain's stock in trade.

Another aspect of the villain is that he must be able to survive an encounter with the Musketeer. It is very satisfying to survive a dramatic conclusion and bring a villain to justice who eluded the heroes' early in the adventure. To do this, however, the villain must have a certain basic ability in combat. He does not need to best the hero, although many villains are as highly skilled in combat as they are in manipulation, but he does need to be able to hold his own for at least a few moments. Personal skill is not necessarily needed; he might maintain a strong bodyguard or perhaps rely upon his political skills to ensure that the Musketeer's own superiors order that no attacks will be made upon him.

Equality in opposition should also extend to other areas of the villain's endeavors. This does not mean that they should be equal in every endeavor, but it does mean that the villain and the hero should be able to interact meaningfully. For example, if a Musketeer is a skilled horseman, the villain should either be an excellent rider or contrive to ensure that they never face each other on horseback, perhaps by allow his minions to deal with the mounted hero. Likewise, if a Musketeer is a sorcerer, the villain does not need to share those powers, but he should be able to counter them or at least survive them. If a Musketeer is able to travel from place to place with *Porté*, the villain should have a *Porté* sorcerer in his employ or be able to communicate with his agents quickly. However, this should not reduce the unique nature of the heroes. For instance, if a hero is extremely skilled at *ajedrez*, his adversary should know the basic rules so they

could play a game complete with cat-and-mouse verbal sparring full of implied threats. The villain does not have to be very skilled and could simply use that time as an opportunity to get to know his opponent better and to make witty banter, or he might be a grandmaster who is toying with the hero to gauge his abilities.

The final characteristic that almost every villain suitable for a Musketeer campaign needs to have is a sense of style. This does not need to apply to his wardrobe, although many villains are snappy dressers. It does mean that the villain should have a presence and a flair that sets him apart. No one will object if a minor thug is bland, but when the heroes face a villain, they need someone exciting and dangerous to challenge them, someone flamboyant or sinister, elegant or crazed, terrifying or incredibly twisted. The only thing — he must not be is boring.

Intelligence, social grace, high standing (or social mobility), an ability to offer sufficient challenge to the heroes, and of course, a more than healthy dose of true panache. While not every villain will match this particular profile exactly, each should possess these traits in fair measure if they are going to be deemed worth of the knight or Musketeer hero, especially one of higher level and skill.

Creating a Knight or Musketeer

"Any fool can gather rabble together and call them by a fancy name but a group cannot achieve greatness without more at its heart than this."

—Stiletto Secundo

While this volume includes the details on some of the chivalric and military organizations throughout Théah, many players wish to create something more personal so we herewith present rules on creating customized Musketeer-type organizations. These are not statistics oriented, but rather offer a guideline for forging something unique.

The first step is to make certain that you wish to create such an organization. This is not a clandestine group that lingers in the shadows or secretly plots to change the world. Musketeers live in the spotlight and mingle with nobles and commoners alike. They are not the brooding silent types who debate or quietly gather information; rather, they thrive in social settings where their devotion to order and their martial skills are in constant demand. They are always ready for battle and very touchy about their honor. If dancing a waltz with a beautiful woman before leaping from a rooftop to stop an assassination sounds like your idea of a perfect night, then hold tightly to your rapier and plunge ahead, good friend.

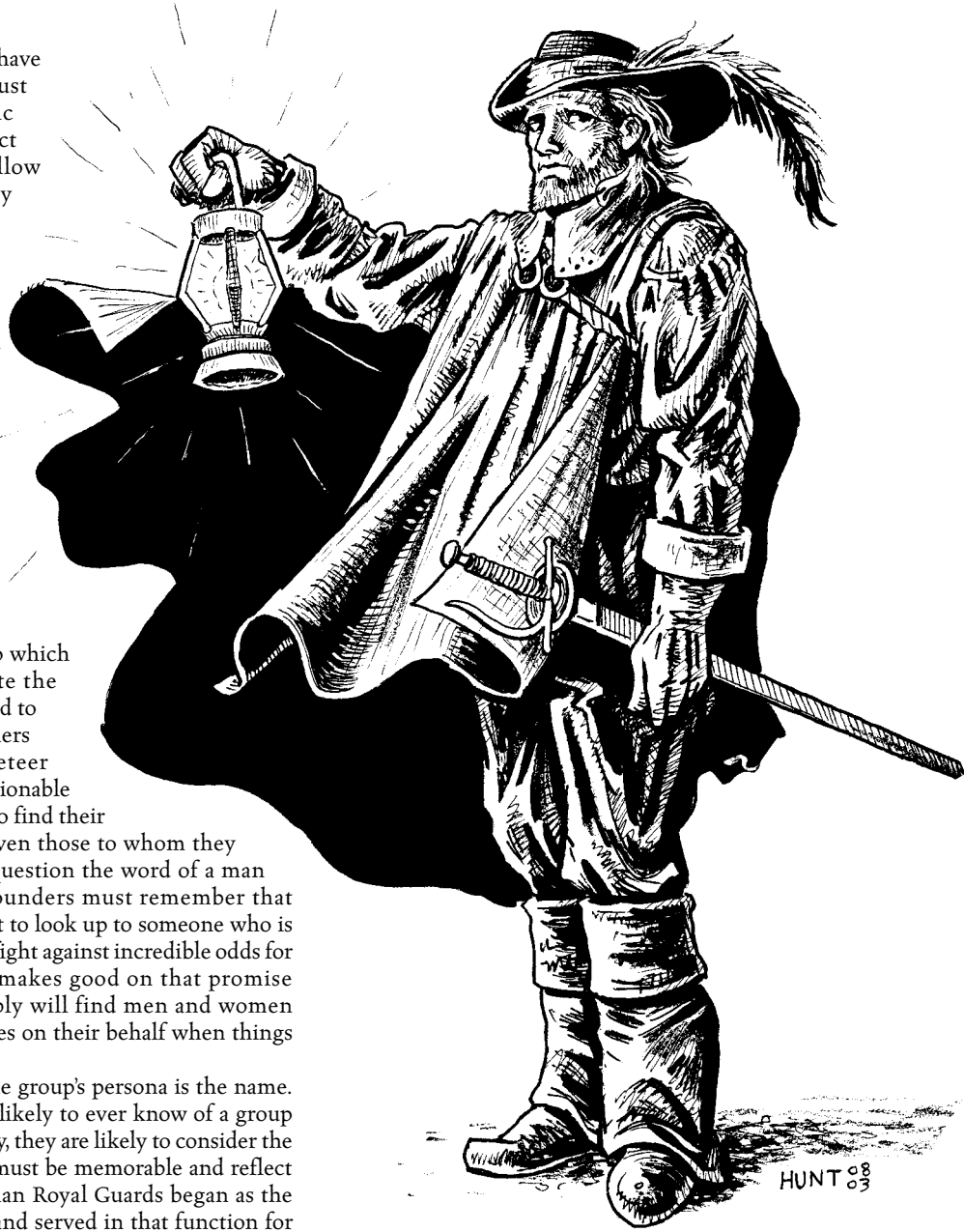
The next step is to select a cause to which your group will dedicate themselves. There are few things sadder than a powerful organization dedicated to trivial matters. Complicated or abstruse causes are not as beneficial as something simple, something universal, something that your group can rally around. Philosophical debates and questions can wait for another day; for now they focus on a single concept. Some groups use their cause as a slogan or motto for their members. For example, the household guards of the Castillian monarchs hold true to a single unifying cause, "For the King!" which sums up their dedication to a unique individual and serves a good rallying cry during difficult times. While some groups take service to a powerful ruler as their cause, other possibilities exist as well such as upholding justice, spreading knowledge, or simply preserving the status quo.

Once the group's founders have selected their cause, they must establish the group's "public persona." Many groups neglect to make this decision and allow their members to act as they choose. A group is defined by the actions of individuals and if one of the members acts in ways the others find reprehensible, it is probably too late to fix by the time the information reaches the leaders. A Musketeer group's public persona will have far greater implications than in most groups like secret societies because Musketeers must interact with the populace on a regular basis.

While a member of a group which secretly elects to manipulate the course of history does not need to worry unduly about what others will think of them, a Musketeer group known to employ questionable means and methods is likely to find their reception decidedly chilly. Even those to whom they have sworn allegiance may question the word of a man known to lie or steal. The founders must remember that people want heroes, they want to look up to someone who is larger than life and willing to fight against incredible odds for what is right. A group that makes good on that promise by acting honorably and nobly will find men and women willing to endanger themselves on their behalf when things become difficult.

One important aspect of the group's persona is the name. The first thing an outsider is likely to ever know of a group is the name. If it is weak or silly, they are likely to consider the group frivolous so the name must be memorable and reflect the group's goals. The Castillian Royal Guards began as the Castillian king's bodyguards and served in that function for several generations, with a reputation for honor and nobility. That role changed when King Carlos, an unworthy braggart, assumed the throne. Despite their misgivings, the Guard served him with distinction until he ordered the death of his brother who was innocent of crime. The commander of the Guards refused and declared that they had been formed to guard the lineage of the monarchs of Castille, not murder the family. Furious, Carlos ordered the commander's death. More than 20 of his men stood beside their doomed commander before the entire court and declared that they would not allow blood to be spilled without cause. Shamed before his own court, Carlos backed down and later abdicated his throne to his brother. The Guards proved their worth and their right to bear the king's own name and became Sandoval's guards. A guardian Order's reputation and willingness to back up its good name with its members' lives is a more powerful force than the king's displeasure.

This also demonstrates another important aspect of being a Musketeer. Musketeers have a strong set of rules and a clear hierarchy. That does not mean that the rules are specific or that



the hierarchy is rigid, however; in fact, often the rules involve nothing more than to live honorably and the hierarchy is merely a handful of men in command. In other cases, there are clearly established rules, rites, and rituals for every contingency. This is completely under the control of the founders and those to whom they answer. The hierarchy creates and enforces the laws by which the group operates and it is these laws which determine what public face the group displays to the world.

Sandoval's Guard has a strong set of rules for their newer members who must serve for a year as a minor member. During that time they are prohibited from telling any untruth, stealing, attacking anyone unprovoked, drinking alcohol, consorting with the opposite sex, and acting against the orders or interests of a senior member of the guard. Once they have proven themselves to have a strong character and noble soul, they become senior members. Senior members are expected to conduct themselves honorably without

specific rules binding their actions. A group of senior officials is selected from the senior members to lead them and determine the correct actions. The ultimate authority of the Guard lies in the hands of the King of Castille.

This brings us to the final aspect of a Musketeer group. While a man's heart may be noble, he is not born a Musketeer. He must be shown how to hold a sword, how to hold courage in his heart, how to embrace what is right and decent. While much of this comes from within himself, he must also be taught. Musketeer groups must devise means of recruiting new members and training them. They must learn the rules and procedures within the Musketeers as well as the proper way to handle themselves. This is usually done by a series of responsibilities and authority that develops over time.

A cause, a public face, a set of rules, a hierarchy, and a training procedure. These are the ingredients to forming a Musketeer group. Beyond that, the group must possess the strength of will and honor, of purpose and dedication that buoys a true Musketeer through the toughest times. Without these ingredients, Musketeers are nothing more than common swordsmen. The group's specific rules, history, life and duties all flow from the basic ingredients mentioned here, but at the heart of all of it lies the Musketeer's soul.



A Musketeer Unit

The size and constituency of any group of Musketeers varies widely. A group may prefer dangerous courier missions that require daring, intelligence, and brilliant swordplay. Another may prefer escort duties for foreign dignitaries, that require daring, intelligence, and brilliant wordplay. One sizable association of Musketeers consists up entirely of women who have narrowly escaped a horrible arranged marriage. These formidable ladies take pride in maintaining order at the Orphanage of Charouse and in the Musketeer's Academy itself. A similar, though smaller, group of gentlemen Musketeers exists who are eager to accept courier missions that take them as far away from Charouse as possible. Other small contingents contain pairs who were forbidden to marry and joined the Musketeers together, and still others who seem quite content without the company of the opposite sex at all.

Organization

Before the Revolution, the Musketeers were the closest thing Montaigne has to a national police force. Considered elite soldiers of Montaigne's military, and more importantly from armed retainers of the noble families, the Musketeers enforce l'Empereur's will throughout the nation. Using the military as a law enforcement tool is a time-honored tradition; the army is a large, blunt tool, and not well suited to the more advanced needs of an evolving political landscape.

The rise of the middle class engendered a dangerous trend for the lower classes to embrace the radical idea that they might have a say in their own destinies. The Musketeers are also a singularly unique enterprise in that commoners and nobles can be seen to interact based on rank rather than class. This has had a subtle but profound impact on the psyche of the country, where for centuries commoners and nobles were assumed to be almost different species. This is not to say, of course, that bigotry, racism, and elitism have all disappeared or even abated to any great degree. But to those thinkers perceptive and observant about such things, there are signs of a shift in attitudes.

The Company

Although technically a branch of the army, the Musketeers are organized more along the lines of a religious order or secular society. As noted above, there are five recognized ranks: Captain, Lieutenant 1st Class, Lieutenant 2nd Class, Sergeant, and Corporal. The head of the Musketeers is the Captain-General. Various support functions are performed by hired staff, i.e., maintenance of the armory, the kitchen, the clerks' office, and general housekeeping, performed by hired servants or family retainers who have accompanied their charges from home.

THE CAPTAIN-GENERAL

The Captain heads the Company of Musketeers. Before the Revolution, Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné held this position. Upon the death of Aristide Baveux, a quiet but intense man named Thierry du

Lamolle assumed the leadership position. He may not be as dashing as his predecessors but knows how to keep the Order intact during these troubled and unstable times. Membership in the Order of the Rose + Cross is actually a benefit here, as Lamolle knows how to keep a secret.

THE LIEUTENANTS (1ST AND 2ND CLASS)

The Lieutenants of the Musketeers are the administrators of the Company, and act as liaisons to the courts of the Crown and the various provincial nobility, merchant guilds and local governments, and embassies of a Musketeer Residence Post. A Lieutenant maintains the facilities of the Residence and supervises contact with the local population. It is not a requirement that one be from a noble or rich family to achieve this rank but this policy is relatively new and old habits die hard, so the bulk of the Lieutenantcy are, in fact, held by Musketeers from noble families. The excuse for continuing this practice revolves around the idea that aristocrats deal better with aristocrats.

THE SERGEANTS

A Sergeant of the Musketeers is in charge of a contingent of Musketeers. The number assigned to the unit is usually between two and eight (including the Sergeant). Above that, a Lieutenant is usually in command.

THE CORPORALS

The title of Corporal is rarely used outside of the Academy. Musketeers generally address the Captain of Musketeers by title and all others by their name (or sword-name), unless the situation calls for heightened discipline. To the general population anyone wearing the Sun Tabard is a "Musketeer" and indeed, this is sufficient honor for many Musketeers.

Recruiting

One may be recruited by an existing Musketeer or may apply to the Academy, but the first class of the year is only open to applicants who have served three years in the regular military, except under extraordinary circumstances.

The Musketeer Academy

It is not enough to be willing to serve or to be good with weapons. A Musketeer has other skills which are developed initially during the first six months of training, at the end of which is a rigorous week-long series of tests. Only 10% of the applicants pass the tests and move on to the three-year training process, during which they rise at 5 am and work for 12 hours. Of those, fewer than half are invited to take the Oath and join the Company.

The Cadre

One's fellow Musketeers are an endlessly diverse lot but one can, however unfairly in some cases, make a few generalizations about the people one will encounter in the service. The broadly drawn stereotypes that follow reflect only the most commonplace examples; each individual will, of course, have unique circumstances that defy the norm. The Musketeer should be bound by nothing so ordinary as a cross-section of pigeonholes.

Despite a growing egalitarian camaraderie of the Company of Musketeers, it is still a truism that "blood will tell." Whatever the circumstances of one's family, and however one may embrace or despise it, one is always a product of one's class.

THE NOBLES

A member of the aristocracy will join the Musketeers because of their family. Most aristocrats in the Company can be divided into two camps: those who serve Montaigne to (a) bring honor to the family or (b) escape from the family. Being a Musketeer is an apparently comfortable alternative to standard military service, and some of the nobly born have, to their surprise, found themselves rising to the occasion. If they do not, they may find their time in the Company cut short.

One will encounter every type from the good-hearted noble who cares deeply and genuinely for his fellow countrymen regardless of rank to the disdainful Porté sorceress who keeps her gloves on as much to avoid contact with the lower classes as anything else.

THE GENTRY

Entering the Company can be a dream come true for those whose families seek to better themselves. The sons and daughters of wealthy merchants are often quite popular, especially when Mama and Papa send gifts to be shared amongst their scion's companions. It is not unheard of for a young lady Musketeer to attract the attention of a young nobleman, although he had better be on his best behavior or he could find himself at the business end of a very sharp weapon.

THE COMMONERS

One of the social benefits of being a Musketeer, at least for a commoner, is having license to do the same thing that a noble can do and even more, be accepted (at least superficially) by those whom one emulates.

Family Benefits

Du Montaigne: There are currently no "spare" members of the Montaigne family and if there were, they would probably not be found among the Company of Musketeers.

Allais du Crioux: The additional income of 100G per month does not go directly to the Musketeer, but is instead contributed "anonymously" to his or her Post.

Flaubert du Doré: The additional 150G per month does not go directly to the Musketeer, but is instead contributed "anonymously" to his or her Post.

Riche du Paroisse: The listed cost in the 7th Sea™ system of 12 HP to choose the Self-controlled Virtue as one's Arcana is waived, and Hot-headed Hubris is disallowed. A steady, levelheaded Riche would make a fine Musketeer, but would be an atypical member of the family. D20™ players should consult with the GM about choosing Self-controlled as an Arcana; however, Hot-Headed is disallowed in this system the same as it is in 7th Sea.

Leveque d'Aur: No changes. Children of this martial family generally go into the military service (and rise quickly), but not in the Musketeers.

Duboise du Arrent: No changes. While not the known for producing the best fighters in the land, the Duboise family is well known and well liked, except among those segments of the aristocracy who make it a habit to dislike everyone. Members of this family are well suited for the diplomatic and liaison aspects of the Musketeers duties.

Valroux du Martise: No changes; however, the Valroux are an insular family, and the few who have dedicated themselves to the good of the nation have become outcasts. As such, a Valroux Musketeer would guard his true name very

closely, and can expect no public financial support from the family. The suspected connections of the Valroux family with extensive black market activities and smuggling makes the position of the Valroux Musketeer a bit of a moral challenge.

Bisset du Verre: No changes. The Bisset family is proud of their children in the Musketeers, and happy to make use of the information that their children (often inadvertently) supply regarding politics and the economy.

Étalon du Toille: The Étalon Musketeer does not give half her income to charity, as does the rest of her family. She is well provided for from home because she is regarded as a charity herself, which permits her family to fulfill its obligation. She in turn donates ALL of her salary, which enables her to make her obligatory donation and everyone feels very virtuous.

Gaulle dul Motte: If using a Sword Name, the Gaulle Musketeer does not suffer the loss of Reputation die when in a major Montaigne city. It must be said, however, that a Musketeer from the Gaulle family is not the first choice to be assigned to diplomatic or court missions. On the other hand, the acquaintance of the family with things arcane is quite valuable, and when such a situation arises, the scholarship of the Gaulle Musketeer is put to good use.

Sices du Sices: No changes. The Sices du Sices Musketeer will mostly likely serve in a diplomatic capacity, at an embassy or guild, although not, perhaps, at court. While the Sices du Sices family honors and respects their family member's service in the Musketeers, it is not something one needs to be reminded of in person on a daily basis.

Michel du Gloyure: No changes. The Michel family is a poor one, but proud and honorable. The lack of Sorcery does not limit the Michel Musketeer from full service in the Society, although a Lieutenancy of a Post might be difficult what with the dependence on Porté for communications. The Michel family's curious resistance to Sorcery makes them a special case: difficult when sent via Porté, but valuable when faced with a sorcerous opponent.

Deneuve du Surlign: No changes. Unlike other noble families, where their Musketeer family members are seen as a bit of an embarrassment or

a letdown, the Deneuve have literally shoved their children through the Academy door. As masters of information management, they recognize the value of a nationwide intelligence network of intelligence and the value of the wide-ranging writ of the Musketeers. The Deneuve Musketeer is well provided for, which is good because the demands for information from the family are relentless.

Du Lac and du Paix: There are several du Lac Musketeers, and countless du Paix, but their true family connections are a well-kept secret. No provisions from home for these social outcasts, they still manage to serve their country to the best of their abilities.

(See *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for more information about Arcana.)



CHAPTER TWO:

All For One

The Montaigne Musketeers

For much of Montaigne's history, a nobleman could expect to exercise more or less unfettered power over his lands and the people thereupon. Only a noble of higher rank or L'Empereur himself could supercede his word. Thus, the higher one's rank, the fewer number of people who could interfere with you. Reasons for travelling outside one's own borders were few: battling with neighboring nobility over borders, property or spouses; service in foreign wars; the rare religious pilgrimage or trade negotiation; or travelling to or from Court (for the purpose of doing battle with one's neighbors over borders, property or spouses).

Before the Revolution, there were three levels of law in Montaigne: Imperial, Ducal, and Regional. The Musketeers have gained their position in pre-Revolutionary Montaigne as the primary law-enforcement officers of the land. Their duties include hunting criminals, attending and sometimes arbitrating legal arguments, and keeping the peace. Answerable directly to l'Empereur, the Musketeers are not beholden to any noble nor bound by any oath of fealty to any lesser lord or their own family. This gives them the freedom to execute l'Empereur's will throughout the length and breadth of Montaigne as they see fit, for better or for worse.

Laws in Montaigne are different depending on your rank; the higher you are the less severe the penalty. At court, a noble's word overrules all but the highest-ranking Musketeer present, while a Musketeer's word is equal to that of three commoners. That was before the Revolution, of course.

In post-Revolution Montaigne, the law is whatever the Parlement says it is this minute. Or the fellow with the biggest cadre of mercenaries or the most weapons says it is — all in all, a confusing situation if you lack the rank to assert yourself.

History of the Order

The origins of the noble Musketeers lie in an otherwise insignificant company of soldiers and a petty squabble between King Léon XII of Montaigne and Emperor Siegfried II of Eisen. The 3rd Musket Company was raised on 12 Corantine 1593 at Lière-Vallée, close to the border with Eisen. During the war, die Grenzeräuber, one of Siegfried's elite companies, had struck far into Montaigne and headed undetected for Léon's encampment at Lière-Vallée. During a routine drill, the 3rd Musket Company stumbled upon Siegfried's soldiers. The hardened Eisen veterans outnumbered the Montaigne recruits two to one, but they had not counted upon the devotion of the untested soldiers to their King. While a small detachment of soldiers made haste for the town to spirit Léon to safety, the rest formed a firing line and prepared to make the Eisen pay in blood for every step they took. The battle raged for hours, surprising the Eisen commander almost as much as the fervor that overtook the troops facing him. Such was the Montaigne recruits' ferocity that they fought on despite being grievously wounded. Using musket, bayonet, rapier and fist they drove the Eisen warriors back from Lière-Vallée, although they sustained casualties that would have routed more seasoned soldiers.

"They fought like madmen," the Eisen general recalled. "Yet I can do no more than hope that I would fight like that were my ruler threatened as theirs was on that day."

The day after the battle of Lièrre-Vallée, King Léon XII appeared in public flanked by the men who had helped him to safety. He summoned the soldiers of the 3rd Musket Company to the town square and stood among the soldiers who had fought so bravely on his behalf. He ordered the ranking Lieutenant of the Company, François Duarte de Levignac, to stand before him. Without ceremony, the King unbuckled his own sword and presented it to the soldier. As Levignac accepted the blade and fell on his knees before l'Empereur, they let out a great roar and so the Royal Musketeers were born.

Levignac set to work almost immediately to rebuild his company charged by royal decree to protect the people and the ruler of Montaigne. As the story of the battle at Lièrre-Vallée spread throughout the surrounding provinces, the new Captain of the Musketeers found himself awash in a sea of eager recruits who hoped to further the honor of their country. They wanted to take the fight to the Eisen Emperor himself, an ambition that the wiser Levignac did not share.

After three days spent herding patriotic youths around a makeshift headquarters in a barn outside Lièrre-Vallée, Captain Levignac reached his wits' end and tried to gain an audience with General Anatole Praise du Rachtisse. The General refused because he was "too busy with the problems of real soldiers to attend to Léon's new toys." Exasperated and more than a little aggravated, Levignac made for the King's camp. After a brief meeting with l'Empereur, the Musketeers had been formed fully with their code and oath laid down by their Captain and their ruler. Léon XII and Levignac created the strictures that would govern their lives, the rules by which they would live, and the duties they would perform in both peace and war. A mere thousand strong, they would be more than soldiers – they would be the King's justice and mercy made visible, the shield of the monarch and people of Montaigne. They would be the symbol of their country's honor. Levignac returned to the farm, announced the new duties, and drew the first 1,000 volunteers from the 3rd Musket Company assembled there.

The Musketeers continued to serve with honor throughout the brief war with Eisen. Their distinctive blue and silver tabards, bearing the personal crest of l'Empereur, became synonymous with courage. Although many within the military disliked the small cadre of soldiers who answered to none save l'Empereur, they could not fault their prowess or their zeal in defending Montaigne. In the last days of the war, however, Levignac and Praise du Rachtisse had a fateful argument. The General was in favor of pushing east and raiding Eisen territory, and anted to use the Musketeers as proven fighters used to working in small units to do so. Levignac refused.

"We fight to defend our people," he said, "not to heap blood-soaked glory at your feet." Praise du Rachtisse was furious, and struck the Captain a blow that left him forever blind in his left eye. Levignac did not return the General's assault, but turned and left without losing his composure despite the injury. The insult to his honor was terrible but Levignac believed he would accomplish nothing by striking a fellow officer. His perceived cowardice, was enough to prompt General Praise du

Rachtisse to issue an order that no soldier in the armies of Montaigne was to enlist in the Musketeers, an order that would never be obeyed in spirit, at least.

With the experience of the military officially denied to them, the Musketeers began a somewhat less conventional recruiting policy in their formative years, one that still influences their methods and teaching. Hearing of their difficulties, three fencing masters of the illicit Valroux style, including Simon Praise du Rachtisse, the General's nephew, offered their services to the Musketeers without offering any details about their background.

Over time, the raw soldiers and recruits of the Musketeers were shaped into experts with the blade and a grueling regimen in the art of fencing became a central part of all Musketeers training. Léon XII's interest in his protectors did not fade after the war, either. Upon their entry to Charouse in Septimus 1594, the Musketeers discovered their barracks included a freshly constructed building of wood designed to house an academy for scholarship and the study of law. If the Musketeers were to bring l'Empereur's justice to Montaigne, Léon reasoned it would be best if they knew something about it. The Musketeers were taught to read and write, and instructed in domestic and foreign law, politics, etiquette, and philosophy. With the finest scholars in Montaigne at the monarch's disposal, their education was nothing, if not comprehensive.

Throughout the first decade of their existence, the Musketeers were distrusted by much of the aristocracy despite Léon's faith in them. Many saw them as nothing more than enforcers of his will who ignored ancient traditions and the nobles' decrees to bolster Léon's reputation at the expense of his loyal servants. It mattered little to the nobles that the laws the Musketeers upheld were just or that they kept the peace or that bandits and highwaymen were few and far between where the Musketeers rode. They saw nothing but loss of their reputation and loss of their precious revenue. Many corrupt aristocrats saw their power erode as l'Empereur's arbitrators settled dispute after dispute. They did not care if their workers were happier or better fed. They felt Léon was being insolent for daring to challenge them on their home soil, and they grew furious. Bitter accusations were raised against the Musketeers at court, the expense of maintaining them as a unit was questioned, and their investigations in rural Montaigne were thwarted by the landowning classes, lords and ladies who saw themselves above monarch and Theus in their domain.

The stubborn resentment of the landed nobility was nothing compared to the hatred the Lightning Guard held for the Musketeers. To the elite Guardsmen, the Musketeers upstarts, and Lucien du Montaigne, Captain of the Lightning Guard, actually believed that the Musketeers were after his position and indeed his life.

Hostility between the Musketeers and the Lightning Guard became openly violent in 1605, when several young Musketeers were provoked into fighting by members of the King's Guard. What started as a brawl outside a lace factory ended up as a duel with the death of two Musketeers. Léon XIII, as yet a young and untried King, could not be seen to favor the Musketeers over his own Guards, nor could he be seen to ignore the injustice that had been done to the people's protectors by his men. Du Montaigne lobbied for the expulsion of the Musketeers from Charouse, claiming that

the Guard could defend the city better without enduring assaults from “Levignac’s army,” as he called them. It was du Montaigne’s suspicions, however, that would be his undoing.

Convinced the Musketeers planned to do away with him and eradicate the Lightning Guard with one fell swoop, he sent two dozen men to Montaigne’s Pride with enough gunpowder and oil to flatten it and burn down half the city. The plot was detected in time, and du Montaigne’s accomplices confessed everything. Du Montaigne was executed (the first member of the Royal Family to be hanged in over three centuries), and Léon XIII issued an injunction stating that the duty of the Musketeers was to protect Montaigne, and the duty of the Lightning Guard was to protect the ruler. While there has been some debate over exactly how well this injunction was followed; it transformed the bloody vendetta between the two Orders into a more bloodless rivalry.

Over the next few decades, the Musketeers cemented their position as Montaigne’s primary enforcers of the law. They endured an attempted coup from within their Order in 1623 by then-Captain Sebastien LeFarge and the turbulence of the Camille Regency, as well as the early years of Léon XIV’s reign. Throughout the forty years of imperial rule the Musketeers stood loyally by their monarch, as he became increasingly autocratic. By 1659, when Jean-Marie Rois et Reines was appointed Captain to replace Claude Desaix du Paix, some were already having their doubts about l’Empereur’s true motives. Jean-Marie himself was regarded as a political placement by many within the Musketeers, although the quiet young man would become one of the most beloved leaders in the history of the Order.

Throughout the 1660s, l’Empereur continued his policies of whim and venom against his subjects, placing the Musketeers in a very awkward position. While many simply obeyed out of habit or a misplaced sense of honor, some began a quiet rebellion against l’Empereur’s cruelties. The chaos caused by the Inquisition’s invasion of Montaigne and the subsequent retaliation against Castille caused l’Empereur to tighten his grip on the country, forcing an ever greater burden onto the peasants who toiled for his glory as the invincible Montaigne war machine marched ever onward.

Misgivings crept into the heart of more and more Musketeers as they were ordered to arrest priests, search the houses of families they had known for years, and arrest people they knew had done no wrong save to be poor. In Charouse, the Musketeers most directly in the eye of l’Empereur struggled with their conscience – they were sworn to obey the King, yet they were sworn to protect the people. All but stricken with guilt, the Musketeers tried to do all they could to ease the suffering of the people under the heel of their tyrannical ruler. A series of military and personal disasters throughout 1668 brought on a fresh wave of vindictive oppression and the streets of Charouse erupted in rioting. The Musketeers were summoned to quell the disturbances along with the Lightning Guard. When ordered to open fire on the crowds, of the 150 Musketeers assembled, only four complied.

Enraged beyond sanity, Léon disbanded the Musketeers. Throughout the days of the Revolution, the Musketeers continued to act to protect the people of Montaigne, calming mobs, saving the lives of soldiers trapped by rioting peasants, spirited nobles away from dangerous areas and hunting down bandits who took advantage of the chaos to prey on the defenseless. The duel between Remy du Montaigne and

Jean-Marie Rois et Reines took place on the steps of the Chateau du Soleil in front of hundreds of peasants, and made the Captain of the Musketeers a hero of the Revolution. Although he almost died at the hands of l’Empereur’s bodyguard, he was saved by his brother Musketeers and his actions saved many from death at the hands of the Lightning Guard, who had slain two hundred peasants in repelling the attack on the Chateau.

Throughout the last months of 1668, the Musketeers operated independently to keep the peace in Montaigne as the Du Montaigne regime collapsed, ensuring that the country was not swept away on a tide of blood. Their actions gathered such renown that, when Parlement was formed on 7 Nonus 1668, one of their first acts was to demand the reforming of the Musketeers. Aristide Baveaux, Master of the Knights of the Rose + Cross, was beseeched by Parlement to replace Jean-Marie as Captain, as the latter was still in exile with his wife in Wische. Baveaux accepted and led the newly recreated Musketeers forward into a bold new age of hope.

Such hope was not to last long, however. On 15 Julius 1669, Royalists assassinated Baveaux. The Musketeers wasted no time and swept the country looking for their Captain’s killers, working with the Knights of the Rose + Cross at every step. The execution of the killers, as well as the ostentatious funerals of the deceased Council members, whipped the people of Montaigne into a paranoid frenzy. Anyone could be an enemy; anyone could be plotting to bring down the state. Suspicion is the order of the day in Montaigne, and many are executed each day on the blood-soaked blade of Le Coiffeur.

Unable to stand by and see evils done in the name of Liberty, the Musketeers have silently opposed the Council, Parlement, and the Committee for National Welfare by covertly aiding the unjustly accused in escaping from Montaigne and seeing that justice is done. Even while the Council limits their ability to deal with traitors and political criminals, they strike a blow for Liberty in a nation that has forgotten all too swiftly the meaning of the word. They oppose the injustices of the people as much as they opposed the injustices of the King. The times they live in are darker than ever, yet the fear and suspicion that surrounds the Order can never swallow it. Their bond of Brotherhood is stronger than blood and stronger than ideology. They are first, last, and always Musketeers.

The Use of the Sword Name

As the ranks of the Musketeers became peppered with the scions of noble houses or people wishing to escape associations with their family name, their family’s history, or their family in its entirety, the use of the Sword Name came into common practice. The name a Musketeer chooses (or more likely that is chosen by an associate) is used exclusively in public and in private, even in the official records of the Academy. This affords the Musketeer some protection from the inevitable social pressures that might be brought to bear against his or her family. (Note: Probably the most famous swordnames in real-world literature are Athos, Aramis, and Porthos.)

Before the Revolution, it would have been shocking to hear that a Duke's son was escorting mule trains from one town to another or that the daughter of a Count was sitting at the next table drinking with the son of the wool merchant in a seedy port tavern. They were all simply and proudly "Musketeers." This anonymity served to minimize scandal, favoritism, kidnapping attempts, and feuds. The Captain-General knew the identities of every last one of his Musketeers but l'Empereur probably did not. That knowledge was and is held as sacrosanct and inviolate as the confessional.

Not all family relationships are quite so negative. By and large, most families are proud of their children who wear the Sun Tabard, and look forward to the day when a mission will bring their valiant offspring back home. In the absence of a pressing mission, it is an easy matter for a Musketeer to obtain leave to go home for weddings, births, funerals, or a simple visit.

There are rare occasions when circumstances may intervene so that a Musketeer may wish to petition l'Empereur for release from the Oath and the Order to return to secular life. A death in the family is the most common or when a family business may be at stake. At least one Musketeer was granted such leave to take up the mantle of a Duke. The choice in such circumstances is completely in the hands of the Musketeer. The Oath to l'Empereur trumps any other obligation or responsibility.

The Musketeer enjoys an unthinkable freedom from burdensome responsibility and unwonted familial association. While entry into the Musketeers is certainly no sanctuary for wrongdoers, it is a haven for many. Allowed to mix freely with those of other classes in society, the nobly born find they have much in common and much to learn from the gentry and the commoner. Unlike the Army, where association is strictly regulated, Musketeers are free to form groups and associations of their own. Since the Musketeers are expected to be well-traveled, a company often moves all across Montaigne, taking on tasks from one Post that will lead them to another, and from there to another. If the members of the group fall in love with a particular place (or persons in a particular place), they may well establish more-or-less permanent residence in a Post. Sometimes older Musketeers, having seen their share of the world and served their 30 years, will return to a favorite place and live the remainder of their life as an Intendent.

The Use of Porté

Any group of Montaigne nobles is bound to include someone gifted with Porté. While many of the Musketeers from noble families have this sorcerous ability, some have eschewed the training, and rejected the use of magic. Others consider it a considerable advantage, and do not shy away from its use. In fact, the prevalence and use of Porté in the upper echelons of the Musketeers has allowed the organization to function so effectively. Although not publicly declared, the Captain-General's office, the Academy, each and every Post, and many of the veteran companies have one or more Porté wielding Musketeers on hand. A sophisticated code and messaging protocol has evolved, the systematic and organized application of which allows the Musketeers to maintain the single most effective and widespread communication network in Montaigne, perhaps in all of Théah, second only to Sophia's Daughters. The public is blissfully unaware of how a unit always seems to be in the right place at the right time.

As a back-up (or perhaps a cover), a superior employment of the standard horse relay is in place, and credited with keeping the organization's excellent level of awareness and response.

It is intriguing to consider how Musketeers seem to be waiting for escaping criminals at the right out-of-the-way inn, how shipments of contraband are intercepted as they cross the border, or how an unusually large number of Musketeers seemed to be on hand to quell unrest in a village. The nobility knows exactly what is going on, but as long as it does not interfere with their own plots, they leave well enough alone. The Church may suspect but to accuse a Musketeer of heresy is in essence to take on l'Empereur himself. To the Church, the minions of a demon are demons themselves.

Porté sorcery is not a specific requirement for Captaincy but it often seems to work out that way. Being responsible for a Post means being responsible for matching companies to missions and many of those missions come from the Captain-General via the Dispatch Box. Keeping the Captain-General informed of the goings-on in the local demesne of the Post also means frequent and dependable use of the Dispatch Box. Thus the function of a Captain is, on the surface, is to be in charge of a Post and the Musketeers in residence, while in fact, it is to be a key link in a nation-wide, highly efficient, reliable and secure information network.

The Problem of "Excess" Nobles

In pre-Revolution Montaigne, as the Musketeer organization grew, it became a favorite dumping ground for "surplus" nobility. Serving in the Army exposed one to many horrors including possible disfigurement, as well as hard work, deprivation, and association with common people. Holy orders had its own drawbacks as well. Chaffing has obvious drawbacks as it occluded bloodlines to the point of utter confusion. For many noble families, sending younger sons and daughters off to the capital to train as a Musketeer had a certain appeal. The young darlings were in a position of authority (for which they were destined, even if there was no room for them at home). Housed in the capital (which could benefit the family), they were under close supervision (always a good thing) and eating out of someone else's larder (even better).

This is not to say that idle young nobles could expect a free ride; those unwilling to exert themselves physically and mentally were sent home. For those who were willing, the Musketeers proved to be a blessing; they were accepted on the strength of their efforts, tasked to their abilities, and able to rise on their own merit.

The Musketeers became a haven for excess children, the dispossessed, inconvenient bastards, and those who wanted to escape their past. All honored l'Empereur and Montaigne, and hoped to find adventure, honor, glory, fame, and fortune. This had a curious consequence. The populace began to think of the Musketeers as being "outside" the traditional hierarchy of commoner/gentry/noble. In the past, nobles were the law, and therefore beyond the law. Ordinarily one would have to deputize another noble to do the job, but with so many people who laid claim to some degree of nobility, it became impractical. One would still send a Duke to arrest a Duke, of course, on some terrible charge (high treason is about all there was), but someone had to deal with baronets involved

in drunken street brawls over a high-priced Jenny. The local constabulary cannot be expected to deal with such situations; more accurately, drunken baronets cannot be expected to forbear drawing steel on a commoner. The idea of soldiers dragging off anyone, highborn or low, however well deserved it might be, makes everyone uncomfortable. As a (probably nobly born) agent of the Crown, a Musketeer performing those functions is much less an offense to the social order, not to mention to the nobleman being arrested.

Prior to the Revolution, a member of the gentry joined the Musketeers to gain access to better education, greater opportunity, more freedom, and the chance to achieve the aforesaid adventure, honor and glory. A psychological undercurrent amongst the gentry and the lower classes was perhaps a desire to see the Rule of Law (as represented by the Musketeers) become stronger and more established,



and to have a hand in that as well. Thus, the regard for the Musketeers amongst the common folk was actually quite strong, if for no other reason than they were seen as a group that can stand up to a local tyrant.

A Musketeer did not earn a fortune. It was sufficient to maintain a reasonable lifestyle, but certainly nothing as lavish as the life that many of the recruits had left back on their family estates. As the ranks of the Musketeers became filled with the children of the well-to-do or with the well-to-do themselves, presents from home (anonymous, of course) became a highly desirable feature. This had both benefits and disadvantages. It allowed l'Empereur to keep the payroll

and expenses for maintaining the Musketeers relatively low, by pointing to the well-provisioned Musketeers.

It did not, however, reduce the possibility of bribery of Musketeers or the opportunity to create coteries within the organization that sustained a hierarchy based on nobility.

Duties

Even in Post-Revolution Montaigne, the Musketeers perform the same duties they always have: maintaining justice and order. Their original duty as a police force sprang from the

Léon XII's original founding of the Order, and was further reinforced by Léon XIII's

in 1605. The Musketeers maintain a garrison of at least ten men in any town with a population greater than 500 and those soldiers are also considered the police service of any outlying villages. All Musketeers receive some training in investigative work as well as judicial process, and are empowered to pursue, question, and arrest suspects.

They are also empowered to pursue witnesses and bring them to court if they feel their testimony will be relevant to the trial in question.

Musketeers write the Judicial Briefings, submitted to a judge in order to acquaint them with the facts of each case put before them. Respected throughout Théah for their impartiality and honesty, it is the Musketeers who ensure that the wheels of Justice turn in Montaigne.

Musketeers also find themselves empowered with far-reaching rights of search, requiring no higher authority than their own word to enter into and search any building in Montaigne, be it inhabited by peasant or nobleman.

With neither great numbers nor the entrenched bureaucracy endemic in the legal system, Musketeers were able to achieve startling results against Montaigne's criminals when

they were first formed. Even today, they have managed to retain a reputation of almost superhuman ability and unshakable dedication that has made them more feared than any other enemy in the eyes of most criminals.

Since the Revolution, they have invoked a rarely used right, to take the life of an enemy who threatens them without issuing warning. This right – granted to them by a young Léon XIV as part of his broader scheme to diminish the authority of Cardinal d'Argeneau's private guard — has been more effective than any warning the Musketeer might issue, and has saved many lives in its time. All a Musketeer need do is loosen his blade in its scabbard, and many criminals will surrender on the spot. Despite this right to kill in self-defense, most Musketeers will never take the life of an enemy. They have been trained to have utmost faith in the

judicial system, and see themselves as more honorable than any base killer. As most Musketeers are excellent swordsmen, any foe facing them will usually find himself disarmed and marched off to in short order. Though they have a great range of powers, the Musketeers were never intended to replace the judicial system, merely accelerate its workings. Thus a Musketeer will never sentence a criminal, but the testimony of a Musketeer carries more weight than any other evidence. It is this unique position that has made the Order respected — they have never abused their power, but rather they have used it to safeguard the innocent and punish the guilty with responsibility and honor.

As arbitrators, the Musketeers fill an important role in rural Montaigne politics. While initially resented by the nobility for their ability to intercede in matters that they viewed as being none of the King's business, they eventually relented in the face of overwhelming public and royal support for the Order. Their duties as arbitrators involve settling many of the small claims that would ordinarily mire the Civil Courts, such as field boundaries, land rights and damages claims. The judgment of a Musketeer in this matter is final, and is accorded with the respect the Order has earned.

During the Queen Camille's regency, the right to arbitrate in property disputes involving a nobleman as a party was revoked, and this allowed the nobility to profit at the expense of their tenants. The gains incurred from this were passed on at least in part to Queen Camille by grateful nobles, fostering hatred for the Crown in the hearts of the people. Although Léon XIV restored many of the Musketeers' powers upon reaching his majority, the right to arbitrate over the disputes of nobility was not something L'Empereur thought fit to entrust to his subjects. Divorcing their civic responsibilities from the needs of the aristocracy brought the Musketeers closer to the citizenry they protected. The Musketeers performed many smaller tasks, initially as favors but later simply as part of their unofficially accepted duties. Musketeers found themselves working reading letters, writing, filing documents and checking receipts of taxation, particularly in villages far from the urban centers of Charouse

The Oath

The Oath taken prior to acceptance into the ranks of the Musketeers commanded that the inductees give all to the furtherance of l'Empereur's will which the Musketeers themselves adjudicated throughout the land, ready to carry out any commands they receive from the Captain-General, acting on behalf of the monarch. In the meantime, they were expected to conduct themselves with an appropriate degree of dignity that reflected well on the Crown and Company, and keep a watchful eye for subversive or illegal activities. They are not officially directed to intervene in the actions of the local constabulary unless such is conducted in such a way that contravenes the will of l'Empereur or the Captain-General's orders.

Because the Oath always referred to the nation rather than the monarch, there was no need to alter the wording after the Revolution. Those who long for the return of the monarchy can take the Oath aloud and nurture their own wishes in their hearts.

and Paix. Their willingness to help even in the smallest of things endeared them to the people of Montaigne more than any great and noble act of war ever could.

In the aftermath of the Revolution, the role of the Musketeers has been altered slightly but significantly. After Quintus 1669, when royalist members of La Couronne proposed that Parlement install Anne du Montaigne and Jean-Marie Rois et Reines as Regents, riots swept Charouse and reactionaries among La Vallée demanded that plots against the freedom of the Republic such as the Couronne proposal be rooted out and thwarted. The Council, attempting to maintain a balance of idealism and practicality, demanded of the Musketeers that one man in every twenty report to Charouse. This draft, consisting of a mere fifty volunteers, was put to the exclusive task of hunting down enemies of the state, royalists and counter-revolutionaries. Unhappy at their task, the Musketeers nonetheless pursued it with zeal, tracking down anyone that could be proved to be working against the Republic and bringing them to trial where they could. They persisted for months, yet found little evidence of any organized pro-royalist plot.

Then, on the 15 Julius 1669, they were to bear witness to the events of Bloody Feast Day. Unable to save the life of their own leader, the Musketeers swore that the assassins would not go unpunished. Working in conjunction with the Knights of the Rose + Cross, they scoured Montaigne and tracked the conspirators to an abandoned noble estate outside Dechaine. In less than a month, the villains behind Bloody Feast Day had been brought to justice. After their execution, Arnaud du Charouse petitioned Parlement to create a new branch of government devoted to hunting down enemies of the state. Statement 15 was approved overwhelmingly, and the Committee for National Welfare arose to find and purge all those who would plot against Montaigne. Though the Musketeers are pleased that the burden of finding and punishing political criminals is no longer theirs to bear, they cannot help but look to the Committee as part of a newer and more bloodthirsty Montaigne. Compassion and mercy are not the watchwords of the Committee's version of justice, and they are ever watchful for signs of doubt and disloyalty. They are above the laws they claim to enforce, and the Musketeers make sure to keep a watchful eye on their activities.

Organization

"On this day, I [state your name] hereby pledge allegiance to the people of Montaigne. May their strength be my guide now and forever. May I resist temptation and be fair and honest in all manners. May my sword and tabard remind me of who I am and of the responsibility I bear. May my soul be brave and my arm strong. Here I am, free of greed and hate. Here I am, standing by my brethren for the people of Montaigne. All for one and one for all!"

— Oath of the Musketeers, 1669

The Musketeers are a small organization and their structure reflects this. At any one time, there are approximately one thousand Musketeers in all of Montaigne, making their presence felt everywhere from the streets of Charouse to the rural farms where they are a combination of notary public, scribe, judge, police, and town crier. The ranks and offices held by Musketeers are few and the honors bestowed upon them are far between — such a small and tight-knit organization requires little of the pomp and stratification

found in more established branches of the Montaigne military. As a result, there are only five ranks within the service, and the Musketeers are more like brothers than soldiers in an army. Despite the ranks and chain of command, many Musketeers enjoy a great deal of autonomy, particularly those furthest from Charouse — indeed, many rural Musketeers find their lives all but completely unchanged by the tumultuous events of recent years.

Appointment to the Musketeers enforces the close relationship that all Musketeers share. All prospective Musketeers must journey to Charouse and apply to join in person. Forty applicants are accepted every four months. The first class of the year, held from Octavus to Tertius of each year, is open only to members of the military with three years of honorable service. Enrollments in Secundus and Sextus are open to any who meet the entry standards: at least 16 years old, never convicted of a criminal offense within Montaigne (although by order of Parlement this does not apply to “political” crimes committed against L’Empereur’s regime), and without any form of disability that will interfere with their duties.

For six months, the recruits are trained alongside each other, eating, working and sleeping in each other’s presence. The recruits are trained relentlessly, and less than one tenth of all those who undergo the training are finally accepted in to the ranks of the Musketeers, yet many volunteer in order to gain the basic education that comes with the six months of training. At the end of the training, all recruits must undergo a series of physical and written examinations that last for a week and culminate in an oral test, which is taken in front of a panel of 20 Musketeers. If they fail to answer any question to the satisfaction of every one of their prospective peers, they are dismissed. If they pass the physical and written tests and their answers are acceptable, they are admitted to the Montaigne’s Pride Academy for a three-year course in fencing, procedure, and foreign and domestic legal systems.

The curriculum is grueling and demands a high standard of mental and physical fitness before these students are accepted into the Musketeers. Half of all those who study at Montaigne’s Pride are never invited into the Order. Upon completing the training at the Academy to the satisfaction of the instructors (who are all retired and distinguished Musketeers themselves), the student is finally admitted to the Order.

Standing before the statue of the noble knight Bastion in the center of Charouse’s grim industrial quarter, wearing the civilian clothes in which they enlisted, their hands are bound together and as they raise them over the flame, they recite the Oath of the Musketeers in unison. Each Musketeer is presented with their Tabard, Musket, and Rapier. Before the Revolution, the Tabard bore the personal symbol of the monarch, and stood for the Crown’s faith in the Musketeers. Today, it bears the Revolutionary Scales of Justice, and represents the Musketeers’ role in society as the even hand of justice.

The Royal Swordsmith has traditionally forged the rapier as a tribute to l’Empereur giving his own blade to the Order’s first captain in 1593. Today, the rapiers crafted for the Musketeers are no less fine, although they bear no royal motif on their hilt. The musket bears a silver fleur de lis on the stock, a reminder of the Battle of Lière-Vallée that the Revolutionary Government has wisely not altered. When the ceremony is complete, the students have become Musketeers, and any member of the Order will accord them as much respect as they would any other Musketeer.

All Musketeers must enter at the rank of Corporal (Caporal), the lowest in the Order. Over two-thirds of all Musketeers currently in the service of Montaigne hold the rank of Corporal, as the long, bloody wars of 1668 and the Revolution have seen many fine officers fall in the line of duty. The Corporal is answerable to all higher-ranking Musketeers, and must further respect the judgement of more senior Corporals (although they are not bound by it). Many Musketeers never rise above the rank of Corporal, and are content in their posts. To quote Cicero le Chance, a soldier appointed to the Musketeers after defending a village single-handedly from royalist reprisals in 1668, “To be the lowliest among the Musketeers is to be greater than the highest General in all of the armies.”

The next rank within the Musketeers is that of Sergeant and of all the Musketeers it is perhaps the Sergeant who has the widest range of responsibilities within and without the Order. As a step removed from the Corporals, each Sergeant typically has responsibility for a number of their juniors — this can be less than five Musketeers in rural districts where the Sergeant is the most absolute authority present, or upwards of twenty in urban centers such as Charouse or Paix. As well as maintaining the chain of command, each Sergeant also looks after the welfare of their charges, ensuring that all Musketeers are well-supplied and quartered in healthy accommodations. The Sergeants also make sure that the Officers are kept apprised of every piece of pertinent information uncovered by Musketeer investigations and, despite their responsibilities, are no stranger to the rigors incurred by the Musketeer’s duties.

There are two distinctions of Lieutenant within the Musketeers, and together they represent the entirety of what might be termed the “officer class” within the Musketeers, though no such distinction in their eyes. The 2nd Class Lieutenant co-ordinates the work of several Sergeants within a district, and is the most likely among any Musketeers to confer and meet with representatives of other law-enforcement organizations, such as the local Town Guard, on particular cases. Most 2nd Class Lieutenants take the time to review any Judicial Briefings penned by a Musketeer in their command, both to acquaint themselves with their contents and to ensure that the tone of the report is as factual as possible. As well as serving as police and judicial liaison, 2nd Class Lieutenants are responsible for apprising their superiors of any information that might be pertinent to their work, and at least one 2nd Class Lieutenant acts as aide to each 1st Class Lieutenant.

With less than 50 1st Class Lieutenants in all of Montaigne, these senior Musketeers have their work cut out for them. Each 1st Class Lieutenant is responsible for overseeing all Musketeer operations within either a Province or a City, collating reports from within their region and passing on information on cross-border crimes to the relevant authorities, be they either the Musketeer Lieutenant in the next province or the Vendel Merchant League. The 1st Class Lieutenant’s duties have historically been very political. The aristocracy have always had to be courted to maintain good will towards the Musketeers, and ranking officers have frequently had to keep a honeyed tongue in their head to sway the opinion of some Duc or Duchesse on some matter of importance to them. In post-Revolutionary Montaigne, they find that there is less demand for social engagements on their schedules, though they spend a greater amount of time filling out paperwork for Parlement, the Courts, or the Committee for National Welfare.

There is only ever one Captain-General at any time in the Musketeers, and it is that officer's responsibility to administer to all Musketeer activities in Montaigne. Past Captains have brought much of themselves to their role. Only once has a Captain of the Musketeers – LeFarge – abused his power and Christine Valroux du Martise, his successor, quickly deposed him. The post of Captain has historically been one of the more important posts in Montaigne, carrying a great weight of both civil and military authority. Today, it is nebulously entrenched in Montaigne's government. While Aristide Baveaux held a position on the Council of Eight by virtue of his leadership of the Knights of the Rose + Cross and the Musketeers, Captain du Lamolle has shown no indication that he wishes to pursue such a post. Instead he quietly goes about the business of coordinating the activities of the Musketeers throughout Montaigne, making sure criminals are caught, order is maintained, and any illegal activity his charges engage in is kept carefully hidden from the watchful eyes of the Committee for National Welfare.

Law

Musketeers have always enforced the laws of Montaigne, even in their darkest days under Léon XIV's tyranny. Shortly after their inception in 1593, they became living engines of the Crown's Justice, dedicated above all else to bringing honor and even-handed arbitration to the people of Montaigne. By the end of the 16th Century, Montaigne's elaborate court system allowed some cases to go untried for years, while many who were tried found that justice was by no means swift. A famous dispute between the Valroux de Martise and the Leveque d'Aur families over the ownership of a single farm took generations to resolve, despite the apparent simplicity of the complaint. The power of arbitration, however, was only one duty the Musketeers had to maintain a respected status in. Law enforcement is, and always has been, one of the cornerstones of the existence of the Order. The Musketeers see it as a sacred duty to maintain peace and order in Montaigne, one that they take very seriously. Historically, the Musketeers have always enforced Criminal Laws, Civic Laws and Royal Decrees.

Criminal law is the area where the Musketeers have always shone. In the years since their founding, they have become adept at hunting down criminals and work well in tandem with both the town guards and the court system. The Musketeers have always shouldered the responsibility of dealing with the more large-scale crimes afflicting Montaigne alone – crimes political and dangerous in nature, such as treason, assassination, revolts and murder. While they have always attempted to hunt down criminals such as smugglers, fences and thieves, such operations rarely attract the attention of the Musketeers until they operate in more than one jurisdiction (for example, in both the City of Basconne and La Motte Province).

More prominent crimes incur an attendant amount of pressure on the Order – a robbery against a noble demanded a more speedy resolution than a robbery against a simple peasant farmer. Today, the criminal jurisdiction the Musketeers are expected to enforce has narrowed significantly. They are now relieved of any requirements to assist in the pursuit of "political" criminals, save where their assistance is requested by an official of the Committee for National Welfare. Ironically, some Musketeers actually assist

certain smuggling rings incognito if the group serves the people. The Order recognizes the need to spirit people who might face injustice at the hands of the mob in Charouse out of the country as swiftly and secretly as possible. This endorsement of criminal activity does not sit well with persons as honorable as the Musketeers, but they believe that it is a small price to pay for saving the lives of those who would receive an undeserved death otherwise.

Civic law has traditionally been a sticking point with the Musketeers. While they have historically been accorded the right to arbitrate in disputes, thus requiring them to be experts in conveyance and land law, and their judgment is considered final in matters of Civic law, conditions added to the bill granting them such rights made them ineffective in their role. The initial charter allowed a Musketeer, as an unbiased arbitrator, Agent of the Crown, and person of honor, to step into any disputed matter of Civic law, be it a defrauded loan, property boundary dispute, or civil damages case. During the passing of the bill into law, clauses stipulated that the Musketeer could not pass judgment on any petty or Civic claim without first being invited to do so to the satisfactory agreement of both parties. This effectively hamstringing the Order's ability to deal with injustices perpetrated by cruel landlords against their tenants, requiring the matter to take up court time.

The waste of time this constituted, both to the Musketeers and the courts, resulted in the bill being overturned by decree of Léon XIII in 1620, though the Camille Regency later struggled to inhibit the power of the Musketeers. With the Revolution and the downfall of the du Montaigne dynasty and the nobility, the matter of arbitration as a right of Musketeers has again reared its head. Parlement would ideally like all legal matters to be resolved through the court system. As Arnaud du Charouse said, "It is good that justice is done and is seen to be done by the will of the People through the courts." Realistically, however, a process of this magnitude would tie up the already-beleaguered courts with disputes that could be easily settled by one agent in possession of the facts. In recognition of this, Parlement has been content to approve their powers of arbitration once again, trusting publicly in their honor and good judgment.

It also fell upon the Musketeers as the chosen agents of the King (and later of l'Empereur) to read and enforce any Royal Decrees throughout Montaigne. This duty remained a mixed honor to the Musketeers. While it once filled them with pride to be the selected voice of their King, almost all Musketeers came to abhor the implications of a Royal Pouch riding into their town, and would read the decrees of their Sovereign Lord with a heavy heart. Though the pronouncements of Léon XII and Léon XIII rarely filled the populace with dread, no Musketeer ever wanted to enforce the decrees of Queen Camille or l'Empereur. Indeed, many of Camille's decrees and new taxes were openly ignored by the Musketeers, and the Order pinned its hopes on the young King, wishing above all that he would grow beyond his mother's shadow and become a wise and just ruler whom they could be proud to serve again. Their hopes were dashed when Léon reached his majority and began his program of devious and tortuous revenge against those who had wronged him. The Musketeers who were by his side saw a small, frightened boy emerge from a harsh childhood as a cold and unfeeling sorcerous monster, selfish and brutal.

Over the years, decree after decree was issued, and the peasants felt the fist of l'Empereur close about all that they did — taxes were increased, Vaticine worship was all but forced underground, their King openly flouted the authority of the Hierophant and engaged the church in pitched battle. Many Musketeers walked away in the last days of l'Empereur's reign; even their bond of Brotherhood would not allow them to stand by while their liege committed such injustices. The Musketeers all too happily obeyed one of his last decrees, however, the last one the Order was ever to enforce. On 25 Septimus 1668, l'Empereur disbanded the Musketeers.

Since the Revolution, the enforcement of official decrees has become the work of local Political Officers, and is now heavily enmeshed in the clandestine power struggles within Charouse. The Musketeers are glad to be free of such a burden, though many are worried that, if unjust decrees are handed down, they will be much worse if enforced by unjust agents of government.

The Life

Before the Revolution membership in the Musketeers was considered one of the noblest callings to which a young Montaigne can aspire. No matter the master they have served, their loyalty, honesty and honor have always earned them the respect of their countrymen. Service in the Musketeers is typically hard and dangerous work, but ultimately rewarding to those who are worthy of the tabard. Most prospective Musketeers join the Order as soon as they can, and the youngest Musketeers are never less than twenty years old. The mandatory length of service expected of a Musketeer is a term of thirty years, though many are retired early by the dangers they face daily in the line of duty. Life within the Order is difficult and demanding, and Musketeers form few strong bonds beyond their comrades. Too frequently they must travel Montaigne, and most spend too little time in one place to know the people they are surrounded with. The Order encourages some distance — more than one Musketeer has hesitated upon seeing their loved ones placed in jeopardy over the years, and a Musketeer to whom the Order is the sum of his world and family knows no such hesitation in the course of duty, and is above reproach.

Marriage is one of the few areas of social life where the Order has no definite regulations regarding the activities of its members. While marriage is generally frowned upon for Musketeers as a distraction and possible leverage for enemies, it is by no means forbidden. The Musketeers are all too aware that the human heart is not something to be trifled with, although they are happier to permit some marriages rather than others. A marriage between Musketeers is not unheard of, though the desertion of a Lieutenant during the recent war with Castille to marry a noblewoman who led a resistance cell he was tracking turned a few heads. Christine Valroux du Martise, while she never married herself, used the influence of the Order to arrange a fine education for any children of Musketeers, setting a precedent that has continued to this day. It is noteworthy that Charles Leveque, a Lieutenant serving currently with the Government in Exile in Wische, is a third generation Musketeer — his grandparents joined the Order under LeFarge.

The Order is not the most financially rewarding of occupations. A Musketeer receives a stipend of thirty Guilders a month, paid in Vendel currency since the Revolution, and has her room and board provided for by the Government. Most Musketeers simply shrug when people ask about their poverty and claim that what they do is a calling, and they expect no more income than the simplest of Theus' priests. Temptation, however, can eat away at the hearts of some. The Order has become very strict on dealing with any wavering of morality on the part of its members. For example, accepting a bribe can be a cause for serious punishment. A history of loyalty and good conduct, however, can usually mitigate such sentences to permanent exile from Montaigne.

Despite the Order's strict nature, most Musketeers seek nothing more than to serve Montaigne first and foremost, with little thought to their own glory or gains. Nonetheless, the Order still issues awards. Receiving a medal as a Musketeer is no slight honor. The Order only awards ten medals, of which the only one a Musketeer is guaranteed to receive is the Medal of Service upon their retirement. Previously, the Order had the right to award twelve honors, but the Medal of the Sun King, the Crown Medal of Distinction, and the Queen's Medal have been removed and replaced with the Medal of Liberty.

Foreigners in the Ranks

A number of citizens from other kingdoms serve in the Musketeers. Service in the regular army is a challenging prospect, and many soldiers consider the presence of foreign nationals in the military in any capacity other than paid mercenary as a threat to security. Within the ranks of Musketeer, however, the threat is minimized. A Musketeer is under constant surveillance by his fellow Musketeers, not out of suspicion so much but because they are always in each other's company and usually always busy, thus ostensibly reducing the opportunity for spying. This line of thinking may be woefully untrue, unfortunately, but that is a story for another adventure.

The Musketeers' charter allows admission to anyone, as long as he or she is at least 16 years old, has never been convicted by a Montaigne court, does not have any crippling disabilities, and is willing to take and maintain the Oath and the dignity of the Order. The foreign Musketeer must be able to operate under the same protection afforded the noble or common Musketeer: whatever the prejudice against Eisen, Castille, or Avalon, all must respect the tabard bearing the symbol of Montaigne, be it Crown or Country. This inclusiveness has made a number of things available to Musketeers that the rest of the country is frequently too narrow-minded to appreciate, and contributes directly to the reputation of the Musketeers as masters of the sword, diplomacy, and intrigue.

Two important characteristics of a good Musketeer are adaptability and flexibility. By bringing recruits from all corners of Montaigne and beyond, the Academy has enabled exposure to a wide array of combat styles and techniques than would otherwise be available to Montaigne's insular and egotistical combat schools. The quick-minded Musketeer leaps at the chance to learn new tricks and styles, whether they come from common practice, a private family school, or a different country. Accessibility to outside learning is reflected in the Rules section for the Character Development.

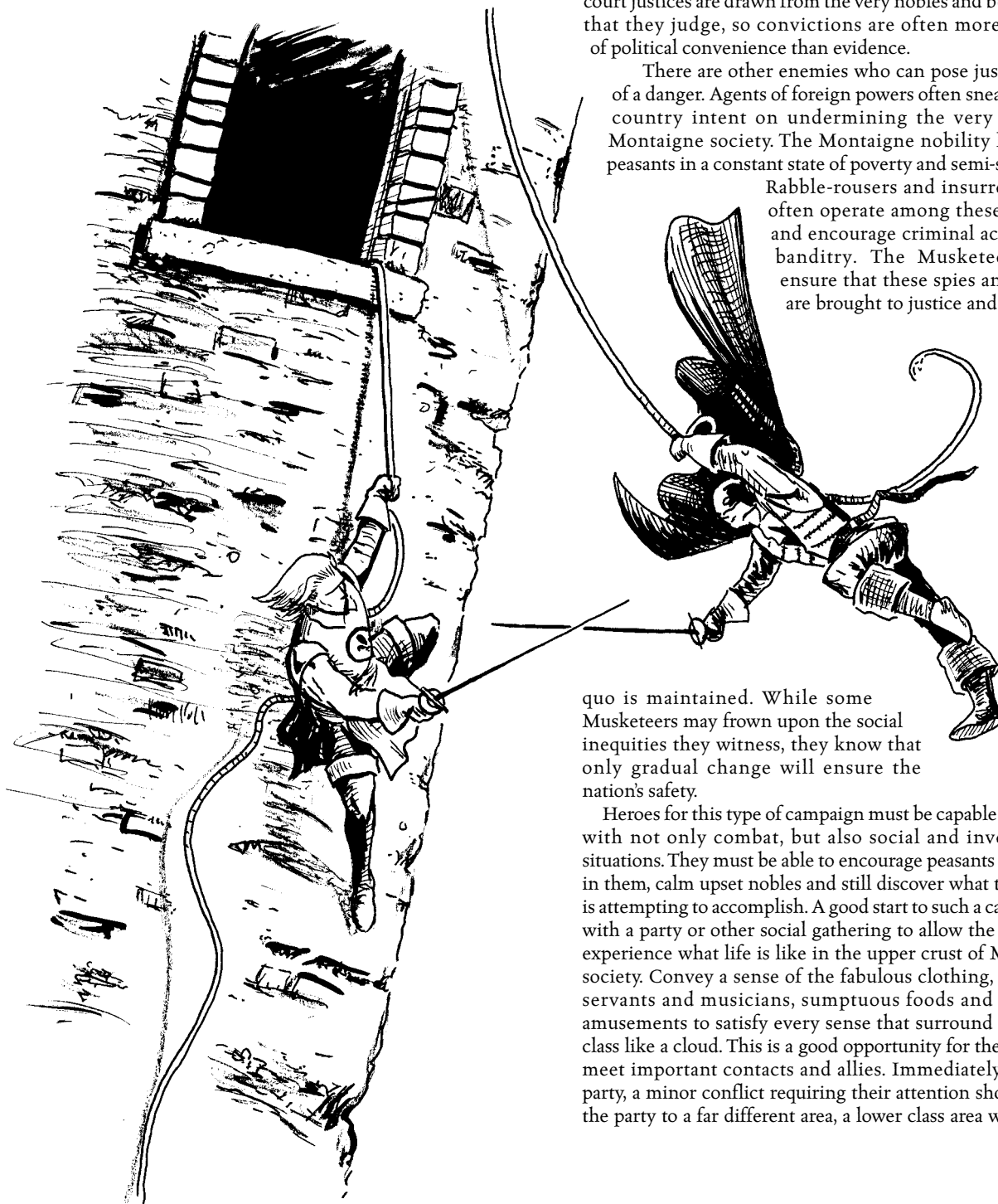
Adventuring Before The Revolution in Montaigne

Vodacce is the home of devious intrigue and betrayals, but Montaigne is the center of the most convoluted political maneuverings in all of Théah. While all authority and power is concentrated in l' Emperor, in practice he leaves his subordinates and bureaucrats to carry out his orders. Anyone capable of manipulating those subordinates can get away with murder or far worse. The Musketeers' duty is to protect Montaigne and her ruler from anyone who might act against them.

Any Musketeer campaign in pre-Revolutionary Montaigne is likely to encounter opponents who use their knowledge of the political arena and their position in society against the heroes. Noblemen who flaunt the law and persecute peasants ruthlessly, diplomats who revel in the lack of supervision, and bureaucrats who scheme and twist things to suit their own purposes rather than the good of the country are all possible opponents. Regardless of whom they face, the Musketeers must unravel precisely what is being done, thwart it and discover who is truly behind it. Even more difficult, they must be able to prove their discoveries before the courts. The court justices are drawn from the very nobles and bureaucrats that they judge, so convictions are often more a matter of political convenience than evidence.

There are other enemies who can pose just as much of a danger. Agents of foreign powers often sneak into the country intent on undermining the very fabric of Montaigne society. The Montaigne nobility keeps the peasants in a constant state of poverty and semi-starvation.

Rabble-rousers and insurrectionists often operate among these peasants and encourage criminal activity and banditry. The Musketeers must ensure that these spies and villains are brought to justice and the status



quo is maintained. While some Musketeers may frown upon the social inequities they witness, they know that only gradual change will ensure the nation's safety.

Heroes for this type of campaign must be capable of dealing with not only combat, but also social and investigative situations. They must be able to encourage peasants to confide in them, calm upset nobles and still discover what the enemy is attempting to accomplish. A good start to such a campaign is with a party or other social gathering to allow the players to experience what life is like in the upper crust of Montaigne society. Convey a sense of the fabulous clothing, dozens of servants and musicians, sumptuous foods and elaborate amusements to satisfy every sense that surround the upper class like a cloud. This is a good opportunity for the heroes to meet important contacts and allies. Immediately after the party, a minor conflict requiring their attention should bring the party to a far different area, a lower class area where they

come face to face with the soul-crushing poverty and filth that the peasants must endure daily. After that, the party can get into the heart of the campaign.

A typical Montaigne Musketeer campaign would begin with the discovery of a group of bandits who have been preying upon merchants in a particular region known for its rich mines. The nobleman who controls that area has requested assistance and the heroes are sent to investigate. The heroes are told that the bandits are encouraging the peasants to rebel and that all of the money stolen from merchants and nobles is given to the peasants. Investigation shows that this is not entirely accurate. Only a handful of middle-class merchants have been robbed and they are all ones who are at odds with the local nobleman. The money has not gone to the local peasants. Interestingly enough, the only person with any unaccounted for money is the local nobleman who has begun building new stables recently. Unless the heroes act quickly, the nobleman will order a crackdown and new taxes for the peasants. Even if the heroes can capture the bandits and prove that they are actually the nobleman's personal guards, it will be extremely difficult to prove that he had any knowledge of their actions.

However amongst the bandits' effects, they will find evidence of an assassination attempt upon a duke is to be made in Charouse on the next festival day. After a hard night's ride, they arrive in time to stop the assassination and find clear evidence that the nobleman they've suspected was behind it. The grateful duke, whom they first met at the party, thanks them for their aid and helps them to present the case against the nobleman. Only after he has been convicted do the heroes discover that the entire situation was merely a setup perpetuated by the duke who stands to gain the accused man's lands. Now the Musketeers must race to prove the nobleman's innocence before his execution can be carried out. Even then, gaining control of the land was only the first stage of the duke's plans and the only ones who suspect is the heroes.

Whatever threats arise, the Musketeers who have the mandate and the ability to search them out and ensure that they do not destroy Montaigne.

Après le Révolution

In the watershed year of 1668, everything in the lands of Montaigne underwent enormous change when the peasants rose up and threw off the oppressive rule of the monarchy and nobility. Things did not become any less complex with the new regime however. Instead of a single authority ruling over a multitude of subordinates, now there are several powerful factions which are all attempting to control the future of Montaigne. Revolutionaries are trying to kill their noble adversaries, the nobles are trying to survive and escape, politicians are trying to create a new society, and the rest of the people are just trying to survive. In this chaotic period, it is uncommon for allied groups to work at drastically different purposes.

Despite being disbanded, the Musketeers were true to their Oath and did what they could to avert worse bloodshed that had already occurred. Jean-Marie Rois et Reines and Remy du Montaigne engaged in what many call the legendary duel of all time. Thanks to the devotion of his comrades, Jean-Marie escaped with his life but lost his country and many of his Musketeers.

Aristide Baveaux accepted the post to lead the revitalized Musketeers and for a while things seemed to have taken a definite turn for the better. The Musketeers continued to uphold honor and justice, as they had always done, and the people were free from oppression for the time in decades. It felt good... for a while.

Then things got very bad. Baveaux was shot on "Bloody Feast Day" and the Musketeers were relentless in their pursuit of the assassins. The Company remains more or less intact as semi-autonomous units who answer only to their tightly held Code of Honor.

For Musketeers operating in this new era, the political aspect of the campaign is just as complex and the chances of political entanglements are just as large now as it was before the Revolution. In fact, a hero is likely to make far more numerous powerful enemies than before. The dichotomy between peasants and nobles is far smaller now, but the crushing poverty remains impossible to eliminate. Any nobleman who remains in the country, including many Musketeers, are in constant danger from those who want to quench the fires of vengeance with noble blood. For the first time in years, the Vaticine faithful are able to speak freely and they decry all heretics, especially those with sorcery. Agents from other countries and secret societies all have an interest in interfering in the development of Montaigne. Some wish to ensure that the Revolution is kept in check and does not spread further while others merely want Montaigne to remain divided.

The number of factions and enemies makes any Montaigne post-Revolutionary campaign fraught with complications. A typical campaign will include the interactions and fighting between the various factions, perhaps amongst the heroes themselves. A good place to start a campaign in this era is at a public execution. The heroes will see the fallen nobles, beaten and defeated, led to their deaths as the low class crowd cheers and high ranking bureaucrats watch on in faded finery as the blood spills. Every possible class is present at the executions and the party can interact with important figures from every way of life.

From there, the party can be sent to investigate rumors of a Castillian sorcerer who has crossed the border and is attacking small villages. The rumors are true, one of the few living practitioners of El Fuego Adentro has decided to revenge himself upon the Montaigne who brutalized his own lands. However, he is not acting alone. He was lured here by reports of the Montaigne officer who burned his village to the ground. The officer has retired to his southern estates in hopes of surviving the Revolutionary fervor, but now his actions in the war are coming home to roost. Only if the heroes act quickly can they stop the sorcerer in time. If the sorcerer manages to kill the Montaigne nobleman, his fellow officers will attempt to stir up a new war with Castille in retaliation. They are actually responsible for the rumors that drew the Castillian to Montaigne in the first place in hopes that a war would allow them to rise in power and prestige. Strangely, the officers' ally is the Inquisition who are willing to go to almost any lengths to destroy the sorcerer and renew the war which maintained them in power in Castille for so long.

While the entire nation around them changed, it is still the Montaigne Musketeers duty to protect Montaigne and her proper government from any and all threats. The facts that the threats are almost certain to come from within

Montaigne and that their allegiance is divided amongst groups on the verge of open warfare are dilemmas which they must face daily. Only time will reveal how the Musketeers fare in the days to come.

Despite the winds of change, Montaigne still operates as a feudal monarchy. Geography and the aristocracy share the same border markings on the maps, and the temper of the local political situation is dictated by the temper of the local aristocratic family, which is in turn dictated by the head of that family. The Musketeers' standing varies from province to province, and the way the Musketeers comport themselves should be adjusted to suit the differences in that temper.

Alternate Campaigns

Musketeers can make a perfect fit in the right campaign, and can lend plenty of motivation to the players either as members or adversaries of the Order. The Musketeers represent the shield of the King and the protectors of the people of any given land, and they will generally reflect the best of any setting they are placed in. As King's Guards, Musketeers are the more evolved descendants of mediaeval knightly Orders – still chivalrous, still bound by their word of honor, though they tend to lack the trappings inherent in the idea of the Knight.

Musketeers are closely tied in with the personality of the ruler they serve. If the King is good and honorable, the Musketeers will be a swift force for justice, protecting the realm from attempts from without and within to slay the Monarch, cause chaos, and generally bring an end to their beloved regime. In such a case, their primary task will often be to foil plots against the Monarch, hunting down scheming uncles, thwarting the schemes of devious priests, and ensuring the realm is kept safe from all those who would pull it down from without. If the ruler is a corrupt, selfish, or unjust, the Musketeers should stand as the last bastion of truth, honor and justice in the land, trying to do what is best for the people and torn between their loyalty to those whom they protect and he whom they are sworn to serve. Even in the darkest days, the Musketeers can embody hope and all that is best in the human spirit. Indeed, if your players are rebels against an evil King, they should know that the Musketeers who oppose them are honorable people caught in a bad situation and bound by loyalty to fight those whom they would aid.

Musketeers are not just servants of the Crown – they are first and foremost defenders of the Realm. Whatever land they are in, a Musketeer will love their home with all their heart, and fight to defend the people of their motherland from any threat. A Musketeer is a combination of watchman, detective, knight and superhero in one package. Masters of the blade and keen shots, Musketeers routinely match wits with gangsters, pirates, corrupt merchants, bandits, evil nobles and ruthless generals – anyone who would exploit their people. The citizens they serve know that the Musketeers would risk everything in defense of the realm, and they love them for it. A campaign where your players are noble Highwaymen might see a Musketeer as an adversary. For example, if a rival gang of bandits has set up nearby and are making it appear that the players are responsible for their dastardly deeds, it would be up to the players to catch these bandits and deliver them to the Musketeers before they are hunted down and unmasked. Of course, the Musketeers'

master, the corrupt local lord who opposes our honorable highwaymen, would be the most likely sponsor of the bandit gang. Perhaps two heroic forces on opposite sides of the law could join forces in an unlikely alliance against evil.

One important point to remember about the Musketeers regardless of setting is Brotherhood. The camaraderie of the Order, and the bond all Musketeers share, is so strong that any Musketeer would be willing to risk his life for any other. The idea of noble sacrifice runs in tandem with this, and no Musketeer should hesitate to sacrifice himself to save his King, or a village, or buy his comrades time to escort their charges to safety. That is the meaning of their oath, "All for one and one for all!"

On the other hand, if an ambitious officer tried to turn the Musketeers into his own private army, and demanded that they spy for him, they might have no option but to turn renegade as they desperately try to find a way to redeem their Order and save the day.

There is ample literary and film reference for Musketeers in case the GM needs inspiration for characters (especially villains) or settings. For more information on the Musketeers, see the *Game Masters' Guide™*, *Montaigne™*, and *The Montaigne Revolution™*.

Les Tabards Noirs (The Black Tabards)

"A noble heart is worth more than a thousand common ones."

Although their history and traditions go back generations, Les Tabards Noirs (The Black Tabards) have only existed as a cohesive unit for a relatively short time. While many see them as traitors, others view them as the only hope for Montaigne's future.

History of the Order

In the turbulent days before the Montaigne Revolution, l'Empereur Leon du Montaigne ordered increases in taxation for the lower classes. These new taxes strained the already overburdened peasants across the nation and groups of Musketeers were sent into the various provinces to ensure that the unrest was kept under control. Many of these groups remained outside of the capital for long months with only a short reprieve from their difficult tasks. Among their numbers were dozens of Musketeers from noble families who often patrolled the lands of their family.

They were still in the provinces in Septimus when the Montaigne Revolution exploded into reality in the capital city of Charouse. Rumors of fighting between branches of the Musketeers and their dissolution spread quickly and paralyzed those members within the Provinces. They banded together even closer than before into small groups that acted together. Several of these groups immediately traveled to the capital, only to be caught up in the chaos and mob rule that dominated there. Overzealous revolutionaries often killed those with noble blood before they had any real idea what was happening. Other escaped the city bearing tales of bloody handed peasants rampaging at will.

Within weeks, news of the events in Charouse had spread to the most remote areas. The Musketeers outside the capital

learned that their former Capitaine had fled the country, their former liege was dead and the Musketeers within the city had sworn allegiance to the revolutionary forces. Shocked by the quick pace of events, each group was forced to declare their loyalty without knowing how the others would decide. Most of them decided that their oaths to the nation overshadowed all other considerations and agreed to return to their duties. The others, including almost all of the noble members of the Musketeers refused to bow to the government that they considered responsible for their liege's death. Most of those fled the country and many eventually joined the government in exile in Siegsburg.

Those groups and individuals who remained in the country were scattered and alone until Simon Roublard, a nobleman and Musketeer in the northern region of Arrent, declared his opposition to the revolution. He sent word throughout Montaigne that any Musketeers who refused to join the Revolution, but who remained within the country should rally to his side at his home. Dozens of confused Musketeers heard his call and responded. Traveling by night and in secrecy for fear of the revolutionary forces, they gathered at the edge of the Lockhorn Forests.

The Council of Eight was taking no chances with such a group and ordered the army to lay siege to the place and kill anyone present for royalist sympathies. The army arrived to find the place undefended. A heap of Musketeer tabards bearing the emblem of the Sun King lay upon the ground before the palace. The former Musketeers had discarded them here before donning their new uniforms, tabards the color of midnight to show their disdain for those Musketeers who had joined the Revolution or fled the country without a fight. Garbed in black, the Tabards Noirs had disappeared into the forests. The army tried to pursue them, but the superstitious soldiers refused to enter the cursed woods. Instead, they burned the palace to the ground and returned to Charouse.

In the months since then under the leadership of Simon Roublard, the Tabards Noirs have become a force to be respected and feared. They travel throughout Montaigne by horse, by foot and by Porte seeking injustice and treason. Without the support of the courts, they must act as judge, jury and executioner, often slaughtering criminals in the midst of their crimes rather than attempt to capture and interrogate them. The principal criminals they persecute are those who support the Revolution and those who fail to show proper respect for noblemen. Both crimes are now punishable by death. While they number fewer than one hundred members, the Tabards Noirs employ another couple hundred of thugs and mercenaries to aid them in their tasks. Disdainful of these men, the Tabards Noirs nevertheless realize that they cannot afford to turn down any assistance.

Duty

The Tabards Noirs exist for one primary purpose: to bring justice and an Imperial presence back to Montaigne. To accomplish this with their limited numbers, they have split into dozens of small groups that operate through Montaigne. Each small group travels extensively, keeping in constant motion so the governmental forces cannot overwhelm them. At first, they primarily sought out nobles and escorted them to safety. Most of the nobles they helped to escape Montaigne now support their cause and each life they saved is a testimony to the righteousness of their cause. They also

drew upon these men and women as a source of new recruits, believing that a persecuted nobleman would find renewed purpose in opposing those that tried to destroy him. While the Tabards continue to search for nobles in need of rescue, most of the nobles have fled the country already and the Tabards may now turn their attention to other priorities.

However, the Tabards had a second reason for searching for nobles, a reason that remains important. They seek Dominique du Montaigne, l'Empereur's daughter, in order to place her upon the throne. Several of l'Empereur's daughters survived, but most are not suitable in the eyes of the Tabards. Both Anne and Cherie married enemies of Montaigne (the reviled Musketeer traitor Jean-Marie Rois et Reines and a Castillian Don respectively). Both Isabelle and Rosamonde are believed to be lost at sea. That leaves only Dominique, so they ask each noble they rescue if they have heard of other nobles in trouble. By aiding each group of endangered nobles, they hope to find Dominique, or at least word of her, among their number. When they find her, their instructions are to ensure her safety at all costs and inform Simon Roublard of her location.

Now that most of the nobles are mostly safely out of the country, The Tabards' time is spent enforcing the laws set down by l'Empereur before his death and punishing those who disobey them. While they operate openly, almost brazenly, after leaving an area they move quickly and without trace for fear of the overwhelming force of the army.

Organization

Despite being dispersed across Montaigne, there is a strong hierarchy that controls the Tabards Noirs. They use Porte messengers, carrier pigeons and couriers to pass information back and forth as rapidly as possible. At the top of the hierarchy is Simon Roublard, the nobleman who originally organized them. A former Lieutenant 1st Class of the Musketeers, Roublard was held in high regard for his impartiality and was considered a candidate for the Captaincy of the Musketeers. When he formed the Tabards Noirs, he was unanimously appointed Capitaine. He has complete authority over the organization and spends most of his time travelling throughout Théah ensuring that the Tabards operate according to the laws he has set down. He is always within a few hours of at least a dozen men and two Porté messengers who ensure that he is never out of touch with his forces.

Within each Montaigne Province, the Capitaine has appointed one Tabard to oversee the activities of all members of the organization. Most of these men were members of the Lightning Guard and were forced to flee Charouse after the death of their commander. They hold strong prejudices against those who remained loyal to Jean-Marie Rois et Reines. It is primarily their advice, which has ensured that the Tabards Noirs have not allied themselves with the government in exile. Each of these Tabards has the rank of Lieutenant and broad authority to act within their region. They usually remain in a centralized area and facilitate communications between small groups by maintaining numerous Porté mages. They are under orders from the Capitaine to refrain from endangering themselves when possible. The primary difference between them is that Lieutenant Ambrose Duboise du Arrent has a liberal view and his men generally do not persecute farmers forced to sell their goods to Charouse. His men are well liked and respected by the populace, often

concealing them from the Revolutionary forces. Philippe Michel du Gloyure on the other hand treats any support of the new regime as treason, regardless of circumstances or reasons. His men are among the most brutal and violent of the Tabards and the populace lives in terror of their raids.

Each Lieutenant has a number of small groups beneath him. Most of these groups are comprised of a single Tabard, with the rank of Sergeant, a Corporeal, and a dozen mercenaries or soldiers whom they have hired. Most of the Tabards were wealthy before the Revolution and retain at least a portion of their riches, which they use to support their cause. The retainers loyalty is strong because of the riches they receive and because anyone who fails in their duties or betrays their employers is treated as a supporter of the Revolution. While the Tabards' enemies may threaten to kill them, they know that the Tabards are likely to make the process long and painful. Each group works independently, although it is not uncommon for several groups to gather at the behest of the Lieutenants if an area provides strong resistance.

At the Capitaine's orders, each Sergeant is required to provide at least one of his men with the training and instruction needed to become a full member of Les Tabards Noirs. This person, usually a young nobleman, is given the rank of Caporal and is generally filled by a young nobleman. While technically the lowest member of the Order without actual command authority, he is often put in charge of soldiers and mercenaries. He will become a Sergeant when his group leader and commanding Lieutenant believe he is ready.

Law

The Tabards Noirs have a clear set of laws, which they uphold with their lives. The laws are those set down by l'Empereur before his death and are the basic rules by which the Montaigne Musketeers abided. They act to punish thieves, murderers, bandits and other criminals. However, unlike the Musketeers who now operate at the behest of the Revolutionary forces, the Tabards no longer have a court system upon which they can rely. They cannot apprehend criminals, obtain evidence, and present them to the court in leisure as the Musketeers do. Instead, they must judge the cases for themselves, often acting quickly before the official forces tracking the criminals arrive. Once the Tabards have publicly identified the guilty party, they insure that justice is carried out. Since the penalties for most crimes are fines and corporal punishment like whippings, the Tabards administer the punishments as soon as they have made their decision. They seize the criminal's goods to cover fines and reimburse themselves.

Due to their need for haste, Capitaine Roublard has trained Les Tabards Noirs to notice the smallest details and read the accused's body language so that their judgments are accurate. It is not uncommon for a Tabard Noir to ride into town, discover a man who has been robbed, quickly examine the scene of the crime, publicly accuse a neighbor of the crime, ransack the accused's home, confiscate goods to compensate the victim and to pay for the criminal's fee, whip the defendant until his back bleeds, and then ride off — all within the space of an hour.

One important thing to remember is that l'Empereur's laws were far more brutal and harsh towards peasants than other people and now it is almost impossible for a person to obey every single law. For example, it was illegal to purchase salt from anyone other

than an agent of l'Empereur. Now that those agents are dead or in hiding, the peasants must purchase their salt from others, an illegal act in the eyes of the Tabards Noirs. Also, in the normal course of days, many obsolete or outdated laws were simply ignored. For example, a town might have a law dictating that only men could draw water from the community well to prevent any household from taking more than their fair share. When the army conscripted hundreds of men from the area for the invasion of Ussura, the law was simply ignored by the people of the region. Since those men largely died during the invasion, the women now have no choice except to get the water for themselves. However, that may not influence a Tabard who witnesses a woman breaking that law, he may simply administer the punishment, likely several lashes from a whip. Some Tabards operate by the word of the law, not the spirit while others take a more lenient approach.

It is hardly surprising that many peasants have declared the Tabards Noirs to be bandits and villains. Balanced against that is the benefit the Tabards can provide to a community, justice swift and sure. A Musketeer who brings a case to court may take weeks before a decision is made and the court usually sides with whomever has supported the Revolution more fervently. The Tabards will decide a case within hours and generally are impartial and fair. They occasionally make mistakes, but they are rare. Many people of Montaigne are happy to have a strong and fast system of justice in place. Especially since the Tabards operate publicly and offer proof of the crimes to the community, rather than in the complex legal setting of the court where some relevant evidence may be ignored because the court will not accept it. While some people claim that the Tabards will not act against a noble who has committed a crime, their presence in Montaigne is meager at best. Instead the most controversy about the Tabards stems from their most stringent law:

Those who fail to show proper respect for their social superiors are guilty of a crime against the natural law of Théah and must pay for this transgression with their life. Likewise, whosoever supports those in rebellion against the natural order must pay with their life.

Ironically this was not a law formally set down by l'Empereur. It is actually a quote from the *Commoners' Cause*, the political diatribe that sparked the Revolution. It was part of a condemnation of the way



that society functioned in Montaigne and was read aloud to l'Empereur by a liberal nobleman attempting to convince him to read the manifesto. L'Empereur interrupted him at that point, declared that was precisely the correct manner in which he ruled the lands under his control and the author was obviously an idiot for attempting to chastise him for it. One of the Lightning Guards who was present during the conversation later reported it to Simon Roublard who made it one of the guiding tenants of the Tabards Noirs.

Under this law, anyone found supporting the Revolution is guilty of treason for which the penalty is death. While different Tabards view this differently, all of them uphold this law and all of them have used it to justify murder. Some Tabards take a very strict view and only punish those who are members of the Revolution or who materially support it. Distribution of Revolutionary propaganda, attendance at an execution, and acting on behalf of the government are all crimes Les Tabards Noirs would prosecute. Others take a larger view and punish anyone who aids the Revolution, willingly or not. Farmers who sell food to Charouse merchants, anyone who does not warn those targeted by the Revolution, and merchants who accept money printed by the new regime. These are all

indirectly supporting the Revolution and many members of the Tabards Noirs view them as having broken this law just as much as those who marched the nobles of Charouse to le coiffeur. It is up to each Lieutenant to administer his region and determine to what extent this law will be prosecuted.

While the extent to which support of the Revolution is considered a crime may vary, all of the members of Tabards Noirs agree upon one group who is guilty of treason, the Musketeers. When the Musketeers of Charouse joined the Revolution, those who would become Tabards were shocked and appalled. They had forsaken their "pledge of allegiance to the Sun" in favor of one to the very people who had destroyed him. The Tabards believe that when the mobs burned and pillaged, the Musketeers stood by and did nothing. Their support of the Revolution lent it legitimacy and helped to ensure that all of Montaigne was thrown into chaos and uncertainty. For these acts, those who wear the tabards bearing the scales of justice are guilty of treason and must be destroyed. The Tabards Noirs view them as their greatest enemies and are ordered to kill them upon sight. Being men of honor, they typically challenge them to duels to the death.

Occasionally, the Tabards Noirs and Musketeers find themselves upon the same side, when fighting bandits or against threats

to all of Montaigne. This may necessitate the delay of their duel until the situation has been dealt with. There are even tales that Simon Roublard fought side by side with a Musketeer to

defeat a bloodthirsty mob who wanted to kill a pair of noble children. When the children were safe, Simon noticed that the Musketeer was seriously injured and in no condition to fight. He allowed the man to go, on the condition that the two would meet in a month's time upon the field of honor.

All Tabards Noirs treat harshly are those who fail to show respect to their social superiors. Anyone guilty of this crime is supporting the Revolution by encouraging the same attitude that lead to noble blood poured out upon the ground. Capitaine Roublard and his Lieutenants are clear on this point. Anyone who is disrespectful to a nobleman must be shown the error of his ways, preferably publicly so that everyone present may understand the penalty of such actions. Some

Tabards enforce this law with lethal force while others consider a sufficient penalty to be a sound flogging, cutting off a hand, or a simple disemboweling.

The punishment of those who lack respect for social superiors or who support of the Revolution and enforcement of the laws set forth by l'Empereur before his untimely death. These are the pillars upon which the Tabards Noirs are built.



HUNT 08
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The Life

After the Tabards broke down into groups, each Sergeant brought his men to the lands with which he was the most familiar, generally the lands which he grew up on or even owned before the Revolution. With his knowledge of the terrain and lands, each Sergeant set up a series of places where he could retreat to in times of difficulty. These were often small cabins or caves in secluded locations where his men could rest. These retreats were fully supplied, often by raiding peasant farms and then blooded by the group's *Porté* mage. Now that they had a series of bases from which to operate, the Tabards began to act in earnest.

Each group travels a random circuit across the territory he claims for his own. They enter the villages, towns and cities in the area, generally during the day, and seek out any sign of criminal or Revolutionary activity. Any signs are quickly investigated and if proof of crimes is found, they instantly punish the transgressors. If fines are due, the offender's property is seized and if physical chastisement is due, the offender is punished upon the spot. Anyone who interferes or offers resistance to the Tabard is given one warning and then set upon by the Tabard's men.

If a noble is in danger, or there is evidence that anyone in the town acted against a noble, they immediately seek out who was involved. If a mob was responsible for the crime, the entire village is held responsible. In a city, the area around the crime is held responsible. The Tabards have a great deal of latitude how they administer the punishment for those who act against a noble. Possible means include burning the homes and buildings, poisoning the well or killing every tenth man.

When combat occurs, it important to remember that the Tabards Noirs consider themselves to be honorable men. They will not attack from ambush or sneak in during the middle of the night. Instead they will act openly and decisively. Since they are almost always outnumbered, they will focus on using brutal tactics to cow any opponent into submission. Normally the entire Tabards group is armed with muskets, pistols and swords. During tense situations, at least half the group stands by with muskets at the ready.

One method often used is that the first man to speak against them or to raise a weapon against them will be targeted immediately and attacked by several of the most skilled members of the group. He is usually not just wounded, but killed in a horrific manner. Decapitations, disembowelments, a full volley of musket fire, or even all three are routine. Another method often used is a warning that the next man to object will be shot along with whomever is next to him. While a man may want to stop the Tabards, the men on either side of him will often restrain him to save their own lives.

If a group is attacked at least one *Porté* mage is always under order to escape. He is to wait a few hours to see if the group survived and is able to get word to him. If they do not, he is to report to the region's Lieutenant. The Lieutenant will then send orders to any available groups. They return to the region that resisted and attacked the first Tabards group. Those responsible for the first group's deaths are now treated as murderers and killed by the assembled Tabards. Anyone who aided them is also killed as well as the families of everyone involved. Depending upon the situation, it is not uncommon for the Tabards to kill an entire village to ensure that everyone

understands. Those who resist the Tabards will pay. The Tabards believe that only by using brutal, overwhelming force can they enforce their will upon a hostile people.

However, the Tabards and Capitaine Roublard know that brutality will not convince the populace to support them. Brutality is always reserved for the criminals and those who resist them. The Tabards show everyone else polite respect, expecting it in return. They conduct all their investigations in public, allowing the public to see that everything they do is honest and fair. All investigations must be conducted with haste and judgments are announced publicly, allowing the accused to make a defense if possible. If the accused's defense is sufficient to satisfy the Tabard, he apologizes for his mistake and offers restitution of any damage he may have caused. If anyone feels that a member of the Tabards acted inappropriately or deceitfully, they may bring the matter to another Tabard. The matter will be treated seriously and carefully. Simon Roublard actually handles most inquiries of this sort personally. If the report is correct, the Tabard is publicly whipped and banished from the organization. If the report is false, the accused Tabard is allowed to whip his master.

After a Tabards group visits an area, they must move on with all possible haste. They know that the entire population is against them, so they quickly move on to the next area. They cannot allow themselves to be trapped or caught unawares. Swift riding or *Porté* allows them to keep ahead of anyone trying to destroy them.

Whenever possible, they return to their bases. While in the base, the group's leader relaxes, enjoys wine and literature and trains his Corporeal, all the while turning a blind eye to his mercenaries. Usually the Tabards set aside a room or two for the mercenaries to relax without his supervision. Once there, the mercenaries gamble, drink and occasionally brutalize women they drag back there. Any actions taken by the men are ignored as simply letting off steam. After a few days, the Tabard orders them back to their duties.

When the group finds nobles in danger, he generally punishes their oppressors and then brings the nobles back to one of his bases. Once there, he contacts his Lieutenant and reports. The Lieutenant will arrange for the recovery of the nobles and their escape from the country. This generally takes a couple days and the group's leader can take this time to explain their cause to the nobles and attempt to elicit aid. This is the time when he attempts to recruit more members for the Tabards who will become Corporals.

The Tabards are continually on the move, enforcing harsh laws with brutal violence and threats interspersed with frantic rides. They are in constant danger, but remain true to their cause out of duty and a sense of honor.

Relationships

Among the various nations, few have any relationship with the Tabards Noirs. While Eisen has hosted the majority of Montaigne's noble émigrés, they have recognized Anne du Montaigne and Jean-Marie Rois et Reines as legitimate rulers, something that the Tabards refuse to accept. So the Tabards have little contact with Eisen. Avalon and Vendel sympathize with the royalist Tabards Noirs and aid them with shipments of goods and small numbers of mercenaries. In particular, Vendel seems interested in helping the Tabards reunite with the émigrés living in their country and forming a coherent

The Knights of Elaine

Uwaine stood in the center of the court, rage pouring from him, even though the proclaimed Queen of Avalon sat only feet away from him on the throne. In fact, that was exactly why he was so angry. Even the mismatched gaze of the druid Derwyddon could not shake him from his tirade of venom against the Lady Elaine as she stood before the assembled nobles of Avalon.

"Who is this woman?" Uwaine shouted at them all, "She will not even tell us where she has been these last ten years while the land was consumed by war and our countrymen killed each other. She arrives here with magic and druidry to ensorcel us and turns our minds. It is all the work of Glamour so that none seek to question her spurious claim. How many other wizards and usurpers have tried to do that this year alone?"

Then he turned to look Elaine directly in the eye, "By what right does she think she can claim the throne of Avalon?" he demanded.

The young woman seemed unmoved; she stood up to reply and at once the mutterings around the room hushed. She took a moment to meet the gaze of each and every noble, until her eyes rested finally on Uwaine's. Her voice was clear and calm.

"You are right to question me, Sir Uwaine. I thank you for the opportunity to prove my claim. I am the rightful heir to Avalon because I carry... this."

With that she turned to Derwyddon who drew back a cloth as he passed her a chalice of such beauty it lit up the room. It was The Graal, lost for over six hundred years. It was not the precious stones that made it shine, however – it was the workmanship and simple beauty of the cup. It was a thing of true and absolute beauty, perfect and glorious. It made everyone in the room aware of just how much in the world was truly beautiful, and how much potential it contained. This is why the entire room knelt before a woman who held nothing more than a simple cup.

"My Lady... my Queen," said Uwaine as he knelt, his anger vanished. "At last Avalon has an heir! At last the land can be healed. Let me be the first to pledge my sword, my heart, and my life to you and to Avalon!"

Elaine regarded him kindly. "Sir Uwaine, I would wish for nothing else than that you should stand by my side. You shall be the first of a new Order of Knights. An Order that will stand as living examples of everything noble to which Avalon aspires."

She paused for a moment, looking once again young and a bit uncertain, aware that she had spoken a little too soon. She could not simply create an Order of Knights on a whim, not if it was to mean something, to her and the people. Derwyddon gave her an uneasy glance in the silence of the court. Before he could offer a suggestion, though, the new Queen found the words came to her as she spoke to the kneeling swordsman.

"Come, Sir Uwaine," she said, beckoning a serving boy to bring water to fill the Graal. "Drink from the Graal. If your heart is true, you shall gain the strength of Avalon's greatest heroes. But I warn you that if your heart is false, the water shall turn to poison and you will die. Are you willing to make the pledge for Avalon?"

At that last word the serving boy nearly slopped the water he was carefully filling the Graal with onto the floor. Elaine, bending near the lad to let him fill the cup she held, whispered in his ear. "Don't worry, my lad, I did not ask you to drink. But perhaps one day you may." She smiled, and the boy blushed and made a silent promise to himself to serve this lady in a greater way some day.

Elaine held out the cup to the kneeling knight, who took it reverently, and without pause drank his fill from the chalice. There was fear in his eyes, but also bravery and devotion. He rose and saluted the Queen as he raised the Graal to her in honor.

force to act against the Revolutionaries. The fact that the Tabards still have some access to their former wealth gives the merchants a certain incentive as well. Castille sees the Tabards with a mixture of disgust for their sorcerous members and horror at the crimes against the commoners. The Vodacce Princes see them as a possible pawn to use against various groups, but the Tabards have little interest in furthering any goals beyond their own.

Among the Secret Societies, the large numbers of Porté mages and their brutal acts against the peasants have not gone unnoticed. Die Kreuzritter and the Rilasciare have both ordered their members to aid the Revolutionary army in tracking the Tabards down or to eliminate the Tabards themselves when necessary. Sophia's Daughters are unsure how to react to this group, but do want to infiltrate their ranks. They have seen that Dominique du Montaigne will be a powerful force in the world, but cannot find her with their scrying, so they hope to use the Tabards to find her. Los Vagos opposes the group and keeps a close eye on Castille's northern border to make sure that the Tabards do not attempt to bring their vendetta against the common people into their own lands. The Knights of the Rose + Cross are closely allied with the Montaigne Musketeers and both view the Tabards as worthy adversaries who have become rabid. They treat each other with respect, but both sides work to ensure the destruction of the other. The Rye Grin shares some of the same goals as the Tabards, but use vastly different methods. They occasionally aid each other, but no true alliance can be made since the Rye Grin contend that individual peasants should not be punished for the crimes of their class, anymore than the nobles should be.

Alternate Campaigns

The Tabards Noirs is easily used in any setting in which a change of government has recently occurred. They represent the forces that wish to return to an earlier regime. The rancor and hatred they feel for the Musketeers may be directed against any organization that supported the new regime. While the New World may not possess Porté sorcerers, any form of spell caster might be substituted. Their search for a lost heir to the throne can be modified to fit any world; they primarily search for a means of returning their country to an earlier time. An heir to the throne is the simplest method, but a magical artifact that could change the past or a means of influencing the people to revert to an earlier form of government would work as well. Regardless of what forms of government exist, this group shows the inherent danger in changing the government.

The important factor to remember is that these are honorable men whose entire lives have been uprooted and destroyed. Unable to accept the changes, they strive to return to an earlier way of life but since time cannot be turned aside, they face an impossible task. This will turn the members of the group bitter and slowly twist them into mockeries of themselves. It is important that they not be played as mindlessly vile or stupid. They are heroes who have fallen from grace and must be treated with care. It is possible to save some from this fate, to teach them to accept their fate. Others must simply be stopped.

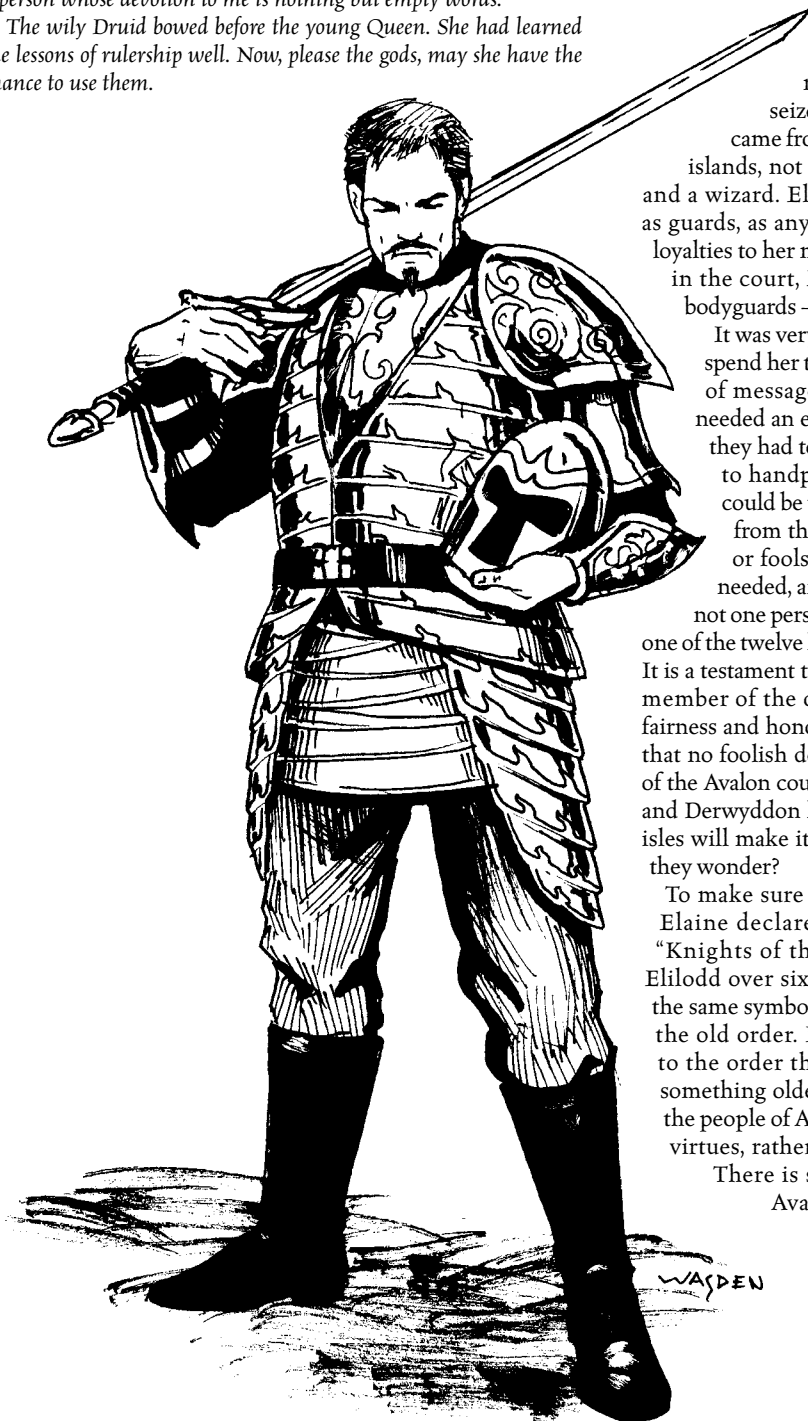
A cheer rang out around the hall – Avalon was united again! After her first court, Elaine wanted nothing more than to rest. It had been a long and difficult, but fulfilling day. However, even as she entered her private quarters, Derwyddon would not leave her alone. He glanced around the small chamber before he spoke. Then the words burst out as if he had spent all night desperately holding them inside. Perhaps he had, she mused silently to herself.

“My Queen, you are toying with powers you do not fully understand. Do not corrupt what you were given. The Graal cannot poison a man!”

She grinned at him, glad to be the one who knew more than him for a change.

“I used no magic or any power of the Graal, my dear friend,” she said. “But they do not know that, and any one who refuses to drink is a person whose devotion to me is nothing but empty words.”

The wily Druid bowed before the young Queen. She had learned the lessons of rulership well. Now, please the gods, may she have the chance to use them.



History of the Order

High ideals are often brought low when they are put in practice. The Knights of Elaine, however, are an exception. Maybe it is due to the gifts of Glamour and the prosperity of the nation, but they have held onto their principles and guard the citizens of the three kingdoms well. You will not find Knights beating peasants for tax evasion or taking bribes from criminals. Due to this reputation being established by the greatest of the island's Knights, Glamour has seen it grow. In a place where reputation can become reality, it is doubtful that any Knight would be able to take a bribe or mete out injustice.

The Knights of Elaine are the youngest such group in Théah. Even so, they have already gained a reputation for fairness and honor that rivals even the Knights of the Rose + Cross. When Avalon accepted Elaine as its queen, it was a nation in turmoil. There were plenty of nobles eager to seize the throne from this headstrong girl. They came from old families and had lived their lives in the islands, not returned after ten years missing with a cup and a wizard. Elaine was forced to use Eisen mercenaries as guards, as any Avalon swordsman could have dangerous loyalties to her many enemies. When Uwayne challenged her in the court, Elaine realized she needed more than just bodyguards — she needed to bring her people hope.

It was very clear to her that an Avalon Queen could not spend her time guarded by Eisen mercenaries. What sort of message of trust did that send to her people? She needed an elite force of swordsmen and Musketeers, and they had to be Avalon. So she decided the best plan was to handpick men and women who had shown they could be trusted to join that Order. Making them drink from the Graal ensured they were either loyal, brave or fools. It was that sort of loyalty and bravery she needed, and the fools could be dealt with later. Even so, not one person has drunk from the Graal whom Elaine (or one of the twelve heads of the Knights) does not trust implicitly. It is a testament to Elaine's ability to judge character that every member of the order has gone on to gain a reputation for fairness and honor. So the people of Avalon are not surprised that no foolish deceiver has ever fallen poisoned to the floor of the Avalon court. Even though the poison is a myth, Elaine and Derwyddon have begun to wonder if the Glamour of the isles will make it real. If it did, would that corrupt the Graal, they wonder?

To make sure the order had some grounding in history, Elaine declared them to be a reincarnation of the old “Knights of the High King,” an order created by King Elilodd over six hundred years ago. The new Knights use the same symbols and systems, but have little else to do with the old order. However, this does add a sense of history to the order that helps the Knights feel they are part of something older and greater than themselves. It also helps the people of Avalon believe Elaine is a champion of the old virtues, rather than making things up as she goes along.

There is some small concern among the Druids of Avalon that Elaine has merely rebuilt a faded Order of pretend Knights. It has always been said that Elilodd would return with his Knights at a time of Avalon's greatest need. Some have taken this to mean

Elaine is blessed with his spirit, which has gathered Knights around her as the prophecy foretold. However, some are not so sure. They believe the old ways of the “Knights of the High King” were something more than empty ritual. They worry that Elaine is playing with dark and powerful Glamour from the dawn of Avalon’s history, a force that once unleashed could bring terrible doom to those who tamper with it.

Duties

The duties of the Knights of Elaine are very simple on paper and highly complicated in practice. Similar to the Montaigne Musketeers, the Knights exist to serve and protect Avalon and her Queen with honor, chivalry, and justice. There are plenty of organizations with similar ideals; the difference with the Knights is that they serve those ideals faithfully.

As Elaine needed a group of fighters to enforce her law on a general scale, the exact duties of the Knights are very vague. They have the power to do anything to anyone in the name of the Queen. They can stop and search whomever they please for any reason. These powers may seem too great, but not once in the (admittedly, quite short) history of the order have they ever been abused. The Knights just seem to know who to stop and who is guilty. Their reputation also ensures that the calls of criminals for more limits to their powers fall mainly on deaf ears. However, if the Knights did start to abuse their position there would be no law or force in Avalon that could stop them.

The only problem the Knights face with jurisdiction is that of the Highlanders and the Inish. As MacDuff and the O’ Bannon have both agreed to allow Elaine to rule as Queen of all the isles, her Knights have power over their subjects. Even with the Knight’s reputation for fairness and justice, very few Inishmen and Highlanders like the Knights watching over them. Quite a large number of Inish and Highlanders join the Knights, and Queen Elaine is the first to encourage this. As citizens of the Triple Kingdoms they are more than eligible and receive no stigma from the other Knights. However, to their countrymen, they have “joined with Avalon” and are therefore just as bad as the rest.

The Knights themselves do their best to leave the other islanders alone. They regularly patrol, but prefer to let the locals come to them with problems, rather than go and interfere.

Organization

The Knights have a very simple, but highly effective organization. The twelve greatest Knights of the Order sit in council with Queen Elaine to discuss policy and action. Each member Knight in the order is responsible to one of these twelve Knights. The council Knights are technically granted the title of Captain, but most don’t use it. Every Knight in the order is officially considered an equal, even those who serve directly on the Queen’s council. There is an unofficial ranking system determined by seniority and service to the order. Any Knight will usually follow the lead of any other Knight with a greater reputation or experience than him.

All of the Knights obey the captains and their Queen without question, but most usually receive orders from only one. If a Captain requires the service of a particular Knight who is in service to another Captain, he will speak to the other Captain rather than the Knight in question. Then the

Knight’s Captain will issue orders on behalf of the Captain who needs the task done. So most Knights are unaware of how often they actually serve the needs of a different Captain. This is how Bors MacAllister manages to get a lot of legwork done without showing his hand.

Each of the twelve Knight Captains of the council are equal and have the same duties (at least in theory). In fact, each of the twelve has their own special talents and techniques. As such, each one is unofficially in charge of a certain type of the order’s duties. They use the Knights under their command to fulfill that duty and so recruit people for the talents they need. (Note: we have provided stats for some of the Knights and encourage GMs to build suitable stats for the others based on the samples provided.)

The Twelve Captains of the Order are:

Uwaine

Uwaine was the first to swear fealty to Queen Elaine and one of the architects of the order. He is a large and powerful man, given to expressing his opinions often and loudly. However, from the day at court when he swore to serve Elaine he has never uttered an angry word in her presence. He concerns himself with the laws of Avalon and has become the de facto High Sheriff of the isles. His Knights concern themselves more with the day to day business of dealing with criminals and bringing them to justice. However, this never means a swift execution. Uwaine’s Knights function like unpaid bounty hunters and work hard to bring even the most terrible murderer back to a city for a fair trial. There are already stories of Knights risking their own lives to save evil men from vigilantes, and ensuring they get to stand a fair trial, whatever their crime. They exist to ensure justice is carried out, not to be the judges themselves.

Uwaine (420[™])

Noble 4/Fighter 1/Donovan 3/Knight of Elaine 10: CR 18; SZ M (humanoid); HD 17d8+51+1d10+3; hp 150; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+2 Dex, +1 Buckler, +9 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork small sword +23/+18/+13 me(1d6+7) or pistol +19 ranged (1d10); SA: Buckler Master, Taunt SQ: Aura of Good (–2 morale penalty, cause fear), Buckler Master, Command (Diplomacy), Commanding Presence +1, Detect Evil, Focused Training, Improved Fort +5, Improved Will +5, Seduction; SV Fort +21, Ref +7, Will +18; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 17; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +10, Climb +5, Diplomacy +20, Gather Information +21, Heal +10, Jump +5, Listen +10, Ride +10, Sense Motive +22, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +10; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Counterattack, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Expertise, Improved Bind, Leadership, Mobility, Parry, Riposte, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Focus (smallsword), Weapon Specialization (smallsword).

Errata: *Swashbuckling Adventures*,[™] Ch. 3, pg. 67 states that for his Focused Training, a Donovan Swordsman gains the bonus feats Weapon Focus (smallsword) and Weapon Specialization (dagger). This should read Weapon Focus (smallsword) and Weapon Specialization (smallsword).

Uwaine – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 5, *Finesse:* 3, *Wits:* 4, *Resolve:* 4, *Panache:* 4
Reputation: 95
Background: Vow (to serve Elaine and Avalon) 3
Arcana: None
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Indomitable Will, Membership (Knights of Elaine), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble
Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Gossip 3, Oratory 5, Memorizing 3, Politics 2, Scheming 5, Seduction 2, Sincerity 3
Spy: Interrogation 4, Shadowing 1, Stealth 1
Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2
Buckler: Attack (Buckler) 2, Parry (Buckler) 5
Commander: Diplomacy 4, Incitation 3, Leadership 4, Strategy 2, Tactics 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 2
Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 2, Trick Riding 2
Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 4, Jab 2, Ear Clap 2, Uppercut 3
Donovan (Journeyman): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 4

Bleddig

Elaine's stepfather was the second man to kneel before her and swear fealty. He is older than many of the other Knights, but is certainly no old man. He is not the strongest, bravest or greatest of the Knights. However, his love for Elaine and Avalon are beyond reproach. He serves the council as a liaison to the nobility. His Knights are usually the guards at formal affairs. As such, the guards are often sons of nobles themselves and well versed in courtly procedure and etiquette. Guests often fail to notice the armed men that surround them because they blend so well into the social background.

Bors MacAllister

No one is sure how many Knights serve MacAllister or what they actually do. When there is a particularly difficult problem that needs a more direct solution, it is MacAllister who sees it resolved. If there is a secret police in Avalon, it is MacAllister who leads it. Problems he is aware of just seem to "go away," usually very quietly during the night. In fact he is so aware of the politics on the isles, he often solves some problems before anyone is aware of them. Most people at court live in fear that MacAllister will one day need to question them. These are the quiet voices of dissent that try to get such a dark character removed from the Queen's side. Knights who serve MacAllister never reveal their true patron. They are careful and discreet spies hand picked by one of the greatest spymasters in Théah. They are taught to learn what they can but take as little risk as they can. Better that their information is incomplete than they blow their cover or fail to return at all. (For more information, see *Avalon™* and *Heroes, Villains and Monsters™*.)

Cowan

Many of the ladies at court hope to catch the eye of this tall and handsome blond haired Knight. He is Elaine's oldest stepbrother, but proved himself worthy of his position without nepotism. He and his Knights train the squires in Carleon and new recruits to the order. For all his good looks

and charm with the ladies he is a harsh taskmaster with his charges. His methods have earned him the nickname "the Boot" among the squires. He has a very small number of Knights who serve him directly. Those who do are often the older Knights looking to retire. They serve as teachers and trainers under Cowan.

Geriant

When a Knight is needed to work abroad, the Queen sends Geriant. He has become a form of martial ambassador for Avalon. He has even been known to work for other nations with the Queen's permission. These missions are always for a just cause. Geriant has slain monsters and protected ladies in danger for foreigners. He never works as an assassin or murderer for the nobility. His service brings the reputation of the Knights to Théah at large, and adds to the glamour of the Knights. Geriant's Knights often travel abroad at the request of other governments to serve the people of other lands in Avalon's name. They are well versed in the customs and languages of other nations.

Geriant (d20™)

Courtier 5/Fighter 1/Robertson 1/Knight of Elaine 5: CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6+15+5d8+18+1d10+3; hp 93; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks: Masterwork rapier +12/+7 me(1d6+3); SA None; SQ Aura of Good (-2 morale penalty), Behind the Cloak, Detect Evil, Improved Fort +3, Improved Will +2, See the Heart (Ex), Style and Grace, Talent, Versatile, Wealth; SV Fort +13, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +14, Climb +5, Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +12, Intimidate +15, Jump +5, Knowledge (History) +10, Knowledge (Nobility) +10, Knowledge (Royalty) +10, Listen +10, Read Lips +11, Ride +12, Search +11, Sense Motive +14, Speak Language (Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne, Ussuran, Vendel, Vodacce [alternately, any seven languages from your campaign]), Spot +10; Feats: Appearance – Above Average, Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Friendly, Iron Will, Natural Diplomacy, Panache, Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier).

Geriant – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, *Finesse:* 4, *Wits:* 4, *Resolve:* 3, *Panache:* 5
Reputation: 70
Background: None
Arcana: Friendly
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Ussuran (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Linguist, Membership (Knights of Elaine), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Specialist (Cold Read 4)
Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Gossip 4, Lip Reading 3, Oratory 4, Mooch 3, Politics 3, Scheming 5, Seduction 3, Sincerity 4
Scholar: History 3, Law 1, Mathematics 1, Occult 2, Philosophy 2, Research 1
Spy: Bribery 3, Cryptography 4, Interrogation 2, Lip Reading 3, Shadowing 2, Sincerity 4, Stealth 1
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1
Cloak: Entangle (Cloak) 3, Parry (Cloak) 4
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2
Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 3
Robertson (Apprentice): Double Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 2, Entangle (Cloak) 3, Feint (Fencing) 3, Exploit Weakness (Robertson) 2
Valroux (Journeyman) Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4

Lamorak

Before Elaine's arrival, Lamorak had designs on the Avalon throne himself. He may have managed it had the fight been a military contest. Like Uwayne, he recognized Elaine as the true ruler of the Glamour Isles when she appeared with the Graal. He pledged his sword and heart to her soon after. As a great tactician and strategist, he has become the general of Avalon's armies. His Knights serve as lieutenants within the army, and most are expert tacticians themselves. They ensure his orders are carried out, and can improvise if things change. They also keep the remaining Eisen mercenaries in order, although there are less of them than there used to be. A growing number of Avalon swordsmen are signing up just for a chance to fight alongside one of Elaine's Knights.

Peppin

This unremarkable man proved himself a remarkable Knight. His stature is average, and his looks are plain; he even has a slight stutter. However, he has proved a talented swordsman, and a quietly dedicated servant of the Crown. Unfortunately, he has been drawn into a search for a creature called "The Mirror Beast." His family is cursed with a Geas to track and destroy this creature, and as he is the eldest, the duty falls to Peppin. The beast can only be seen in mirrors, and can only be destroyed by arcane means. Searching mirrors for over one hundred years has driven most of Peppin's family mad, and many worry that Peppin will share their fate. He continues to search for the creature, but still manages to fulfill his duties as a Knight. Those Knights that serve Peppin are often left to their own devices. So they have taken on the duty of seeing to troubles in the land caused by Geas' and curses. They are adept with fey and glamour lore and travel the land looking to help those who are hurt by it. They are a strange group, always on the look out for things no one else tends to notice. Few people understand Sidhe and Glamour lore the way these Knights do. They are on a quest to find the truth of the Sidhe, and they know it is out there, somewhere.

Yseult

This Knight is the only lady who serves the council. However, that is not the reason for her fame. She is one of the most daring and swashbuckling of the Knights. She never fights on the ground if she can fight from a swinging chandelier. She exhibits visible evidence of Glamour to the point that many wonder if she has Sidhe blood. She is unmarried and has sworn never to fall in love with any man who cannot exceed her standard as a swordsman. However, if she finds a man she likes, the court rumors suggest she may fight him with only a fraction of her true skill.

Although she has no specific duties on the council, Yseult is especially fond of rescuing men from the clutches of evil women. As the only woman Captain of the order, she has become an icon for women in Avalon. So her Knights try to help women in particular in the Isles. However, she is served

by both men and women, and there is no pressure for lady swordsmen to join her service rather than another's. Yseult finds her status as a champion of women rather annoying. She wants to be known as a Knight, rather than some figurehead. She has also fallen out with Sophia's daughters. They tried to recruit her, failing to understand she was already dedicated to a duty and service.

Yseult (A20™)

Fighter 1/Swashbuckler 4/Andrews 3/Knight of Elaine 4: CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6+8+7d8+14+1d10+2; hp 86; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+4 Dex, +7 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork rapier +18/+13/+8 me(1d6+4) or pistol +16 ranged (1d10); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, The Deepest Cut; SQ Aura of Good (-2 morale penalty), Detect Evil, Focused Training, Improved Fort +2, Improved Will +2, Light-Footed, The First Attitude, The Second Attitude, The Third Attitude; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 16; AL NG; Skills: Balance +14, Bluff +10, Climb +10, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Ride +9, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Tumble +14; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Lunge, Parry, Power Attack, Riposte, Sex Appeal, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Finesse (Rapier)*, Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier).

* Usable only when in light or no armor.

Yseult – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, *Finesse*: 5, *Wits*: 3, *Resolve*: 3, *Panache*: 4
Reputation: 65
Background: None
Arcana: None
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Membership (Knights of Elaine), Membership (Swordsmen's Guild), Specialty (Balance 4)
Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Politics 1, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3
Athlete: Break Fall 3, Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Sprinting 3, Swinging 3, Throwing 1
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye Gouge 2, Kick 3, Throat Strike 2
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3
Rider: Ride 4, Mounting 2, Trick Riding 3
Andrews (Apprentice): Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Andrews) 5

Gwydd

This boy is the youngest Knight serving on the council. He is no more than eighteen, but has an unearthly skill matched only by his beauty. It is obvious the boy has powerful Sidhe blood; however he refuses to speak of his origins to anyone but Elaine and Lugh. As they are satisfied with his credentials, no one questions Gwydd's loyalty or dedication. He and his Knights deal with matters regarding the Fay folk. Unlike Peppin's Knights, Gwydd and his followers look to dealing with the Sidhe themselves, rather than the effects of their glamour. Some of Gwydd's Knights have visited Bryn Bresail to deal directly with the Queens themselves. Usually their duties are not quite so glamorous. Most of the time they arrest small Unseelie Goblins and Sprites causing trouble across

Avalon. This is a very difficult task, and usually involves more diplomacy than force of arms. After all, they have no direct jurisdiction over the Sidhe, even when the creatures are destroying crops and burning buildings. So their plan is to stop them doing any more damage, and hope the threat of telling the Queens about their antics will be enough. Due to the sensitivity of their work, most Knights with any Sidhe blood tend to end up in Gwydd's service. (For more information on Gwydd, see *The Sidhe Book of Nightmares*.™)

Owain

Another young Knight, Owain is the only one of the twelve captains to be promoted to the position from within the order. This is mainly due to the newness of the Knights, as all the other captains were given their positions upon joining. Owain replaced Sir Melias who fell during the struggle for reunification. His position on the council serves as a reminder to everyone that Knights can fall and die. Melias has not been the only Knight to die in the service of Avalon; he was, however, the only Captain. Owain's duties involve doing his best to see that no more Knights are killed in the Queen's service. He and his Knights are skilled medics who travel the land looking to heal and protect those they meet. They are highly skilled at keeping people alive until better medical help is available. Owain's Knights are also the ones who investigate any loss of a Knight. They go after any Knight who is overdue from a mission, in the hope they have not perished. Many Knights have been brought home badly injured from terrible battles by one of Owain's men, who have fought terrible battles themselves to bring their charges home.

Owain (d20™)

Wanderer 5/Fighter 1/Goodfellow 1/Knight of Elaine 3: CR 10; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d8+27+1d10+3; hp 84; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks: Avalon longbow +11/+6 ranged (2d4+2) or small sword +11/+6 me(1d6+3); SA Increased Range +10; SQ Aura of Good (-2 morale penalty), Bowyer and Fletcher, Detect Evil, Evasion, Focused Training, Improved Fort +2, Improved Will +1, Tradesman, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Ward of the Albatross; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 15; AL LG; Skills: Climb +12, Diplomacy +10, Heal +17, Hide +7, Jump +11, Knowledge (Sidhe) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Ride +11, Search +9, Sense Motive +13, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +10; Feats: Defensive Shot, Dodge, Focused, Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Healing), Weapon Focus (Avalon Longbow), Weapon Specialization (Avalon Longbow).

Owain – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 4, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 4, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 35
Background: None
Arcana: Focused
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne, Membership (Knights of Elaine)
Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 3
Doctor: Diagnosis 4, First Aid 3, Surgery 3
Hunter: Ambush 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 2
Archer: Attack (Bow) 3, Fletcher 2, Snap Shot 4, Trick Shooting 1
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3
Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 1
Rider: Ride 2, Mounting 1
Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 2, Footwork 4, Jab 2
Goodfellow (Apprentice): Arc 3, Disarm (Bow) 2, Tagging (Bow) 1, Exploit Weakness (Goodfellow) 2

Lawrence Lugh

Alone among the Knights, Lugh is not served by anyone. He stands alone as Elaine's champion and is the de facto leader of the council. If there is anyone in the isles who embodies the tenants of honor, love and loyalty then it is Lugh. He is not just a Knight, but an icon of all that is good in Knighthood. Every Knight in the order hopes to impress Lugh and be accepted into his service, even though no one ever has. If Lugh ever did form his own group, he could pick the greatest Knights with ease to form an elite unit. (See *Player's Guide*,™ *Avalon*,™ and *The Sidhe Book of Nightmares*™ for more information.)

Jeremiah Berek

Critics of the Knights point to Berek as the best example of a flaw in the Order. He is a sailor rather than a swordsman, and seems to fight with underhanded methods that many consider unbecoming to a true Knight. A number of others are unable to tell the difference between a privateer and a pirate, although very few of them are Avalon. Some believe his appointment to the Knights is purely honorary. However he serves Elaine with the same zeal as any other member of the council. His 'Knights' are not drawn from the ranks of the Knightly order, but are the sailors who serve him known as 'The Sea Dogs'. Few of these sailors have much training the Knightly virtues. They do not serve the duties of the order in any way save their service to Berek. However, any of Elaine's Knights know them all as part of their order. This doesn't mean they train and work together. With the Sea Dogs spending their lives at sea and not in Avalon, the two rarely meet. However, when they do, they regard each other as equals and help each other as members of the same order. Apart from this though, both parties have the sense to leave each other to their own duties. Sea Dogs do not roam the land righting wrongs, and no Knight of Elaine would sail the sea as a pirate... privateer. (For more information on Berek, see *Avalon*™ and *Heroes, Villains and Monsters*.™)

Law

The laws the Knights enforce are well known to everyone across the land. However, they are not very strictly defined. They ensure that justice and truth rule the land. They are ready to protect Avalon and its Queen with their swords and their lives. This is of course all very well, but does little to explain what actual laws they enforce. The most codified version of the laws the Knights enforce is in the vow that they all swear on their initiation

Before Her Majesty the Queen and all the Triple Kingdoms, I solemnly swear to:

*Defend justice wherever I find myself, be it land, sea or sky;
Uphold the laws of Avalon and protect her from her enemies;
Protect the innocent and those incapable of protecting themselves;
Exemplify the honor and nobility of the Glamour Isles in my thoughts, words and deeds;*

And defend Her Majesty the Queen from all foes, foreign and domestic. This I vow in the name of the High King, Her Majesty and the Triple Kingdoms.

In practice the Knights follow the whim and word of Queen Elaine. All of them are dedicated to her as the essence of Avalon. All of them would gladly give their lives in her defense without question. Her word is the law of Avalon, and her Knights are the upholders of that word. Some say that the Knights have so much autonomy in interpreting the law that they are judge and jury in one. In one sense this is true; they have the power to punish as they see fit any transgressions they find. However, they are not the makers of law, only the tools of justice and fairness. While they will decide on a punishment for many minor transgressions, for any serious crime their job to see the accused is brought to trial. Few people, even the accused, believe they have much cause to complain about the judgments of Elaine's chosen.

The Knights are more than a group of guards and soldiers. They are a living symbol to the people of the Glamour of the Isles and the power of Queen Elaine. Their reputation for justice and service to Avalon reflects directly on Elaine. They are seen very much as extensions of her will. As a result many people treat the Knights in the same way they would treat their Queen. This has caused Elaine a little discomfort. If she were a different kind of monarch, the Knights could be a terrible force for evil. Their unquestioning obedience to her could easily be abused by any successor she had. She also fears that if the Knights serve only her, then all that they represent and the good they have done will fade when her reign ends. Elaine knows that the Knights are the one thing that will outlast her rule. So she has begun instilling in them a loyalty to Avalon, its throne and its people that goes beyond their loyalty to her. When she has gone, it will be up to the Knights to keep Avalon in peace and prosperity. It will fall to them to see the new King or Queen keeps the land safe and the people happy. The Knights of Elaine may be a new Order, but the Queen of Avalon intends to see to it that they become an enduring and respected one.

The Life

It is the dream of many young Avalon youths to one day prove worthy to join the Knights. They live a life of adventure in Avalon's most exiting time. They serve one of the greatest rulers of the country, and share in the Glamour of her court. The Knights are chosen from only the most loyal and talented men and women of the country. So just to be asked to join is an honor.

Needless to say, joining the Knights is very difficult. Only the Captains or the Queen can offer a place in their ranks to a young hopeful. Even when one of the Captains finds someone they wish to offer membership to, Elaine must also accept them. It is rare for a Captain to bring someone unacceptable before his Queen, as she trusts the judgment of her Knights. However, a few have been turned away because there was something about them that the Queen was unsure of. She meets each candidate in private and talks to him or her for a while alone before announcing whether they have been accepted. Elaine is not only simply a figurehead, allowing her Captains to use her name as they see fit. The Knights belong to her, and even if only once, she has met and spoken to each and every one of them.

Sadly for those hoping to join the order, entry is not a simple matter of joining an academy. No one can choose to join the order. It is the Captains who offer membership on behalf of their Queen. Only they and Elaine can decide who is worthy. So to become a Knight you must impress the order somehow. All the Knights and their Captains are always keeping an eye out for acts of skill and bravery. This is quite easy to do as for many, their work ensures they roam the country and stay in touch with the people they serve and protect. If they hear of a promising youngster they approach them in disguise. They get to know the potential recruit to see if his heart is as loyal and true as it is brave. If the person seems worthy to the Knight, they report them to their Captain so he can watch them. The Captain is the one to decide to make official contact. Often a Captain will notice the youngster has skills better suited to another Captain, and will pass them on to their colleague. So by the time a Knight officially approaches the recruit the whole council could be aware of him and know all about him. This may seem to be rather secretive for such a noble organization. However it is very necessary, as most people are drawn to the glamour and fame of the Knights. Those who serve Elaine know that Glamour is important for the isles, but they do not seek it for themselves. They consider any personal fame and celebrity status to be something they hold in trust for Avalon, and not for themselves.

Despite eschewing personal Glamour, the Knights recognize its importance to Avalon as a whole. So they ensure their actions and traditions only add to the magical power of the isles. As another way of finding new recruits, many of the Knight Captains attend the many festivals and tournaments that entertain the people of Avalon. In these times of joy and plenty, the nobles often hold tournaments of arms during festivals. When a Knight of Elaine attends, every swordsman works a lot harder to impress them with acts of skill and daring in the contests. On very rare occasions a Captain has awarded a place in the order to the winner of these tourneys.

However, the reason such appointments are so rare is that very few 'contest winners' have the right attributes to become Knights. The ones appointed in tournaments are usually recruits who would have been offered a place anyway. The Knights do use the tournaments to look for new recruits, but it is more likely they will spot a more humble swordsman at the tournament and resolve to keep an eye on him. The Knights are not looking for the greatest swordsman. They look for the man who fights when he knows he cannot win; yet the honor of a lady is at stake. They watch for those who fight even though they can hardly lift a sword because they have sworn to do so. They are seeking men who fight with honor and fairness, never taking opportunities to cheat an opponent of fair victory.

So you may wonder why the Knights bother to attend the festivals, even though they do so rarely. It is to fulfill their secondary duties as a Knight. When they attend, every participant fights at his best, and tries to be as daring as possible. Glamour builds and grows at such times, and the land prospers.

Once accepted as a member of the Knights, the life is one of constant glamour, intrigue and adventure. The new recruit is able to wear the full uniform of the Knights, a simple tabard of blue emblazoned with the flag of Avalon. Every Knight is expected to keep their clothes and weapons in pristine condition at all times when on duty. It is even rumored that Knights have been ordered to wash their tabards in the middle of a battle if they got too muddy. This extreme uniform code

ensures every Knight seems to be dressed finely, with their rapiers shining. They stand out in a crowd as a dashing and slightly larger-than-life figure, which is how it should be.

Each Captain uses the Knights at his disposal as he sees fit. Some are charged with specific missions, while others are sent to wander the country and right wrongs. Usually Knights travel alone across the land, except when they have recently joined the order. In this case they travel with a more senior Knight for a year and a day so they can gain the benefit of the older Knight's experience. There are not really enough Knights to allow them to travel in large groups and still administer to the whole kingdom. When Knights do travel together, they usually are all in service to the same captain, and gathered for a particular task. The most experienced Knight becomes the leader of such a group by default.

Every Knight must serve as a guard in the great court in Carleon for at least two months a year. However it is rarely a chore as the court is a place of intrigue and high society. Consequently many Knights wish that their time there could be longer. It is a chance to be responsible for the Queen's safety, which most Knights see as their greatest duty. The only down side is that the Knight is expected to do more training and routine duties.

Adventure and trouble seem to follow the Knights wherever they go. The country responds to their fame, and fate makes a point of keeping them occupied. Somehow, no Knight ever gets much of a rest between adventure and excitement. It also appears that whenever there is injustice or cruelty, fate ensures a Knight is there to fight it.

Alternate Campaigns

Elaine's Knights should fit easily into a non-Théan campaign. At their heart is a powerful loyalty to their Queen and the need to do good. While they could serve any nation, they would fit best in a young kingdom. In such a place ideas are new and ideals are not crushed by cynicism. They could still work in a larger and older land. However it is likely in such an environment that power politics and intrigue would tarnish their loyalty and faith. The essence of Elaine's Knights is that they really are what they appear to be. They don't take bribes or abuse their powers. They are loyal and generous with the people they meet and never run from danger or their duty.

They are also extremely loyal to their ruler. So consider carefully whether the ruler of your kingdom has the same charisma as Queen Elaine, to inspire such an order. Here at least there is room for a little subterfuge and manipulation. If the ruler were evil, yet managed to create a reputation like Elaine's, the Knights would be a powerful tool for terrible harm. However, the ruler would have to move with great subtlety, so the Knights would think their leader was still good and pure. As time went on, some of their missions might seem a little odd. Eventually they would begin to mistrust their leader. Later the characters might realize other Knights are having the same doubts, but many need a lot more convincing. That could pave the way for an exciting end to a campaign as the Knights realize they must depose their ruler to bring justice to their country once again.

The Fianna — The O'Bannon's Guards

History of the Order

The voices still scream in the O'Bannon's mind. From the day he felt thousands of souls flood his essence he has never known peace. They drive him and push him to serve their needs and the needs of history. They are the past, present and future, they guide and call to him. The past demands that he serve history and tradition, the present needs him to look to the health and well being of his people, the future begs him to heed its warnings. So he sits upon the throne of Inismore until the screaming in his soul is too much, then he runs into dark places once more to look for silence and stillness once again.

The O'Bannon is a troubled man, and he needs his knights to help him look after the people and crown of Inismore. When he rules, they stand by his side. When he is gone they watch for his return. The Fianna are the eyes and ears of the O'Bannon, and the heart of Inismore.

When the O'Bannon came into power many years ago he gathered his best knights around him and took them into a dark room deep in his castle and locked himself in with them.

"Whom do you serve?" he shouted.

One said, "You, my lord," and O'Bannon cut him down where he stood.

"Idiot," he screamed as he tore at his hair, "You serve a madman, what good is that? Who will see to my people when I am gone?"

Another said, "Then we serve the people, your Majesty," but the O'Bannon drove his blade into the man's heart and watched him fall dead to the floor.

"Imbecile," cried the King smashing his head against a wall until blood ran into his eyes. "The people will die and move on. They will make themselves King after me. They will hurt and kill each other and bring ruin when I am gone."

Finally one knight stepped forward and said, "I serve Inismore and that will be an end to it, great lord." The O'Bannon came up to that knight, so close he almost touched, and fixed him with a shattered stare from his broken eyes. "Then, sir, you serve a great mistress," said the O'Bannon. "You will sing for me and watch when I am gone. Now tell me, good sir knight, who here do you trust?"

A little unsure, the knight pointed out those among the other guards whom he felt he could trust and who stood as his friends. Smiling, the O'Bannon slaughtered the rest, and named the survivors "The Fianna" or Soldiers.

The Fianna served their lord faithfully for the rest of his reign, which turned out to be only a few years. One day the O'Bannon was gone, and the Fianna had vanished as well. The court lay empty, with the crown of Inismore sitting on an empty throne. It was an O'Toole who after a few days approached the throne and took up the crown. Wars began and thundered across the land unchecked by the O'Bannon or his guard. The people felt forgotten and alone, leaderless and crushed. However, the Fianna had not forgotten them.



They couldn't stop the wars, but they could see to the people. While war raged they quietly removed a large number of corrupt nobles and power-hungry merchants. When an O'Toole tried to kill the O'Bannon's wife to remove the chance of an heir, the Fianna saw that the plan (and the O'Toole) vanished without a trace.

When the wars were over they silently carried on their work, gradually becoming forgotten. Then the O'Bannon returned again, and the Fianna returned with him. They served him as before, and faded away into the countryside when he left again. So it goes on into the modern day. When the O'Bannon is away they watch the people, and now he has returned they stand by his side as his guards.

Duties

First and foremost, the Fianna serve Inismore and her people. They are also utterly loyal to the O'Bannon as the embodiment of the Inish spirit. Unfortunately, the Fianna have become as feared across the isles as they are loved and respected. Even though they are known to be just and fair, and have the interests of the isle at heart, they are also known to take the long-term view. The Fianna have carried out terrible atrocities because sometimes the safety of the isles was more important than one man, woman, child or family. If the only way to repel an invasion is to level the village they are coming for, then the village will burn. The Fianna are adept at using similar tactics to Erich Sieger in Eisen. The end always justifies the means to them. They take no joy in this; it is just the way things have to be. Inismore will survive and endure, no matter what the cost.

When the O'Bannon is gone the people believe the Fianna disbands, or leave with him. In fact they fade into the hills and villages of Inismore, and wait for the O'Bannon's return. They return to their old lives or more often create new ones for themselves and rejoin the Inish people, perhaps not even as a swordsman. However, they always keep their eyes and ears open. They watch the O'Bannon's enemies and his people in secret, which may be why many Inish are suspicious of strangers when the O'Bannon leaves. The Fianna are not just

some secret police, they exist to protect Inismore, and so dark men who were in the right time at the right place have saved plenty of Inish lives. Many O'Tooles have been killed in their beds for an abuse of power. Every time the savior or assassin has faded back into the night.

The other purpose of the Fianna is to guard the Fâl Stone or "Old Molly." This stone lies in a courtyard in the center of the city of Tara, the capital of Inismore. When kissed by the true king of the Inish, the stone sings a haunting (and some say prophetic) melody. It is regarded as one of the greatest treasures of the island and is a symbol of the nation and culture of the Inish everywhere. No Inishman would dare touch the stone without good reason, as it is sacred to them all. However, few foreign nobles have any such difficulty. That is, until they are found dead the next day for their disrespect.

Everyone in the Isle knows that the stone is watched all day, every day. The people believe the Sidhe and the power of Glamour protect the stone. In fact, the Fianna kills anyone who touches the stone without just cause. They do not stand by it and guard it; they watch in disguise as faces in the crowd or beggars lurking in the alleys. They watch the stone in secret, ready to punish anyone who disrespects it. There is a story told of a Montaigne noble many years ago. He boasted loudly that he was unafraid of these local customs. In broad daylight he chiseled off a piece of the stone as a keepsake. No one really knows what happened to him during the night, but he returned the next day, ashen-faced. He placed the small chip of stone he had stolen back on top of Old Molly. Then he shouted that he was sorry and begged forgiveness of the O'Bannon, the Fianna, and the Inish people. After that, he stabbed himself and fell dead as his blood splashed onto the Stone. Most people still wonder what terror the Fianna could have threatened the noble with to make him do that, as he was under no Glamour. If anyone doubts this local story, they are shown the small chip of stone that still rests on top of the Fâl Stone. Even many years later, the myth keeps the Stone unmolested.

The final duty of the Fianna is to serve the O'Bannon, which is difficult for two reasons: he is rarely there and he is utterly insane. While he is away they serve him by recruiting more to their ranks so that when he returns, the Fianna will be there waiting for him, stronger than ever. They also keep an eye on the other nobles and the state of the country. They insinuate themselves into a variety of positions from guards to servants and even bedfellows so they can watch more closely. They never take a hand in actual policy making but they punish those who work against the O'Bannon or his laws. If one of them finds evidence of wrongdoing they convene a Shadow Court. The accused is brought blindfolded before five high ranking Fianna and the evidence is heard. The accused has a chance to proclaim innocence or promise to make restitution, all the while unable to see his accusers. The defendant is later released, and if he fail to mend his ways, or if he speaks of his experiences, swift and terrible punishment comes without warning.

When the O'Bannon sits on the throne the Fianna is more obvious. When in uniform they all wear masks to protect their identity. Many people believe the Order to be smaller than it is, as they see only a few uniformed guards. In fact the uniformed Fianna are often different each day, while the others serve in secret. Oddly, those who are on duty as

bodyguards to the O'Bannon are rarely called upon to defend him. The madman has proven more than once that he quite capable of looking after himself.

In reality, the guards are there to protect the people from their king. It is the Fianna who bring problems and disputes before the king on another's behalf. The King has been known to kill the messenger with news he did not like so the Fianna takes the risk. They also stand ready to restrain their lord if he seems about to harm the innocent, or if his rage comes upon him while in company. Over the years the Fianna have given their lives many times to protect the people from their king. More often though, a word in the King's ear is enough to calm his anger. He trusts his guards to hold his humanity and remind him of it should he lose himself to madness.

Organization

There are only two ranks among the Fianna: the Mactalla (Echoes) and the Curfa (Chorus). The Mactalla, enlisted men within the Order considered to be the echo of the O'Bannon's voice, they are chosen for their loyalty to the O'Bannon and to Inismore. They are also chosen from among those who do not shirk from the Order's terrible purpose. The Curfa are the higher-ranking Fianna, and it falls upon them to find and train the Mactalla. The Curfa hear the chorus that sings in the O'Bannon's mind, and as a result understand his ways. They are always looking out for men and women who have the qualities they need. The O'Bannon is not looking for men who want to become celebrities or gain Glamour for themselves. The Fianna work in silence and must be prepared to do what no one else can for the good of everyone.

The Curfa are selected from the ranks of the Mactalla. They are the officers of the Order, but not in the same sense as most military organizations. Often groups of Mactalla are set to a task without a member of the Curfa to lead them. Sometimes a group of Curfa work on a mission alone. The Curfa are certainly above the Mactalla, and can assert their rank. However the ranking system is a lot less formal, after all, they are all Fianna.

As the Curfa choose the Mactalla, the O'Bannon chooses the Curfa. There is no way to join the Curfa without the acceptance of the O'Bannon and each new member is inducted in a secret ceremony that only other Curfa can attend. During this initiation the O'Bannon asks (often strange) questions of the Fianna Mactalla to tests his loyalty. Sometimes he asks for a tale, other times he asks riddles but he never asks the same question twice. The question always reveals something about the initiate's true intentions. If the O'Bannon is satisfied with the response, he cuts his finger and marks the initiate's cheeks, the same as they do for those who have participated in their first hunt. At that moment the new Curfa member is linked to the O'Bannon. All Curfa know instinctively when the O'Bannon will return and when he is going to leave. They know if he is pleased with the state of the Isles or not. More importantly, they gain an understanding about the ar ri that defies description.

Before he leaves on one of his jaunts back to Bryn Bresail (or points unknown,) the O'Bannon often creates many more members of the Curfa to ensure continuity although the Mactalla continue to issue commands. The Curfa belong to the O'Bannon who uses them as he sees fit.

Law

The Fianna do not truly follow and enforce any actual laws. While the whim of the O'Bannon is considered law in Inismore, this is only the case when he is present. Even then, the Fianna have been known to actively disobey him when they believe his judgment to be impaired. Their other duty of protecting the Fál Stone and the land of Inismore is not codified in any actual law. Even so, the spirit of most Inish law holds those duties at its heart.

The Fianna serve a higher ideal, but are unfortunately unregulated as to their interpretation of it. When the O'Bannon is gone they are a secret police, beholden to no one. When their lord is around they are the dedicated servants of a madman. They have nothing to trust but their instincts about what is right and wrong in the isles.

Ironically one of their duties is to see everyone else is following the law of the land. While they allow themselves a broader mandate, they allow no such leniency for anyone else. They are not interested in minor transgressions. They watch the more important ones in the form of the nobles and power brokers abusing their position. Their reputation (through rumor and superstition) is a constant reminder that the O'Bannon's will and law is to be obeyed, whether he is there or not.

The Life

What sort of a person chooses to follow a madman? The Inish, of course. They recognize the true purpose of the Fianna to guard and protect the land they love with all their heart. Mad Jack is their lord and master, but even he serves the land and the people.

Those who wish to join the Fianna find the task easier when the O'Bannon is around. At times like this the Fianna are easy to find and a potential recruit can simply ask one of them how to join. When the O'Bannon is gone, the Curfa watch for potential recruits and offer the tests to the worthy. Anyone can try and join the Fianna. The Knights aren't picky about who attempts to join. They trust the tests required for membership to be enough to weed out the fools. While they never refuse a man the chance to try and join, they make it clear that few who fail survive.

The Curfa gives new recruits three tests, one of wits, one of cunning and finally one of loyalty. Quite often the candidate is unaware the test is going on. While they go about their daily life, a situation occurs around them, and they are watched to see how they do. Sometimes they are charged with a particular task that will cover all three. Many versions of the tests involve solving riddles and finding the meaning of strange tales. Tests of wits are designed to see how clever and resourceful the candidate is. They can involve changing the rules on him while he performs a task. Such as telling him to escape by the back door, and when he tries he discovers there is no back door. They may also test wit by giving the recruit a task, but not giving him enough information, like how to get to a place, or who to meet.

The tests of cunning are often more deadly. The recruit is placed in a dangerous situation, without an obvious means of defense. He may find himself in an alley and meet several armed thugs, while being completely unarmed himself. Unlike the test of wits, the examiners do not usually have a solution to the problem in mind. Either the candidate is

both clever and resourceful enough to escape or defeat his opponents, or he gets hurt. A lot of the time, the candidate doesn't just get hurt. The Fianna don't use actors for these trials, they maneuver the right things together.

The final test, that of loyalty, is always the worst. The candidate is sent to assassinate the occupier of a particular house. The recruit usually believes this assassination is the test, proving he will spill blood for the Order. However, the only occupant of the house is a member of the recruit's family, tied up and unconscious (so they remain unaware). If the recruit has no family, the Order will use a small child. Luckily, the gun provided for the mission will not fire, and a Fianna is on hand to stop the recruit killing their nearest and dearest with something else, just in case. The Order only wants to know that the recruit would pull the trigger if the Fianna told him to do so. Any man with no loyalty to his family has no place in the Fianna either.

The family member is returned home, none the wiser. The Fianna may never tell their family about their new career. In truth, many tell those in their family they can trust, as the Order does not enforce secrecy. However, should some family member try to use their knowledge to their advantage, they will find themselves in a shadow court very quickly. Members of the Order are all usually made aware of any new recruit, so those who join often find family members among their new companions who can now be a lot more open about their dealings.

In true Inish style, there is one final test for the recruit. He must recount the tale of his tests to a small group of assembled Fianna. Being Inish, they do this test over a few ales. However, the recruit is only told of this test when he is extremely drunk. If he is too drunk to realize his companions are serious, they all point guns at him (and keep drinking) to make the point. This test proves several things. How good the recruit is under pressure, how much wit he has even when drunk, and how good a tale-spinner he is. It also proves to be a bloody good laugh for the other Fianna. Storytelling is an important part of Inish and Fianna custom. They are often adept at working reports into stories and tales they spin in bars; the sort that the whole bar may hear, but only one of the listeners will understand. The telling of tales can also be important for when the O'Bannon is back. He likes a good story, and sometimes does bad things to poor tale-weavers.

If the recruit passes the tests he is tattooed with the design of the Fianna. The design is an intricate knotwork pattern that only a few have the skill to craft. If you stare at it too long it seems to shift and move as your eye follows the twists and turns. The tattoo is mostly green, but turns a deep crimson if the Fianna becomes a member of the Curfa. By this mark, every member of the order knows each other. So while it is up to the recruit where it gets placed, it had better be somewhere he can show it easily when meeting another disguised Fianna. While the design is strange, it is only known by those in the order, so few people know to remark on it.

From that moment the recruit is a Mactalla of the Fianna. When on duty guarding the O'Bannon they wear a green tabard with the O'Bannon's family crest and a scarf over their face for disguise. When not guarding the O'Bannon, they look just like any other Inishman, whether on duty or not.

Alternate Campaigns

If there is a mad god-king in your campaign, why not give him a personal army? After all, can he really get any more dangerous? Perhaps not, but there is more to the Fianna than simply service to an insane Sidhe. Their lord need not actually be mad. He could be an old man, or even a young girl, anyone who isn't really quite fit enough to make the right decisions. Perhaps a disease has made a ruler prone to fits and rages, as the illness gets worse. Someone needs to keep the ruler safe, and keep his people safe from him.

The Fianna are a group of loyal men and women looking to serve their homeland. This home is swamped with magic and mischief, and its people need to know someone is out there fighting for them. The Fianna could easily take control of Inismore while their leader is away. So it is important to remember that they have no wish to rule. They are there to enforce the law, not to create it. The Fianna are also prepared to do whatever must be done to keep things from getting too crazy. Sometimes this means doing something no one else is prepared to do. They protect the land and its people, even from themselves. In a time of chaos, they keep the way and light the path, even if they must use their swords to clear it.

The Stelets of Ussura

History of the Order

The elite guard of Ussura, the Stelets represent the authority of the Gaius throughout the land. Although they were formed relatively recently by the young Gaius Ilya, the concept behind their existence is an ancient part of Ussuran history. Charged with ensuring that Matushka is revered and respected, and her holidays celebrated, they also serve as a traveling cadre of enforcers who oversee the secure governance of the nation's five kingdoms. When they are in Pavtlow, they act as city guards and personal bodyguards for the Gaius and his or her family.

Brodyaga or rangers have always shared an important relationship with Matushka, protecting her kin and living in accordance with her laws. Hunting only what they need, fighting poachers, and never assuming wealth or excess, many feel that they represent the best of what is Ussuran. Since their inception they have done more to extend and support Matushka's will and bind the Gaius to the land than any organized force in recent centuries. Starting with their naturalist leanings and leading to their eventual disposal of several key and destructive poaching groups, the Stelets have made their presence known.

While their numbers were initially small, the ranks of Stelets have burgeoned over the years, especially when the Montaigne army came calling. Originally called chevalier guards (and used only during ceremonies and so on), the name Stelet was established when the Gaius determined their role would be more than just parades and bearers of the royal coronet.

In 1667, the Stelets managed to put down a secret cabal within the Ussuran council to overthrow the Gaius. The act was done so quietly and the Stelets were so delicate in their actions that no one noticed. The offenders were swiftly

and secretly executed and their remains buried in hovels throughout Rurik and Veche. Only the four Stelets responsible for the mission know the exact locations.

The Situation Post-Revolution

If your campaign occurs after the Montaigne Revolution, you know (or will soon learn) that the assault on Ussura ended in defeat and many dead invaders buried in the snow. There is an old saying that one should never dance with the land when she wears white, and thanks to Matushka, Ussura will probably always be dressed in white when the enemy appears at the border. Montegue and his forces completed their retreat by late Julius 1668.

Now came the slow process of rebuilding. Although the assault did not end as Montegue wished, he came much closer than anyone did to conquering Matushka's beloved country. As we have seen in Castille, the Montaigne Army leaves devastation in its wake. The weather is unstable, the land is fallow, and Matushka seems to have abandoned them. Many citizens of Pavtlow fled to Veche, whose Knias is old and strange in the head. His son does not show any signs of being the ruler his father once was, which means that unless his strong-minded daughter comes back from wherever she is, the Stelets may have to assert martial law to prevent an uprising.

As if there was not already enough trouble, the Kosars, led by Jyrgal Timurbek, have decided that maybe it is time for the new kingdom of Kosara to take its place among its Ussuran sisters, even if that means raising weapons against the Gaius. On the border with Cathay, there is some dissention as well. It appears that Dalan-Tai, the leader of Xian Bei, is thinking very seriously about reuniting with the Tumen from whom they were separated so many centuries before by the Fire Wall.

The Montaigne may be gone, but peace is a fragile commodity in Ussura.

Augmenting the Forces

With so much chaos, Pyotyr Siev Andropovich, the leader of the Stelets, has chosen to increase his forces with an additional branch of the Order. Making it very clear to the Gaius and the recruits that this is a temporary measure until peace can be restored, he has appointed Ivor Vasnovitch, probably the most presentable of the ranger guard in Ussura, as the leader of the new unit. He would have liked to appoint his own son but sadly, the young man has gotten it into his head that he must raise a new army in Ussura which will directly contravene the Stelets.

Vasnovitch was a logical choice. In 1668, he has instituted a program to rotate Stelets between the two extremes of their training. Each Stelet serves two years in the wild and then one year in Pavtlow. Effectively, there are now twice as many Stelets working in the wild as in the city. His aim, to give every ranger a rest from the hardships of the cold winter land — had a slightly less obvious agenda. By filling the forest with soldiers of the Gaius, only he and his second know at any one time where the Stelets are and thus can place them advantageously to provide preemptive strikes against would be dissidents or invaders. and when and where a counterattack against dissidents or foreigners would come.

The implementation of his plan came none too soon. When the Montaigne army moved into Ussura, over 5,000 Stelets were on alert in hundreds of places throughout the forest, ready to bring down the advancing foreigners. While their numbers were smaller than those of the Montaigne Army, they used the terrain to their advantage and stymied the invaders at every turn.

Ivor's second-in-command is a smart, brash but effective leader named Natalia Ulanova. Not surprisingly, she has her own agenda. She sees herself as the authorized vigilante and defender of Matushka's outlands and of Matushka herself. Her first and most important decision was to create small units of Stelets that she called *svyazka* (literally, packs or prides). Each *svyazka* is made up of two to six rangers who patrol and protect various regions of the winterland. Since then, her actions, while important and often pivotal, have gone mostly unnoticed by the general populace, which is probably just as well because many of them would not understand what she is doing or why she is doing it in the manner she has chosen.

Duties

The Stelets are the highest-ranking military arm in Ussura. To be accepted into their ranks one must display even greater strength and resolution than normal for an Ussuran. All Stelets are expected to enforce the Gaius' laws throughout Ussura and administer Matushka's will. Any Ussuran who would harm another without just cause calls down the wrath of the Stelets. Even those from outside her borders are not safe; foreigners bearing arms against the boyars or the Gaius often disappear without notice.

Stelets serve as personal guards to the Gaius and in many cases travel to other lands to perform acts to which most of the boyars cannot be privy. Assassinations, misinformation, and intimidation are some of their tools and it is this responsibility and authority that has become the weight of their station. The Stelets keep the nobles' hands clean of deception and subterfuge and some give up their lives in foreign places, never to see their beloved winterland again. There is a common proclamation among the Stelets, "I am the hand of my father, hidden forever behind his back, so that none can see that he is as much a nurturer as he is a killer. I am that hand and I would do nothing to show this strength to his allies or those who could exploit him."

On a smaller scale, the Stelets have two very distinct roles. Those who serve the Gaius directly, either as personal guard and escorts, are sometimes called the *konvoj*. They attend high-class functions, wear dress uniforms, and maintain a high profile to deter would be assassins, guerrillas, or dissidents. A Stelet in this service uses skills gained as a swordsman or personal champion rather than as a ranger, although he must be alert at all times even as he does when in the outlands.

Often a Stelet may be ordered to deliver a message, escort an important dignitary, or stand guard over one of many historical landmarks, statues, shrines, and tombs throughout Pavtlow where members of the Gaius' family and other nobles are buried.

The bodyguard arm of the Stelets is almost dichotomous to the brodyaga (ranger) who serve Natalia on the front. The brodyaga hunt poachers, quell dissension, ferret out cults and secret societies, and keep the borders safe from harm. They do not stand in watchtowers or travel the wood with hundreds

of days of rations; instead, they are expected to make their way, sometimes for months at a time, living off of what Matushka offers them and their own strength of will. Many come back from their tours having lost weight due to the deprivations endured during the assignment.

Brodyaga Stelets often form small patrol groups to hunt poachers and those hiding from the law, but they also perform humanitarian acts for those in need of their aid. The veteran brodyaga living brutal lives in Ussura's unforgiving cold, ever watchful for peasants who has lost everything or who are on the verge of starvation. A brodyaga will give up her rations to save a starving muzhik, secure in the knowledge that Matushka will reward her sacrifice.

Matushka might frown upon the use of firearms, but they are an important part Stelet training. While brodyaga do not carry firearms into the wood, poachers do. Knowing the weapon of the enemy is important in understanding how to defeat him. In addition, using the weapon of your enemy against him is a high effective way to survive the wild for months on end without using up precious arrows and other supplies. Stelets who are gone for months at a time must sometimes resort to unpleasant methods to achieve their ends.

The Story of Gregori Volga Yemnovich

In April 1665, Gregori Yemnovich was expected back from an 8-month tour of Northern Gallenia. It was the first time anyone had been sent so far north into this barren region for so long a period. However, Natalia Ulanova considered it an important test, even if it meant a brodyaga's death. Gregori volunteered for the assignment and understood the dangers. When he did not return, the brodyaga in Breslau grew nervous. Gregori was one of them, and they could not rest idle without knowing the fate of their comrade. Natalia sent word to Breslau that no search teams would be sent to find him. If he was lost it was Matushka's will. All but six of the brodyaga obeyed her Ulanova's command.

Gathering their belongings and marching north, the six marched north, following the trail as best as they thought Gregori would forge it. Two weeks into their journey they found remnants of Gregori's belongings and feared the worst. They agreed to spend one more day searching for a body before returning to Breslau empty handed.

That night, camped in a small cave, the group was attacked by a maddened and deranged Gregori. Wild-eyed, he attacked his comrades with a sharp stick and the bones of an animal carcass. In a ghastly whirlwind of mayhem and carnage, Gregori slew four Stelets before the last two took him down.

One of the two suffered a deep wound and expired three hours later. The last survivor buried the bodies and made the lonely trek back to Breslau to report the attack and the fate of his comrades. He eventually resigned his station saying he could never again face the hard winters of Ussura without thinking of that fateful event.

Natalia Ulanova reissued her order. Any Stelet who disobeyed could consider himself expelled from service, and any who helped a renegade Stelet would suffer the same fate.

Organization

Regular Stelet units are divided into regiments of 30 soldiers. Archers, cavalry guards, dragoons, grenadiers and snipers are among the specialist units of the regular Stelets and each is different in size based on location and formation. Irregular units are designed and organized as needed but usually range from two to six each. Natalia establishes their patrol areas according to her own chaotic yet patterned understanding of the wilderness.

Stelets who work alone usually perform tasks without a set protocol. Delivering messages or murdering visiting diplomats fall under a special branch of the Stelets known as naladchik. Naladchik hold no rank and report directly to the Gaius for their orders. No one in Ussura can detain them other than the Gaius; once they are sent on a mission they must complete it or expect to suffer for their failure. As a result, naladchik are only drawn from the Stelets who have no family or other connections. Those who are married or who have living parents or kin are exempt from the duty of naladchik.



Special reserve regiments exist and are stationed in various cities throughout Ussuran, but only those at the highest level know the details about their size and scope.

Stelet ranks are listed below (from lowest to highest):

- Stelet
- Michman (Warrant officer)
- Khorunzhy* (Cornet of the Guard)*
- Shtabs-Poruchik (Junior Lieutenant of the Guard)*
- Poruchik or Sotnik (Lieutenant of the Guard)
- Rotmistr or Esaul (Captain)
- Secund-Maior (Second Major)
- Premier-Maior or Voiskovoy Starshina (Major)
- Podpolkovnik (Lieutenant-Colonel)*
- Polkovnik (Colonel)*

* This rank does not exist in the wild.

Law

- Attacks of any kind against the Gaius are punishable by death. Members of the family of the offender are hunted down and put to death as well. Often public, these executions do happen in private from time to time, if the Gaius or Ivar consider the acts require more delicate measures. Often the head of a cell of terrorists just “disappearing” is a strong message.
- Attacks of any kind against members of the council are punishable by death. Members of the family of the offender are hunted down and hobbled.
- Attacks of any kind against boyars are punishable by death.
- Attacks of any kind against bogatyrs are punishable by death; however, in many cases if family is still alive, the Stelets take the property of the offender and exile him from the city.
- Killing a muzhik is punishable by death. Members of the family of the offender are hunted down and ordered to pay restitution. The amount is not set, but often indentured servitude or the taking of property is involved.
- Any other attacks against a muzhik are punishable by imprisonment, fine, or whatever measure short of death that a Stelet feels is reasonable. Neither the Gaius, nor the boyars take much issue with those who would attack muzhik and therefore leave their judgment to the Stelets.
- Poaching is punishable by death. Stelets take poaching personally and do more than just kill poachers, but the government’s official stance is public execution.
- Theft of any kind is punishable by death. This is an odd decision for Ivar to make when this law was ratified two years ago. Most Ussurans do not hold tightly to valuables, however, it was thought that if thieving were allowed to continue without strict punishment, Ussurans would grow accustomed to the notion of taking from one another and the materialism of the west would infect the motherland. Stelets view stealing from a fellow man nearly as harshly as poaching, but rarely do more than bring a criminal in for public justice.

- Sedition is punishable by death. In this, Stelets are not required to memorize many laws. If anything is considered an offense to the Gaius, it is merely removed. Many crimes conveniently fall under sedition. In the wild, a Stelet often lets the elements be the executioner of those who would raise arms against the Gaius.

The Life

Stelets are drawn from every walk of life. However, only those with the will to survive the harsh winters of Ussura without subsistence are fit to join the ranks of the Stelets. As a result, Stelets rarely marry, and families are a luxury for those who have the time. Tours of duty in the wild range from 3 to 6 months at a time, with short vacations in between. One cannot keep a family if one is never home. So much so, that Ilya does not accept married Ussurans into the ranks of the brodyaga. While a few Stelets may have families, they eventually must resign their positions when it comes time to serve a tour in the wild. Ilya was once quoted as saying, “I will not make orphans of Ussura’s children. Already too many are willing to die for Matushka. Why make her young suffer?”

Ivor and Natalia consider the work they do vital to Ussura’s continued health and only accept those who meet their rigid and difficult standards. Those who complain lack the initiative to care for themselves or others, and those without the backbone to see the Gaius’ work done to the bitter end are fit for this work.

Once someone is asked to join the inner ranks of the Ussuran military, Ivor and Natalia will take 20 to 30 people at a time and put them through the rigors of Théah’s harshest training. Weapons and fighting are the smallest part of this training. Instead, trials of patience and willpower top the list of tests an Ussuran is expected to pass to become a Stelet. When this training is completed, it is expected that the Stelet gains a better respect for the order and a strong sense of character that may have once been lacking.

In game terms, this means that Stelets are lawful or good by nature, always adhering to a code that is larger than they are.

While no Stelet will ever speak of the training or its initiation rites, it is clear that all who survive it, become more than they once were, developing character and integrity necessary to survive in the wild and be one of Matushka’s elite. (For more information, see *Ussura*.™)

Alternate Campaigns

Most rangers are by nature trackers. While this combination of magical powers and wilderness knowledge may not always mesh in perfect harmony with a low magic or more realistic campaign, the Stelets provide an intelligent and explainable alternative. Their connection to the land, reverence for nature, and inherent affinity for the hunt make them an ideal mix of druid and ranger.

A group of adventurers camping and hunting in a forest protected by Matushka’s rangers would certainly think twice after an encounter with her attendants. A cold wind, followed by a blanket of fog, and then the mysterious arrival of four rangers and a druid standing over the bewildered and awestruck PCs would deter even the highest level party from trouncing through the woods, disrespectfully. And a fierce brodyaga clad in a bearskin will certainly remind them that

the forest is a place to play.

The Stelets need not be adversarial. The PCs can be their connection to the real world, giving them information on human encroachment and developments that would eventually harm the forest. Alternately, a campaign with PC Stelets protecting the earth with all manner of magic and wilderness lore at their disposal lends itself to many different kinds of woodland and mountain-based adventures.

Stelets can also be used as emissaries, couriers, or any sort of adventurer traveling across great lands to ensure the delivery of an important message, cargo, or dignitary. Such adventures are ripe with opportunities, especially when the Gaius’ enemies are everywhere. Those who serve the Gaius can be expected to commit great “sins” in the name of Ussura and Matushka. They should never flinch in this duty.

Nevertheless, the Stelets are very much like a knightly order of rangers. They are wilderness-based, often with only themselves to depend upon, but always adhering to a greater code and belonging to a higher order — even when they are not being watched. Stelets who would break this code would find themselves hunted by the very order they once served.

The Knightly Order of the Rose + Cross

History of the Order

There are two histories to the Order of the Rose + Cross: the one that is public knowledge and an older one known only to those within the order itself.

Public Knowledge

The first time the Order of the Rose + Cross came to the public’s attention was in the spring of 1613. A pamphlet appeared on the streets of Crieux in Montaigne that boldly exhibited an emblem of four entwined roses surrounding a cross. The message on the paper was cryptic, proclaiming the Order as an anonymous assemblage dedicated to upholding three Vows: “to bring justice to the unjust, to protect those who cannot protect themselves, and serve those who wear the sacred Seal of the Order.”

A second pamphlet appeared a few weeks later in the Eisen city of Starke. The message was much the same, referring to a secret group of men and women “Meting justice when others are too weak to raise hands, delivering charity when others turn away.” Public interest began to increase, and even the Vaticine Church decided to look into the matter – but they would find no new information until it was literally outside their front door.

Ten weeks after the pamphlet was found in Starke, hundreds more pamphlets were scattered around the Grand Cathedral in Castille. Again, the message was similar to the original pamphlet in Crieux, only this time the message also declared the Order was devoted to “serving the Prophets and all who serve their Holy Mission.” The Hierophant was quick to respond, instructing the members of the secret Order to “make themselves and their intentions plain.”

No one came forward.

The Invisibles

There is one final rank within the Order, one that is kept secret from Initiates and even from Poor Knights. Known in hushed conversations as “The Invisibles,” they are the Order’s secret espionage force and directly inspired by the ancient Numan group of the same name. Numbering no more than twelve individuals at any time, the Invisibles are charged with handling the most sensitive and dire missions imaginable. They do the Order’s dirty work, making sure whatever actions they must take are untraceable to their brother Knights. Invisibles do not openly wear the Seal of the Order; they are not meant to be seen or even known.

No one seeks to join the Invisibles, as recruitment is handled by the Invisibles themselves. Their policy is to watch and secretly test a strong candidate. If the individual is found worthy over a period of months or even years, the Invisibles will reveal themselves and make their offer. If the worthy Knight accepts, he publicly distances himself from the Order, sometimes even going so far as to fake his own death.

Only the Minister knows the true number and identities of the Invisibles, and only he can determine when a mission is serious enough to warrant their involvement. With the decline of Miles over the last few years, the Invisibles have become somewhat more independent in their action and some within the group and among the Master Knights see this as a worrying trend.

Almost a year later, three men sporting the Seal of the Rose + Cross foiled an assassination attempt against a Montaigne cardinal. They fled before they could be properly identified. Two weeks later, six men wearing the Seal rescued the Princess of Castille from kidnappers. They, too, did not wait for recognition or accolades. The very next week, a Vendel League merchant was pulled from a burning building by a single man dressed in a blue tabard, the Seal proudly displayed on his chest. Like the others, the stranger disappeared without a trace.

Speculation over who might be behind all these daring acts was finally put to rest on Octavus 5, 1615, when one hundred fifty men and women across Théah identified themselves as part of the enigmatic Order, openly wearing the Seal on their chests. Each one was revealed to be of high birth, prestige and position. Three of these individuals proclaimed to be the founders of the Order: Beatrice Desaix du Paix, famous duelist and the first daughter of the king of Montaigne; Brother Domingo del Aldana, chief advisor to the Hierophant for over ten years; and Salvatore Vestini, son of a Vodacce Merchant Prince and heir-designate to the rich Vestini lands. Because all of its members were important figures in society, the Order gained immediate acceptance and respect — along with petitions from dozens of noble men and women across the land eager to join the instantly famous company.

To the surprise of many, the Order politely declined all of the petitions. With great respect, the three founders declared that becoming a Knight of the Rose + Cross was by invitation only. However, a form membership was possible for anyone who wished to donate funds to the Order. These generous

individuals would be known as Patrons, and would have a special place within the fraternity. They would also be allowed to wear the Seal of the Order, an honor much of Théah’s noble classes could not resist. On 17 Corantine 1617, the Hierophant gave the Order the Church’s blessing by declaring the Knights to be official “servants of the Church and Makers of Justice.”

Through the following years, Chapter houses spread across the continent. With each valiant deed, the Order’s fame and prestige grew. Individual Knights began to capture the public’s attention and some even garnered a following of devoted admirers. But the fact that nonmembers were not allowed within the interior of Chapter houses caused some outside the Order to wonder what mysteries might be locked inside.

The often-breathtaking physical prowess demonstrated by the Knights led some Church scholars to question whether the Knights were somehow enhancing their abilities through sorcery or other dark means. Learned minds have recognized the rose to be the alchemical symbol of purity, while the cross was symbol of the four ancient elements. These observations only fueled the speculations and the debate continues to this day, in part due to a book written by the scholar known only as “Balreaux.”

Despite its conspiracy-minded detractors, the Order of the Rose + Cross remains a beloved and respected institution. People everywhere know of the Knights and speak reverently of them. Children from every nation and social station dream of one day joining their ranks. Newspapers eagerly report their activities, knowing it will increase their sales. The Knights of the Rose + Cross have literally become cultural icons and have a special place in the hearts and minds of people across Théah. Everyone knows that, no matter how bad things get, a dashing Knight may be counted upon to ride to the rescue.

In short, the Order has not only captured the imaginations of both the common people and the nobles but it has inspired their very souls. What most do not realize, is that this is and always has been the Order’s ultimate purpose.

Private Knowledge

While most accept the official history of the Order, the truth is that the group is older than is generally known — much older.

In the days of the Numan Empire, a group of men and women became known as the Fraternity of the Sword and served the Emperor by enforcing justice throughout the land. They had a friendly rivalry with another group, called “the Invisibles,” who served as the Emperor’s private espionage force. For five generations, these two organizations upheld Numan order and defeated various enemies of the Empire. All that changed when an enemy emerged from within the Empire itself.

When the Senators made their dark bargain for sorcery and stole political power from the Emperor, the Fraternity was severely weakened. Many members deserted out of frustration, while others were hungry for power and crossed ranks to ally with the Senators. By the time the First Prophet began spreading his message, only a few within the Fraternity remained to hear.

The Prophet's controversial words about the Creator entity known as Theus found a believer in the leader of the Fraternity, an idealistic man named Curtius. He felt the Prophet's inspiring message was just the thing to uplift the hearts of the other demoralized Fraternity members and, for a brief time, he was right. However, when the Prophet came into conflict with the Numan government, the Fraternity was torn between its duty to the Emperor and its devotion to the Prophet. It did not have to agonize over loyalties for long as the Prophet was declared an enemy of the Empire by the Senators and quickly executed. News of his death crushed the remaining spirit of the Fraternity; Curtius himself committed suicide and the Fraternity was officially disbanded.

The story would have ended there, but one member did not lose his faith. A young Frater named Verginius found not only solace in the Prophet's message, but illumination. Sorcery, he concluded, was an abomination, an unnatural force from outside the Creator's work that ultimately corrupted any who wielded it. It was because of sorcery the Prophet was killed and that the Senators now had more power than the Emperor. Verginius shared his revelation with a few former Fraternity members and their past rivals the Invisibles. A new brotherhood was formed and named the "Invisible Sword," dedicated to opposing the Senators with politics and intrigue.

To begin with, the Invisible Sword had great success. Just as it seemed the Senators would be defeated, a Fate Witch exposed the secret warriors to her husband and the outnumbered brothers were all eventually captured and executed. Before he died, Verginius documented their history and beliefs in a journal. He hid the tome in Castille, where it remained forgotten and unknown until 992 AV.

When a monk named Guillaume accidentally discovered Verginius' writings, he was immediately inspired and vowed to restore the Invisible Sword and continue its righteous cause. He left his order and traveled across Théah to search for successful methods to combat the ancient Enemy. His journey ended with his death in the great Mu'gla-kum desert of the Crescent Empire, but his loyal Eisen apprentice was determined to carry on his master's quest. He continued meeting with wise men and reading books in great libraries. The more the apprentice learned, the more he came to understand the implication of the First Prophet's words: "Only those who are worthy or make themselves worthy can see the truth." The human soul, if worthy, could change the world, and not even sorcery could stand against it.

The apprentice's conclusions were confirmed when he met an alchemist named Khalid, who told him that transforming base metal into gold was just an analogy for transforming the base soul into "the golden soul."

"The rose is the symbol of the soul," Khalid explained, "for as it dies, so it blooms. We are all dying. Every day of our lives. And so do we bloom."

"And what of the cross?" the apprentice asked.

"Not the 'cross,'" Khalid answered, "the *crux*. The crucible where all is transformed."

The symbolism perfectly matched the apprentice's interpretation of the First Prophet's words, that the soul might be transformed through knowledge. Ecstatic, he changed his name to Verkündigen Rosenkreuz, Eisen for "he who declares for the Rose + Cross," and returned to the Church to share his discoveries and beliefs. To his surprise, the Vaticines had no interest in hearing his words, condemning him and casting him out as a heretic.

In response, Rosenkreuz enlisted the aid of three other monks from his old order, teaching them what he had learned and calling them "Brothers of the Rose + Cross." As they traveled the countryside, their interpretation of the First Prophet's words gained converts and enemies. The brothers hired mercenaries for protection and, over time, the monks learned the mercenaries' martial abilities and the mercenaries learned the monks' wisdom. They had started a new incarnation of the Fraternity of the Sword, scholar-warriors wearing the Seal of the Rose + Cross.

The most important event for the brotherhood occurred on 10 Decimus 999 when a stranger approached Rosenkreuz and revealed himself to be the Third Prophet. He was delighted by the truth in Rosenkreuz' discoveries and the brotherhood escorted him to Vodacce with the hope of rebuilding the Church. When they arrived, they discovered a false Prophet has already corrupted the Hierophant's ear. Determined to protect his new position, the false Prophet turned on the Third Prophet and the brotherhood. Rosenkreuz managed to escape, but the Third Prophet was burned at the stake as a heretic. Understandably, the brotherhood longed for revenge, but Rosenkreuz knew the time was not right. Instead, he ordered his followers into hiding. No longer would they openly wear the Seal of the Rose + Cross. Only through secrecy could justice come to those who betrayed the True Prophet.

Over a century later in 1118 AV, a follower of teachings of Rosenkreuz went before the Hierophant. He was a famous crusader knight named Hughes Allais du Crieux, and he petitioned the Vaticine Church to allow him to found a new order of knights to guard the Crescent Empire land that had been captured during the Crusades. Realizing that pilgrims hoping to travel to the homeland of the Second Prophet needed protection, the Hierophant agreed and established the "Holy Order of the Poor Knights of the Prophet." Hughes worked the teaching of Rosenkreuz into his Knights' training and, like the old brotherhood, they became both warriors and scholars.

The Order grew and prospered, acquiring so much wealth and resources as to rival many of Théah's royalty. This led to jealousy and resentment, and even the Hierophant realized that such a powerful group could threaten his political security. On Octavus 13, 1307, King Philip IV of Montaigne, heavily in debt to the Order, declared the Knights in Montaigne guilty of heresy. Evidence was produced by agents of the King that the Order conspired with the Crescent forces and worshiped idols. A close ally of the Montaigne King, the Hierophant declared all Knights guilty of the crime and gave every Théan monarch the right to arrest the Knights. The sovereigns could keep half the wealth discovered, and the rest went straight into Church coffers. The last Master of the Order, Jacques du Muguet, was burnt alive in the main plaza of Charouse. As he died, he repeated the same message that all the other Knights had during their executions, vowing that the Montaigne King would face judgment for his actions. Within the year, both King Philip and his puppet Hierophant had died of natural causes.

The Knights who managed to escape the fires of the Inquisition fled in secrecy to the Highland Marches, a place the Vaticine Church had no influence. Some suggest that the Order knew of their betrayal and had smuggled much of their knowledge and treasure out of Montaigne before the King could act. In the far north, they forged an alliance with

Robert MacDuff, a noble desperate to cast off the shackles of Montaigne rule. The presence of highly trained cavalry at the Battle of Dun Vahl gave victory to MacDuff and allowed him to establish his independent kingdom. The Knights once again secluded themselves from the outside world, constructing the Monastery of St. Brigid in Kirkwall as a headquarters from which to rebuild. The Poor Knights disappeared from all knowledge, while its members carefully plotted their return.

The betrayal at the hands of the Mother Church fundamentally changed the Order. No longer would the Knights attempt to be a part of the Church. Instead, they decided to champion the people, to set an example for them to emulate and discover Rosenkreuz' truth on their own. This new plan was set into action in spring of 1613 with the pamphlet in Crieux and continues to the present day. It is the Order's goal to remove the need for sorcery and the influence of any outside force, by slowly moving all of humanity towards the potential of their own spirit. They have tried to teach this directly and paid the price, so now they achieve this goal slowly and surely by acting as living examples to the rest of the world.

So far, The Rose + Cross has done a remarkable job in keeping their true origins hidden, even going so far as to secretly release a book entitled *Revelations of the Rose + Cross* in which all manner of fictitious, but essentially harmless, claims about the Order are exposed to the public. The book has satisfied many of the Order's critics and muddied the waters for any potential enemies searching for the truth on their own.

The Order has taken the harsh lessons of its past to heart and looks to the future with a cautious but eager eye.

Duties

The Knights of the Rose + Cross are dedicated to serving an ideal. They believe that, by providing a heroic example to the people of Théah, they can inspire and uplift them to do great things in their own lives. They are paragons of honor, loyalty, and strength, seeking out evil and making sure justice prevails. Whether contacted at a Chapter house by a person in distress or discovering trouble on their own, Knights are always seeking situations where they can be of help. Thwarting the wicked is their primary concern, but Knights are also known to aid in other circumstances, from natural disasters to penning escaped livestock.

In addition, Knights are honor-bound to help patrons of the Order, men and women who have acquired honorary membership by donating funds or performing other services. An annual donation of 5,000 Guilders allows a patron to wear the Seal and, in keeping with his vows, a Knight must safeguard them. Sometimes a patron will sponsor an individual Knight as opposed to an entire Chapter house. The Knights call these patrons "roses" and, when speaking of them, refer to their patron as "my rose." Patrons must be warned that the Knights will not perform decidedly illegal actions in their name, those few patrons that do cross the line quickly find themselves without support or favor.

The recent Montaigne revolution has put the Order in a difficult situation, as many noble patrons came under the threat of the revolutionary forces. The Knights tread a fine line in helping their sponsors, while not exposing the Order to retribution from the government or being seen to act in an illegal manner.

The Order is very careful not to publicly criticize sorcery, but no sorcerer is ever invited to join the Order and someone with sorcerous heritage is incapable of attaining the enlightened state revealed by Rosenkreuz' teachings. The equality that the Order shows has endeared it to the common people, emphasizing the message that everyone is capable of the potential shown by the Knights.

Organization

Internationally famous, it is no surprise the Knightly Order of the Rose + Cross includes members who hail from almost every corner of Théan. While the Order does not discriminate on grounds of nationality, it has yet to bring any citizens from the Crescent or Cathay subcontinents into its fold. However, as more and more Knights find themselves adventuring in and around these exotic lands, most agree it is only a matter of time before some of the best and brightest of these distant people prove worthy of wearing the Seal.

Despite the danger and violence Knights encounter on a daily basis, their membership has remained relatively stable over the last decade at just over 500 active. This tally does not include retired Knights or patrons, the latter whose numbers tend to fluctuate with the ebb and flow of the Théan economy. Indeed, patronage in Montaigne has declined significantly since the beginning of the country's revolution, although a burgeoning and wealthy middle class has in part made up for the loss of so many nobles.

Active members are divided into nine distinct ranks, of which seven (Poor Knight, Wandering Knight, Sergeant Knight, Adept Knight, Senior Knight, Master Knight, and Grand Master) are known to the public. The final two ranks of Seneschal and Minister are deliberately kept out of common knowledge.

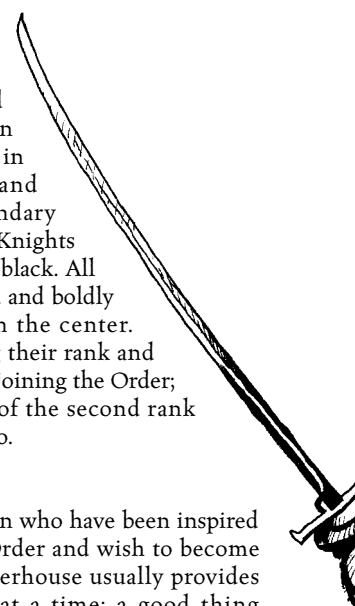
All active Knights wear a tabard whose color indicates rank within the Order. Poor Knights are clad in red, while Wandering Knights and Sergeant Knights wear the legendary blue tabard. The highest-ranking Knights are the only ones allowed to wear black. All the tabards are trimmed with gold and boldly display the Seal of the Order in the center. Knights refer to each other using their rank and the name that they have taken on joining the Order; for instance a Castillian knight of the second rank could be called Wandering Rodrigo.

Initiate

Initiates are those men and women who have been inspired by the stories and deeds of the Order and wish to become Knights themselves. Each Chapterhouse usually provides shelter for up to ten initiates at a time; a good thing considering that on average only one out of every ten initiates successfully completes the arduous eighteen-month training period. The other Knights commonly refer to these eager petitioners as "Beggar Johns" as they have not yet earned the right of a true title.

Poor Knight

If an initiate manages to survive the initial training period, they assume the title of "Poor Knight," the lowest rank of Knight in the Order. These Knights are well trained but lack field experi-



ence, a problem that is remedied through apprenticeship to a senior member, who is most often a Wandering Knight. Though being an initiate proves their potential, it is this apprenticeship period that is actually more formative and usually results in a strong bond between student and teacher.

To reinforce the importance of this relationship, the Order utilizes specific terms for both instructor and apprentice. While other members address the student as “Poor Ian” or “Poor Daniel,” a teacher always refers to his charge as “Tyro.” Meanwhile, the student is instructed never to address his teacher as “Master,” since that designation is meant solely for the Master of the House. Instead, he calls his teacher “*Dominus*.”

Wandering Knight

After a Poor Knight completes his apprenticeship, he advances to the rank of Wandering Knight. The number of Wandering Knights in the Order at any time is roughly equal to the number of all the other ranks combined. Consequently, this is the type of Knight most Théans have either seen or heard about in tales.

As the title of the rank suggests, a Wandering Knight is not a stationary position. Wandering Knights are modern “knights errant” who travel far and wide to defend the helpless, protect the innocent, and bring justice to the wicked. These Knights recognize no borders and do not call a single Chapterhouse “home.” The majority of Wandering Knights do not progress to a higher rank because they feel the greater good is out among the people they are sworn to protect, not back at a Chapterhouse.

As with all ranks, the Knight is referred to by his rank. However, the Castillian term *vaganti* has become popular in some regions, so being referred to as “Vaganti Salvador” and “Vaganti Robert” is becoming increasingly common.

Sergeant Knight

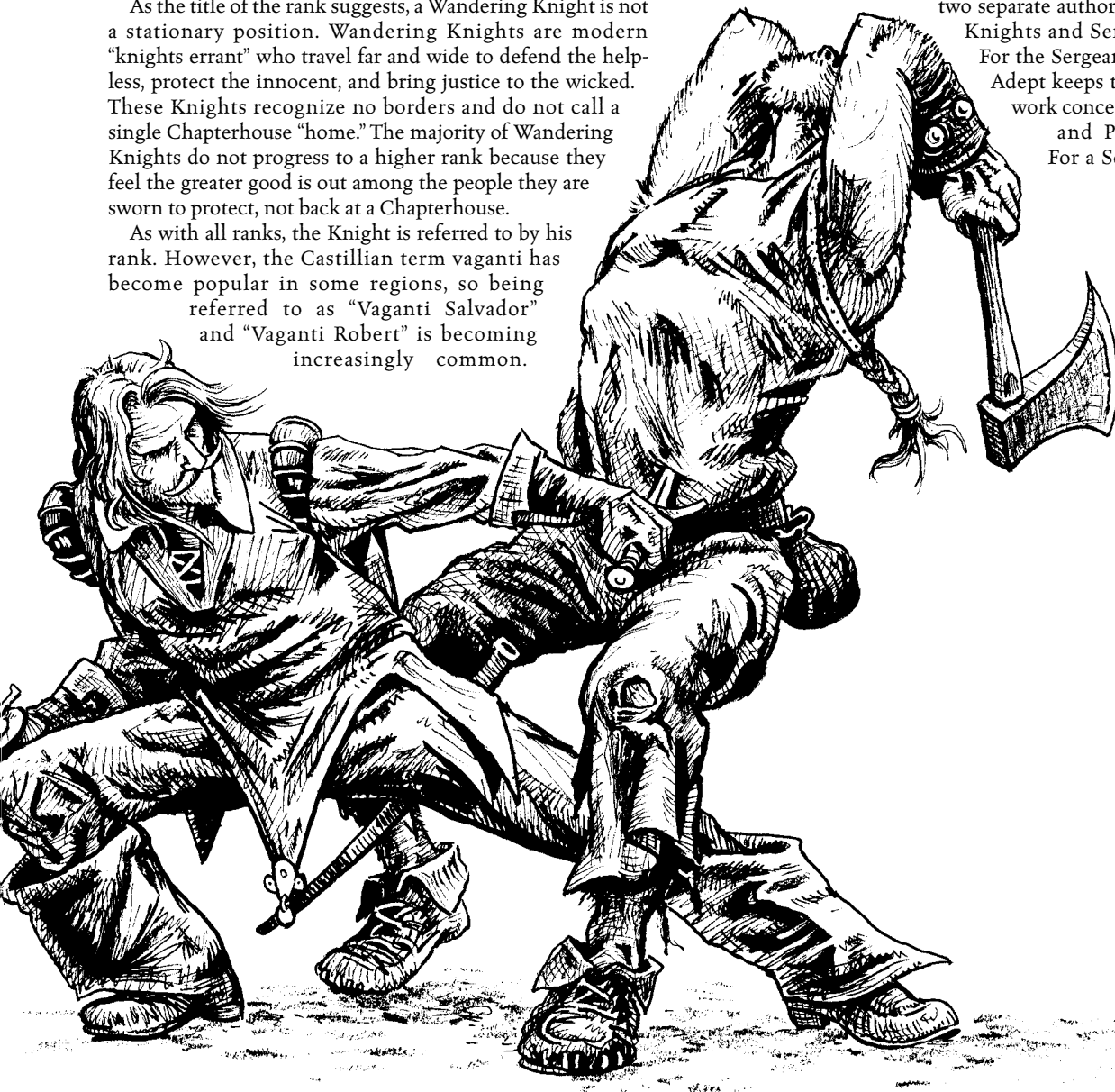
After field-training a number of Poor Knights, some veteran Wandering Knights discover that they have an affinity for teaching. These Knights often settle at a Chapterhouse and proceed to oversee the training of the newest initiates. Granted the rank of Sergeant Knight, these men and women are dedicated to insuring the quality of future Knights — a task that is never taken lightly.

While they are one rank higher, Sergeants do not have any official authority over Wandering Knights. However, most Wandering Knights hold Sergeants in high due to their many years of experience. It is not uncommon for a Sergeant Knight to be the oldest member of a Chapterhouse.

Adept Knights

Considered to be “a Rank most tedious” by many Knights, an Adept Knight performs an important function for the Order. Promoted directly from either the ranks of Sergeant or Wandering Knight, Adepts are in charge of all the paperwork and administrative tasks of a Chapterhouse.

Adepts are in the peculiar position of answering to two separate authorities: Sergeant Knights and Senior Knights. For the Sergeant Knights, an Adept keeps track of paperwork concerning Initiates and Poor Knights. For a Senior Knight,



an Adept keeps up with various bills and expenditures. Most Senior Knights are assigned at least three Adept Knights, and most Adept Knights aspire to someday be Senior Knights. Many noble sons with more background in organization than swordplay find themselves gravitate towards this position in the Order.

Senior Knights

If Adept Knights are like the middle management of a Chapterhouse, then Senior Knights are the equivalent of the board of directors. Promoted almost exclusively from the ranks of the Adepts, Senior Knights are responsible for the house's fiscal matters and other managerial concerns. Most Wandering Knights have learned to stay on the good side of Senior Knights, as a Knight's reputation often travels from Chapter house to Chapter house faster than the Knight himself. Considered by many, mainly it should be noted the Seniors themselves, as the true power in the Order, it is certainly correct that they are the main reason that the Order has thrived and expanded as it has in such a short space of time.

Most Chapter houses have two Senior Knights, and they are properly addressed by the title "Senior," although some certainly have other names whispered by younger Knights when they are far out of hearing range.

Master Knights

Many think a Master Knight is in charge of a Chapterhouse, but this is only an outsider's perception. Management of the house is entrusted to the Senior Knights; a Master Knight instead serves as diplomat and liaison to the community in which the Chapterhouse is located. Master Knights are always seen at the best parties, charity events, and other social occasions skillfully petitioning for donations from the nobles. An expert in public relations, it is the Master Knight who regularly gives interviews for newspapers, speaks in public forums, and represents the Chapterhouse at court. A Master of the House, as they are sometimes called, may not be the oldest or most accomplished Knight at a Chapterhouse, but they are usually the most charismatic.

There is typically only one Master Knight per Chapter house. While he or she has no direct authority in military or financial matters, all the other Knights generally consider it wise to take heed to a Master's opinion on diplomatic matters.

Seneschals

Only two Seneschals reside within the Order, serving the Minister in much the same fashion as Adept Knights serve Senior Knights. Charged with carrying out the mundane operations that keep the Order functional, they are quite knowledgeable about almost every aspect of the Order. One Seneschal is located at ancient library of the Monastery of St. Brigid in the Highland Marches, while the other serves at the Chapterhouse of the Grand Master in the Montaigne city of Paix. Much like the Minister, their identities are not widely advertised and they appear as ordinary Senior Knights when in public.

Minister

The Minister is the ultimate authority concerning the Order and the keeper of all its ancient secrets. Currently, Miles Valroux du Martise, who resides at the Monastery of St. Brigid, holds the position. His mental and physical health has been in steady decline over the past few years, making

some wonder how much longer he can, or will, retain the position. What secret knowledge led to the sudden decline of "Old Unshakable" is also a topic of much hushed debate in the Order.

Grand Master

The Grand Master is the apparent highest-ranking member of the Order, serving as its public face and biggest celebrity. While it is true that they hold a lot of influence, even they are only aware of the secrets the Minister feels safe for them to know. Anti-government militants in Montaigne recently assassinated the previous Grand Master, Aristide Baveux, during an event now known as Bloody Feast Day. His replacement, Hughes Sices du Sices, now leads the Order from the Chapter house in Paix. As a noble, Hughes walks a fine line in revolutionary Montaigne, but his decision to remain and his conduct so far has brought him respect and popularity from both within the Order and from the general populace. However, the Mayor-Prefect of Paix just barely conceals his contempt for someone he sees as an embodiment of the old order.

Law

Unlike the Montaigne Musketeers or the Knights of Elaine, the Order of the Rose + Cross does not enforce any strict set of national laws. Instead, they are dedicated to the code of Théan chivalry and a modified code of conduct passed down from the monastic Rule granted to the Poor Knights. When a Beggar John becomes a Poor Knight, he makes the following oath:

"I swear I shall protect the weak. I shall show mercy to a defenseless foe, keep guard against treason in my own heart and in the hearts of others. I shall hold a passion for justice in my heart, show humility before the Creator and his Work, and give aid to any man, woman, or child, friend or enemy, without thought to reward or compensation."

Courage, justice, generosity, mercy, modesty, and temperance are all virtues a Knight strives to uphold. If a local law interferes with any of these noble activities, most Knights will not hesitate in bending, if not breaking, it for the greater good. The needs of the human spirit supercede the needs of secular law, and no Knight will knowingly allow evil to prosper behind a veil of edicts and regulations. However, no Knight will act against such a foe without being able to first produce conclusive evidence of evil doing. The Knights are dedicated to justice and not the darker vengeance of die Kreuzritter.

The ceremony of the black ball is used when the Order identifies someone who is so beyond redemption that they must be killed. The Order views killing as a dark art that changes the person who performs the act and can alter how other perceive them. To ameliorate this issue, Knights in a Chapterhouse draw balls from a large bag and the one who draws the black ball goes in secret to execute the villain, then returns to his room in secret.

The most important thing a Knight can do is set a heroic example. The Order is dedicated to inspiring and enriching the soul of humanity. While a Knight's martial prowess makes him a force to be reckoned with, it is his virtuous heart that truly sets him apart. This is the esoteric secret the Order tried

to bring to light twice before. The concept of the “Golden Soul” that lies at the cornerstone of the Order’s philosophy is very similar to some Cathayan beliefs, which make sense since the Order developed their ideas in the backdrop of the Crescent Empire before and during the Crusades, and there are even hints of a connection with Cathay.

The Order has nearly been destroyed twice and they do not intend to make that mistake again, so any efforts to pursue study and revelation of the Golden Soul will be done in secrecy.

The Life

To even hope of becoming a Knight of the Rose + Cross, an individual has to come to the attention of the Order, usually by performing a deed worthy of a true Knight. This is because the Order does not allow just anyone to join; recruitment is strictly by invitation only. The Order recruits members from all walks of life, but the majority tends to be young men and women from noble families who are not likely to receive any significant inheritance. Feeling they have nothing to lose, they will sometimes take incredible risks to impress a Knight, hoping the Order’s tabard will bring them prestige and glory. Some merchants and even pirates have used their wealth to become Patrons, in the hopes that their sons and daughters may be noticed for membership in the Order. While many children of Patrons have been accepted as Initiates, it is only through their own worth that they will ever become true Knights.

Once a person has become an initiate, they are subjected to eighteen-months of intense physical and spiritual training, pushing their body and mind past exhaustion on a daily basis. A large number of potentials quit after only three days, but those who persist are rewarded by promotion to Poor Knight.

The first step of being a Poor Knight is the Ritual of the Vows, where an initiate is led into a chamber deep within the Chapterhouse. Surrounded by other Knights, he kneels upon a giant Seal of the Order. He is approached by the Master Knight who places an old-fashioned longsword with its point at his heart and asks, “Will you protect those who cannot protect themselves?”

The initiate responds, “So I vow.”

The Master Knight then places the sword at the initiate’s throat and asks, “Will you bring justice to the unjust?”

Again the initiate responds, “So I vow.” Satisfied, the Master Knight holds out the sword in both hands and asks, “Will you serve the Order and those who wear the Seal?”

The initiate responds, “So I vow” for the third time and takes the sword by the blade into both his hands, usually drawing blood. A bowl of water is then emptied over the initiate’s head and the Master gives him a new name known only to other Knights. He is then given his tabard and told he may keep and name the sword for his own use. Initiates are given the distinct impression that if the Master Knight views their Vow as false, the sword will be plunged into their chest. No one knows of any Initiate who has died in the ceremony, but the story persists among the lower ranks.

The ceremony concludes with the Master announcing to everyone assembled that a new Knight is among them, at which point the Knight announces his name. He keeps the name of his sword private. He is then given as an apprentice to another Knight, who acts as his field instructor, mentor, and advisor for the next two to three years.

After the apprenticeship is finished, the Poor Knight is initiated into the second rank and admitted into the Great Secret of the Order. Again kneeling in a circle of Knights, the Poor Knight removes his tabard and is told of the Order’s ancient history, the story of the true Third Prophet, and the truth Rosenkreuz discovered about the human soul. When it is over, the Poor Knight repeats his Vows and, this time, understands and feels their power. Inside his soul, the Third Prophet’s lost lesson becomes real and the Knight comprehends that mankind’s own words have power. From that moment on, when the Knight makes a Vow, that is a promise based on the three Vows from his initiation, it will come to pass. The Knight does not know how it will happen nor is it guaranteed that he will be a part of it, but the Vow will come to pass. A number of non-Knights have shown this ability on occasion and some have subsequently been accepted into the Order. However, the training program that the Order uses is the best and most assured way to unlock this potential in mankind.

Once he becomes a Wandering Knight, a Knight lives the life of a wayward adventurer, traveling across the continent in search of wrongs to right and noble deeds to perform. He has no permanent residence, resting and re-supplying at Chapterhouses and homes of patrons. It is not an easy existence, but most Knights agree that they have never been more satisfied.

Life for those of the rank of Sergeant Knight and higher presents its own challenges. Chapterhouses must constantly be maintained, initiates must be trained, and communal ties must be maintained. In addition to performing the tasks of their ranks, these Knights also spend time in daily meditation upon the teachings of the true Prophet.

A Knight’s career typically ends in one of three ways: they are killed, they get married, or they retire. A fallen Knight is buried with a somber ceremony, laid to rest with their tabard and sword. Most Chapterhouses maintain private cemeteries that are closely guarded, and only a Knight may be buried there. If a Knight decides to marry, they surrender their title and are wed within the Chapterhouse. The Knight is no longer an active member of the Order, the other members will now refer to them as a “Fellow.” If a Knight is fortunate enough to survive to an age to retire, they are given a ceremony similar to the Ritual of Vows. The retiring Knight is asked three questions — “What was your greatest victory?,” “What was your greatest regret?,” and “What do you wish to leave the Order?” They are then baptized once more by a bowl of water being emptied over the head and earn the same title as a married Knight, that of “Fellow.” (For more information, see *Knights of the Rose + Cross*.™)

Alternate Campaigns

The Order of the Rose + Cross can be lifted from its default setting of Théah with little trouble because the concept behind it is strong and rich with adventure potential. Anyone who is well-versed in history and conspiracy theory may have already recognized that the Knights are loosely based on real world speculations about Knight Templars, the Masons, and especially in name and thought, the Rosicrucians. There is no reason these ideas and themes cannot be incorporated into other campaign worlds.

To maintain the essence of the Order in an alternate setting, it is important to remember the Knights have dedicated their lives to being examples of chivalry. All the bits about

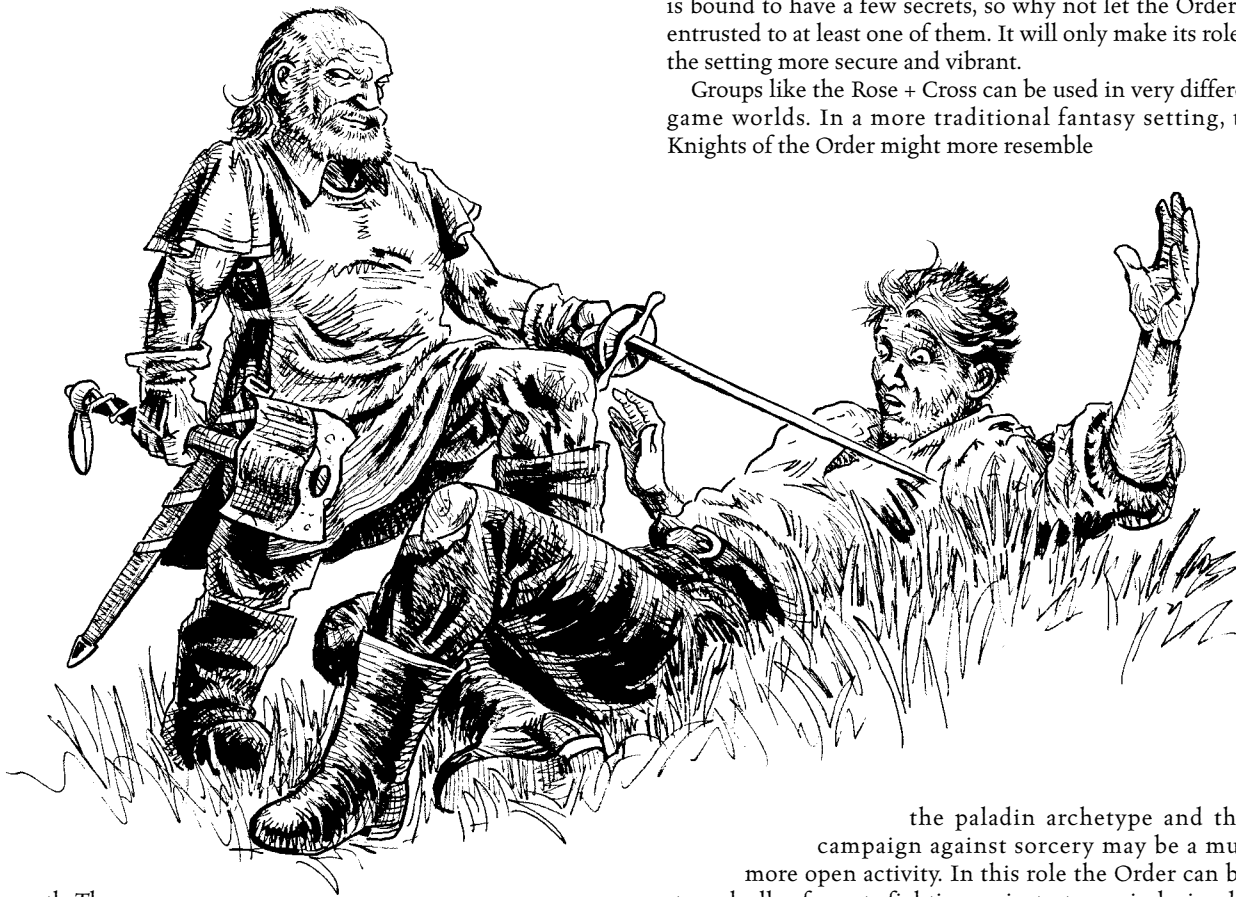
“awakening humanity’s soul” and “the Prophets” aside, Knights strongly believe virtue and integrity are what makes a person great, not brute force or birthright. To a Knight, might does not make right. Right comes from the human spirit, the goodness that dwells in the heart of every man woman and child. Right makes might, and therefore imparts a sense of noblesse oblige, the notion that it is the duty of the strong to protect the weak. At its core, this is what the Knightly Order of the Rose + Cross is all about and what separates its members from those in similar organizations.

In other words, Knights are heroes dedicated to uplifting the common man, leading by example rather than brute

uphold the tenets of the Order. You can use the Order as a kind of glue to keep all the players together over the course of a campaign.

The fact that the Order is something of a secret society can be a useful tool to incorporate as well. By their very nature, secret societies have secrets, and this is certainly the case in Théah. These secrets are things only the Order knows and could change the world if revealed to the population at large. In Théah, the secret is the message of the True Third Prophet and the truth behind it. In real history, the secret has been thought to be everything from the Holy Grail to the location of Atlantis. The actual nature of the secret is not as important as the fact that it must remain hidden. Any campaign setting is bound to have a few secrets, so why not let the Order be entrusted to at least one of them. It will only make its role in the setting more secure and vibrant.

Groups like the Rose + Cross can be used in very different game worlds. In a more traditional fantasy setting, the Knights of the Order might more resemble



strength. They are a force of good in the purest sense of the word, a shining example of civility and honor. Such a strong moral position can fit into almost any type of campaign, whether it is with feudal Knights who wear shining armor and sit at a round table or cosmic Knights who carry laser swords in a galaxy far, far away.

Of course, this is just the major theme upon which the Order is based. Some other aspects of the Knights are also worth considering if deciding to use them outside of Théah, not the least of which is that the pan-national nature of the Order provides a great excuse to unite a group of adventurers that have nothing else in common. Knights can hail from all and sundry backgrounds, nationalities, occupations, and in the case of a high fantasy world, races or species. They may be wildly different as individuals, but they are united in their mission to

the paladin archetype and their campaign against sorcery may be a much more open activity. In this role the Order can be a staunch ally of a party fighting against a tyrannical wizard, or an implacable foe to a party containing sorcerers. There is scope to make individual members of the Order run the spectrum of characters, from powerful and honorable paragons of virtue to a naive swordsman who tries to do right but all too often comes off as a hapless fool. To put a darker spin on the group, some of the senior members may be using the Knights for their own agenda and the party may find them coming up against people who should really not be their enemy. The players have the option of fighting and making a true enemy of the Order or perhaps heroically uncovering the corruption in the group and restoring the Knights to their purpose.

As originally intended, the Knightly Order of the Rose + Cross is meant to stir the hearts and imaginations of the common people. It can do the same for your own creativity as well.

The Iron Guard of Eisen

History of the Order

Eisen is a nation in constant turmoil. From this conflict have risen strong, stoic people. If nothing else, the people of Eisen are known for their strength and their loyalty. Even in the midst of the War of the Cross, many people looked to Emperor Riefenstahl for strength while the countryside was being driven into mud by warhorses and seeded with the blood of Eisen's best soldiers. While his suicide was one of the outcomes of that conflict, the people of Eisen have reacted less emotionally than, say, the people of Montaigne.

While the Emperor left no child to take his place, there are a group of men and women that each possesses a valid claim to the throne. They are the Eisenfurst, the Iron Princes who have access to mines producing the raw ore that is forged into the dracheneisen armor and weapons famous throughout Théah. Each of these princes has gathered the best soldiers in their lands to protect them from the assassin's blade and aid them in their quest to reunite the fractured fields of Eisen. These dedicated soldiers are known as the Iron Guard. While they do share some basic similarities, a traveler in Eisen would do well to recognize which unit an Iron Guard soldier is a part of and which lord he serves. Mistaking a Steel Warrior for a Clenched Fist is a serious blow to Eisen honor. In the Mud Nation, that is all that some soldiers have left.

The Iron Guards were a necessary effect of the unusual rites of succession in Eisen. Only nobility is allowed to possess items made from *dracheneisen*. The amount of items made of this amazing ore is often an indication of the well being and riches of the family. Those nobles with dracheneisen mines on their lands became very prestigious very quickly. It was also a chance for a common man to rise above his station. By law, the discoverer of a new vein of ore would be given a barony from the lands surrounding the new mine. Two of the current Eisenfurst reached their current position in such a manner. Because of the value of the ore, the princes could recruit the best soldiers to protect them and their lands from bandits and rivals. Unlike the Musketeers or other such organizations, the Iron Guards never protected a single person. Rivalries heated up between Guards and alliances between Princes cooled them down.

With the current state of the country, the Guards have become even more important. Eisen has no central army or navy and any one of the Princes could make a play for the Emperor's crown. The Iron Guard of that Prince would have to fend off countless attackers, but in the end they would go from Iron Guard to Imperial Guard. They are a step away from being the most trusted guard of a king and that inspires a loyalty other knights wish they had.

Each guard has unique characteristics but they do share some similarities. All Iron Guards must be of Eisen nationality. The Prince pays for room, board, and equipment of his or her men. An Iron Guard receives a stipend of around 20 Guilders per month. Depending on the financial stability of the Prince, this can be paid in anything from Marks to IOUs. Each Iron Guard swears three oaths when they are inducted which they are expected to follow to the letter. Finally, the guard may appeal to other members of the unit in times of trouble for assistance. Failure to aid a fellow guard can cause repercussions ranging from exile to execution.

Membership specifics for each unit are detailed below. (Membership mechanics for d20™ can be found in can be found on pages 86–90 of *Swashbuckling Adventures™* or pages 96–98 of the *Eisen* sourcebook.)

Fischler: The Wily Foxes

Eisenfurst: Faulk Tobias Fischler. Fischler is a fisherman by trade, having stumbled upon his mine by accident. Seen by many as a minor player in the succession of the Emperor, he is a simple man, more comfortable on a fishing boat than the throne of a kingdom.

Unit Leader: Mainhard Kulbert looks as if he is as old as the Drachenberg Mountains. He is a short lump of a man with bad eyes and terrible breath. All of his sons have grown, but he feels as if all the men that serve underneath him are of his blood. He has been known to weep openly at the funerals of his charges. His fatherly concern has earned him the nickname "Mother Fox." He always gets involved in conflicts between members and settles them in a quick blast of words.

He is not so much a soldier as a survivor of Eisen. One of the tests he issues to candidates is a deceptively difficult one. The cadet must try to track and find Mainhard in a wooded area before sundown. No one has succeeded to the current guard's knowledge. The lesson is not about tracking; it is often more about dealing with failure. He knows life as an Iron Guard is tough and wants to prepare his men for the bad times.

Mainhard is well-versed in hunting and tracking. He is not a Swordsman of any school, but he is no slouch with a blade. His preferred weapon is a crossbow. Fischler has offered to send him to the Hopken crossbow school but the old man has laughed it off. He feels the school won't teach him anything he hasn't already learned himself.

Duties

Enforce the law within Fischler: Fischler prefers any crimes to be settled between the offended parties. If something is stolen, the Fox takes something of equal value from the guilty party. In these instances, the Fox acts in the Prince's stead. The people view the Foxes as mediators and police officers.

Obey Eisenfurst Fischler's orders: Fischler keeps a loose leash on his Foxes but if one gets in trouble they will report to his castle for a meeting. Fischler likes to make the soldier swear under his glare. Often, Mainhard will end up defending his man and Fischler will threaten to expel the soldier. Suspensions are common. The worst penalty is being sent to the *Schwartzwalden* to bring back a creature in repentance.

Watch the Schwartzwalden and report any activity: Fischler keeps a close eye on the dark forest on his border. Every Fox must spend a fortnight patrolling the outskirts of the forest and checking in with the villages near the forest for any sign of monster activity. If a major situation involving creatures from the forest comes up, the Foxes are expected to drop whatever they are doing and deal with the monster as quickly as possible. Lately, they have been sending condemned prisoners into the forest covered in Blackwood sap. These prisoners never are seen again. While Mainhard thinks this would be an excellent deterrent, no one knows about the practice outside the guard whom Fischler has sworn to secrecy.

Uniform: Black uniforms with green trim. Foxes arm themselves with traditional heavy weapons.

Freiburg: The Wachthunds (Watchdogs)

Eisenfürst: Logan Gottschalk Sieger. Logan is the son of Erich Sieger but inherited the city of Freiburg in the will of the previous lord, Nicklaus Trague. Trague was befriended the young man and asked him to scribe his treatise on the existence of Theus. After he finished the work, Trague threw himself from the top of his tower.

While Logan has only been Prince for a few months, he has done much to continue Trague's legacy. Freiburg has always been known as a hideout for criminals, tramps, and men of poor reputation. Logan is slowly working to extend the freedoms of his city to other persecuted members of society, including scientists, sorcerers, and fleeing Montaigne nobility.

Unit Leader: Hannah Stein is a woman not much older than her Prince. She comes from a small farm on the outskirts of Sieger's lands. Her father was killed in the War of the Cross and her mother died after she would not give up her harvest to Eisen soldiers. Her mother knew she had done wrong by her act of murder and entrusted the arrogant noble's *panzerhand* to her daughter. Hannah was told to take it far away and returned just in time to see her mother killed by the very soldiers that were fighting for Eisen. Hannah stopped crying that day and set out under her current name.

Hannah bounced around from job to job. While she was relatively unskilled as a fighter, she had no intention of letting herself be treated softly because she was a girl. She signed on to a sailing ship and soon learned how to use her iron first by fending off the advances of the sailors on board. Soon enough, the boys respected her tough demeanor and she was made bosun of the ship. The captain retired, and Hannah found herself back in Eisen.

Hannah has a certain tomboy charm to her. She's not afraid to challenge someone that's bigger or louder than she is. She doesn't take complements or flattery well and beats such behavior out of her charges very quickly. While there are other guards in Freiburg, Hannah and her boys specifically keep an eye out for the young Prince.

Duties

Enforce the law within Freiburg: While the barony only extends to the edge of where Trague could see from the top of the old tower, this is a very tricky oath to uphold. The city prides itself on being free from the prying eyes of the establishment. Each guard is given free reign to enforce his personal ethics on the city.

Obey Logan's orders: Logan does not really give orders to obey. His second-in-command, Wilma Probst, does have errands to run and debtors that need to be tracked down. While she does not have the same command of the Watchhounds that Logan does, most guards defer to her when she asks them to do something for her. After all, she makes sure everyone gets paid on time.

Act as a bodyguard when hired to private citizens: Since there are no taxes in Freiburg, the city must find other ways of generating revenue. One method is the use of the Guard as bodyguards and courier for the wealthy people in Freiburg. While some may find the practice distasteful, the guards stand to make more money.

Uniform: Black uniforms with white trim. Many wear a *panzerhand* on both hands and study the Loring School.

Hainzl: The Steel Warriors

Eisenfürst: Georg Hainzl. The current lord of Hainzl has always been a very whimsical fan of opera and theater. A few years ago, Georg's sanity began slipping. He started to dress as the characters he saw on stage. His family humored his madness and ruled in his stead. Recently, he has adopted the persona of Carleman, the famed conqueror of Eisen. While he has remained in this persona for some time, it has changed him from a harmless fool to an ambitious leader.

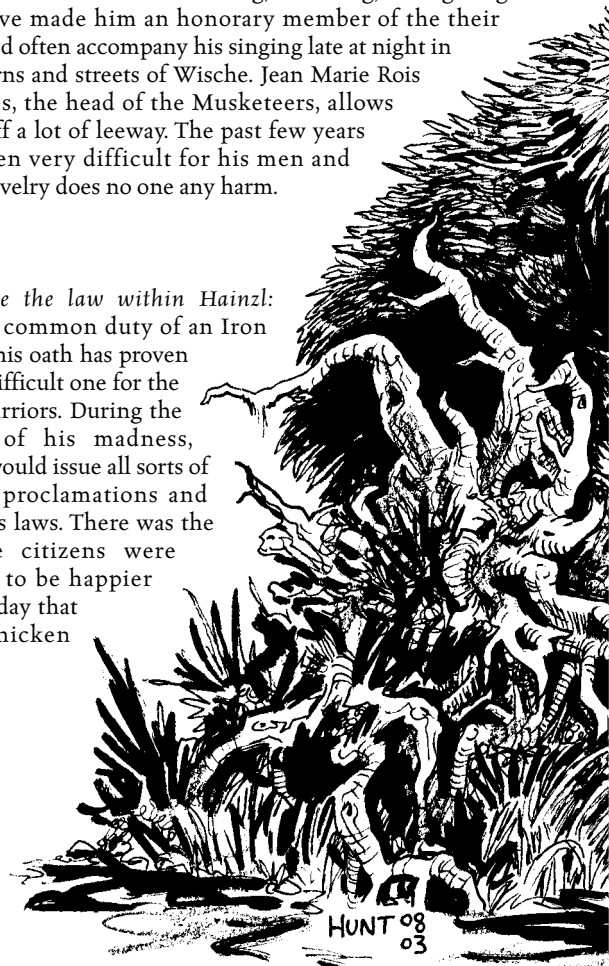
Unit Leader: Dagobert Usellhoff is handsome, well-mannered, considerate, kind as he's brave and the finest leader Hainzl has every chosen for his guards. Usellhoff is very dashing with the ladies of the court and cuts an impressive figure in his uniform. He can often be heard singing operas and other songs as he makes his way through the halls of the castle.

Usellhoff has an uncanny knack for deflating angry situations with a quick joke or an anecdote from his travels of Théah where he fought a bear in the sewers of Charouse or wrestled a bear in Ussura. He once stopped a bar brawl by juggling six bottles of wine while reciting speeches from *King Herygh*. Because of this talent, the people of Hainzl love him. Anyone seen with Usellhoff is treated as if they were wandering around with royalty.

This good faith extends to the Citizen's Watch in Wische (see below) as well. The idle ex-Musketeers can appreciate someone with a knack for drinking, wenching, and fighting. They have made him an honorary member of the their group and often accompany his singing late at night in the taverns and streets of Wische. Jean Marie Rois et Reines, the head of the Musketeers, allows Usellhoff a lot of leeway. The past few years have been very difficult for his men and a little revelry does no one any harm.

Oaths

Enforce the law within Hainzl: While a common duty of an Iron Guard, this oath has proven to be a difficult one for the Steel Warriors. During the depths of his madness, Hainzl would issue all sorts of strange proclamations and senseless laws. There was the day the citizens were ordered to be happier and the day that every chicken



in Hainzl was declared a traitor to the land and summarily executed. While those guards outside of Georg Hainzl's sight could ignore the sillier commands, those stationed at his home were sent on all sorts of odd quests. Since his transformation to Carleman, most of the proclamations have stopped. Every once and a while, he orders his Guards to go and collect supplies for the upcoming invasion that most generals could do without. The most recent of these 'supply raids' netted 4,000 red hats and the ire of every haberdasher in Eisen.

Obey the Hainzl's family orders: Hainzl's family is truly in charge of the lands that bear his name. When the Steel Warriors are truly needed, Georg's family will give the order where to go. Of course, one of the duties the Iron Guard often is given is to protect Hainzl when he rides out to see his lands. As Carleman, Georg is not content with living out his fantasies in the safety of the castle.

Guard the family mine: Hainzl's mine is one of the richest strikes in Eisen. He has enough *dracheneisen* that he can sometimes sell the surplus to other nobles. His madness has made his mines a rich target. The family immediately put a permanent garrison of Steel Warriors at the secret location of the mine. Guarding a mine can be very boring, but some soldiers prefer it to chasing around the whims of a madman.

Uniform: Black with grey trim. Steel Warriors fight with Heavy Weapons.

Heilgrund: The Ghosts

Eisenfürst: Stefan Gregor Heilgrund III. The Emperor's suicide took place in Heilgrund's palace. Stefan became prince when his parents drank a cup of deadly nightshade rather than live with the Emperor's death on their hands. Stefan has made it his mission to reunite Eisen and erase his family's shame. The young prince has taken whatever means necessary to gain power. Whispers abound that he has been making deals with the shadowy beasts of the *Schwartzwalden* for power beyond the mortal realm.

Unit Leader: Dieter Heikkenen is the picture that many people think of when they think of an Eisen soldier. Blond hair, dark eyes, muscular build, and a *panzerhand* clenched at the ready. Dieter was often seen near Heilgrund when he made his way around his lands. But he is also sent on various errands around Eisen. He prefers to use his iron fist as a weapon.

Dieter came to his position when the previous head of the Ghosts disappeared. Dieter joined the Ghosts only last year, but his dedicated service and his ability to enter and exit a room unnoticed caught Stefan's eye. The Ghosts have never been truly organized into a hierarchy but Dieter was the agent that Stefan gives his direct orders to. Dieter himself has no actual power, but with the recent arrival of the black armored guards protecting Stefan, the group has gotten closer. The Ghosts don't have to follow his orders but they do because they suspect the same thing he does. Something is wrong with Stefan Heilgrund.

With the arrival of Heilgrund's *schattensoldat*, the prince has officially disbanded the Ghosts. The black-armored soldiers

are even more mysterious than his old Iron Guard. Heilgrund has forbidden anyone to go to the Emperor's Castle, which is where the black soldiers are based.

Dieter has sent a couple of men to investigate to other soldiers and unsurprisingly, those men never returned. It concerns him that Heilgrund has

turned to these strange men for support the running of his kingdom. The Ghosts have never been known for official

word so rather than truly disbanding, they now meet at the behest of Heikkennen. He feels that these weird troops could do the land more harm than good. While they don't interfere with Heilgrund himself, they have interfered in the missions the *schattensoldat* sometimes take. Dieter's nightmare is that the Ghosts will be transformed into the silent things that police the lands around the Emperor's palace.



Oaths

Enforce the law within Heilgrund: The ghosts have been trained to be as unobtrusive as possible. They were never expected to break down doors with arrest warrants. Wanted criminals were meant to disappear and either reappear in the stockade or never reappear again depending on the severity of their crimes. If someone is accused of a crime, the Ghost may pay the suspect a visit in the middle of the night and ask for a whispered confession while the family sleeps in the next room. Ghosts who still operate today continue this practice. Its effectiveness is surprising. Most people are glad to see an actual person instead of one of the *schattensoldat* and will gladly confess to the Ghost what they've done wrong.

Obey Heilgrund's orders: The first order that a new Ghost is given usually "Protect Heilgrund at all costs." Because of this, Ghosts often are able to do things that other Iron Guards might find reprehensible. Heilgrund understands the importance of such agents. Whereas most other Guards are meant to have an obvious presence to keep the peace, agents that are unseen work just as well. Anyone could be a Ghost, so why run the risk of plotting a crime against Heilgrund when the very person you plot with could be a Ghost? With the disbanding of the official Ghosts, many of them have altered their first order to mean they must protect Heilgrund even if it means protecting him from himself. Some Ghosts have entertained the idea of making Stefan disappear. Dieter has forbidden this action... at least, until a suitable replacement could be found.

Speak not of Heilgrund's actions: This is the main reason why there hasn't been more public outcry over the *schattensoldat*. The Ghosts are bound not to tell anyone about them, even if they feel they are evil. Many regular citizens confuse the Ghosts with the new guard. Besides the oath, many ghosts have another reason for not revealing the truth about the *schattensoldat*. It represents a great failure. Heilgrund's ambition has caused him to go to terrible lengths to regain power. In a perfect world, the Ghosts would discover away to deal with the black soldiers and return to Heilgrund's right hand with no one the wiser.

Uniform: Black uniform with heavy weapons. The Ghosts only wore their uniforms when they were assigned to protect the *Eisenfürst* in public.

Pösen: The Swamp Dogs

Eisenfürst: Fauner Pösen. She is beautiful, deadly, and driven. She has no problems doing whatever it takes to get what she wants. In a nation full of soldiers, she is the most dangerous fighter. Her army is ready to strike at a moment's notice, and she holds an important prisoner inside her lands. She defeated Montegue, the ingenious leader of the Montaigne army, and now keeps him as her permanent guest.

Unit Leader: Russell Drozden is the perfect rabid dog that Pösen keeps on a leash. His eyes are lean and angry and his hair is long and wild. He fights without a helmet because he loves the sound of battle and the screams of the men he kills. His *zweihander* is kept in immaculate condition and it is often said that once he readies it, he will not put it away until it has taken a man's head.

Drozden's first memory is of the din of battle. While his mother screamed and the villagers ran screaming from the raiders, Russell was transfixed by the violence like an artist to a sunset. He applied to the academy the day after he became



old enough and was one of the top of his class. Even at the academy, he was already building his reputation as a formidable opponent. The training added a sharp edge to his ferocity. While he is something of a madman of a battle, he also has paid attention to his classes on tactics. He is the perfect counterpoint to Fauner; while she is calm and strikes with precision, Drozden howls like a madman and wades into the carnage like a wolf into a field of grazing sheep.

Drozden is very rarely seen near Pösenstadt. Being cooped up in the castle makes him uncomfortable. He also knows how well trained Pösen is and laughs if someone asks him why he is not at her side protecting her. She is the most

formidable soldier in Eisen. Anyone lucky enough to defeat her would certainly be able to destroy her guards. He often sends new Dogs to guard her in his stead so she can learn first hand how much a guard's presence is unnecessary in the castle. While he is not an official instructor at the academy, he often shows up whenever a new class is gathered and challenges the entire class to try and disarm him. In the five years he has done so, no cadet has stripped him of his zweihander.

Oaths

Enforce the law within Pösen: When they are not helping out at the academy, the Swamp Dogs travel the lands to keep the peace. Pösen's enforcement techniques are very militaristic. It is up to the Guard to determine which party is in the right. People that break the law in her lands face whippings, the stocks, and other such physical punishments. One that has grown in recent years has come to be known as Fauner's Kiss. A convicted criminal is bound with his or her hands behind the back. The Swamp Dog then strikes the criminal at full force with their *panzerhand*. The more severe the crime, the more strikes the criminal receives. If the criminal survives, all previous crimes are forgiven. A criminal can ask for the Kiss but it's up to the guard to administer it.

Obey Eisenfurst Pösen's orders: Pösen's Swamp Dogs are generally left to their own devices. Many of them stay around the academy and help instruct the new soldiers. Some ride out on patrol with Russell into the Undying Swamp. Many of the Dogs think Fauner will be riding to unite the country soon. A few troublemakers have already begun to raid into neighboring lands in anticipation.

Patrol and kill any encountered monsters: Most of the creatures come from the Undying Swamp. Because the creatures can appear at any time, the Swamp Dogs are trained with a variety of both traditional and non-traditional weapons. Creatures that can melt regular weapons and shrug off musket fire have to be stopped somehow. Swamp Dogs pay attention to local superstitions and folk remedies. In Eisen, these things often have merit.

Uniform: Black with blue trim. Swamp Dogs carry a variety of weapons because they often find themselves fighting opponents that aren't human.

Sieger: The Clenched Fists

Eisenfurst: Erich Sieger. Technically, his lands are part of Castille, but Sieger waylaid the envoy sent to rule him. Sieger is ruthless and willing to do anything to keep his title. He murders, salts his fields, and made deals with foreign powers to stay in power. He would do anything for his lands, even destroying them.

Unit Leader: Wolfgang Vogel is a veteran of the War of the Cross. It is evident in his eyes, his manner, and his speech. His hair is a mix of grey and black and his arms are covered with a lattice of scars. He is still a relatively young man, but he has fought enough battles for three lifetimes.

He served under Erich Sieger during the war and he serves under him still. He knew Erich when he was a devout Vatican and watched his faith bleed on the ground like the soldiers he led. Wolfgang believes that Sieger is a good man who has just lost his faith. Sieger's deity is the land that bear his name and he is willing to do anything keep them. Wolfgang helped salt the lands, burn the bridges, and did whatever his lord asked. Wolfgang understands his lord

because the only thing he has left is his loyalty to Sieger. He has no family and no home, only has his duty.

With Sieger's absence in Vodacce, Vogel is one of the few remaining members of the Clenched Fists loyal to the prince. The members of the *Mörderbande* have taken this opportunity to take Sieger's lands as their own. The loyalists are small in number but they are steadfastly loyal. They are hoping Sieger returns to his lands soon. Even with the support of the few Fists he didn't take to Vodacce, Sieger may not have lands to return to.

Oaths

Enforce the law in Sieger: While Freiburg has a reputation for being a city of lawlessness, the lands of Sieger are not much better. Sieger recruited every merciless thug, homicidal brute, and reckless killer he could find to rule through fear. Sieger feels that if anyone were to try and usurp him, they would have a difficult time getting rid of his men. In the meantime, the Fists are rife with corruption of the vilest sort. Only a few members could be considered good men.

Do not kill anyone important: This order is a bit of a misnomer. Sieger expects his men to kill anyone he wants but finds that people won't swear loyalty to him if they were asked to do such a thing. So he deigns certain people important and others as 'fair game'

Obey Eisenfurst Sieger's orders: This oath has become difficult to enforce with his absence. While Sieger was in Eisen, he would issue orders for people to be roughed up or eliminated. When he left, he took his gritty charisma with him and soon the *Mörderbande* started to take over. Business remains the same but now the leaders of the *Mörderbande* are in charge.

Uniform: Black uniforms trimmed with red. They often carry maces.

Wische: The Roaring Drachen

Eisenfurst: Reinhardt von Wische. Wische is a name synonymous with tragedy. His wife died and he lost his sons one by one. For years, all he was able to do was sit in his throne and let out wails of sorrow that could shake the bravest soul. In a desperate gambit, his chief advisor dyed her hair and began masquerading as his dead wife. Reinhardt has returned to his old self. But who knows how long the masquerade will hold?

Unit Leader: Georgette Diefenbakker is both a Musketeer and a Roaring Drachen. She is a young woman with stunning looks and an amazing ability with the rapier. People are often surprised to find out her status as the leader of the Roaring Drachen, as the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of an Iron Guard is a slender girl in a Musketeer's tabard.

She joined the Musketeers shortly before the Revolution and was instrumental in aiding the escape of Jean Marie Rois Et Reins from the country. Upon arriving in Wische, she was one of the first Musketeers to sign up for the Citizen's Watch, where she was paired with Marko Diefenbakker, the previous leader of the Drachen. The two got along famously. Georgette was the daughter Marko never had, and Marko exemplified everything Georgette wanted to be. He had stayed with Wische through the dark times and was still serving when he died a few months ago. In honor of him, Georgette took his last name and his mantle of the leader of the Drachen. When Reinhardt regained his faculties, he swore her in as an official citizen of Eisen to allow her to take the reigns of the guard.

Oaths

Enforce the law within Wische: With two guards in the province, the lines of jurisdiction can be blurred sometimes. While generally the Iron Guard deals with the Eisen and the Musketeers deal with the Montaigne, whenever crime occurs between the two groups, problems arise. Wische law is harsher than Montaigne punishment and most criminals hope to be caught by the Citizen's Watch instead of the Roaring Drachen. Georgette tried to strike a balance between the two but she is only one person. In the field, there have been a few duels to see who takes in a criminal.

Obey Eisenfurst Wische's orders: With Wische's delicate mental condition, this has come to mean listening to his chief counselor, Gisela. To return Reinhardt to his old self, she has taken to dressing as his deceased wife, Cornelia. Most of the Drachen are aware of this deception and aid it as needed. The Citizen's Watch is not aware of it and will not become aware of it if Georgette has anything to do with it. She finds the whole thing quite romantic.

Protect the people of Wische above all else: For all the difficulty that Wische has suffered, his people are some of the happiest in Eisen. Because of this oath, many of the Drachen have helped out their citizens in non-martial ways like building houses or planting crops. When Wische was low on money, these skilled helped out the soldiers that weren't getting paid regularly. The families they protected took them in and put them to work while they were unpaid. Most Drachen have one or two other skills that they can put to use in case they need to scrape up a little extra money. Georgette is an excellent seamstress. She sewed on the "brotherhood" patches of the Citizen's Watch and the Roaring Drachernall by herself.

Uniform: black uniforms with gold trim. Most members carry zweihanders and are skilled in the Drexel school. Georgette is a Valroux fighter, but she honors the tradition by keeping Marko's weapon in her office.

The Citizen's Watch in Wische

The lands ruled by Reinhardt von Wische are currently the subject of an unusual arrangement. While Wische has a personal guard called the Roaring Drachen, Musketeers loyal to the Crown accompanied many of the fleeing Montaigne nobles. With the influx of wealthy Montaigne citizens into Eisen, these Musketeers were without purpose. The King was dead, the new government considered them traitors, and they had nothing to occupy themselves with. Simultaneously, the Roaring Drachen were in poor shape. Because of Reinhardt's coma and a conspiracy led by his brother to usurp his power, many of his most loyal guard hadn't been paid in months. It got bad enough to where the IOUs issued were being accepted as legal currency in some shops. When the Montaigne arrived looking for asylum, they brought as much money as they could carry. This would help Wische's debt, but the logistics of something like this had never been tried before. Wische suggested letting the Musketeers patrol his lands to ensure spies from the Council of Eight wouldn't sabotage the government in exile. While he could not sanction their activities, he could understand the new residents' need to defend themselves. A few weeks after Wische's acceptance of the Montaigne, the seeds of the Citizen's Watch were born. This gave the Musketeers something to do other than sit around and wait for assassins from the Council of Eight to sneak into Wische. Until the Roaring Drachen could be paid in full, the Citizen's Watch kept the streets safe.

The real genesis came in the winter when Franz Steiger, an innkeeper, threatened one of his guests. The guest was Harlan Vitienne, the former assistant to *l'Empereur's* main groomer. Harlan didn't agree that Steiger's inn was worth the money he was paying and refused to do so. Each man called the other a criminal and a somewhat comical fight broke out between them. While the fight between a young fop and an old innkeeper sounds funny, it soon got out of hand. The Montaigne citizens were unhappy with the conditions in exile and the Eisen thought their guest were being ungrateful. Old wounds from the War of the Cross were reopened. Soon more and more citizens piled into the brawl. It looked like Wische was going to be destroyed by a riot that started in the capital city. It took the combined actions of the remaining Musketeers and the Roaring Drachen to put water on the fire. After the clean up began, Jean Marie Rois et Reines, leader of the Musketeers, and Marco Diefenbakker, head of the Roaring Drachen took a long walk and talked like two old soldiers.

When they returned, they had formed a plan. Each people would ultimately be held up to the standards that their nationality had for them. The Drachen would protect its people and the Musketeers would look after the Montaigne. Eisen citizens would be prosecuted under Eisen law and Montaigne law would rule its people even in Wische. Montaigne law is harsher on violent criminals and Eisen law is worse on thieves. The Musketeers who were part of the Watch were allowed to carry weapons and enforce the law as if Wische was their lord.

If a citizen has a problem with someone, he seeks out a member of the Guard. If a guard catches someone from the other side perpetrating a crime, he holds the suspect until a member of the proper authorities can be contacted. This system has held for the most part. Sometimes, people ask to be tried under the other system but these appeals rarely are successful. There are occasional personality clashes between the two groups but these are quickly resolved with a duel to the first blood and a round of drinks at the tavern afterwards. The relations between the two organizations have done much to calm the blood between the two nations. If these two militias can get along, everyone else should be able to as well.

Today, the two organizations operate fairly well in Wische. Relations are fairly polite since the death of Marco Diefenbakker. His successor, Georgette, is the first and only member of both the Roaring Drachen and the Citizen's Watch. So far, this arrangement has eased relations between the groups. As a sign of good faith, the Drachen have begun to wear the sun sigil of *l'Empereur* on their *panzerhands*, and the Musketeers in the Watch wear a small drachen on their shoulders. A few instances of cross training have occurred but most fencers feel uncomfortable with the weight of the *panzerhand*, and most Eisen feel under prepared with just a rapier for personal defense.

In situations where a conflict of interest may arise, Georgette has proven to be a fair and even-handed judge of which set of laws should be used. She has also done well to let each group do what they are supposed to. The Drachen enforce the laws of the land and the Citizens Watch protects the exiles. If a large military operation were to begin, the organizations would most likely unite into one and become a very powerful force to protect Wische from invasion. Until that time, the Citizen's Watch makes the men and women of Wische feel double protected.

(For more information Eisen™ and Montaigne Revolution.™)

Alternate Campaigns

Eisen is an excellent model of a land where the king has died and a civil war has decimated the country. In a non-Théan campaign, PCs could even be from different provinces or units brought together with the hope of helping reunite the fractured nation. The dracheneisen could easily become a variety of magical artifacts that denote nobility or even some sort of magical connection. Any one of the Iron Guards could be used as a personal guard for an important NPC. Even two different guards could be set up as a rivalry between two provinces. Wizards and clerics would probably be out of place in such a military setting but there might be value in their services as well. A field chaplain wouldn't be out of place and any one of these units would be aided by a combat mage.

Die Kreuzritter

Those who walk the Dark Pathways make perhaps the greatest sacrifice of all for Théah. Theirs is a life spent in ceaseless vigilance against the inexorable rise of evil. It is neither for the faint of heart or faith, nor those ties to the world. More than any others who pursue the ways of knightly virtue, they are truly alone. (Note: it is nigh unto impossible to condense information about this very complex Order into a few short pages. You are encouraged to read *Die Kreuzritter*TM for more details.)

The History

The official story of the Black Crosses begins in the Crescent city of Zafara in AV 308 with the founding of the Hospital of the First Witness by a Eisen crusader named Erik Schumacher and his wife Francesca, a Numan healer. Schumacher had discovered precious documents, including Malak's final sermon, which he failed to destroy despite direct orders from the Emperor. He made his way to Zafara where, with the aid of his wife and a Crescent named Khalil, he established a hospital to treat the wounded and the sick. It was his way of atoning for hiding the Prophet's words. His work tending the wounded helped ease his conscience somewhat but did not grant him the absolution he desired.

At night, the Eisen and the Crescent pored over the document, trying to decipher its prophecies. There were the expected promises of special places in Elaethorum for the loyal followers and spiritual glory through mortal restraint that Malak had preached during his lifetime but there were also several mysterious and sometimes incoherent sections of text.

When Francesca Schumacher died after a difficult childbirth, the final sermon of the Second Prophet was buried in the tomb with her. Her distraught husband and Khalil swore an oath to tell no one, reasoning that it would be rediscovered when Theus wished it to be revealed. An honor guard was placed at the tomb to

protect the good lady's remains. Only Schumacher's most trusted men were asked to serve at the door, unaware of just exactly what they were protecting.

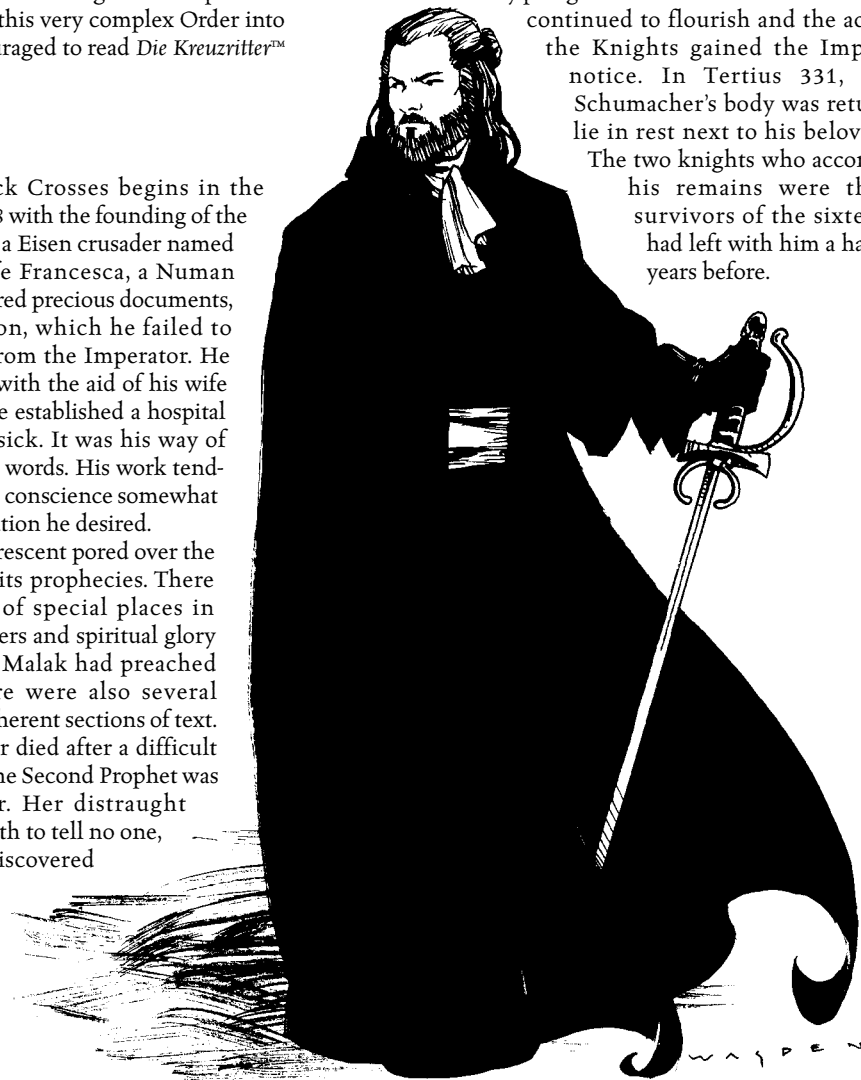
The morning after the funeral Schumacher announced his intention to wander the desert until Theus re-united him with Francesca. The men were aghast that their General would abandon them and his wife's legacy so quickly and begged him to stay. Having entrusted Khalil with the care of his now-recovered son, he was resolved to leave in the morning.

At sunset, various members of the unit sat together, trying to decide how to stop their leader from what was obviously a suicidal journey. A young Eisen sergeant climbed to the rooftop and began to tear down the sails that had served as their symbol in Zafara. He sliced them into wide strips and called for some diluted pitch, which he said would save their leader.

When Erik Schumacher emerged from his home the next morning he was met by the entire force of his soldiers. Each man wore a rough new tabard made from a strip of sailcloth and adorned with a black Prophet's cross. The young soldier saluted his General and explained that for the rest of their days they would honor the efforts of his beloved wife by painting their badge black. Unable to prevent his departure, they pledged to continue his work. The Hospital

continued to flourish and the actions of the Knights gained the Emperor's notice. In Tertius 331, General Schumacher's body was returned to lie in rest next to his beloved wife.

The two knights who accompanied his remains were the only survivors of the sixteen who had left with him a handful of years before.





In 347, the Hierophant confirmed the Knights of the Hospital of Zafara as an official Order of the Vaticine Church for their services of compassion and healing along with their duty to protect their injured charges. He established the office of Hochmeister (Headmaster) and reluctantly granted the Order permission to use the Black Cross as their insignia and thus they became known as die Kreuzritter or the Black Crosses, using the Eisen term in honor of their founder.

A thousand years later, the Order had gained a vast holding in land and money with which they built monasteries and hospitals. The Knights were a strong part of the Church's Army. Sadly, Emperor Arvid I decided that he needed to annex their wealth and convinced Hierophant Logan III to excommunicate the Order. Armed with an order from the Church, Arvid encountered the Black Crosses at the now famous Battle at Tannen. At the end of the day, the Order was no more.

The Truth

The Knights of the Black Cross did not all perish at Tannen, thanks to the Hierophant's secret missive to Hochmeister Kurgen offering the Order sanctuary in Altamira. As often happens, some had to sacrifice themselves so that others could survive, and those who survived had to relinquish all evidence of their former existence. Led by a Knight named Judith, the survivors disguised themselves and fled to Castille

where she met with the Hierophant who told her that he could not save the Order. Sanctuary became a monastery to which they were for all intents and purposes exiled.

During excavations under their monastery, the Knights made a fascinating and terrifying discovery of a city made of crystal but when sunlight touched the material, it melted away with a hiss. They also found a ring and a glove. Hochmeister Judith donned the ring and found herself plunged into a surreal landscape, which they called the Dark Paths. It was here that the Barrier was revealed and the presence of evil creatures who were trying to break through into Théah.

Judith pledged the Black Crosses to protect the Hierophant in exchange for the restoration of the Order to its full rights and for over 100 years they continued to wage their private war against the enemies of the Church and the creatures they called the Strangers. Then came Matthias Lieber, the Objectionists, the Hierophant's death, and the devastating War of the Cross.

Despite the chaos, the Knights have remained true to their cause. They obey the Heiros Council until a new a new Hierophant is chosen but given the dissention in that group, the Knights need only answer to the Hochmeister. There is much to keep them busy, especially the openly sorcerous acts of the Montaigne Empeureur and what that portends for strength of the Barrier.

The Hospital continues to serve Zafara to this day under the benevolent guidance of the kindly lady Sigrun Masthof. The Hospital Guard continues to serve as local law enforcement for the city. An honor guard still stands before a small unmarked mausoleum in the courtyard within the Hospital's grounds. Occasionally a rumor arises amongst the guard that perhaps there is something more to this hallowed ground, possibly the remains of an early Hierophant, a Prophet or even the embodiment of Theus himself but such stories are dispelled as quickly as they arise.

After the Revolution

The Revolution removed the threat of the Porté wielding Empereur and spared the Order the need to take matters into their own hands. The rage of the mob against the nobility enabled the Knights to dispatch a number of sorcerous aristocrats. For now die Kreuzritter Knights continue to patrol the city streets looking for evidence of Porté activity. However, the main focus of their activity is locating the missing Montaigne archbishops. The Council of Eight does not seem to care but restoration of the clergy is crucial to the restoration of the Hierophant. While they search for the archbishops, there are always Strangers who must be dispatched back to the foul regions from whence they came.

Duties

Regardless of whether your campaign is set before or after the Revolution, the main duties of die Kreuzritter remain the same: guarding Théah from sorcerers, whether human or Stranger; protecting the Church; and alleviating suffering wherever they find it.

The Code

Knights of the Black Cross follow a simple code based on four Oaths: Loyalty, Charity, Secrecy, and Faith. It was determined early in their existence that these are the four qualities needed to fight Legion. The following very solemn Oaths are part of the lengthy initiation ceremony conducted at Kippe Academy where the Order's artifacts are maintained. The ceremony begins with the Hochmeister's chilling words: "You have died for the Order now it is time for your rebirth."

I swear Loyalty to the Black Cross. I will not abandon my Brothers – not in life, not in death. My hand shall be turned against my Brother's killer. I will aid my brother if his cause is just. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten.

I swear Charity toward my fellow men. I will never allow suffering to continue. I will give aid to those in need. I will give bread to those who are hungry, and shelter to those without a home. Lastly, I will give death to those who can be helped no other way, and they shall have the Last Rites from me without exception. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten.

I swear myself to Secrecy. I will not reveal our Order. While we are dead, we are safe. I will not put us in danger. Living men cannot perform our duties. Only we, the walking dead, can defend the Church and her children. Only we know the face of her true enemy. I will not mistake my fellow man for that enemy. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten.

I swear Faith to the Church. I will honor the pact made to protect the Hierophant and the Church. I will die in the Hierophant's stead, if called upon by the Order. No other voice shall guide us through the shadows save the Hochmeister's. We cannot and will not swear allegiance to another, even in subterfuge or jest. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten.

Members of die Kreuzritter must walk away from their old lives, disappear, even fake their own deaths – whatever it takes to sever the ties and keep their families safe from harm and retribution.

Organization

Technically, the Hierophant is the nominal head of the Order. He (or she) assigns the missions and controls the funds, or at least goes through the motions of doing so. In fact, it is the Hochmeister who actually manages all aspects of the daily operations.

The Knights are, of course, the center, the heart of the Order. Although they may refuse a mission, once they accept it they must see it through to the end. There are four types of Knights in the Order:

Assassins

The Assassins are tasked with removing "obstacles" like petty nobles and troublemakers. Their byword is Secrecy.

Phantom Guards

These are the elite Knights of the Order, those who guard the Dark Paths against the Strangers. The Hochmeister almost always comes from the ranks of the Phantom Guards. The important element of the Oath for them is Faith for spending so much time in the shadows takes its toll.

Town Guardians

The Black Crosses never forget their origins in Zafara. The Town Guardians, a relatively new branch of the Order performs regular patrols, prevents crimes, and of course kills any unnatural creatures it encounters. Their byword is Charity.

Vigilants

The loners among the Order, these Knights guard Synchroneth ruins and their byword is Loyalty.

Laymen

Like most Orders, die Kreuzritter needs support from those who perform valuable and supportive services. These are usually people whose skills are so valuable that they cannot be risked on dangerous missions (like Grandmaster Kazi). They are treated with deference and respect.

Acolytes

These are the newest members of the Order, the eager ones who have not yet gone on a mission or who are still apprenticed to a Knight to complete their training. An acolyte may only become a full Knight when his or her master believes it is time. Knights cannot issue orders to other Knights' acolytes and even the Hochmeister honors this rule.

The Dilemma

The Black Crosses support the Church first, last, and always. They deplore sorcery and fear that its continued practice will weaken the Barrier to the point where they will be unable to hold back the horror that will rush in and overtake Théah. They have many resources at their disposal but perhaps the strangest — and certainly the most hypocritical one — is the practice of Nacht sorcery.

Unlike Porté, which rips holes in reality, Nacht offers the ability to step though the shadows into the Dark Paths. The Knights who patrol the Shadows are sworn to kill any non-Knight who witnesses them as they pass back and forth, although some have sought and obtained exemptions for trusted companions.

There are many, many dangers for the Black Crosses and one of the most deadly are the Nights, the gaunt warriors who were once (supposedly) die Kreuzritter who died while patrolling the Dark Paths. They wield strange swords and wear armor forged from darkness itself and their leader claims to be — or once to have been — Judith Losch herself. Whether one is fighting the shadow selves of former brethren or one of the monstrous creatures who make their home in the darkness, this is a place where a lack of vigilance will result in death... or worse. (For more information, see *Die Kreuzritter*.™)

Alternate Campaigns

As noted above, die Kreuzritter is an extremely complicated Order with secret signs, codes, special ways of communicating, dark secrets that must be maintained, and even darker paths that must be traversed if Théah is to be kept safe.

In a non-Théan setting, the Black Crosses become the Dark Knights, the paladins who hold the line against encroaching evil of such magnitude that most could not withstand its force. On the simplest level, these Knights would be called upon to clean out and re-sanctify a once-sacred place, be that a church or temple to the gods. They might be asked to end the reign of terror causes by a hideous creature either of this world or another. This is especially helpful for those who prefer a mix of high fantasy and extraterrestrial monsters.

As a rule campaigns involving such paladins have little humor and a great deal of heart-wrenching drama. It is also an ideal setting for a player who enjoys running a strong female knight. One of the most powerful Black Crosses in the history of the Order is the creature once known as Judith Losch, the first Knight to enter the Dark Paths.



CHAPTER THREE:

*Swordsmen
and Musketeers*

The following are provided as pre-generated characters for your game. For 7th Sea™ each has been created with 100 character points. There are far fewer skill and ability options available to a 1st level d20™ character, so each begins at 3rd level with notes about how to take him or her to 4th and 5th level. You will also notice that the 7th Sea™ variants all have Swordsman Schools but their d20™ equivalents do not have that school as a Prestige class, because few 3rd level characters would qualify. The GM may wish to reduce the requirements to allow the d20™ characters to add levels from the appropriate Prestige Class or start the character at 5th level with additions as noted.

These characters are designed to be playable immediately. The background gives you a starting point for adding that character to a campaign. Needless to say, subject to GM approval, anything and everything on these templates can be adapted to suit the player. If the players are already quite happy with characters of their own design, the GM may find these personalities useful as ready-to-run NPCs. Players should work with the GM to determine the nature of their “secret.”

*Pre-Generated NPCs**Gérard Leveque d'Aur,
Montaigne Musketeer*

Gérard was born to the powerful Leveque d'Aur family and raised on tales of Musketeers bravery. As a younger son he was forced to choose a life for himself because his older brothers handled most of the responsibilities (and money). It did not take him long to decide to join the Musketeers.

During the Revolution he served with honor and distinction, trying to protect the lives of innocent Montaigne caught up in the bloodshed. He had been born without sorcery and had seen the excesses and decadence of many sorcerers under Léon. In his heart, he believed in the Prophet's warning against the Bargainers' arts. Recently he has come across like-minded people who told him terrible secrets about the origin of these dark magics. These new friends convinced Gérard that he could help steer his beloved country out of the chaos and into a new age of peace.

Gérard Leveque D'Aur (d20™)

Musketeer 3: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D10+3; hp 26; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex,); Atks: Rapier +4 me(1d6+1) **or** rapier +2 me(1d6+1) and dagger +2 me(1d4+1) **or** pistol +5 ranged (1d10); SA Elegant Duelist; SQ Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL NG; Skills: Balance +3, Bluff +5, Climb +3, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +3,

Ride +3, Sense Motive +4, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +3, Tumble +3; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise (rapier only), Membership (Rilasciare), Parry (rapier only), Two Weapon Fighting (with rapier and main gauche/dagger only), Weapon Focus (Rapier).

4th level: Add one level of Musketeer. Spend 3 skill points to raise Bluff to +8 (6 ranks, plus modifier), 2 skill points to raise Sense Motive to +5 (4 ranks cross-classed, plus modifier). Pick up bonus feat — Weapon Focus (Main Gauche).

5th level: Add one level of Valroux.

(See *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for details.)

Gérard Leveque d'Aur (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, *Finesse:* 3, *Wits:* 2, *Resolve:* 2, *Panache:* 3

Reputation: 0

Background: Code of Honor 2

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Montaigne Accent (North), Membership (Musketeers), Membership (Rilasciare), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)

Courtier: Dancing 1, Fashion 1, Etiquette 1, Oratory 1

Spy: Shadowing 1, Stealth 1

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Rider: Ride (Horse) 1

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 1,

Valroux (Apprentice): Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 1, Feint (Fencing) 1, Tagging (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 1

Lady Arielle Summers, Knight of Elaine

A Sidhe woman was curious about human children and wanted one of her own. She chanced upon a handsome nobleman of the Avalon court and dallied with him long enough to become pregnant. Soon after Arielle was born, the Sidhe lady tired of her and passed her off into the keeping of an Avalon peasant couple. After the girl spent ten summers with her foster family, her mother re-appeared and took her to Bryn Bresail to continue her up-bringing. Arielle loved the magical land, and seemed to take after her father in her skill with a blade but could not seem to master any of the Sidhe martial raining. Not only could she not fight like a Sidhe but she manifested absolutely no Glamour sorcery. To make matters worse, by Sidhe standards she was unattractive and lacked grace. Her mother tired of the girl and returned her to Avalon.

By now Arielle was a young woman, and ready to seek her fortune. When she arrived at Elaine's court, people were stunned at the resemblance she bore to the nobleman. After Arielle told the tale of her life, there was no doubt she was the child of the maiden her father had encountered in the woods. Once she was introduced to her noble heritage, she was drawn to the Knights of Elaine, not only by their style but also their devotion to Avalon. She had been peasant, Sidhe, and noble, and felt in touch with all aspects of the Glamour Isles (except for Glamour itself.)

Since returning to Avalon, Arielle has discovered that in human terms she is beautiful and graceful. She finds the attention she receives a little unnerving. Among the Knights she serves Sir Gwydd, and tries to avoid running into her mother when dealing with the Sidhe.

Lady Arielle Summers (d20™)

Sidhe Blooded Swashbuckler 3: CR 4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D6+6; hp 20; Init +1 (Dex, +4 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: Rapier +4 me (1d6+1) **or** pistol +4 ranged (1d10); SA Dexterous; SQ Iron Susceptibility, Light footed; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 18; AL CG; Skills: Balance +3, Bluff +6, Climb +3, Jump +3, Ride +3, Sense Motive +4, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +2, Tumble +5; Feats: Appearance (Above Average), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Panache, Power Attack, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner)

At 4th level: Add one level of Swashbuckler. Add Weapon Focus (Rapier) for bonus feat.

At 5th level: Add one level of Andrews.

(See *The Sidhe Book of Nightmares™* and *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for more information.)

Lady Arielle Summers (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, *Finesse:* 2, *Wits:* 3, *Resolve:* 3, *Panache:* 2

Reputation: 0

Background: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Sidhe Blood (Appearance-Stunning, Iron Susceptibility), Membership (Elaine's Knights)

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 1

Spy: Shadowing 1, Stealth 1

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Rider: Ride (Horse) 1

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1

Andrews (Apprentice): Feint (Fencing) 1, Lunge (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Andrews) 1

Connell MacLynn, Mactalla of the Fianna

One of the O'Toole boys decided that Molly MacLynn should belong to him even though she was married. Molly refused his attentions but could not call on the authorities for help as the O'Toole family ruled their small province. One drunken night, the O'Tooles accosted Molly's husband, Allyn, and killed him in a duel. Then he found his way to Molly and tried to force his suit on the recent widow. Her cries bought young Connell, who was staying with his sister, to the rescue. The O'Toole reminded the young man about the power of his family and how he should walk away and not get involved. Without even looking in his sister's imploring eyes, Connell took a swig from the flask of wine he held and ran the O'Toole through. Then he covered his face in a mask and went to visit the family of the O'Toole. He woke the father up in bed by placing a sword at his throat. He told the father that if any further harm was perpetrated on Molly or her family, then someone would come for him in the night again.

Connell's use of Fianna tactics made the O'Toole family believe the threat came directly from the Fianna itself, so they quietly buried their son and spoke no more of it. Connell was very pleased with himself until he met a real member of the Fianna. They woke him at night by sword point and scared the young man almost to death. However, instead of a death threat, the Fianna Knight offered Connell a drink from his ale flask and suggested he join the order. They had been watching him and decided the young man had the skills and talents they required. The Fianna were preparing for the return of the O'Bannon and looking to fill their numbers. Connell passed their tests well and set out to protect more than just his family from those who would harm them — he joined those who guarded the heart and soul of Inismore.

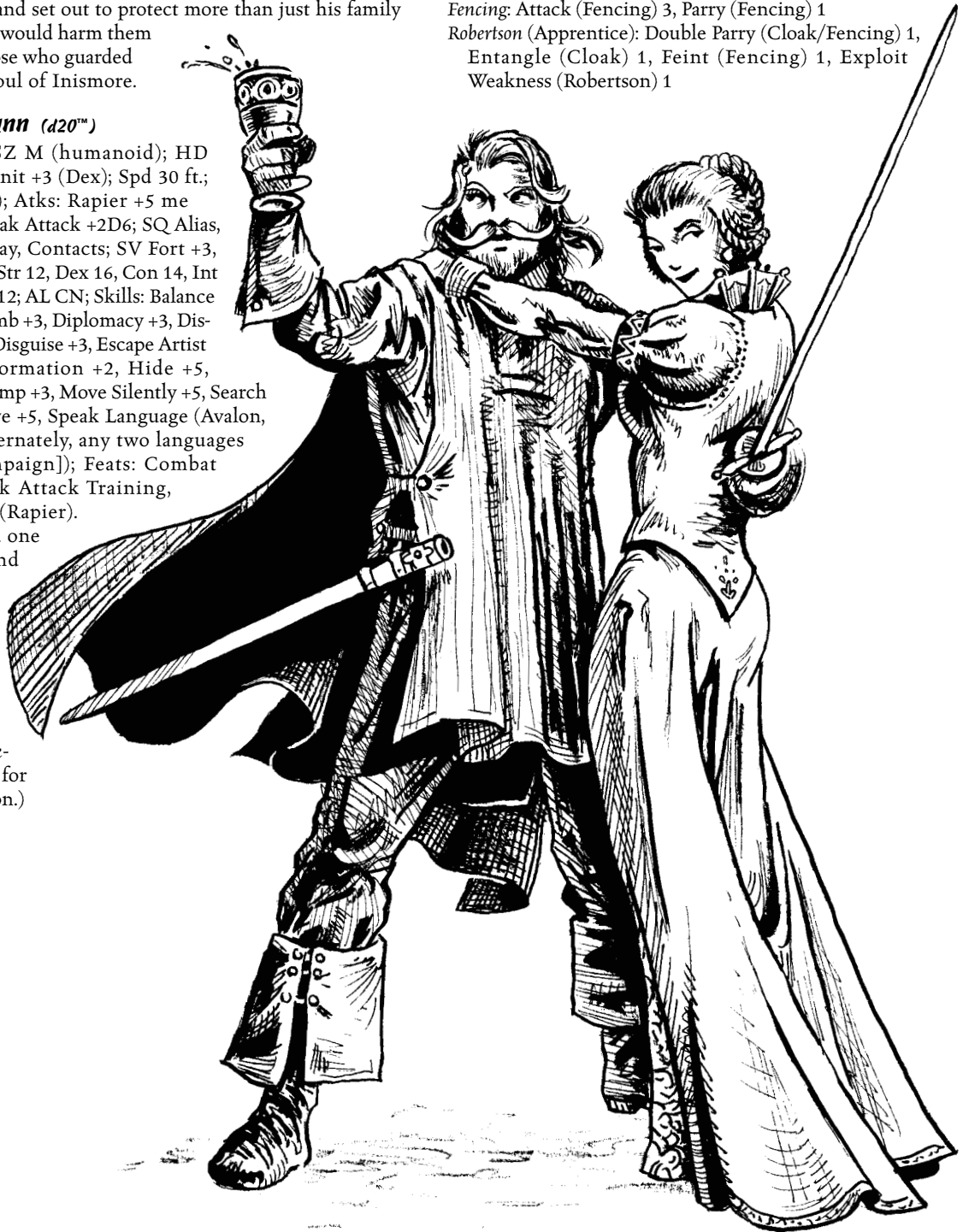
Connell MacLynn (120™)

Spy 3: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D6+6; hp 22; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks: Rapier +5 me (1d6+1); SA Sneak Attack +2D6; SQ Alias, Brilliant Getaway, Contacts; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12; AL CN; Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +3, Climb +3, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +3, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +2, Hide +5, Innuendo +2, Jump +3, Move Silently +5, Search +3, Sense Motive +5, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]); Feats: Combat Reflexes, Sneak Attack Training, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

At 4th level: Add one level of Spy and add four ranks to Bluff and one rank to Sense Motive.
At 5th level: Add one level of Robertson.
(See *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for more information.)

Connell MacLynn (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: Nemesis (O'Toole) 1
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Connections (2pts), Keen Senses, Membership (Fianna), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)
Bard: Etiquette 1, History 1, Oratory 1, Singing 1, Riddles 1
Spy: Interrogation 1, Shadowing 1, Stealth 1
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1
Cloak: Entangle 1, Parry (Cloak)
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1
Robertson (Apprentice): Double Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 1, Entangle (Cloak) 1, Feint (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Robertson) 1



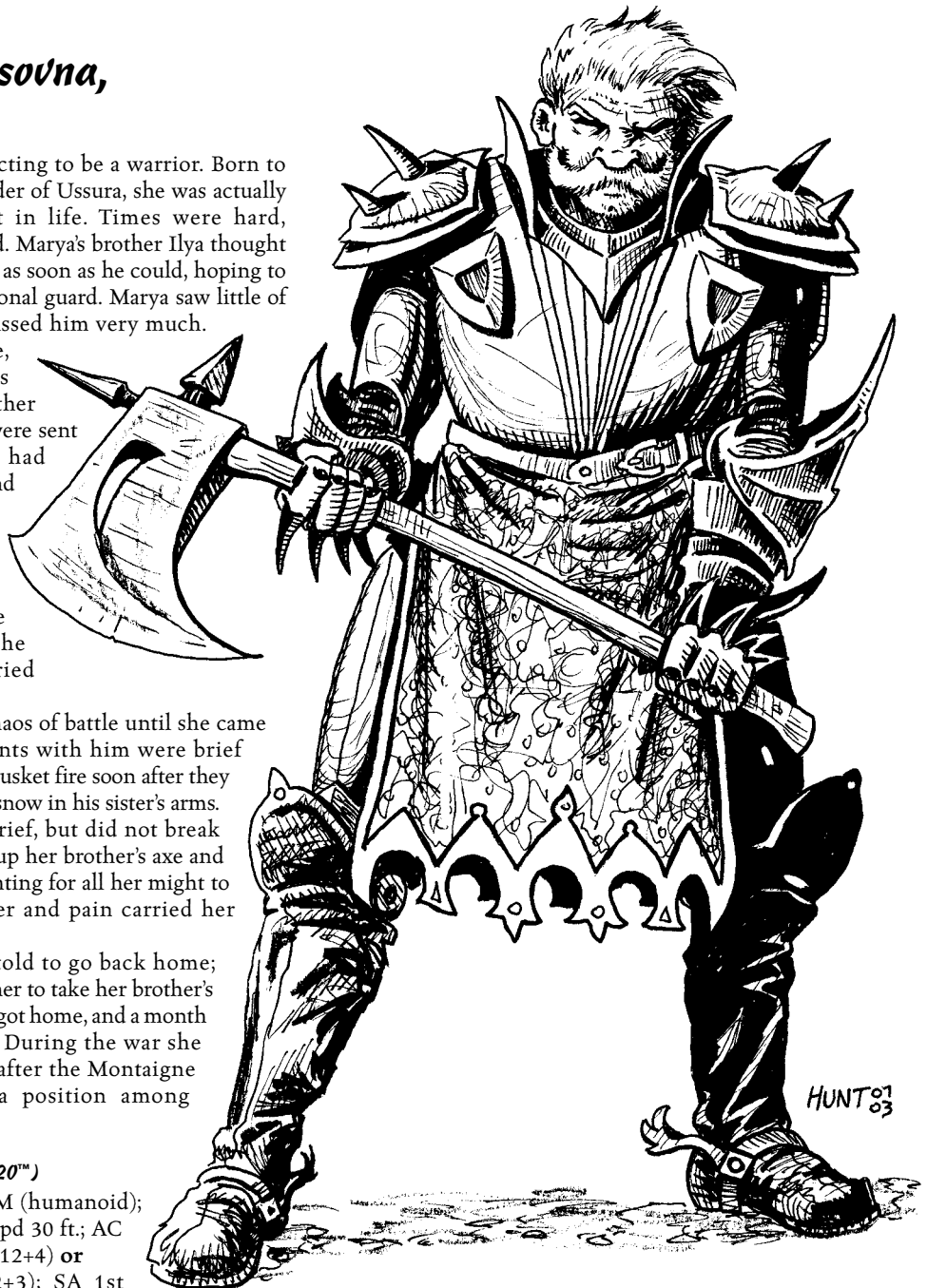
Marya Dubrenyasovna, Ussuran Stelet

Marya did not grow up expecting to be a warrior. Born to a peasant family near the border of Ussura, she was actually quite content with her lot in life. Times were hard, but Matushka always provided. Marya's brother Ilya thought differently; he left for the city as soon as he could, hoping to serve in the local Boyar's personal guard. Marya saw little of her brother after that and missed him very much.

Then the Montaigne came, and everything changed. As Montague's army pushed further into the country, more men were sent to the front. Few of them had fought in a real battle before and many fell to Montaigne steel. Ilya was assigned to the front as it pushed nearer to Marya's home. Believing it may be her last chance to see her brother, she left for the nearby battle front and tried to find him.

She searched amidst the chaos of battle until she came upon Ilya's unit. Her moments with him were brief because he was cut down by musket fire soon after they were reunited. He died in the snow in his sister's arms. Marya was overcome with grief, but did not break under its weight. She picked up her brother's axe and took his place on the line, fighting for all her might to defend her homeland. Anger and pain carried her though and she survived.

After that battle she was told to go back home; however, she felt it was up to her to take her brother's place. She enlisted the day she got home, and a month later was back on the front. During the war she served with distinction and after the Montaigne withdrew she was given a position among the Stelets.



Marya Dubrenyasovna (D20™)

Théan Ranger 3: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D10+9; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks: Great axe +7 me(1d12+4) or great axe +4 ranged (1d12+3); SA 1st Favored Enemy; SQ Provided By Nature (Healing Herbs); SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13; AL NG; Skills: Climb +5, Handle Animal +4, Heal +3, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Ride +4, Search +3, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Ussuran; [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +3, Use Rope +2, Wilderness Lore +5; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light armor or no armor), Endurance, Power Attack, Track, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light armor or no armor), Weapon Focus (Axe).

At 4th level: Add one level of Théan Ranger.

At 5th level: Add one level of Bogatyr.

(For more information, see *Ussura™* and *Swashbuckling Adventures™*.)

Marya Dubrenyasovna (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2

Reputation: 0

Background: Romance 2

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Ussuran (R/W), Cold Climate Conditioning, Membership (Stelets), Membership (Swordsman's Guild when in Ussura), Ussuran Accent (Rurik)

Herbalist: Cooking 1, Diagnosis 1, First Aid 1, Flora 1

Hunter: Stealth 2, Survival 2, Tracking 2, Trail Signs 1, Traps 1

Commander: Strategy 1, Tactics 1

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 2, Footwork 2, Jab 1

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 2, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

Bogatyr (Apprentice): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 1, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 1, Throw (Heavy Weapon) 1, Exploit Weakness (Bogatyr) 1

Axel von Wendel, Knight of the Rose + Cross

After fighting for Eisen in the War of the Cross, Axel was tired. To ease the pain and horror of what he had seen, he began drinking heavily, not unlike so many other Eisen veterans. However, Axel was also the eldest son of a noble Freiburg family, and such behavior was not to be tolerated. His family came from a proud military background, and such sloth and decadence was not to be tolerated. Argument led to argument until Axel could stand it no more. He claimed his inheritance of a dracheneisen panzerhand, and left Eisen and his family behind.

He traveled Théah as a mercenary until he encountered a Knight of the Rose + Cross. Something long dormant awoke inside him. These men and women not only fought for a cause, but brought hope by their very presence. He knew he must become a part of their work and did everything he could to prove himself worthy. Now, after much dedication he has been able to claim his own red tabard. He is devoted to the cause and hopes to make his family proud of him once again.

Axel von Wendel (420™)

Musketeer 3: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D10+9; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: Longsword +6 me(1d8+3) or longsword +4 me(1d8+3) and panzerhand +0 me(1d6+1) or pistol +4 ranged (1d10); SA Elegant Duelist, SQ Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; AL CG; Skills: Balance +3, Bluff +2, Climb +4, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +1, Ride +3, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +2, Tumble +4; Feats: Exotic Shield Proficiency (Panzerhand), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise (only with fencing weapon), Servant, Toughness, Two Weapon Fighting.

At 4th level: Add one level of Musketeer and add one rank of Sense Motive (class skill through Servant Feat).

At 5th level: Add one level of any class and add one rank of Sense Motive (class skill through Servant Feat).

At 6th level: Add one level of Eisenfaust.

(See Eisen,™ *The City of Freiburg*™ and *Swashbuckling Adventures*™ for more information.)

Axel von Wendel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, *Finesse:* 2, *Wits:* 2, *Resolve:* 3, *Panache:* 2

Reputation: 0

Background: Dispossessed 2

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne, Eisen Accent (Freiburg), Inheritance (Dracheneisen Panzerhand), Membership (Knights of the Rose + Cross), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)

Servant: Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Menial Tasks 1, Unobtrusive 1

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Commander: Strategy 1, Tactics 1

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 1

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 1, Parry (Panzerhand) 2

Eisenfaust (Apprentice): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 1, Bind (Panzerhand) 1, Disarm (Panzerhand) 1, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 1

Don Alejandro Rodriguez del Rios, Knight of Die Kreuzritter

As the youngest son of a good Castillian family, it was up to Alejandro to join the priesthood when he came of age, but like many Castillians, he was too full of passion to truly settle down to academic studies. He needed to do more than preach; he wanted to fight the enemies of good. He became more outspoken amongst his colleagues until eventually he earned the enmity of a well-placed bishop. While Alejandro still managed to become initiated as a priest, he was not granted his own diocese and was forced to wander Théah. This suited the young priest very well.

Just as he was about to begin his journey die Kreuzritter made contact with him. It turned out he had an uncle in the Order who told him that the Knights were pleased with the young man. Alejandro accepted their offer to enter the training program, excited by the prospect of working to protect some of the darkest secrets in Théah. He and those like him have the faith to remain true to Theus even in the face of Legion's greatest evil.

Alejandro has never shirked from his new duty. He lives to strike down evil wherever it lies in whatever manner the Order demands of him. He knows that even the darkest heart can earn the Last Rites to bring redemption to a tortured soul. The young Black Cross only hopes his own soul is still there to be saved.

Don Alejandro Rodriguez del Rios (420™)

Wanderer 1/Assassin 2: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD (2D6+1D8)+3; hp 18; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks: Rapier +3 me(1d6+1) or dagger +2 me(1d4+1) or dagger +4 ranged (1d4+1); SA Death Attack, Poison Use, Sneak Attack (+1D6); SQ Evasion, Tradesman; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13; AL CN; Skills: Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +4, Heal +5, Hide +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +4, Profession (Priest) +5, Search +3, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Castille, Théan [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +6, Tumble +8, Use Rope +4; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Ordained, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

At 4th level: Add one level of Assassin and two ranks of Tumble.

At 5th level: Add one level of Assassin and one rank of Tumble.

At 6th level: Add one level of Aldana.

(See Castille,™ *Die Kreuzritter*,™ and *Swashbuckling Adventure*™ for more information.)

Don Alejandro Rodriguez del Rios (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, *Finesse:* 3, *Wits:* 3, *Resolve:* 2, *Panache:* 2

Reputation: 0

Background: Crisis of Faith 2

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Castillian Accent (Torres), Membership (Die Kreuzritter), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Nightblade, Ordained

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1

Priest: Oratory 1, Philosophy 1, Writing 1

Spy: Shadowing 1, Stealth 1

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 1

Aldana (Apprentice): Feint (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1,

Tagging (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 1

Gretchen Aushvan, Iron Guard "The Swamp Dogs" (Pösen)

To her parents' dismay, Gretchen never wanted to play with other little girls. She was often dragged home in disgrace for having mud-throwing fights with the local boys. She would have been punished a lot more if she was not usually the victor. Due to her complete failure to adopt any lady-like virtues, her parents despaired that she would find a husband. This suited the girl just fine because she had no plans to marry and spend her life looking after children and a husband.

The day after her sixteenth birthday she had another row with her parents about how to behave. In a fit of pique, she agreed to join some local boys on an ill-planned monster hunt in the darker places of Pösen. They were all very lucky that none of them died. They were also very lucky they brought Gretchen along. She managed to kill a kobold with very little help; only she and one other boy stood their ground while the others fled.

Gretchen finally knew what she wanted to do with her life. Her parents were only too glad to allow her to enroll in the Gelingen Academy — at last their wayward daughter had found something respectable to do with her life! The hunters who had met up with the Eisen girl standing over her dead prey in the woods vouched for her qualifications. They had seen her talent, and realized she was going to get herself killed if she did not get some training. Upon graduation she joined the Swamp Dogs, which allows her to hunt monsters to her heart's content.

Gretchen Aushvan (a20™)

Théan Ranger 3: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3D10+3; hp 26; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks: Longsword +6 me (1d8+3) **or** longsword +4 me (1d8+3) and hand axe +4 me (1d6+1) **or** pistol +3 ranged (1d10); SA 1st Favored Enemy; SQ Provided By Nature (Healing Herbs); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 10; AL NG; Skills: Climb +9, Handle Animal +3, Heal +5, Jump +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Ride +5, Search +9, Speak Language (Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel; [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +8, Use Rope +3, Wilderness Lore +7; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light armor or no armor), Beat, Iron Will, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Track, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light armor or no armor).

At 4th level: Add one level of any class and one rank of Wilderness Lore (class skill for Eisen).

At 5th level: Add one level of any class and one rank of Wilderness Lore (class skill for Eisen).

At 6th level: Add one level of Gelingen.

(See *Eisen™* and *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for more information.)

Gretchen Aushvan (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2

Reputation: 0

Background: Hunting 2

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Ussuran (R/W), Eisen Accent (North), Keen Senses, Membership — Iron Guard (Swamp Dogs), Pain Tolerance

Hunter: Stealth 1, Survival 1, Tracking 2

Doctor: Diagnosis 1, First Aid 1

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 2, Parry (Heavy

Weapon) 1

Gelingen (Apprentice): Exploit Weakness (Monster of choice) 3

Sir Padyn, Newly Admitted Knight of Elaine

"Hero, huh? Not bloody likely, lad. 'Hero' and 'fool' are opposite sides of one very thin coin..."

This is the template for a young Inish Knight of Elaine. The specific details of his background are up to the player and the GM, but he should be played as a very human young man who has a little trouble remembering that he is a knight now and does not need to answer every threat with his fists. His spirit, his blunt manner, and that Inish charm have endeared him to the Queen and her Council. They do not send him on diplomatic missions but when there is a need for action in the face of certain danger, Sir Padyn is usually called into service.

Sir Padyn (a20™)

Swashbuckler 4/Donovan Swordsman: CR 5; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6+12+1d8+3; hp 35; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Buckler); Atks: Sidhe sword +11 me (1d6+9) **or** unarmed +9 me (1d3+3) **or** pistol +5 ranged (1d10); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike; SQ Buckler Master, Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL CG; Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +7, Climb +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (Sidhe) +4, Ride +6, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Tumble +6, Use Rope +4; Feats: Brawny, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Improved Unarmed Strike, Large, Weapon Focus (Smallsword), Weapon Focus (Unarmed), Weapon Specialization (Smallsword).

At 6th level: Add one level of fighter and one rank to Ride.

At 7th level: Add one level of Knight of Elaine.

Note: Sir Padyn also meets all the prerequisites for the Finnegan Boxer prestige class. As an Inishman, there is a natural preference for "friendly fisticuffs" to more lethal combat at least when he is among his compatriots but he knows that such behavior is not acceptable at Court.

Sir Padyn (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2

Reputation: 0

Background: Sidhe Lover 2 (or other selection to suit backstory)

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (ACQ), Large, Membership (Knights of Elaine), Sidhe Sword

Courtier: Dancing 1, Fashion 1, Etiquette 1, Oratory 1

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Buckler: Parry (Buckler) 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1

Rider: Ride (Horse) 1

Donovan (Apprentice): Bind (Buckler) 1, Disarm (Fencing) 1,

Riposte (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 1

New Advantages (7th Sea™)

Past Services

(3 Points, 2 for Members)

At some point in the past, you performed a noteworthy deed on behalf of an organization that has a Membership Advantage. Whenever you are dealing with members of that organization, add 20 points to your Reputation. Both you and the GM should agree on a good story about what services you have rendered, so be prepared to do a little extra work for this Advantage. Membership in the organization is not required for this Advantage, but having it lowers the cost of by 1 HP.

Guardian Family (2 Point Advantage — Vodacce only)

You have a greater resistance to Sorte magic. Any target number for a Sorte effect cast against you is 5 points higher. (See Chapter Four: Who Watches the Witches?)

New Feats (d20™)

Distinctive Service (d20™)

Prerequisite: This character must have performed a notable or difficult service for one of the Musketeer organizations or Secret Societies.

Benefit: Thanks to past services rendered, you receive a +2 circumstance bonus to all social interactions with members of the organization. The GM may also allow this bonus when dealing with non-members who have a strong connection to the organization, such as a Patron.

Guardian Family (Racial Feat) (d20™)

If you are a member of a guardian family you may choose at character generation to have this Feat. It still costs you one of your beginning Feat slots. You must be Vodacce and should be in a fighting class. Taking this feat gives you a +3 resistance bonus to any save against Sorte sorcery. (See Chapter Four: Who Watches the Witches?)

New Backgrounds (7th Sea™)

(Note: There is no equivalent for this in the d20™ System. A GM may choose to role-play this aspect, however.)

Ousted

You used to be a member of an organization, but for whatever reason, your membership has been revoked. Pick one of the groups to which it is possible to have the Membership Advan-

tage. You have been kicked out of that organization, and cannot get Membership in that organization while you have this Background. You and the GM should agree on a good story about what you did that got you kicked out. You are not actively hunted by members of that group, but they are very reluctant to help you, and may even be watching you covertly to make sure you do not pass along any sensitive information about their business. The Rank of this Background indicates the strength of the antagonism and mistrust between yourself and your former compatriots.

Predecessor (Requires Membership)

This Background requires that you have a Membership Advantage. You are following in the footsteps of a parent or other older relative in the organization. You keep getting caught in your predecessor's reputation, enemies, and entanglements. The Rank of this Background reflects the degree to which your predecessor's fame (or infamy) affects your life in the organization. You and the GM should agree on the story of your predecessor.

Probation (Requires Membership)

This Background requires you to have a Membership Advantage. Due to some misdeed on your part, your membership is at risk. The slightest mistake on your part could now cause you to lose your membership, and your peers and superiors are keeping a close eye on you. The Rank of this Background indicates the severity of your past offenses. The higher it is, the less severe your next mistake must be to cause you to lose your membership. If you do lose your membership, you lose this Background and gain an Ousted Background of equal Rank.

New Equipment

(Note: 7th Sea™ and Swashbuckling Adventures™ use different economic models for determining character wealth; thus the differences in price between the two systems is intentional.)

Arquebus (7th Sea™)

The arquebus is a predecessor of the musket. It uses the same kind of ammunition and powder, but employs a matchlock instead of a flintlock system to ignite its primer charge. Consequently, it is next to impossible to use it in rain, snow, or strong winds. They are no longer produced in Théah, but some can still be found in working order in rural areas, or as decorative pieces.

Damage: 5k3

Range: 70 yds.

Modifiers: Short Range (TN -10), Long Range (TN -15)

Reload: 30 Actions

Cost: 15 G

When you attempt to fire an arquebus, roll dice as if you were rolling damage from the Weather Table in the *Game Master's Guide*™. If the result is higher than 15, the match has gone out and must be lit again in order to fire. Lighting the match takes 1 Action if you have a ready source of fire available.

d20™ Mechanic: Treat the arquebus as a standard musket that cannot be fired in wet weather, i.e., rain, heavy snow, or thick fog.

Blunderbuss (7th Sea™)

A blunderbuss is a bell-barreled firearm that shoots several projectiles in a scattered fashion instead of a single aimed bullet. They are useful for hunting and guard duty, but are not well suited to the Théan battlefields. A blunderbuss is devastating at close range, but the scatter of the shot makes it less effective against targets that are further out. Modern Théan blunderbusses employ a flintlock mechanism, just like the ones used in muskets and pistols.

Damage: Point Blank (appx 1 yd.): 5k4

Short Range: 5k3

Long Range: 3k2; no Firearm damage is considered to have been done when making Wound Checks.

Range: 20 yds.

Modifiers: Short Range (TN 0), Long Range (TN 20)

Reload: 25 Actions

Cost: 20 G.

When Brute Squads fire blunderbusses:

Point Blank (appx 1 yd.): 15 points

Short Range: 6 points

Long Range: 3k2; no Firearm damage is considered to have been done when making Wound Checks.

A blunderbuss can be used to attack an entire Brute Squad, using the standard rules for targeting multiple Brutes.

d20™ Mechanic: The blunderbuss does 3d6 points of damage to a target in the first Range increment, 2d6 in the second range increment, and 1d6 to any target in a 5-ft. path out to the maximum range. The blunderbuss has a maximum range of five increments, or 50 feet.

Carbine (7th Sea™)

A carbine is a gun with a smaller bore and shorter barrel length than the musket. It serves as a long-range firearm for horsemen.

Damage: 4k3

Range: 60 yds.

Modifiers: Short Range (TN -10); Long Range (TN -15)

Reload: 25 Actions

Cost: 20 G

(For d20™ rules, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*™ page 166.)

Musket Rest (7th Sea™)

A musket rest is simply a staff with a fork on one end. The barrel of a musket, arquebus, or carbine can be rested in that fork to steady the gun. Doing so gives the shooter a Free Raise to hit. The cost of a musket rest is 2 G. For an additional 5 G, the rest can have an attached shield, which provides the firer cover while he reloads. The TN to hit someone behind such a shield with a missile weapon is increased by +10.

d20™ Mechanics: Using a musket rest gives the shooter a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls. If the rest is equipped with a shield, the shooter gets the benefit of cover from any ranged attacks.)

Custom Firearm Creation

Longer Barrel (+4 G) (7th Sea™)

Your weapon has a significantly longer barrel than most of its class. Your Range is increased by +10 yards, and the length of the barrel increases the Reload time by +5 Actions. For instance, a pistol with a longer barrel will have a Range of 40 yards instead of 30, and will take 25 Actions to reload instead of 20.

d20™ Mechanics: This increases the range increment of a weapon by 20%. For example, a musket with a longer barrel would have a range increment of 180 feet. This also increases the reload time by two actions. This modification increases the weapon cost by 20%.

Shorter Barrel (-2 G) (7th Sea™)

Your weapon has a significantly shorter barrel than most of its class. Your Range is reduced by -10 yards, and shortness of the barrel decreases the Reload time by -5 Actions. For instance, a pistol with a shorter barrel will have a Range of 20 yards instead of 30, and will take 15 Actions to reload instead of 20.

d20™: This decreases the range increment of a weapon by 20%. For example, a musket with a shorter barrel would have a range increment of 120 feet. This also decreases the reload time by one action. This modification decreases the weapon cost by 10%.

Smaller Bore (-0 G) (7th Sea™)

Your weapon fires a smaller diameter projectile than most of its class. You roll one less die (-1k0) of damage. For example, a musket with a smaller bore would do 4k3 damage instead of the normal 5k3. This modification also makes the weapon more accurate, effectively decreasing your short/long range modifiers to -5/-10.

TABLE 3-1: FIREARM WEAPONS CHART (7TH SEA™)

Weapon	Damage	Range	Short	Long	Reload	Cost
Arquebus	5k3	70 yards	-10	-15	30 Actions	15 G
Blunderbuss	5k4/5k3/3k2	20 yards	-0	-20	25 Actions	20 G
Carbine	4k3	60 yards	-10	-15	25 Actions	20 G
Musket	5k3	80 yards	-10	-15	30 Actions	20 G
Pistol	5k3	30 yards	-10	-15	20 Actions	20 G

d20™: This decreases the damage die by one size, but grants a +1 enhancement bonus to hit. For example, a musket with this modification will do 1d10 points of damage. This modification does not alter the weapon's cost.

Larger Bore (+10 G) (7th Sea™)

Your weapon fires a larger diameter projectile than most of its class. Your roll one more die (+1k0) of damage. For example, a musket with a smaller bore would do 6k3 damage instead of the normal 5k3. This modification also makes the weapon less accurate, effectively increasing your short/long range modifiers to -15/-20.

d20™: This increases the damage die by one size but incurs a -1 penalty to hit. For example, a musket with this modification will do 2d8 points of damage. This modification increases the weapon's cost by 50%.

Quality Weapon (7th Sea™)

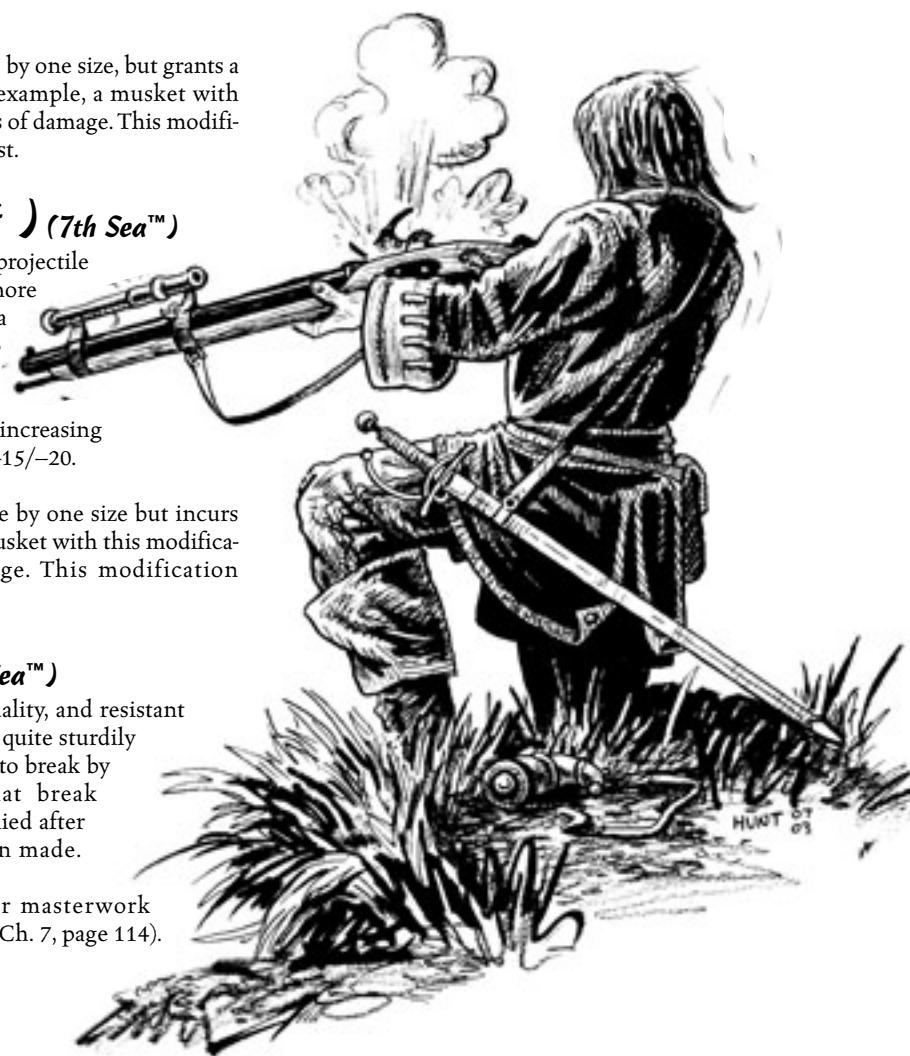
The firearm is of extremely high quality, and resistant to rust, as well as wear and tear. It is quite sturdily constructed and is therefore harder to break by those who have Techniques that break weapons. The cost multiplier is applied after any other modifications have been made.

d20™: Use the standard rules for masterwork weaponry (see Player's Handbook™, Ch. 7, page 114).

Inferior Weapon (Half Cost) (7th Sea™)

The firearm is of extremely low quality, making it vulnerable to rust and wear and tear. It is quite flimsily constructed, making it easier to break by those who have Techniques that break weapons. The cost multiplier is applied after any other modifications have been made. When this weapon is fired, the GM (or a player, if the weapon is used by an NPC) may spend a Drama Die to cause it to fail to fire immediately. In that case, roll 1k1. The weapon does not discharge for that many Phases. If the firer takes any Action other than aiming the firearm at a target, it misses and the shot is wasted.

d20™: Reduce the weapon's hardness and hit points by 5 each. Furthermore, if the shooter rolls a natural "1" on his attack roll, the weapon becomes fouled and cannot be used for the rest of the battle.



Example of Custom Firearm Creation (7th Sea™)

A villain wants to outfit his Brute Squads cheaply, so he issues them inferior carbines with smaller bores and shorter barrels to save on expense. Ordinary carbines cost 20 G each. Shortening the barrel reduces the cost to 18 G, and the smaller bore decreases it to 14 G. Skimping on the quality cuts the cost in half, so each carbine will cost only 7 G. This weapon does 3k3 damage, has a range of 50 yards, and a reload time of 20 Actions. Since it is still a firearm, it does the usual 15 points of Damage per successful Hit when used by Brute Squads.

TABLE 3-2: FIREARM WEAPONS CHART (d20™)

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type	Cost
Arquebus	1d12	×3	150 feet	12 lb.	Piercing	100 G
Blunderbuss	3d6/2d6/2d6*	19-20/×2	10 feet*	10 lb.	Piercing	150 G
Carbine	1d12	×3	75 feet	7 lb.	Piercing	150 G
Musket	1d12	×3	150 feet	10 lb.	Piercing	250 G
Pistol	1d10	×3	50 feet	3 lb.	Piercing	125 G

*See item description for complete rules.

Firing a Scouring Stick

When out of ammunition, or when caught in the middle of reloading a firearm, a desperate ploy is to fire the scouring stick (sometimes referred to as a ramrod, although that term is better suited to the tools used with cannons than it is to personal weapons). Attempting to do this requires you to be at least halfway through the reloading process.

Scouring Stick (7th Sea™)

If you are trying to fire the scouring stick from a musket, you must have spent at least 15 Actions reloading the musket already. Fired scouring sticks have a range of one-fifth their normal range of a shot fired from the firearm, have a penalty of (TN -10) to hit at Short Range and (TN -15) to hit at Long Range (in addition to the bonus or penalty for the weapon itself) and do -2k1 damage. Firing a scouring stick will effectively ruin the stick and has a chance of damaging the interior of the firearm's barrel.

Check if the weapon breaks by using the Improvised Weapon rules. Normal firearms use the hard weapon rules for breaking, so they are ruined when any of your damage dice explodes more than once. Inferior firearms break as if they were firm weapons, breaking any time you roll a 10 on any damage die, whether you keep it or not. Quality firearms only break if any of your damage dice explodes more than twice. Once you have fired your scouring stick, you cannot reload until you obtain another one.

TABLE 3-3: SCOURING STICK SHOTS FOR FIREARMS (7TH SEA™)

Weapon	Damage	Range	Short	Long	Reload
Arquebus	3k2	14 yards	-20	-20	15 Actions
Blunderbuss	3k2	4 yards	-10	-35	12 Actions
Carbine	2k2	12 yards	-20	-30	12 Actions
Musket	3k2	80 yards	-20	-30	15 Action
Pistol	2k2	30 yards	-20	-30	10 Actions

Scouring Stick (d20™)

You may fire a scouring stick at any point during reloading your weapon. You suffer a -4 penalty to hit with the scouring rod, and the rod is destroyed in the firing. The firearm takes 2d6 points of damage every time a scouring rod is fired out of it.

TABLE 3-4: SCOURING STICK SHOTS FOR FIREARMS (D20™)

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Range Increment*
Arquebus	1d6	x2	10 feet
Blunderbuss	1d6	x2	10 feet
Carbine	1d4	x2	10 feet
Musket	1d6	x2	10 feet
Pistol	1d4	x2	5 feet

*A scouring rod must only be fired a maximum of 2 range increments.

Encounter Tables

Nefarious Activities

As the characters walk down the street, a suspicious character roughly snatches a package from a passerby and runs off down a cluttered alley. Roll 1d10 to determine the victim:

TABLE 3-5: PACKAGE GRAB ENCOUNTER TABLE (FOR BOTH SYSTEMS)

Roll	Result
1-3	The victim is a poor housewife who says she will be eternally grateful if her bread is salvaged and returned.
4-6	The victim is a nervous courier taking a pouch to a prominent merchant of the town, and will try to hire the heroes as bodyguards if they return it.
7-9	The victim is a noble who will have had his entire day simply ruined by the occurrence and will probably be cross with the heroes for not stopping the thief earlier.
10	The "victim" is an agent of a Secret Society, and the theft is a distraction for his colleagues to act without the heroes noticing.

The heroes round the corner in time to see a crowd of thugs robbing a merchant.

TABLE 3-6: THUG ENCOUNTER TABLE (FOR BOTH SYSTEMS)

Roll	Result
1-5	The thugs fdown the road with whatever money they have stolen.
6-8	The thugs stand and fight the heroes.
9-10	The thugs scatter and fin various directions while the gang's biggest member will stay behind to fight the heroes.

A drunken nobleman is abusing the peasants, beating them with his cane and shouting all manner of curses.

TABLE 3-7: DRUNKEN NOBLEMAN ENCOUNTER TABLE (FOR BOTH SYSTEMS)

Roll	Result
1-3	His carriage has become mired in the road
4-6	He believes someone has picked his pocket
7-10	He simply believes himself better than the peasants, and they have not shown him the proper respect. The locals are unlikely to make much more of this, and the heroes must think quickly if they are to prevent some thing terrible from happening.

- Insults have flown like bullets and the heroes find themselves witness to an illegal duel between two master swordsmen. The fight ranges across several streets causing great damage and frightening onlookers. It is up to the heroes to contain the fight without injuring anyone and finding out what caused the duel in the first place.

- Revolutionaries have stirred up some malcontents who are protesting in the street, overturning wagons and waving burning torches. All it needs is a tiny spark to turn into a full-fledged riot. The heroes suddenly find themselves alone on a wide empty street facing a mob of angry citizens. It is up to them, and them alone, to calm this situation before people get hurt.

- The heroes arrive to see plumes of smoke curling into a clear blue sky as the panicked inhabitants of the street run screaming from a blazing home. It is up to the heroes to organize the locals, put out the blaze, and rescue anyone trapped inside.
- As the heroes walk around the corner, they duck as a bottle narrowly misses their heads. One of the city's roughest taverns has degenerated into an open brawl, and the heroes must act quickly if they hope to break up the fight, or at least keep it in the tavern until the participants have knocked each other silly. Of course, no one likes outsiders interfering in their brawl.
- By sheer chance, the heroes witness a mugging in progress. A pair of thugs are holding knives to a hapless family out for an evening stroll. The thugs are likely to take the family hostage in an attempt to escape. It is up to the heroes to keep the innocents safe and bring the guilty to justice.
- Criminals are stealing a cartload of goods in broad daylight! The terrified wagon drivers are whipping their horses into a frenzy, fleeing down the street while they grapple with the thieves and crates of valuable goods spill off the wagon.

TABLE 3–8: WAGON GOODS ENCOUNTER CHART
(FOR BOTH SYSTEMS)

Roll	Result
1–4	Apples, oranges, wine or some other commodity which would be considered valuable in the local environment.
5–7	Huge rolls of expensive fabrics like silk or fine brocade come undone, tangling people and animals alike.
8–9	Rare foods, herbs, and spices Midnight Archipelago (8) or Cathay (9).
10	Smuggled or otherwise highly illegal goods being stolen in a deal gone wrong. The wagon drivers in this case are as likely to fight off the heroes as the thieves.

Chaos erupts on the streets! Roll twice on the table above, ignoring all further results of 10, and combine the incidents. Nobody ever said it was going to be easy being a Musketeer!

Villains du Jour

Roll on a d10 with the following results:

1. The Fallen Hero

Once, he could have been a Musketeer. He aspired to greatness, but his only failing was naivete. Manipulated by an enemy of the order into failing them, he was cast out. Over the years his resentment has festered like an open wound, until he has returned to wreak his revenge on the very ideals he once held dear.

Strength: He knows the way the mind of a Musketeer works, how they think, and how the organization operates.

Weakness: He is most likely riddled with self-doubt, and can be made to hesitate by an impassioned appeal to the honor he once had.

Activities: As a mastermind, he will usually strike out at the Musketeers where they are weakest and his crimes will bear the stamp of revenge rather than greed or ambition. As a follower, he will lend his sword and his expertise to anyone who can bring the Musketeers into disrepute or destroy them.

2. The Leader

Driven by ambition more than anything else, the Leader seeks to exert power over her fellows. She is likely an individual of rank within society, but seeks to rise further at the expense of her opponents, and is willing to use any means to achieve her success.

Strength: She has the resources and influence to fuel her rise to power.

Weakness: She plays a dangerous game, and must act carefully to maintain her present position while advancing her cause.

Activities: As a mastermind, she will work behind the scenes, possibly even manipulating the heroes into doing her bidding while they remain in ignorance of her black heart. As a follower, she is biding her time until she can safely dispose of her master and take control of his organization.

3. The Player

Boredom breeds characters such as the players, daring criminals who match wits with the finest exemplars of law and order they can find for no other reason than excitement. Likely a spoiled noble or a brilliant artist by day, the Player's crimes are no less real for their perpetrator's motives.

Strength: The Player oozes charm and is very likeable.

Weakness: The Player will invariably draw "worthy adversaries" to himself, believing his crimes nothing but an entertaining diversion.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Player will plan crimes designed to cause a stir at the highest level in society so that they can observe their handiwork or commit crimes that are deemed impossible simply to see if they can be done. As a follower, the Player will tend to be the social face and confidence trickster of a greater villain, but is unlikely to feel any deep loyalty toward their master.

4. The Traitor

She is your most trusted confidante, a pillar of virtue and justice — and she will sell your mother to your worst enemy without batting an eyelid. Full of guile and treachery, the Traitor works within noble organizations such as the Musketeers, helping them while betraying them whenever it becomes necessary. By the time her evil deeds come to light, she has already disappeared, leaving no trace of her existence save bitter memories.

Strength: Trusted and loyal, the Traitor can work covertly against the heroes without arousing suspicion.

Weakness: Any false move will give the Traitor away, leaving her vulnerable.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Traitor's main ambition will be the weakening or corruption of the organization she works for in order to further her own ends, and she is most likely to be seen blackmailing or misinforming her comrades in order to achieve this. As a follower, she will be working to betray her friends as a small part of her master's greater scheme.

5. The Shadow

A mysterious conspirator, the Shadow is less concerned with leading than with manipulating events to his advantage. Most likely a member of the government the Heroes are sworn to protect, the Shadow strikes out at anything they view as a threat from the shadows, leaving a bloody trail that never quite leads back to their hands. Motivated by duty and armed with ruthlessness the Shadow is a terror to any he deems opposed to the state.

Strength: The Shadow hides behind criminal organizations, intermediaries, and a bewildering array of smokescreens.

Weakness: The Shadow trusts no one, not even his own loyal followers.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Shadow will engage in assassination, smuggling, criminal enterprises and murder to further his agenda and ensure that the nation the Heroes serve follows the course he has plotted for it. As a follower, the Shadow will most likely be involved in the administration of a front organization seemingly unconnected with his master that nonetheless serves his unknown superior's bidding. Most Shadows will choose to die rather than betray the master; the punishment for betrayal is not a quick end.

6. The Soldier

The Soldier works alongside the heroes, though their methods are almost certain to differ greatly. Might makes right, and the Soldier is only too willing to force her philosophy on others. She may be corrupt or she may just be a little too overzealous in her enforcement of the organization's edict. Either way, the Soldier's methods are likely to foster hatred for the noble ideals of the heroes' organization among the people she is supposed to protect.

Strength: The Soldier will never hesitate at using strong-arm tactics or violence to enforce her will.

Weakness: The Soldier makes little secret of her aims and relies on her might rather than her wits.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Soldier will typically use violence and intimidation to scare any criminal or opponent of the state away, or failing that she will resort to murder. She is more likely to concentrate on "political" criminals, and will sometimes consort with other lawbreakers to bring such enemies of the state to book. As a follower, the Soldier will simply enforce the will of her master, and is the perfect choice to lead whatever brute squad the villain employs.

7. The Outlaw

The Outlaw may be a pirate, highwayman, burglar, bandit or racketeer, but he is governed by one thing and one thing only: Greed. Far from the model of such "Gentleman" outlaws as Phillip Gosse and Phineas Flynn, these are desperate characters, driven to evil acts in order to further their criminal ends.

Strength: The Outlaw's desperation can make him unpredictable, and he will not hesitate to use his opponents' honor against them.

Weakness: The Outlaw's cruelty leaves those who follow him ready to betray him at any turn.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Outlaw will run a gang or a pirate ship or some other criminal enterprise. As a follower, the Outlaw will be similarly occupied, though the revenue

they make will be diverted towards funding the schemes of their master. They will betray their master at the drop of a hat — if they know who he is.

8. The Occultist

Théah has more than one route to power, and the Occultist seeks it through the mastery of dark arts. Versed in ancient knowledge and more than a little mad, the Occultist is an educated and dangerous foe, all too willing to unleash powers she cannot control to satisfy whatever desire has driven them to such methods in the first place.

Strength: The Occultist can tap into powers that are unlikely to be available to the heroes.

Weakness: Nothing is without a price, and the Occultist fears nothing more than her benefactor.

Activities: As a mastermind, the Occultist will work to steal artifacts, kidnap important people, and kill innocents in order to either fulfill her bargain or unleash a tide of evil on the world. As a follower, the Occultist will usually be a counselor or sorcerer in the service of another, bringing an otherworldly presence to her master's plans. She will not be particularly loyal to her leader, and would betray or kill them for her own dark and selfish desires.

9. The Spy

The Spy works against whatever nation the heroes defend on behalf of their nation's enemies, either as a dirt-clad revolutionary stirring up sentiment against the rulers or as a sleek and silk-tongued courtier in the halls of power.

Strength: The Spy has the backing of a nation behind him and is, more than anything, a consummate professional in all things.

Weakness: The Spy is far from home, and knows his superiors will leave him for dead if he is discovered.

Activities: As a mastermind the Spy will orchestrate grand schemes to cripple the heroes' homeland in order to advance his nation's cause, while himself remaining above suspicion. As a follower, the Spy will gather information for his superiors or stir up unrest among the natives to trouble the heroes.

10. The Visionary

The Visionary has seen the light, and is guided by a higher power to a glorious future only she can see. In Théah such people usually believe themselves to be influenced by Theus, but in another campaign world it can be any benevolent god. They usually act against the enemies of their faith, enforcing their divinely inspired edicts with a fury the likes of which the world has never seen. Believing themselves above all laws of kings and governments, the Visionary is one of the most dangerous people in an already dangerous world.

Strength: Determination keeps this fanatic going in the face of all opposition.

Weakness: Blind to all but their own truth, the Visionary often trusts in Theus to guide their hand, often leading herself into trouble through her delusional faith.

Activities: As a mastermind The Visionary rouses mobs, attempts to kill heretics, and hounds any enemy of their faith. As a follower, the Visionary blindly obeys any whim of her master, whom she believes to be guided by Theus.



CHAPTER FOUR: *Sample Campaigns*

The following hooks are designed for a group of heroes at least one of whom is a member of a chivalric or military order and it is possible to have heroes from more than one of these Orders in the group. The important thing is that they consider any trouble they encounter to be their problem. Some of these hooks will suit certain Orders better than others, but all are flexible enough to suit most. Note that the larger campaigns may take several sessions to complete.

WARNING: THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS CHAPTER IS FOR THE GM. IF YOU ARE NOT A GM AND YOU READ IT YOU RUN THE RISK OF SPOILING A LOT OF SURPRISES IN STORE FOR YOUR CHARACTER! YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

The King of the Sea

King Piram wants to destroy Queen Elaine the Usurper and take the throne of Avalon, which is his by right. He grudgingly agrees that she has done a passable job uniting Avalon and bringing the Highlanders and Inish to heel. This will save him a lot of work when he takes power, which he expects will be soon.

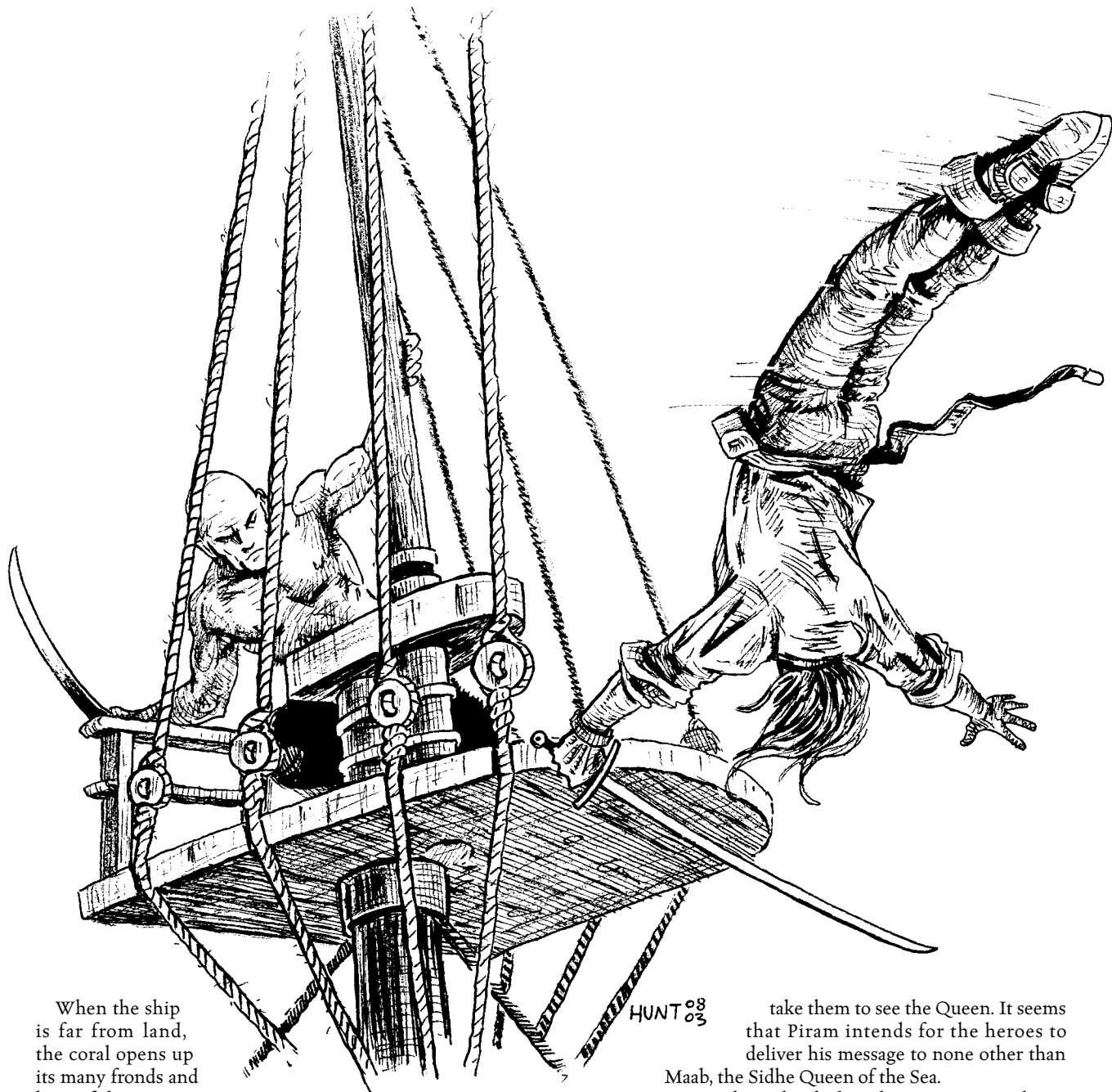
The main problem is that damned Order of Knights. Piram knows that to gain the throne he needs them on his side so he sends an emissary to engage the services of a few worthy heroes. The task is a very simple one, the King explains. He wants to know what it would take to lure the Knights away from the girl and bring them into his service — in essence, who is the weakest link? If they are as true

and noble as they seem (which he doubts), he wants to know what it will take to destroy them.

This is a spying and information-gathering adventure. The heroes can join the squires, the regular army or perhaps become servants in Carleon. No matter, their task is to spy and report back to the King of Breg. It may be that as they learn more about the Knights, it becomes clear that no amount of gold from Piram will get them to betray such their noble order. If that is the case, how do the heroes deliver the bad news? How much can they learn much before their duplicity is discovered? Their biggest challenge will be to fool Avalon's master spy, Sir Bors MacAllister. If he unmasks them he may execute them without trial, or he may offer them a new deal, to become double agents working for him and spying on Piram.

If the heroes do well (or convince Piram that they have), he has another task for them. This time they must sign aboard a ship with orders to travel north. Any hero born in Avalon will know there is nowhere to travel due north from the northernmost point of the Highland Marches, but Piram merely smiles and tells them that not all the nations of Théah are visible on a map.

When they arrive at their destination — and he assures them they will know when they have — they are to deliver a message for him. “Tell the lady that I will not be treated as a servant, so she must accelerate her plans or find another ally.” These seem like harsh and unpleasant words to say to any lady, but the King must have his reasons. The heroes should be more worried about how they will “know when they arrive” especially when the King gives them a beautiful coral about the size of a fist and tells them to take care of it. “By this token the lady will know I sent you.”



When the ship is far from land, the coral opens up its many fronds and beautiful music rises from it. The sailors, a superstitious lot, are frightened of it and some may even try to destroy the coral. While it sings the air grows still and calm, and it is as if the sea itself is listening. Then, from nowhere a terrible storm blows up, and the ship is dragged to the bottom of the sea!

The heroes believe they are dead. After all, they are underwater on the remains of a smashed ship. Oddly enough, they seem to be able to breathe or at least they do not seem to require air. Perhaps they are ghosts, doomed to haunt the ship.

The coral has by now grown to twice its original size and opened into a beautiful flowerlike plant, waving gently in the water. Through the darkness the heroes see lights below and strange creatures swimming all around. An escort arrives to

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take them to see the Queen. It seems that Piram intends for the heroes to deliver his message to none other than Maab, the Sidhe Queen of the Sea.

What is her link with King Piram? What is the plan he wishes to accelerate? It seems Maab's magic keeps the heroes safe underwater, but how can they return to dry land? More to the point how are they to deliver such a message without offending the powerful Sidhe ruler? The encounter with this terrifying creature is almost heart stopping. Luckily for them, Maab still needs Piram. She explains that the coral has properties that will protect them, enabling them to breathe water as long as they are within twenty feet of it. Diplomacy is of the utmost importance here. Maab has no need of the heroes once their message is delivered, so they had better be eloquent. If she believes that they are simply innocent couriers, she may allow them to return to the surface; if not, who knows what she might try to do? (See *The Sidhe Book of Nightmares™* for more information about Maab and her realm.)

Hey, My Lord Producer!

Like other Avalon playwrights, Montgomery Peerson is fascinated by the Sidhe. Unfortunately for him, the audience at the first performance of his new play included the Sidhe about whom he had written. Most were intrigued rather than insulted by the diversion; however, a malicious spirit called "Pudge" took great offense. He did not like the way he was portrayed, and has haunted Peerson ever since, and taken extra steps to ensure that every performance of any Peerson play is plagued with disasters. Open-air performances are always drowned with rain and theatres housing indoor performances break and fall apart. Actors meet with accident and illness as soon as they agree to take a part. The only part that Pudge will allow to be played without incident is that of himself but Peerson worries that the devious Sidhe is saving something special for the hapless actor who performs the role.

Luckily there is help at hand. A Sidhe lady named Sawcream actually liked Peerson's portrayal of her. Not only was she enraptured by the magic of theatre, but also highly entertained by seeing a young actor dressed as a beautiful Sidhe maiden. Sawcream has challenged Pudge in an effort to keep Peerson's plays going. She rebuilds theatres, stops the torrential rain, and helps heal wounded actors. She also accompanies Peerson morning, noon, and night, asking questions and telling him her ideas for new plays. The poor man is trapped between a malicious saboteur and a raving fan and he desperately needs help.

This adventure can either be used for comedy or terrible danger. The Fae combatants can be an amusing diversion or a malicious terror. Their battles could range from embarrassing to dangerous. The Sidhe are unlikely to attack each other directly but they will try to use their power hurt (or help) the show. Peerson has exhausted every last contact and option to gain permission and funding to perform in a reasonably prestigious theatre in Avalon. If he cannot control the disasters, no theatre in the Triple Kingdoms will have anything more to do with him.

The beleaguered playwright initially hires the heroes to help guard the actors and stage crew (and even the audience) against the fall-out of the Fae battle. As time goes on, more actors get hurt which forces the stage manager to hire replacement actors and stage crew some of whom also suffer injury. Enter the heroes. Even the bravest Knight may quail with fear as she tries to remember her lines in from of a live audience. Acting is not regarded as a fitting profession for a lady I Avalon, but any woman with dreams of the stage may see the perfect opportunity.

As a sub-plot, Glamour has begun to affect even the Sidhe who spend any time inside the walls of the theatre. Sawcream has begun to become more like the Sidhe maiden she wants to be, enough for Peerson to begin to notice her for more than her wide-eyed enthusiasm. Pudge has also noticed this and wants to see Peerson write his character as the worst and nastiest creature in the land, so his pranks have taken a decidedly dangerous turn. Can the heroes turned actors save Peerson and his company's reputation? Can they survive a show beset with Fae-crafted disasters? Can they get the two creatures before the fight escalates to deadly proportions? What is causing the shift in Glamour? And most importantly, can they remember their lines?

Flying the Flag

Much to their surprise, the heroes receive a midnight visit from Sir Bors MacAllister who hires them to travel to the Highland Marches on a job for him: he wants them to steal the Faerie flag of the MacLeods. However, there is a wee little problem — a few months ago the MacDonalds, the MacLeods' bitter enemies, stole the flag.

MacAllister would love to send his own spies, but it is too risky. If they are detected trying to manipulate Highland politics, the whole kingdom could turn against the Queen. He cannot just leave things alone, however. The MacLeods are suffering a severe downturn of fortune, which means that the MacDonalds may attack at any moment. With the complicated clan politics, war could consume the entire island in a very short time and now that the Isles are more or less united, it could quite possibly spread to the other kingdoms.

Worse yet, if the MacLeods use the flag, it will bring the Sidhe into the affair, introducing an extremely unpredictable and powerful element into an already difficult situation.

If the heroes agree, they head for the Highlands and infiltrate the MacDonald clan. The flag is held in their castle under impossibly tight guard. It appears that the MacDonalds are indeed planning to go to war with the MacLeods sooner than anyone thought. The heroes can easily sign on as mercenaries if they want to try and get close to the commanders. However, once signed on they will be unable to leave the castle and warn MacAllister because the MacDonalds are not authorizing anyone to leave the place, for fear of alerting the MacLeods. Since losing the flag, MacLeod land has been troubled by a bad harvest and the Unseelie are afoot as well, making things worse. The MacDonalds figure that now is a good time to attack the hungry and despondent MacLeods.

At the root of the plan lies something far more malevolent. Legend states that the flag, a powerful Sidhe artifact, can be used three times. Each time it is waved the Sidhe will come to the aid of the flag bearer in battle; however, on the third time, great misery and destruction will follow. The flag has been used once against the MacDonalds and they need for the MacLeods to use it for what would be the third time. The MacDonalds plan to wave the flag as they go into battle to call Sidhe to their side. Then, they will "allow" the MacLeods to recapture the flag during the battle which they will assume the MacLeods will then wave for the third time even though they know such action will bring disaster. It will also rally the Sidhe away from the MacDonalds.

'Tis a risky plan, but the MacDonalds are counting on the MacLeods' utter desperation. When the Sidhe switch sides and fight for the MacLeods, the MacDonalds will abandon the field. They do not want the MacLeod land; they just want the Sidhe curse to fall upon their enemy.

There are, of course, a few problems... Will the flag waving count against the total if a different clan waves it? What form will the doom of the MacLeods take? Will the Sidhe obey a new master (however temporarily) or do they answer only to the MacLeods? If the Sidhe turn on their summoners after the battle, will they leave quietly when the MacLeods are no more, or stay in the Marches to cause more death and mayhem? The MacDonalds are playing a dangerous game, but bitter blood runs deep. Can the heroes stop them in time or will the whole Highland Marches pay the price for their revenge?

The Iarann Garda

Through the actions of other heroes, the O'Bannon and the Fianna have become aware of Argyle O'Toole's Iarann Garda ("Iron Guard"). The Fianna are rather worried about the whole affair, as O'Toole's men are rumored to have MacEachern blades with which they hope to destroy the O'Bannon. This fact seems not to worry the O'Bannon and that worries the Fianna even more. If they assault O'Toole's home the O'Bannon will put himself in the thick of the action, which could well get him killed.

So the Fianna are planning to strike the Iarann Garda before the O'Bannon gets there. Time is of the essence, so the Fianna need all the help they can get. It is possible the O'Bannon knows all about the Fianna's plan and has sent the heroes to give them a hand. He may be crazy, but this time he does not want to risk his life. This way he still appears both brave and insane to his Fianna. There may be little reward for the heroes beyond the debt owed to them by the Fianna. If the heroes are clever here, they may be able to get hold of one of the Sidhe killing blades for themselves.

The adventure also offers a chance to get even if any heroes have ever been up against Argyle before. This battle will see him and his family crushed once and for all — if the Fianna and the heroes are successful.

Unexpected

While in Carleon, the heroes have recently become friends with an Avalon priest named Father David Roland who asks if they could collect his guest from the harbor. When they meet the ship in question ("The Prophet's Daughter") they find a well-dressed Castillian priest named Father Lucas del Rio and his lovely wife Christina. A pleasant and charming couple, the two chat with the heroes about Castille and Theus on the way to meet Father Roland.

It seems Father del Rio is a pen friend of Father Roland. Although the two have certain theological differences, they both enjoy discussing them by letter. When the war in Castille ended, the two decided it was time they met, hence the journey to Carleon.

When the heroes arrive at Father Roland's house with their guests, their host will not allow them to leave unless they have all dined. It is the least he can do to thank them for insuring the safe arrival of his guests. Over the meal the conversation turns to religion, and the state of the church. Everyone seems to agree that the Inquisition is getting a little out of control, especially Christina. She reveals that her father was arrested for no good reason and she is quite vocal in her distaste for Verdugo and his "unruly thugs." Both of the priests are curious as to the heroes' feelings on the matter.

In fact, the two priests are not the old friends they appear to be. Lucas is a high-ranking member of the Inquisition whom Roland has invited to Carleon because he is worried about the presence of the Sidhe. Fearful that their godless ways may be the downfall of Avalon, he thinks it best idea to create a branch of the Inquisition within the church of Avalon. The Inquisition is, of course, enthusiastic about having an Avalon power base.

If the heroes seem to have the right attitude during the dinner conversation, the priests will try to recruit them into their new organization. If the heroes are vocal opponents of

the Inquisition, the priests will resolve to use a subtler plan — they need swordsmen they can trust and the heroes are the closest thing they have.

Lucas is a charismatic leader, and extremely cunning. He will try to get the heroes to help him arrest or remove people doing evil in Avalon. It begins very laudably with those they have seen doing wrong. All the time Lucas will insist they are doing the right thing and that he too loathes the Inquisition and does not want to emulate them. However, he points out, someone must do the work that the Knights of Elaine cannot.

Eventually things start to get nasty. If the heroes doubt Lucas' motives, they may try to reason with Roland; however, he is just as dedicated to the task as his friend so the heroes must tread very carefully, and be very sure about who they can trust. Both the priests have help and assistance from higher up in their organizations. If the heroes are clever, they may be able to find these secret allies within the church of Avalon who are actually the ones who need to be brought to justice.

The whole affair is Roland's, but if he fails, there will be others to fill his shoes. Perhaps the heroes can convince him that things are not going as he planned. He truly does not want to see a new Inquisition, but believes something needs to be done about the Sidhe. He is completely convinced that Lucas has the best interests of Avalon at heart, and that the Inquisition will not get out of control. The heroes may turn to Christina to dissuade her husband. She is a vocal opponent of the Inquisition and apparently knows nothing of her husband's activities. This will be a terrible mistake. She is actually a higher-ranking Inquisitor than her husband. She fakes a loathing for the Inquisition so that the dissenters will come to her and she can weed out the troublemakers.

It is all up to the heroes. Do they become the founders of a new terror for Avalon or do they become the first to fight it? If they choose the latter, can they avoid becoming its first victims? To get any help from the authorities they will need proof that Lucas and Christina are both Inquisition agents and not just "concerned citizens." This will be difficult as both are every cunning and careful. However, there is one man who may be able to help the heroes — El Vago. But this is Avalon, not Castille. What would Los Vagos be doing so far away from home? (See *Swordsman's Guild*™ for more information.)

The Tournament

The heroes attend one of Avalon's famous tournaments of arms. The tradition of such tournaments reaches back hundreds of years and many have been known to travel from far and wide to see the spectacle and try their own sword. In the Glamour-soaked lands of the Triple Kingdoms the tournaments are awash with pageantry and spectacle as combatants vie for the honor of their sponsor or a loved one.

The tournament itself consists of several different tests of arms. Where there used to be jousting, things are now a little more modern. There are contests of marksmanship with musket, pistol, or bow. There are many one on one (non-lethal) duels to find the best swordsman at the tourney. The local nobility usually preside over the finals of these events, and occasionally even a high-ranking person like Sir Bors or even the Queen herself.

Each finalist seeks one lord or lady who will bestow a scarf or some token of favor that the combatant carries during the contest. The victor brings the sponsor much honor and so the

best tokens (and fullest purses) are usually reserved for the most promising (and dashing) heroes. The giving and receiving of tokens has its own etiquette and while usually completely innocent is also used as an excuse for subtle flirting. The day ends with a “grand mêlée” in which all participants fight each other in non-lethal (but potentially dangerous) swordplay.

The winner is the last person standing on the field or the participant who has struck the target most accurately.

There are also many comedic contests, such as trying to catch pigs in the mud, climbing up a greased pole, or trying to knock each other off a log with feather-stuffed pillows. (The GM should

feel free to add more contests of skill and martial discipline, or those one would find at a medieval country fair, as they see fit.)

This tourney is a little different from the usual ones. Sir Bors MacAllister himself is attending! Many of the combatants hope to impress the Knight Captain and possibly gain an invitation into Elaine’s Knights. However, not everyone wants to impress the spymaster; in fact, someone wants him dead.

The heroes overhear an evil plan to assassinate Sir Bors with a musket during the target shooting finals so that his death will be blamed on a stray bullet. Who is behind this terrible plot? Could the Lord of the area be worried that Sir Bors has come to investigate him? Is the Knight Commander making a public appearance to flush out an old adversary? Is it perhaps

an old adversary seeking revenge? Once they are aware of the danger, the heroes will have great difficulty getting to Sir Bors to warn him unless they are of a high enough station to enter the royal pavilion and grandstand.

Worse yet, how to find the assassin? From what the heroes can see, everyone is wearing a weapon!

As an alternative to the assassination plot, perhaps a friendly rivalry turns bad. The heroes get into an argument with a group of Elaine’s Knights. The ale is flowing as freely as the bravado, and the heroes call a Knight’s skill into question. As it is all in jest no real offense is taken (hopefully), but both parties vow to prove their abilities on the field the next day. During the combat, one of the Knights sustains a minor cut but later that evening, keels over in a dead faint. An investigation reveals poison on the hero’s blade. Where did it come from, and how can the heroes convince the Knights it is not their fault? The fallen Knight is very ill, and if he dies the other Knights will avenge their brother. Can the hero prove his innocence in time? Who is the real villain here?

Ussura: The Heart of Matushka

The Explorer’s Society has hired the heroes to look after a warehouse that contains several items shipped from Ussura. The items are mostly mundane and unimpressive but the cautious Explorers always expect trouble. During the night the warehouse is attacked and in the scuffle, the heroes find themselves helpless to stop the removal of one of the crates. (Perhaps they are held at bay by a superior force, or perhaps gassed into unconsciousness before the attack.)

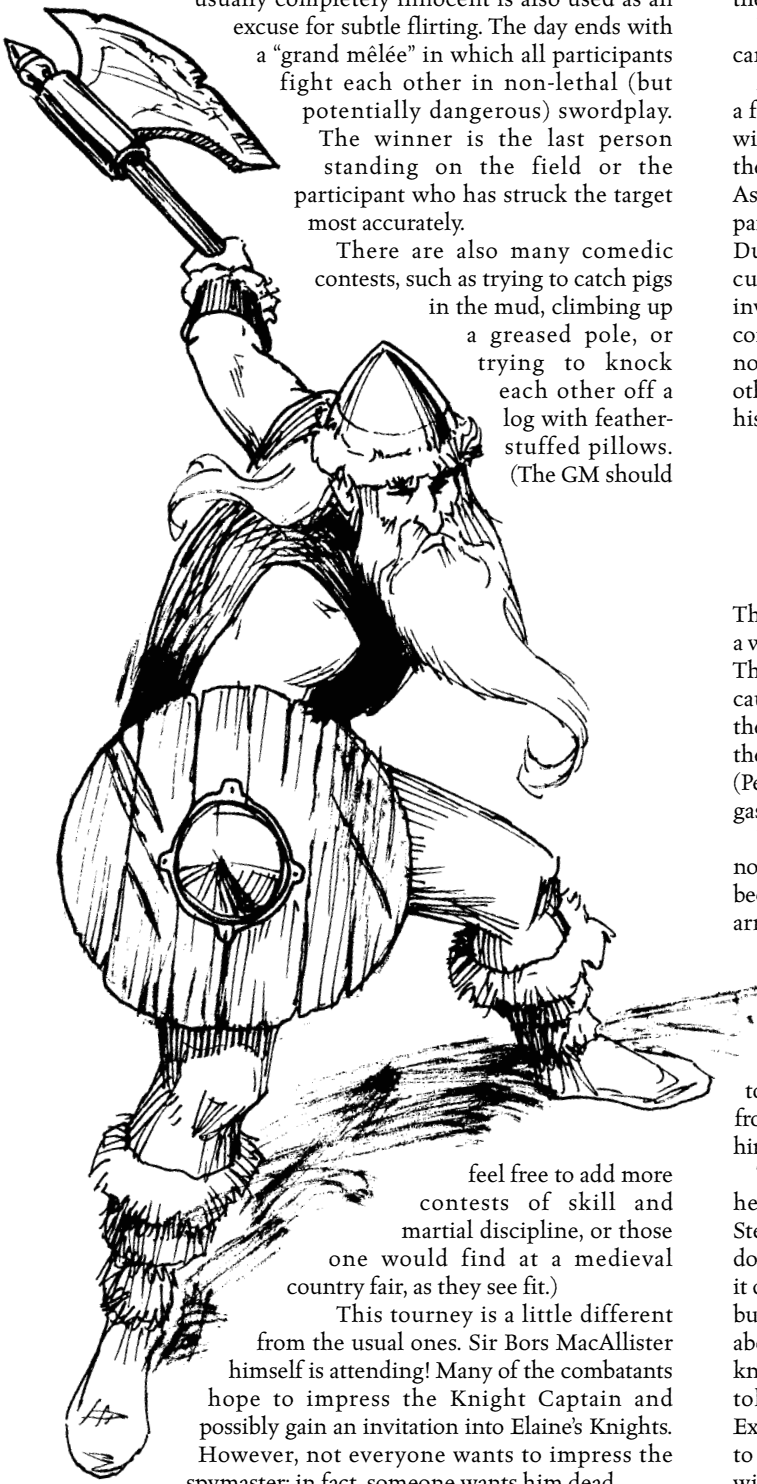
When the Explorers arrive to investigate, they discover that nothing is gone. No crate on their manifest was stolen. Things become a little more confusing when a group of Ussuran Stelets arrive and demand the return of “The Heart of Matushka.”

Apparently this sacred item was stolen from Ussura and the Stelets have traced it to an Explorer’s ship, the same one that delivered the other items to the warehouse.

It seems the thieves hid their booty among the cargo to ensure safe passage, and their partners removed the item from the warehouse. They had not bargained on the Explorers hiring guards.

The box contains the Heart of Matushka, a vaguely heart-shaped relic made from a strange silver metal that Stelets have guarded for several years. It seems that Matushka does not want it to fall into anyone’s hands but does not want it destroyed either. The object is apparently Synchronicity in origin, but has little to do with Matushka herself; the name has come about because of her interest in the relic. The Stelets do not know much about what it does nor do they care. If Matushka told them to guard it, that is good enough for them. The Explorers have heard of it, however. (The GM is encouraged to imbue the item with whatever Synchronicity power he or she wishes, or may wish to keep such information secret; the fact that the Explorers want the item might be enough to motivate a search for it.)

Who is responsible for stealing the item? Whoever it is, do they know how to work it? The Stelets want it back, the Explorers want to keep it. Talk about getting stuck between a rock and a hard place!



The Eisenfürst Bride: An Iron Guard Campaign

Act II: Das Dating Game

For a kingdom to survive, the leader must produce an heir to receive the family name and titles and selecting a spouse for such a task is never easy. The personal guard of an Iron Prince is expected to enforce the will of their leader, keep the peace in the province, and sacrifice themselves if necessary. Selecting a spouse for their leader is not part of their duties – unless they are the Iron Guard of Fauner Pösen, a woman who has no time for silly things as love and courtship.

This campaign is meant to be somewhat light-hearted but with a dramatic undertone. Fauner is a difficult woman and the staunch Iron Guards should rightfully feel out of place trying to judge who is the best match for their boss. Of course, the GM can keep make the task more amenable by throwing a few assassination attempts, duels of honor, or possibly a kidnapping or two. While Fauner may be no fool for love, the heroes very well may be.

Act I: A Close Call with a Cannonball

Fauner often spends time at the Gelingen Academy near the capital city of Insel. The heroes accompany her as she rides out to witness a large-scale exercise complete with live cannon and full armor. This is where the heroes should feel at home. Allow them a bit to talk with the students; perhaps one of the students is a sibling of one of them or perhaps they observe a brash student who deserves a lesson in humility. Swordsmen should be tapped to show off a few tricks of the trade.

Fauner stays under the watchful eyes of her guards. One of the heroes notices a cannon near the area where Fauner is standing. While this is not unusual, the fuse on this one is lit and the chains that secure the weapon to the ground are not in place. Worse, the cannon has been over-packed with gunpowder and set up to wipe out the Eisenfürst and anyone around her (like her loyal guard!) After a few tense moments, the heroes manage to defuse the situation and remove their lady from danger. As the dust settles, a pair of hooded riders dashes out from the stables into the woods and the chase is afoot. One of the riders screams something in High Eisen, which translates to “Death to the Tyrant!”

If the heroes catch the riders, they will have to decide whether to render justice right there or drag the traitors back for questioning. If the riders are imprisoned, one of them dies mysteriously reducing the number of people who can be “encouraged” to talk about their leader.

Even the normally hardened Fauner has been slightly rattled by this attempt on her life. The next morning, she assembles her personal guard and informs them of her plan: to insure the line continues directly from her, she will marry. She has been wooed before, but now she is seriously considering a wedding. With her many responsibilities, she does not have time (or patience) to decide which of her suitors will make the cut, so she has selected a special “panel of judges” from among her guard... who just happen to be the heroes!

Six suitors and their dossiers are provided below. Note: one of the suitors is connected with the conspirators who tried to kill Fauner in the Act I. Rather than having an errant player’s glance ruin the fun of rooting out the bad guy, each suitor has a motivation and/or connection to the conspirators. Of course, the truly devious GM will weave more than one of these into villains or possibly even not select one until the heroes have come to a conclusion and then reveal the truth.

Lord Donal O’Toole

“I see the strength of Milady in her people, and of the people in her.”

- Fair-haired and handsome, Donal is the middle child of the deposed O’Toole family. He possesses a good sense of humor but some days find him wrapped in a melancholy that is a prelude to an explosive temper. He hopes a marriage will allow his family to use Pösen as a staging ground for their attempt to reclaim their royal status.
- Donal gets along with people famously and would be embraced by Fauner’s subjects. His warm laughter would do much to ease the tension of Fauner’s grip on her kingdom. However, on his off days, Donal could quite easily fall into a destructive rage that could cause him to do something that would bring shame – or even harm – to his wife.
- Donal is considered a bit of a ne’er-do-well by his family and has traveled to Eisen to show them that he really does have a head for politics. Shortly after he arrived, the conspirators approached him with their plan to get close to the Eisenfürst and kill her. Promises of money and political support for his agenda back home sealed the deal. The conspirators agreed to wait until after the wedding to strike again; in the meantime the heroes might be able to find the connection between the traitors and the O’Tooles.

Freiherr (Baron) Enwalt Zeigstumpf

“From pure Eisen blood we will build a kingdom that will make our enemies afraid to even tremble.”

- Baron Zeigstumpf is a gruff career soldier who runs a minor academy out of his manor house. A well-respected minor noble from Heilgrund’s lands, he is a small athletic man. He wears his sword wherever he is and is often seen holding his dracheneisen helm. He is shorter than Fauner but does not see that as a deterrent to their marriage.
- An alliance with another Iron Prince could bode well for Fauner’s later attempts to claim the title of Emperor. Zeigstumpf and Fauner have a lot in common. They both have a love of battle, a military outlook on the administration of lands, and no time for the niceties of court. Zeigstumpf is rather short and makes a very comical picture when standing next to Fauner. He also believes that her welfare falls under his providence and orders the Iron Guards around like he is already in command.
- Ziegstumpf’s treachery is at the behest of the mad Stefan Heilgrund. The major component in his next leap to dark power is the ritual sacrifice of an Eisen ruler and a powerful one like Fauner could raise his Bargains to heights untold – not to mention the sweet revenge of his unrequited love.

Hendryk Brandt

“Can you look at the snow-covered morning and tell me you do not see beauty?”

- A dark-haired minor noble with a sweet and affable charm, Hendryk Brandt seems to be the one man with as much tenacity as Pösen herself. He has pursued his ladylove for many years and while she has torn up his love letters, broken his bones, and bruised his ego, he knows in the end it will be worth it.
- Of all the suitors presented here, Brandt is the only one that truly loves Fauner for herself. While he knows that is not much to offer his high-ranking lady, he has tried to broker a better station for himself to make himself more desirable to her. In this pursuit, he has managed to get the backing of several Vendel merchants and hopes it will be enough for Fauner to consider his suit seriously, although in reality, it is a mere pittance. If Fauner loved anything other than Pösen, she would have married Brandt years ago.
- The Vendel have manipulated this poor fool for love into being their puppet. Their budding syndicate will work on “eliminating” other suitors. While Brandt proclaims innocence, Fauner will never see him again if she finds out about this connection.

Don Adriano Ortiz

“The fire that burns in her eyes can only be fanned with hot Castillian blood.”

- Adriano is a roving Don displaced by the war with Castille. His lands are decimated, so he understands all too well the sorrow of war. He is a handsome man with a few flecks of grey in his beard. A student of many of the Castillian Swordsman schools, he has been known to fight using the Aldana, Gallegos, Soldano, and Torres styles. He is very proud of his skill with a blade. His quick temper provides ample opportunity to practice the skill.
- Ortiz is proud, passionate, and loud. He is not afraid of Fauner’s beauty or her icy wit. The only thing more exciting to him that outmaneuvering her in a duel of words is facing her in a duel of blades. He would not be happy to fade into the background. He knows a woman of her strength needs an equally passionate man and not a foppish lap dog.
- Fauner is still stinging from her attempted annexation of Freiburg last year. The City of No Questions has become a haven for the scientists and heretics the Inquisition hunts. Ortiz is an agent of the Inquisition. If he were to become her husband, he might provide her with support to attempt her conquest again and the dreaded Inquisition would finally have a foothold in Eisen.

Baron Laurentius de Mannville

“What good is conquest if there are no people to triumphantly return?”

- Baron de Mannville is one of the disposed nobility who made it out of Montaigne before losing his head to Le Coiffeur. A career politician, he puts on a splendid and flattering public face but in private moments, he can be quite a bitter

manipulator and cynic. There are some whispers of problems with drink and women, and intermittent periods of ill health, but that could describe half the nobles in Théah.

- Even as minor as his barony was under l’Empereur, de Mannville was very wealthy. His money could go far to solve the strain Fauner’s army has put on her finances. He would also do well as a political advisor and diplomat who could soften the blunt hand of rule she possesses. While she may have the military expertise to reunite Eisen under her iron fist, she would not have the diplomatic skills to keep the other Princes from ousting her shortly after the war was over.
- Laurentius is actually a spy for the Council of Eight. They know Fauner is a warmonger and would encourage her to attack Wische to flush out the loyalist exiles.

Luciano Calezzi

“I do not woo, ma bella donna. Wooing is for lovers. We, you and I, are people free of such nonsense.”

- Luciano is a wealthy Vodacce merchant who has been a bachelor for a long time. His appearance will not set a woman’s heart on fire but his clothes are exquisitely tailored and he spares no extravagance when wooing a lady. He prefers to send gifts than woo with words but when he talks about his home in beautiful Mantua, he becomes incredibly eloquent. It sounds as though the poor man has not been home in a very long time.
- Calezzi is very wealthy, although not as well off as Baron Laurentius. He will not give up his merchant fleet for anything, preferring to leave the rulership of Pösen to his intended bride. Besides, Calezzi is deeply in love with his courtesan, Melisande. While this may not faze Fauner, Melisande may try to manipulate the situation..
- Calezzi is really Luciano Caligari, one of the surviving cousins of “Grandpapa” Vincenzo. The Caligari know Fauner wants to keep control of her lands without interference. The Caligaris will not interfere exactly – they just want to use Pösen as a foundation for the rebuilding of their house and storing Syrneth artifacts away from the prying eyes of rivals, secret societies, and the Inquisition.

Act III: The Iron Lady

Once the suitors have been introduced, it is time for the real fun to begin. While Fauner understands the need for an heir, she is not about to get wrapped up in the nuances of courtly love or become all starry-eyed because she gets rare flowers or jewels delivered to her chambers. She must find someone worthy of her lovely mailed hand which is why she has asked her loyal guardsmen to test her suitors. Such tests may include:

- Send the suitors into the wilderness to survive on their own for a week. (Of course, the conspirators could use this time to eliminate one of the competitors to its candidate.) This tasks relies on a combination of role-playing and standard survival and wilderness abilities in either system.

- The Iron Guard leads a hunting trip into the edge of the Schwartzwalden. The suitor must bring back a creature of unusual origin to decorate Fauner's hall.
- Line up the suitors on the training grounds and have them walk the gauntlet during which each hero gives the suitor a solid hit with the panzerhand. The suitor who makes it farthest along the line without being knocked out or making a noise wins the contest. Each time the suitor is struck, he must make a Resolve check (7th Sea™ TN (10 + 10 for every Dramatic Wound he has received) or Fortitude save (d20™) with a DC equal to 10 + the damage received from the blow. Failure indicates that the suitor has cried out, whimpered, or made some other noise and is disqualified from this competition.
- A drinking contest in which the suitors must outlast the Iron Guards or lose. For 7th Sea™, use the Inebriation Rules (see below). For d20™, each contestant must make a Fortitude save after every drink (DC of 10 + 5 for each drink taken since the contest began.) The first contestant to fail passes out.
- Each Guard challenges a suitor to a duel (challenger's choice of weapons) to first blood.
- The suitors must compete against the heroes in a strategy game (possibly ajedrez or some game of the GM's devising).
- Each player writes a diplomacy question. Each suitor selects a hero who poses the question and the other heroes grade the suitor on his response.
- Each suitor must write a poem or compose a song and perform it for Fauner (the GM) who will determine the winner.

The suitors will of course use whatever means they have to convince the guards they are the best man for the job. Bribery, threats, promises of power, heart-felt declarations of love, and possibly even begging will ring in the heroes' ears in between the trials. In addition, the conspirators will do their best to narrow the field and perhaps run afoul of the Guards in the process.

Inebriation Rules (7th Sea™)

Make a Brawn test against a TN of 10 × the number of drinks consumed during the Scene. For every failure, consult the chart below. Note: failures are cumulative.

- 1: Slight speech impediment.
- 2: -1 unkept die to rolls until the end of the Scene.
- 3: -2 unkept dice to all rolls; drops to -1 in the next Scene.
- 4+: Knocked out for the remainder of the Scene. If you awaken, you are at -3 unkept dice to all rolls; the number goes down by 1 every Scene until you are back at 0.

Able Drinkers may ignore these rules.

Act IV: Attack Now or Forever Hold Thy Peace

Once the suitor has been chosen, the wedding plans move apace. While Fauner is not one for foppery, the wedding of an Eisenfürst is still a major political event. Nobles from many nations and perhaps even a few of her fellow princes come to her castle to see the spectacle. The closer it gets to the actual ceremony, the more irritable Fauner gets. She wants to wear her armor instead of a dress. She does not like the menu. She hates the design for the cake. The seating arrangement for the wedding banquet is a political nightmare. (The GM should provide as many pre-wedding disasters as the group can handle.)

The wedding itself is held with the usual pomp and circumstance. As the priest says those eternal words "Speak now or forever hold thy peace," everyone looks around nervously. The air is very still except for the sound of very nervous people trying not to breathe too loudly.

The air is split by the sound of cannon fire! The castle is under attack!

General Rahn, known as *die Schwartzritter* or Black Knight received an invitation but rather than attending such a stupid event, he knew it would be the one time in his life he could catch Fauner Pösen quite literally with her guard down. Thirsting for a *königreich* of his own, he has gathered a troop of soldiers and mercenaries to take into the castle and topple Fauner from her throne. He plans to kill those whose ransom would not be worth his effort and hold the rest – including the Eisenfürst – for some serious amounts of guilders.

Most of the scenario to this point have been light-hearted but this is the chance to kick up the action and drama. *Die Schwartzritter* knows this may be his only chance to unseat Fauner and take her kingdom. The battle is joined — walls scaled, duels on the battlements, cannon fire, and swordplay. It is up to the heroes to rally the full Guard and the suitors to drive off the black-armored warlord and keep Fauner's wedding feast from furnishing her funeral table.

Act V: From Death Comes Life

Even if General Rahn is defeated, it has come with a terrible cost. One of Fauner's suitors has died on the walls. Was it during battle or at the hands of the conspirators who might have taken advantage of the chaos to work their own agenda? Either way, the heroes may be deputized to investigate the situation and exact retribution. This can be played as a series of smaller battles as the Iron Guards chase Rahn's raiders throughout Eisen or it could become the source of a new campaign as the heroes pursue the conspirators throughout Théah to carry out their leader's orders.

If General Rahn was merely routed, he will become a persistent and annoying enemy who is always readying a counterattack or, even worse, allied with the conspirators (or other Eisenfürsts) who are trying to murder Fauner.

For a dash of dangerous romance, perhaps Fauner has developed feelings for one of the Guards (heroes) who have served her so well. A dalliance does not require her to share her kingdom.

It is quite possible that the Eisenfürst of Pösen may decide that she is never going to marry; on the other hand, she may decide that she wishes to marry after all. Although Fauner is

not married in the official plot, there is no reason why the GM should deprive his or her players if they wish to alter the story to suit their game.

The Web of Flies

This sample setting is designed as a starting point for your own campaign. Rather than provide adventures, this setting is designed to work as a story arc to run as your campaign progresses. If you are short on ideas, you should find some of the adventure hooks here useful. The campaign also makes use of two new NPCs, Nyle Piram and Jennifer Strand, so the GM should read their secrets below before continuing with this campaign seed.

The heroes should be members of the Knights of Elaine, or at least looking to join. If they are already members then getting involved in the dark manipulations of the villains is their sworn duty. However, the GM may wish to play through the heroes' attempts to prove themselves and be accepted into the Knights in which case, this adventure should grant them the renown they would need to impress Elaine and Sir Bors. Either way, the heroes should be the sort who are ready to help other without hesitation and defend Avalon with everything they have. If they would rather be in the inn with a mug of ale instead of helping the helpless, this adventure may not be for them. (If that is the case you should be asking yourself why they are calling themselves the heroes of your campaign!)

As members, or even prospective members of the Knights, the heroes should all be Avalon. However, as long as there are enough Avalon in the group, a few extra nationalities should be able to join in and help. However, these foreign heroes will have to prove that they are trustworthy and at least in the beginning may not be privy to any meetings and secrets of the Knights.

Note: if your campaign is not run in Théah, you should still find this setting very useful. It can be placed in any land that has dark magic trying to hide from honor and justice. You can use any knightly order whose agenda requires them to defend the weak and uphold the law.

The adventures should begin innocently enough. The heroes work in Avalon or with the Knights of Elaine to keep the peace. There are plenty of magical and mundane evils lurking in the Glamour Isles to keep them busy. Mostly they are minor sprites and ruffians causing trouble, and are not too difficult to control. However, as time goes on, the heroes begin to notice something strange. The villains seem to know a little too much about the comings and going in Avalon. Ruffians and cutpurses seem to know exactly where to be to get the best pickings.

Even more disturbing, many of these rogues also seem to have help getting acquitted of their crimes. Those who are let off seem to know who the heroes are, even if they have never met. Some even seem to know the names of the heroes' friends and lovers. A few have information that the character thought no one else knew. The villains delight in subtly taunting the heroes with this information right after they are released. This is very frustrating because heroes cannot arrest and beat a confession out of them. That is not how things work in Avalon where a free man is a free man. Heroes try to watch these smiling criminals, but they will learn nothing. The rogue in question maintains clean hands and closed mouths.

Just when the heroes were beginning to doubt their instincts and give up their vigil, they learn a crucial piece of information.

The heroes have discovered (or stumbled on) a secret group known as "The Order of Flies," led by Nyle, the son of King Piram of Breg. Not content with his father's failed attempts to oust Queen Elaine, Nyle has made a deal with the Unseelie. They provide support for his spy and assassination network, as well as granting him a few Unseelie "boons" in exchange for the promise of sanctuary in Breg once Nyle is king. King Piram, tangled up in his own plots, knows nothing about his son's activities.

The Order of Flies is a vast network of spies, which includes humans and Unseelie. Most of the members are guttersnipes, informants, and rumormongers. Only those at the very center know the full story. The Order seeks information it can use to blackmail and corrupt as much of Elaine's court as possible. As the members are everywhere, just about any interesting tidbit reaches Nyle's ears. The essence of the Order is a quiet corruption that they hope will one day leave Elaine friendless and alone. Then she can be removed and destroyed.

At the moment the Order is still trying to put down roots in every level of Avalon society so only a few nobles and courtiers are in its power. What makes the Order dangerous is that it is huge. There are so many minor members that finding them all would be nigh unto impossible. The network is vast because it consists of quantity over quality. Nyle's spies are not always very good, but there are a great many of them. They are as plentiful as flies and just as annoying and difficult to stamp out. They know so little that they are unable to do much to lead the heroes to the real bad guys which is another reason why many of the clues the heroes get may lead back to King Piram rather than Nyle.

There is help to be found, however, in the form of an old woman named Jennifer Strand. She has already been hurt by the Order of Flies and seeks to destroy it. She can tell the heroes much about her suspicions, and perhaps enlist them to help her in her fight. The investigation may lead the heroes to King Piram; ironically the archenemy of Elaine may become a valuable ally when he discovers plots happening in his name. He may also need the heroes' help to deal with his son without causing scandal or ruining his own plans.

Should the heroes discover Nyle's involvement, they had best be warned before taking him on. He has support from secret Unseelie masters who want to see Avalon in Glamour-laden anarchy. If the heroes can help Jennifer, Nyle will lose his support. His gift was part of the deal he made, and the Unseelie will expect him to return or replace it if they are to continue aiding him.

Even unmasked Nyle is still part of a vast network, and will work in secret to reclaim his power and Unseelie aid. He is a vengeful man and anyone who thwarts his plans goes to the top of his dark agenda. Powerful heroes may decide that vanquishing Nyle is not enough; the brave (or foolish) may wish to take the battle to his secret masters in the heart of Unseelie Bryn Bresail.

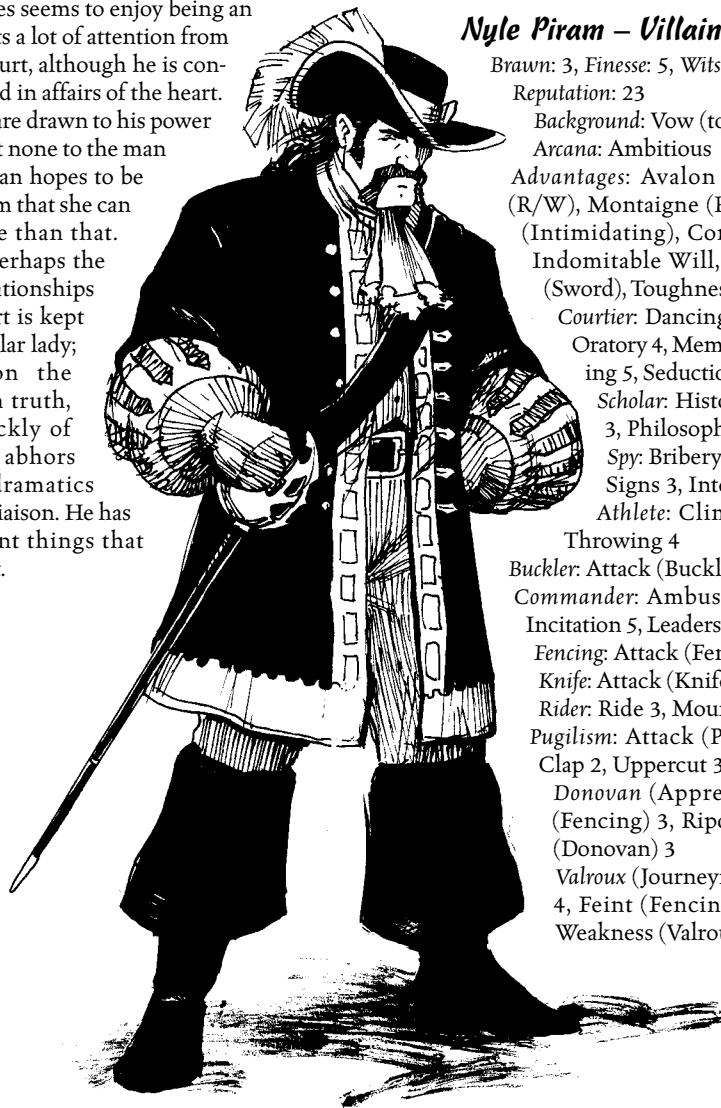
Nyle Piram, Master of the Order of Flies

Nyle was born to greatness. His father, the King of Breg, would be King of Avalon one day, and Nyle would rule after him. King Piram made sure his son had every opportunity to learn and improve himself; if he were going to all the trouble to take it, he wanted to be sure his dynasty could keep it.

Like his father, Nyle is a tall and dashing figure. He is strong and fit, although not especially brawny. His grace and dexterity do him equal credit on the dance floor and in swordplay. He sports a dark beard, but even without it his resemblance to his father would be obvious. He tends to favor dark clothing, always with a flash of color showing from underneath a doublet or coat. All of his clothes are made of rich fabrics that display his wealth. He sets fashion trends rather than following him. Needless to say, women (both human and Fae) find him fascinating.

Despite his intellect and exquisitely noble manners, Nyle has not turned out the way his father wanted. He reminds his father of himself and not in a good way. Nyle is not content to listen to his father's wisdom or blindly follow his orders. After several furious rows between the two, Nyle left his father's castle to reside in Carleon where he is a powerful figure at court, looking to create his own legacy in service to Elaine.

He evinces absolutely no interest in joining the stiff-necked Knights, but he does seem to enjoy being an advisor. He also gets a lot of attention from the ladies of the court, although he is constantly disappointed in affairs of the heart. Too many women are drawn to his power and good looks, but none to the man inside. Every woman hopes to be the one to show him that she can love him for more than that. Some wonder if perhaps the real reason his relationships fail is that his heart is kept for another particular lady; one who sits on the Avalon throne. In truth, he tires very quickly of most women and abhors their whining dramatics when he ends the liaison. He has far more important things that truly own his heart.



Nyle Piram (a20™)

Noble 6/ Donovan Swordsman 1/Valroux Swordsman 3: CR 10; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d8+21+3d10+9; hp 90; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex); Atks: Rapier +10/+5 me (1d6+4) **or** main gauche +10/+5 me(1d4+4) **or** Rapier +8/+3 me(1d6+4) and main gauche +8 me(1d4+3); SA Buckler Master, Taunt; SQ Commanding Presence +2, Focused Training (Valroux), Friends in High Places, Seduction; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18; AL NE; Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +10, Climb +3, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +10, Heal +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (Politics) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Profession (Spy) +6, Ride +6, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]), Spot +6, Swim +4, Tumble +6, Use Rope +6; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light or no armor with a small blade in the off hand), Detect Lie, Expertise (only with a fencing blade in the primary hand and small blade in the off hand), Leadership, Parry, Power Attack (only with a fencing blade in the primary hand and small blade in the off hand), Riposte, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light or no armor with a small blade in the off hand), Weapon Focus (main gauche), Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Focus (Small Sword), Weapon Specialization (Main Gauche), Weapon Specialization (rapier), Weapon Specialization (Small Sword).

Nyle Piram – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 5, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 4, **Panache:** 4
Reputation: 23

Background: Vow (to destroy Elaine) 2

Arcana: Ambitious

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Appearance (Intimidating), Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty, Indomitable Will, Noble, Sidhe Ally, Sidhe Weapon (Sword), Toughness

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Gossip 3, Oratory 4, Memorizing 4, Mooch 4, Politics 3, Scheming 5, Seduction 5, Sincerity 4

Scholar: History 2, Law 3, Mathematics 1, Occult 3, Philosophy 1, Research 1

Spy: Bribery 4, Conceal 3, Cryptography 4, Hand Signs 3, Interrogation 4, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3
Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3,

Throwing 4

Buckler: Attack (Buckler) 2, Parry (Buckler) 3

Commander: Ambush 3, Cartography 1, Diplomacy 4, Incitation 5, Leadership 3, Logistics 1, Strategy 4, Tactics 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 4

Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 2

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 4, Jab 2, Ear Clap 2, Uppercut 3

Donovan (Apprentice): Bind (Buckler) 2, Disarm (Fencing) 3, Riposte (Fencing) 3, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 3

Valroux (Journeyman) Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4

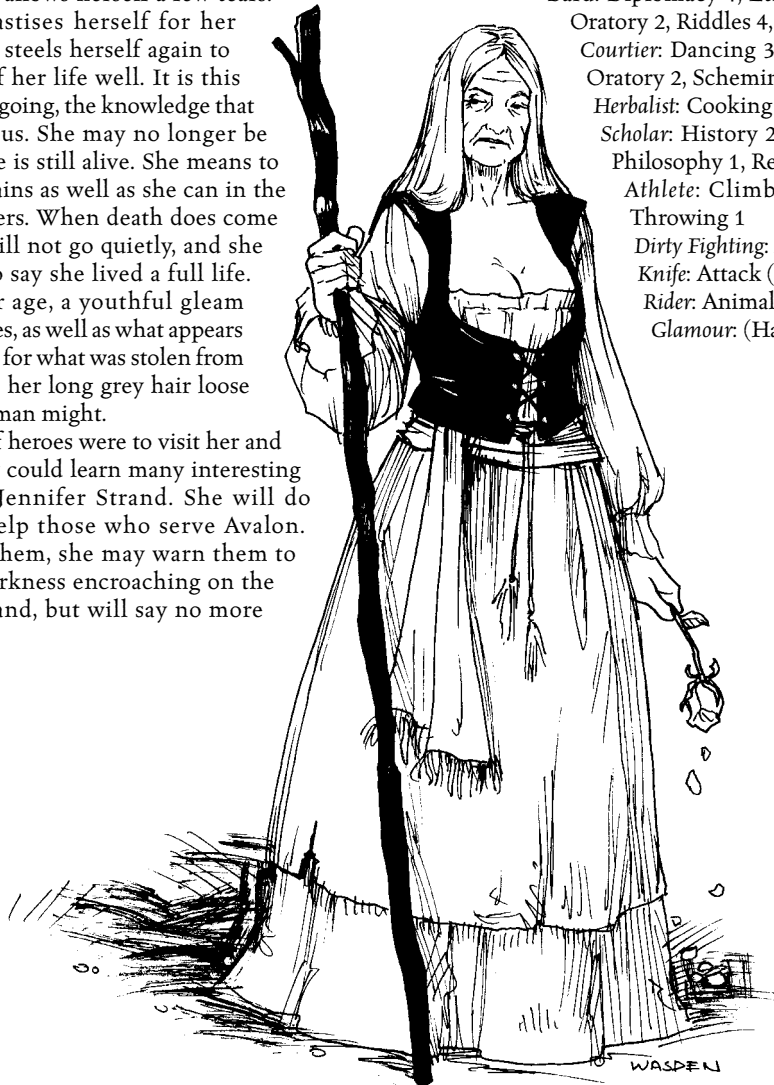
Jennifer Strand, Friend, Confidante and Adviser; Adversary of the Order of Flies

Jennifer appeared in a village on the outskirts of Carleon a little over a year ago. She is a kindly old lady who enjoys the company of others and a really good gossip. There is a touch of Glamour about her, and she earns her keep trying to heal the nearby villagers of their various common ailments, in return for which they bring her food and keep her company. Jennifer says nothing about where she came from, so many believe she may have forgotten in her dotage. She is a staunch supporter of Queen Elaine, and is also very knowledgeable about the Sidhe.

Jennifer is a very old woman. She used to be quite beautiful and a hint of her past is still evident in her kindly features. She has not forgotten her youth and dresses rather non-conservatively for an old lady. She longs for the days she could dance and run. Sometimes she forgets her age for a moment and makes comments others find odd. She might point out how much she fancies a good-looking young man, or becomes as excited about clothes and fashion as any young girl. It is almost as if the days of her youth are not just a fond memory but have been stolen from her. When no one can see, she often allows herself a few tears. Then she chastises herself for her weakness and steels herself again to use the rest of her life well. It is this that keeps her going, the knowledge that time is precious. She may no longer be young, but she is still alive. She means to use what remains as well as she can in the service of others. When death does come for her, she will not go quietly, and she will be able to say she lived a full life.

Despite her age, a youthful gleam escapes her eyes, as well as what appears to be a longing for what was stolen from her. She wears her long grey hair loose as a young woman might.

If a group of heroes were to visit her and be polite, they could learn many interesting things from Jennifer Strand. She will do her best to help those who serve Avalon. If she trusts them, she may warn them to beware the darkness encroaching on the heart of the land, but will say no more on the subject.



Jennifer Strand (A20™)

Courtier 3/Glamour Mage 4: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+4d10; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Dagger +2 me(1d4-2); SA Known Legends 2 (Iron Meg, Thomas), Spells; SQ Glamour Check +2, Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 6, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14; AL NG; Skills: Alchemy +2, Bluff +8, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +12, Heal +7, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Nobility) +6, Knowledge (History) +6, Knowledge (Sidhe) +12, Search +4, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +8; Feats: Alertness, Altruistic, Iron Will, Glamour Sorcery (Half Blooded), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

Spells (2/3/1): 0 level: *dancing lights, dazzle, ghost sound*; 1st level: *charm person, sleep*; 2nd level: *suggestion*.

Jennifer Strand – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 1, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2

Reputation: 20

Background: Vendetta 1

Arcana: Altruistic

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Debater, Appearance (Above Average), Eagle Eyes, Sensitive Bones, Glamour Sorcery (Half Blooded)

Bard: Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 3, Herb Lore 3, History 2, Oratory 2, Riddles 4, Sidhe Lore 3, Singing 2

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Gossip 4, Oratory 2, Scheming 1, Sincerity 1

Herbalist: Cooking 3, Diagnosis 1, First Aid 2, Flora 3

Scholar: History 2, Law 1, Mathematics 1, Occult 3, Philosophy 1, Research 3

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Rider: Animal Training 2, Ride 3

Glamour: (Half Blooded) Iron Meg 3, Thomas 3

Other NPCs

Simon Roublard

In every man's life there comes a moment when he must decide the course for the rest of his life. For Simon Roublard, that moment came when he stared into a woman's eyes and pledged himself to her for all time. The woman was Dominique du Montaigne and this happened in the early days of the Montaigne Revolution.

Prior to that, Roublard had been a Montaigne Musketeer, one of the most highly decorated Lieutenants and a possible candidate for the Lightning Guard. Despite his noble birth, even the peasants of the land respected and admired him for his honest testimony in court. Few Musketeers would speak out against noblemen for fear of destroying their career without benefit, but he possessed that courage and because of his reputation he was able to do so with impunity.

He first came to attention to Montaigne as a young Musketeer when he accused a nobleman of his wife's murder. The case was almost thrown out of court until Roublard pointed out that the nobleman and the murderer were both left-handed, had identical shoe prints, and both chewed a rare spice. Despite this information, it was only when Roublard pointed out that the victim had just bathed and yet had blood beneath her fingernails that the case was decided. At his prompting, the widower removed his lace fichu and revealed deep scratches upon his neck. The nobleman was found guilty of his wife's murder and punished accordingly. Roublard's reputation for honesty and perceptiveness was established.

In truth, few understand how perceptive Roublard really is. His eyesight is extremely keen, he can hear the faintest whisper, discern dozens of scents and remember everything he has ever observed. Even more impressive is that he has trained himself to understand hundreds of professions and crafts. While he is not skilled in each of them himself, he does possess extensive knowledge. This allows him to tell at a mere glance what a man does for a living as well as a plethora of details about his personal life and habits. When visiting a crime scene, he often can deduce from a handful of clues who is responsible and the means they employed.

His knowledge of political scheming and manipulation is just as extensive. While he himself had little interest in changing the course of Montaigne, he was adept at seeing through deceptions and correlating seemingly unrelated events together to identify complex schemes. While he thwarted the plans of many villains, his role in these matters remained unknown to more than a few members of the Musketeers, due to the politically sensitive nature of his efforts.

He served as a Musketeer with distinction and honor for years until the Montaigne Revolution. At the time, Roublard was assigned to the area around his home in Arrent, but when he heard of the chaos erupting in Charouse, he immediately journeyed there. He found the situation far worse than he'd ever imagined. Mobs moved at will through the capital burning and pillaging. While the Musketeers attempted to rescue individuals, they were powerless to stop the Revolutionaries and many spoke of working with them.

As Roublard traveled home, he witnessed a burst of golden light from within a coach abandoned beside the road. When he investigated it further, he discovered the beautiful

Dominique du Montaigne within it. Bandits had attacked her coach and she used Porté to escape, but found that the capital held no safety for her. Returning to the coach several hours later, she found herself without money, weaponry, or servants. Roublard could not abandon the defenseless noblewoman and took her to his home in Arrent.

Over the next few days, he envisioned a new Montaigne, one in which the nobility would rule benevolently over the peasants. When he spoke to her of his vision, she became convinced that he meant to use her as a figurehead for his own control of the throne and before he could explain himself, she fled using her Porté sorcery. However, instead of a bleeding rip in reality, she disappeared within golden burst of light. Roublard's senses told him that she was a blessed angel sent from Theus and he vowed at that moment to find her and return her to her rightful place upon the throne of Montaigne.

The next day, he sent word to other Montaigne Musketeers who refused to bow to the Revolution and summoned them to his home. He formed them into a new order of Musketeers dedicated to returning Montaigne to its glory. Garbed in unadorned tabards of black since he did not know what emblem would most please Dominique, they became Les Tabards Noirs (the Black Tabards) and appointed Roublard their Capitaine-Général.

While he is renowned for his impartiality and honesty, the blood and violence he has seen recently have changed Roublard. He now views the peasants as curs who wait hungrily to drag down their superiors. Without a firm hand to control them, they would run wild and destroy everything good and decent. He always sides with nobles now, not because they are innocent, but simply because the peasants cannot be allowed any further victories.

Simon Roublard is not a handsome man. His nose is far too prominent and his eyes are far too piercing, but there is an intensity about him that draws men into obeying him. His voice is a low growl that raises to sonorous tones when he seeks to inspire others. When he is in the middle of an investigation, he focuses on the facts of the case, but he never loses sight of the political implications and realities of the world.

Simon Roublard (d20™)

Montaigne Noble 1/Musketeer 6/Valroux 5: CR 12; SZ M; HD 1d8+2+11d10+22; hp 95; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +7 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: +14/+9/+4 rapier me(1d6+4) **or** +12/+7/+2 rapier me (1d6+4) and +12 main gauche me(1d4+3) **or** +14 pistol ranged (1d10); SA Raise the Stakes SQ Commanding Presence +1, Elegant Duelist, Focused Training, Friends in High Places, Raise the Stakes, Off Handed Fighting, Nimble, Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 18; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +10, Climb +4, Diplomacy +14, Forgery +7, Gather Information +12, Heal +7, Intimidate +10, Jump +5, Knowledge (Crime) +17, Knowledge (Land of Montaigne) +15, Listen +15, Ride +6, Search +20, Speak Languages (Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +18, Sense Motive +18, Tumble +7. Feats: Alertness, Ambidexterity,* Careful, Defender of the Crown, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise,** Panache, Power Attack,** Road Scholar, Sword of the Crown, Tagging, Unarmed Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Focus (Main Gauche), Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Main Gauche), Weapon Specialization (Rapier).

- * Only with a small blade in the off hand.
- ** Only when fighting with a fencing blade in the primary hand and a small blade in the off hand.
- *** Only with rapier.

Simon Roublard – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 5, **Wits:** 6, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 4
Reputation: –40
Background: Hunted 2 (Musketeers), Moment of Awe 2 (Dominique du Montaigne)
Arcana: Careful
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W); Academy, Citation, Commission (General), Keen Senses, Legendary Trait (Wits), Membership (Black Tabards), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble, Specialist (Cold Read 5)
Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Lip Reading 2, Oratory 4, Politics 2, Scheming 4, Seduction 2, Sincerity 4
Doctor: Diagnosis 4, Examiner 4, First Aid 2
Scholar: History 2, Law 5, Mathematics 2, Natural Philosophy 2, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Theology 1
Spy: Cryptography 2, Forgery 2, Interrogation 4, Lip Reading 2, Poison 1, Shadowing 1, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1
Streetwise: Socializing 1, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 4
Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Rolling 2, Sprinting 2, Swinging 2, Side Step 2, Throwing 1
Commander: Ambush 3, Cartography 1, Diplomacy 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 2, Logistics 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 2
Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 2
Rider: Mounting 2, Ride 2
Valroux (Journeyman): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4

General Albrecht Rahn,

Die Schwartzritter (The Black Knight)

"If Rahn does not become an Eisenfürst, he will then challenge Legion when an enemy sends him into the Abyss."

—General Eduardo Santiago

One of the unique practices of the Eisen mercenaries is the *heiligen*. A soldier often wears a small necklace made from silver with the sigil of a famous Eisen general. The belief is that the general will intercede with Theus on the soldier's behalf and prevent any misfortune on the battlefield. Legendary warriors like Stefan the Wolf, Reifenhstahl, and Gottschalk are often honored in this way. Ask any soldier who served in the mercenary companies during the Castille-Montaigne war and they will give you the name of the man who is most likely to next be honored in such away. He is called *die Schwartzritter* by his enemies because of the pitch-black armor he wears on the field. His allies and subordinates call him Albrecht Rahn.

Very little is known about Rahn's childhood. If asked directly, all he will say is that he learned to fight at a very early age. He began distinguishing himself in the waning months of the War of the Cross as a brave fighter. His reputation grew

tremendously when he became head of a mercenary company shortly before the war between Castille and Montaigne began. He began to wear his signature armor and sold contracts per battle to distinguish himself. The regular generals scoffed at this practice until they saw his troops in battle.

Rahn has shown that the color of his heart matches the color of his armor. He has marched behind lines of women and children, attacked in the dead of night, and snuck into the enemy general's tent to slit his throat. He would sometimes switch sides between battles if the money was right and would slay the soldiers he was fighting alongside weeks before. Rahn is unfettered by the unwritten rules of civilized war.

Conversely, he has shown himself to be an educated man. His tactics are those of someone that has studied at the great war colleges in Eisen. He was ready to assault *El Morro* when the war ended. After the war, he sold the battle plan to the Castillian and they used it to shore up the weaknesses he had discovered. He is a deadly Eisenfaust fighter that keeps his calm even as explosions and casualties erupt around him. In the rage of battle, Rahn moves through smoothly. Some of his men brag the general has never suffered a wound. He makes no such claims but lets those stories circle through the taverns his soldiers frequent. The more people hear his name, the more they want to take advantage of his services.

Rahn's ambition is turning back home. While his prolific fighting has made him wealthy, many think he is going to make a grab for a seat at the table with the Iron Princes. Men under his banner have been seen snooping around places where new ores of *dracheneisen* are suspected. Finding a new vein is the easiest way to become an Eisenfürst. This is not his only plan. Some close to him have also suggested that he may be looking to eliminate one of the current Princes in a lighting fast attack and seize the lands for himself. The people supporting this theory point out Freiburg or Sieger as the most likely targets. Of course, if he were bold enough to try and take one of these kingdoms for himself, he could just as easily strike at someone in a less turbulent position.

Rahn is a large man with short dark hair and a scar on his face. When asked about the scar, he calls it his "first lesson." His black armor is not made of *dracheneisen* and lately he has just gone about wearing his coal-colored breastplate to identify himself in battle. His panzerhand is also made of the wondrous metal. He is a very serious man but does have a bit of black humor about him. He has a deep, rattling laugh that is usually only heard after he gives the order to charge.

Albrecht Rahn (A20™)

Musketeer 5/Noble 1/Eisenfaust 5/Stiel Commander 1: CR 11; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d10+12+6d8+12; hp 114; Init: +1; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 Breast Plate, +2 Dracheneisen panzerhand); Atk: Longsword +13/+8/+3 me (1d8+2) **or** panzerhand +17/+12/+7 me(1d8+3) **or** Longsword +11/+6/+1 (1d8+2) and panzerhand +15 me (1d6+1) **or** pistol +11 ranged (1d10); SA Elegant Duelist, Retaliatory Blow, Focused Training, Off-Hand Training, The Waiting Game; SQ Better Commander, Commanding Presence, Friends in High Places, Schooled in Command, Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +13; AL LE; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13; Ht: 5'10"; Skills: Intimidate +11, Knowledge (war) +8, Listen +7, Profession

(Soldier) +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +8, Speak Language (Castille, Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne, Théan [alternately, any five languages in your campaign]), Tumble +5, Wilderness Lore +11; Feats: Ambidexterity*, Commanding, Exotic Shield Proficiency (Panzerhand), Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Improved Critical (Panzerhand), Leadership, Orders, Sunder*, Toughness, Two Weapon Fighting, Warrior Born, Weapon Focus (Panzerhand), Weapon Expert (Panzerhand), Weapon Master (Panzerhand).

* Usable only when fighting with a panzerhand as the off-hand weapon

Albrecht Rahn – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 4, *Finesse:* 3, *Wits:* 2, *Resolve:* 4, *Panache:* 3

Reputation: –30

Background: None

Arcana: Commanding

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne, Castille; Commission (Captain), Dracheneisen (Panzerhand), Tough, Man of Will

Athlete: Break Fall 1, Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sidestep 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3

Commander: Ambush 5, Artillery 3, Diplomacy 2, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Logistics 2, Strategy 4, Tactics 4

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 5, Eye Gouge 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 3, Parry (Panzerhand) 2, Uppercut: 3

Eisenfaust (Master): Beat 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5

Steil (Apprentice): Advance 2, Charge 3, Envelop 2, Flank 2, Hold Ground 1, Regroup 2, Scout 4, Set 1, Trim Line 2, Withdraw 2

Françoise de Charente

A pretty enough thing, if a bit vacant, is what they say about her. She was hardly a great beauty when she was just Mademoiselle Françoise de Charente, daughter of a powerful Guildmaster (the Guild of Goldsmiths, no less), although hardly unpleasant to behold. Her round, simple visage really could not be called “moon-faced,” even by her enemies, but her normally expressionless demeanor did tend to suggest something of a waxwork figure, particularly when she was bored. Which she frequently was, being forced to attend dreary banquets and playing hostess to various nobles and merchants while her father did business. She loved her father, a solid and stolid businessman, but she hoped one day to follow in her mother’s footsteps. Her mother was rarely home, preferring to oversee the family’s mining and transportation concerns personally. Such business trips appeared to involve travel to exciting places, frequent danger, and no small amount of violence. However, this path seemed unlikely.

When Mademoiselle de Charente became Madame la Marquise de Pardaillan, things changed. Her marriage to the Marquis was a fortunate one for her family, as it merged their growing middle-class wealth and power with the old man’s wealth and titled name. The Pardaillan family was neither large nor powerful, but they were an old line and well respected.

Possessing no trace of the Porté sorcery, their particular branch of the family had quietly dwindled. However, a title is a title, and when a nobleman older than her father took a fancy to marry her, the Charente family gulped and acceded. Wonder of wonders, so did Françoise. She agreed to meet with Marquis to negotiate on her own behalf, despite her parents’ raised eyebrows, and the two came to an understanding. Both were interested in being married largely so everyone would leave them alone about being unmarried. Both would be free to pursue their own business within the bounds of propriety. He revealed to her that for the last thirty years he had been happily sharing his life and bed with his cook, and had no intention of altering that relationship. They shook hands, and the modest wedding went forward.

The new Marquise was suddenly thrust into the highest levels of the Montaigne aristocracy. Her smooth, round face became a serendipitous asset: a perfect blank canvas for the style of the court, the painted face, the beauty marks, the arched eyebrows, the flower petal lips. Her hair, a pleasant auburn, was not a favored color that season, but with her long curls neatly tucked up under the great white wigs in fashion and her quiet but clever mind, she set forth to see what adventure she might find in the Court of Charouse.

She was actually well received at court. Although she encountered many people she thought completely idiotic, she kept her own counsel and made a few friends, including the powerful and sharp-witted Lady Jamais Sices de Sices. Things were going well when tragedy struck: the Marquis and his beloved Cook were lost in a boating accident and presumed dead.

It turned out that the widowed Marquise actually looked fairly fetching in black. She assumed control of her husband’s lands and fortune in her own right (including the great estate, the fishing fleet, several villages, and a large pile of money) so she decided the time had come for her to take charge and find something worthwhile to do with her life.

In her role as the Marquise de Pardaillan, she is a perfect picture of a porcelain doll courtier. A small woman, the fashions of the day fit her well, the narrow waist and lace collars, the vast sleeves showing a dainty wrist. She wears simple jewelry, especially delicate items of gold filigree from her father’s atelier, naturally, that occasionally produce positive comment from the ladies of the court.

Francoise de Charente (d20™)

Courtier 4/Noble 3/ Spy 1: CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6+10+3d8+6; hp 39; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Knife +4 me (1d4) or knife +7 ranged (1d4); SA Sneak Attack +1d6; SQ Alias, Commanding Presence +1, Friends in High Places, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 18; AL NG; Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy 12, Disguise+19, Gather Information +14, Hide +7, Innuendo +12, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Local) +10, Knowledge (Nobility) +10, Knowledge (Royalty) +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Read Lips +10, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Speak Languages (Avalon, Castille, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +10; Feats: Alertness, Appearance – Above Average, Dangerous Beauty, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Disguise), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

Francoise de Charente – Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 1, Finesse: 3, Wits: 4, Resolve: 3, Panache: 4

Reputation: 25

Background: None

Arcana: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille(R/W), Montaigne (R/W);

Appearance (Stunning), Contacts, Dangerous Beauty, Noble

Courtesan: Acting 3, Cold Read 3, Conceal 2, Dancing 2,

Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Gossip 3, Politics 3, Seduction 3,

Sincerity 4

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4,

Gossip 3, Lip Reading 2, Politics 3, Seduction 3, Sincerity 4

Spy: Conceal 2, Disguise 4, Shadowing 2, Sincerity 4, Stealth 2

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Sprinting 2, Throwing 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2

Who Watches the Witches?

In Vodacce, noble daughters blessed with Sorte magic are a prized asset. Like any member of the nobility they need guards and protectors. Many people hate and fear their power, and would like nothing better than to see these women slain. This goes double for the rare times when a Fate Witch actually leaves her home. The nobleman cannot assign just anyone to guard his wife for fear that she will take offense and wreak some sort of havoc on him. Often the younger male relatives of the family are given the task, but they are eager to get out into the world and play the Great Game. Very few wish to languish in the ladies' quarters with a bunch of women who scare the Scaravese out of them.

There is also the possibility that the Witches can manipulate any man who enters their presence for their own devious ends – after all, they are Vodacce. No father wants his son to become the plaything of his wife or daughters. Technically one could

train the women to look after themselves. However,

the thought of the Strega armed with steel

and sorcery keeps a man awake at night.

The Vodacce are nothing, if not clever. Each

of the major families has identified a minor

noble or upper middle class family to be the

guards for their Strega. These guards are trained

from birth for the task, and imbued with absolute

loyalty for the family they serve. In return they live

in a similar style to the nobles, and some have even

been married to Senzavista if they have served with great

merit. It is unheard of for any member of a guardian family

to betray their benefactors. (Well, none have survived to tell

of their treason, at any rate. In Vodacce everyone recognizes

the danger of an enemy with powerful friends.) These families

were chosen for their loyalty and dedication, but also because

they showed a particular resistance to Sorte magic. Over time

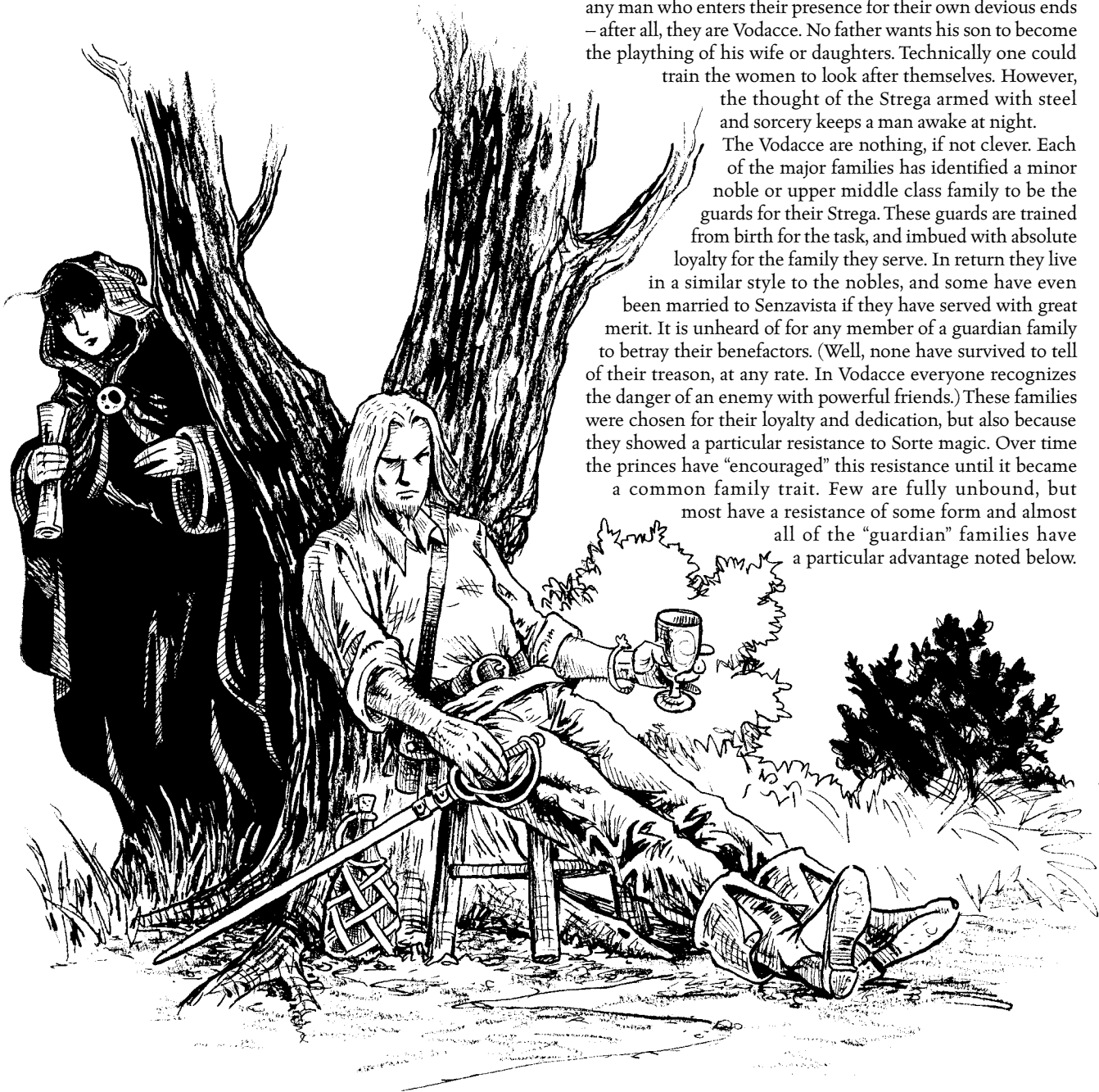
the princes have “encouraged” this resistance until it became

a common family trait. Few are fully unbound, but

most have a resistance of some form and almost

all of the “guardian” families have

a particular advantage noted below.



Bernoulli: The Corattzi Family

This family was chosen for their dedication to the Vaticine religion. They consider their work an almost sacred task. There is also a little Crescent blood mixed in their lineage so they are agile horsemen and usually bilingual.

Caligari: The Demara Family

This family is partially descended from the Delaga line, like the Caligari. They were chosen because they, too, have a long-standing hatred of the Villanova clan. These days many are also trained in a little Surneth lore so that they can acquire such items if they should come by them while traveling with their charges.

Falisci: The Caralli Family

It is rumored that the Falisci gave the Caralli this job to keep them away from Falisci parties. The Caralli are renowned for taking everything much too seriously. They perform their duties with an Eisen-like stoicism. Few of them enjoy parties and loud behavior, but almost all enjoy gambling, which of course they pursue with grim determination.

Lucani: The Brevalli Family

The guardians of the Lucani Strega are excellent listeners and charming companions. The Lucani know their Strega are destined to use their powers to help families other than their own so their witches are often sent on trips to visit other families and nations to seal marriage agreements. The Brevalli travel with them, eyes and ears open so that they can bring as many secrets as they can home to the Lucani. While everyone pays attention to the witch, her guard quietly gathers information. Some even remain with their charges after marriage as a “wedding gift” which puts a Lucani spy in their court.

Mondavi: The Grimanci Family

The appointment of the Grimanci was done in the usual Mondavi fashion. The Mondavi held tests among their loyal retainers and the Grimanci family proved the best duelists and fighters. This may be due to a mixture of Eisen blood in their veins. The family has familial links to Eisen and a talent for small unit tactics. Like their patrons they are slower to anger than most Vodacce, but never forget an insult.

Vestini: The Masanda Family

The Masanda are possibly the most unattractive family in Vodacce, but this is actually an advantage, given that they protect some of the loveliest women in Vodacce. The prince who chose them wanted to ensure the women in their charge would not be attracted to their guards, because he knew the guards would certainly be attracted to them. This leaves the family with little desire for society, preferring to train for their duties. They are not downcast or cynical, however, and display all the usual passion of a Vodacce, ready to avenge any insult against their appearance with terrible skill and force.

Villanova: The Scrivelli Family

When the Villanova wanted to find a family for special guard duty they simply made the shortlist public knowledge. Each family on the list knew that only the survivor would be picked. The Scrivelli family was that survivor. They rose above the six months of bloodshed and assassination that eliminated five other families. They are renowned as assassins and murderers, who will stop at nothing to impress the Villanova. Few make an attempt on the lives of their Strega if only because of the Scrivelli's reputation for butchery.

GM Secrets

From Chapter 2

Fischler

Mainhard is upset by Fischler's use of condemned criminals to appease the beasts of the forest. He is afraid that when the prisons are emptied, he will be asked to either use his own men or to arrest people falsely to keep the criminals coming. In either case, Mainhard will be the first to volunteer to be covered in Blackwood sap. He would much rather die than watch his lord consumed by the darkness of the forest.

Freiburg

A long time ago, Hannah was in love with Wolfgang Vogel, head of the Clenched Fists. The torch still burns, and she thinks he is a good man caught in a bad situation. If it ever came down to a choice between Logan and Wolfgang, she is unsure what she would do. She possesses her *dracheneisen* illegally because she is not a noble. While no one in her guard questions her about it, she waits with some trepidation for the day someone recognizes the *panzerhand*. When that happens, she will most likely be forced to resign. Even in the City of No Questions, such things cannot be tolerated.

Hainzl

Dagobert is an excellent performer and singer because that is what he has been trained to do. He is not an actor or a soldier. He came to Hainzl penniless and starving. Acting is not a celebrated art form in Eisen and he did not have enough money to get to a country where he would be appreciated. He was arrested for stealing food and sentenced to a stay in Hainzl's dungeon. He charmed his way out of his cell and was on his way out of the castle when he turned the corner and came face to face with the Prince. After a tense moment, Dagobert played on Georg's madness and bluffed him into thinking he was the Captain of his Guard. A few dirty jokes and flattering comments later, he was.

While he is an excellent performer, he has absolutely no fighting ability at all. When a real fight begins, he lets the other guards get involved and stays as far away as possible. He knows that if he were ever forced into a duel, it would be both his first and his last.

Heilgrund

Dieter did not join the Ghosts by accident. His true allegiance is to die Kreuzritter, and his mission is to watch Heilgrund for evidence of his dabblings in the occult. With the arrival of the strange soldiers from the Schwarzwalden, Dieter suspects that Heilgrund has made his bargain and he will soon have to strike. He has stayed his hand because he is unsure what effect Stefan's death would have on the soldiers. If he can make sure that he can eliminate Heilgrund without letting the schattensoldat loose to rampage across the land, Dieter would slit his lord's throat in a heartbeat. Until then, he watches and looks for a safe way to stop Stefan from his descent into darkness.

Pösen

Russell grows impatient. He thought that Fauner would have made her bid to reunite Eisen and his thirst for real battle grows daily. The last time he challenged the academy he nearly killed one of the cadets, a fact that has been covered up by the faculty. His desire for a fight burns so bright that he is considering an offer from one of the other princes to challenge Pösen to a duel. While he knows she is the best, he has never actually faced her mano-a-mano. He also had deduced the real reason for the request; his weapons will be covered with poison that will kill Fauner when he draws first blood. If she does not go to war, his blood and pride may boil hot enough to accept this offer of treachery. While he plans on killing himself shortly after Fauner dies, he will know once and for all if he is truly the best fighter in Eisen.

Sieger

Vogel knows how desperate the situation truly is. He is considering joining the Mörderbande just to keep himself alive. He plans on working as a double agent within the ravagers to defeat them on the inside. The main reason he has not done it already is because he has not gotten word to Sieger yet. He is afraid that the Eisenfürst will brand him as a traitor and kill him when he returns.

Vogel also still loves Hannah but thinks she could not possibly love a man who has done the things he has done. (He is also prepared to blackmail her for asylum in Freiburg if things get any worse in Sieger.)

Wische

Georgette has let "Cornelia's" secret out to Dagobert because has a bit of a schoolgirl crush on the handsome leader of the Steel Warriors. She knows his secret as well but is still worried that if he does not return her feelings, he might blurt it out to someone in exchange for his life.

From Chapter 4

Nyle Piram's Secrets

During the argument with his father, Prince Nyle accused the king of being a weakling. How else could he explain having lost the throne – and to a woman! Despite his claim that he is the son of Piram and Maab, Nyle is actually the offspring of the King's tryst with a human noblewoman. Piram wanted a son, saw to it that he got one, and then abandoned the woman. Nyle knows about Piram's relationship with Maab and is furious that he does not have Sidhe blood.

Nyle considers it not only his destiny but his duty to be in control of every situation around him. Anyone above him is an enemy to be seduced or crushed; anyone below him is a weakling to be used as a tool. His charm and good looks have made him the target of many a woman's affections, and he has used and abused every one of them terribly. Women literally fall at his feet so he despises them as weak, malleable, and unimportant. His reputation has remained untarnished because whenever he ends a relationship he ensures the woman gets the blame. He is so clever and twisted that most of his liaisons believe it entirely their fault, no matter what they have suffered at his hand. Those who cannot be convinced to see it this way conveniently "disappear." There always seems to be another lady willing to offer her shoulder for the poor Prince to cry on, which only adds to his loathing for them. When he has brought so much pain and hurt to women, why do the fools still keep coming back for more? He has some definite ideas about the role of women in the world and he secretly hates Elaine for proving him wrong.

The dark lords of the Unseelie were attracted to the unspent rage and passion seething in the young Prince. They have offered him power which he had no qualms about accepting. He is their gateway into the mortal realm to do their bidding and work to destroy Elaine. They have given him command of the Order of Flies, a network of hundreds of spies, both human and Sidhe. This network is so potent and clever that even Bors MacAllister does not believe it truly exists, which is probably good; if he did, it would give the great spymaster even more sleepless nights.

Jennifer Strand's Secrets

Jennifer mourns her lost youth because she really is an 18-year-old girl trapped in the body of an old woman. She was born to a noble family and entered life at court wide eyed at the Glamour and nobility of Carleon. Over a year ago she fell in love (like so many others) with Prince Nyle. He was tall, dark, handsome, and romantic, and when he suggested that they go to a more private place to be alone together, she could not resist. While she was a virtuous girl, the wiles of the devious man proved too much and she went with him into the forest. There in a secluded woodland copse, strangely different from the forest she knew, they lay down together. She must have fallen asleep after what she vaguely recalls as a strange, dreamlike experience.

When she awakened, the handsome Prince was gone and she was lost in a forest that now seemed dark and terrible. She stumbled around blindly, imagining she saw herself still lying there under the trees, still as death. Somehow she found her way to a village she recognized, and was taken in by the kindly folk there. It was in the home of her rescuers that she saw herself in a mirror and fainted dead away. She was an old woman.

Fearing for her life, she said nothing about her past. She could not return to the Avalon court – who would believe her story? If anyone did, how much shame and hurt would fall upon her parents. She was wise enough to know that the Prince would not marry her. Better that her parents grieved for her death than bore the shame of her actions. For a long time she believed this was a punishment for being free with her virtue.

Somehow the transition from youth to old age had awakened her latent Glamour abilities. While not immensely powerful, she was now aware that there was more to her fate than it seemed. She bent herself to study and in the past year, she has amassed a great deal of Fae lore. She realizes now that Nyle must have taken her to a faerie place, most likely an Unseelie one where he stole her virginity and her youth. The evil young man is up to something, but who to trust?

No one pays too much attention to an old woman, so Jennifer has listened to the comings and goings around Carleon. From among the gossip she hears she has pieced together the existence of the "Order of Flies." However, this has only made her more paranoid because they seem to have eyes and ears everywhere. If only she could find some heroes to trust with her knowledge, she might be able to get her revenge on Nyle, destroy his evil, and regain her youth.

In fact, the image she saw of herself was indeed her youth. It was a gift from Nyle to his Unseelie partners to cement their contract. If Jennifer can find a way into the dark Unseelie place in Bryn Bresail where her youth lies, she can yet reclaim it. This may also revoke some of Nyle's power because it would break his arrangement with the Sidhe. However, Jennifer does not have much time. The Unseelie gnaw at her youth, savoring its sweetness like a great delicacy. They have eaten two years of it already, and there may be nothing left if she cannot reclaim it soon.

Albrecht Rahn's Secrets

Besides being a ruthless and amoral leader, Rahn has a strange hobby as well. He collects *dracheneisen*. Whenever he faces other Eisen in combat, he makes sure that after the battle, a scavenger squad sneaks onto the field at night to remove whatever pieces it can. He often wears a different *panzerhand* every week or so from the collection. The few people who have realized this have usually challenged him to a duel of honor. They have not survived.

Françoise de Charente's Secrets

As is so often the case, history is made by way of a chance and accidents. The Marquise has recently put aside the black of mourning, and now wears the colors of the day, following the lead of Lady Jamais in matters of style. In all respects she is the picture perfect lady of the court: demure, pleasant, ornamental. Appearances are, of course, deceiving. The boning of her bodice is a bit stiffer than most, not to increase the prominence of her bosom, but to secure four slim stilettoes as part of her corset. And that fan can deliver a sharp crack as well.

While staring out into the gardens during a particularly tedious salon, she overheard some gossip about a "grey market" crime. She knows about markets, white, grey, and even black. She continues to gather information that would otherwise be overlooked – not great treason or momentous news, but movements of people, current sentiments in court, "possibilities."



Rather than trust her information to writing, she arranges meetings with the heroes. One evening while meeting with them to pass information, the group is confronted by an enemy and manages to make an escape in a borrowed Musketeer uniform. When her heart finally goes back to normal, she realizes that she actually had an adventure! She decided to keep the outfit and have a bit of fun, and so Le Chauve-Souris was born.

Lady Jamais is no fool, and knows something is going on, but does not disapprove. She assumes that la Marquise and Le Chauve-Souris are lovers. Or perhaps brother and sister.

As Le Chauve-Souris, Musketeer, Françoise wears the standard Sun-in-Splendor tabard, and carries a fine rapier. If pressed, she will not use her sword, however, relying instead on her slim and deadly knives, of which she carries several. She lets her natural auburn hair flow loose to her shoulders, and she clips a false moustache to wear on her upper lip and chin, just a wisp like a young man who is desperately trying to grow the facial hair of an adult gentleman. A bit of pencil to the eyebrows, a bit of color foundation to the face, and no one would recognize the rather dashing little Musketeer as the placid, white-skinned, bewigged lady of the court.

Character



Templates

Avalon Knight of Elaine

Queen Elaine is always seeking worthy warriors to join the ranks of her Knights, formally known as The Order of the High King. Each prospective Knight takes a lifelong vow of service and promises to defend the Queen and Avalon against all enemies, protect the innocent, and exemplify honor and nobility in thought, word, and deed. Candidate must then drink from the Graal, for it is believed that should their heart be false, the water therein will poison them and they will die a horrible death. Only those born in Avalon, the Highland Marches, or Inismore may enter the Order.

Avalon Knight of Elaine (d20™)

Human Avalon Fighter 1/Swashbuckler 3/Donovan 1/Knight of Elaine 1: CR 6; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 3d6+9+2d8+6+1d10+3; HP 47; Init +3 (Dex); Speed 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +1 Buckler); Atks Smallsword +10 me(1d6+4); SA None; SQ Buckler Master, Detect Evil, Dexterous, Improved Fortitude +1, Light Footed; SV Fort +11, Reflex + 6, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +6, Diplomacy +8, Jump +6, Ride +8, Sense Motive +8, Speak Languages (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages native to your campaign setting]), Tumble +9; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Indomitable Will, Iron Will, Parry, Weapon Focus (Swordsword), Weapon Specialization (Swordsword).

Avalon Knight of Elaine (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2

Reputation: 10

Background: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W); Avalon Accent (Avalon), Citation, Indomitable Will, Memberships (Knights of Elaine, Swordsman's Guild)

Bard: Etiquette 2, History 1, Oratory 2, Singing 1

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 2

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Buckler: Parry (Buckler) 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1

Donovan (Apprentice): Bind (Buckler) 1, Disarm (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 1

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ *Knight of Elaine*, Ch. 3: *Prestige Classes* and *Avalon*™ sourcebook.)

Character



Templates

Eisen Iron Guard

Each Eisenfürsten appoints a cadre of trusted guards whose purpose is to enforce the law of the kingdom, keep the peace, eradicate monsters, and serve as bodyguards for their ruler. Beyond this, the requirements and duties vary from kingdom to kingdom, as does their name. In addition to these guards, there are other martial Orders in Eisen including the ancient Order of St. Gregor (bodyguards turned bounty hunters), the Tobians (armed field chaplains), and the Winged Kursars (a fearsome cavalry unit); all three are headquartered in Pösen. Warbands, despite their charter, are not regarded on the same level as Théah's chivalric or martial Orders.

(For more information, see *Eisen*,™ *Game Masters' Guide*,™ and *Montaigne Revolution*.™)

Eisen Iron Guard [Pösen] (d20™)

Eisen (Théan Ranger) 5/Gelingen 1/ Pösen Iron Guard 1: CR 7; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d8+2+6d10+12; HP 61; Init +2 (Dex); Speed 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks Longsword +11 me(1d10+3); SA Favored Enemy, Favored Prey; SQ Iron Guard Membership, Provided By Nature (Healing Herbs); SV Fort +10, Reflex +3, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 13; AL LG; Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +5, Climb +9, Heal +8, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Intuit Direction +9, Jump +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Search +8, Speak Language (Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages native to your campaign setting]), Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +11; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light, medium, or no armor), Iron Will, Track, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light, medium, or no armor), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Expert (Longsword), Weapon Focus (Longsword).

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ *Iron Guard*, Ch. 3: *Prestige Classes* and *Eisen*™ sourcebook.)

Eisen Guard [Pösen] (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: None
Advantages: Castillian, Eisen (R/W), Vodacce; Eisen Accent (North), Keen Senses, Membership: Iron Guard, Toughness
Doctor: Diagnosis 1, First Aid 1
Hunter: Stealth 1, Survival 2, Tracking 1
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 1
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 1
Gelingen (Apprentice): Exploit Weakness (your choice) 3

Character



Templates

Montaigne Musketeer (Pre-Revolution)

Quite possibly, the most famous armed unit in swashbuckling history, in or out of Théah, these loyal men and women serve as l'Empereur's primary means of enforcing the law in Montaigne. Training to be worthy of the Tabard is long and difficult, but the new Musketeer is not only skilled in the use of weapons but also well educated. In addition to policing the cities and towns of Montaigne, Musketeers also serve as arbitrators for small arguments. Above all else, they pledge their allegiance in a binding oath to serve and protect le Roi du Soleil and his domain.

Montaigne Musketeer (d20™)

Montaigne Musketeer 5/Valroux 1: CR 6; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 6d10+12; HP 54; Init +3 (Dex); Speed 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks Rapier +7me(1d6+1) or rapier +5 me(1d6+1) and main gauche +5 me(1d4) or pistol +9 ranged (1d10); SA Elegant Duelist; SQ Focused Training, Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +5, Reflex +4, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +9, Climb +5, Intimidate +8, Jump +5, Listen +5, Sense Motive +10, Speak Languages (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages native to your campaign setting]), Spot +5, Tumble +12; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with rapier and small blade), Defender of the Crown, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise (only with rapier), Parry, Two Weapon Fighting (only with rapier and small blade), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Focus (Main Gauche), Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Main Gauche), Weapon Specialization (Rapier)

Montaigne Musketeer (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, Finesse: 3, Wits: 2, Resolve: 2, Panache: 3

Reputation: 0

Background: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W); Dangerous Beauty, Memberships (Musketeers, Swordsman's Guild), Montaigne Accent (Northern)

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Politics 1

Scholar: History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 3

Rider: Riding 1

Valroux (Apprentice): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 1, Feint (Feinting) 1, Tagging (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness 1

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ *Montaigne Musketeer*, Ch. 2: *New Character Classes and Montaigne*™ regarding the nation pre-Revolution. For post-Revolution details, see *Montaigne Revolution*.™)

Character



Templates

Sandoval's Guard (Castille)

It is not easy to serve a King who has no power, but that is what the loyal members of the royal Guard in Castille must do. Despite his ancient and honorable lineage, Good King Sandoval – and his beloved nation – are at the mercy of the Vatican Church and most especially Cardinal Esteban Verdugo, the head of the dreaded Inquisition. For now, they must be content to serve and wait until the Church grants the King his full rights as monarch. Fiercely loyal as only Castillian's can be, the Guard is vigilant in their watch over the young King.

Sandoval's Guard (120™)

Castillian Musketeer 5/Gallegos 1: CR 6; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d8+2+5d10+10; HP 53; Init +3 (Dex); Speed 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks Gallegos rapier +10 me(1d6+2) or pistol +9 ranged (1d10); SA Elegant Duelist, The First Circle; SQ Servant of the Crown; SV Fort +3, Reflex +4, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 15; AL CG; Skills: Climb +7, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +5, Sense Motive +9, Speak Language (Castillian, Crescent, Montaigne, Théan [alternately, any four languages native to your campaign setting]), Spot +5, Tumble +11; Feats: Defender of the Crown, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise (only with rapier), Parry, Riposte, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Sandoval's Guard (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: None
Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne, Vodacce; Castillian Accent (Gallegos), Castillian Blade (Gallegos), Memberships (Sandoval's Guard, Swordsman's Guild)
Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Lip Reading 1, Oratory 2
Servant: Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Menial Task 1, Unobtrusive 1
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 3
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1
Gallegos (Apprentice): Feint (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1, Tagging (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Gallegos) 1

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ Ch. 3: *Castille Prestige Classes* and *Castille*.™)

Character



Templates

Royal Guard of the Celestial Empress (Cathay)

Cathayan Royal Guard (d20™)

Han Hua Fighter 6/Shan Dian Dao Te 1: CR 7; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 7d10+14; HP 63; Init +6 (+2Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Speed 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks Dao +15 me(2d8+6); SA None; SQ None; SV Fort +8, Reflex +8, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 13; AL NG; Skills: Balance +6, Climb +9, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Jump +9, Move Silently +6, Speak Language (Han Hau, Koryo, Tikaret-baraji, Xian Bei), Ambidexterity (only with rapier and small blade), Defender of the Crown, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise (only with rapier), Parry, Two Weapon Fighting (only with rapier and small blade), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Focus (Main Gauche), Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Main Gauche), Weapon Specialization (Rapier). Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Expert (Dao), Weapon Focus (Dao), Weapon Specialization (Dao).

Cathayan Royal Guard (Cathay) (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: none
Advantages: Han Hua (R/W), Koryo, Xian Bei; Cathayan Accent (Han Hua), Combat Reflexes
Acrobat: Balance 2, Footwork 3
Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 2
Spy: Shadowing 2, Stealth 2
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 1
Hard Martial Arts: Attack (Hard Martial Arts) 2, Balance 2, Block (Hard Martial Arts) 2, Footwork 3, Jab 2
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3
Shan Dian Dao Te (Apprentice): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 1, Corps-à-corps 1, Feint (Heavy Weapon) 1, Exploit Weakness (Shan Dian Dao Te) 1

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ Ch. 2: *Unchanged Classes* and *Cathay*.™)

The Sultan's Royal Guard (Crescent Empire)

Crescent Royal Guard (d20™)

Crescent Swashbuckler 4/Daphan 1: CR 5; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 4d6+4+1d10+1; HP 29; Init +2 (Dex); Speed 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks Pattern Welded Scimitar +7 me (1d6+4) or pistol +7 ranged (1d10); SA Attack Vigorously, Dexterous Strike; SQ Dexterous, Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +4, Reflex +6, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 16; AL LG; Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +6, Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Sense Motive +8, Speak Languages (Castillian, Crescent, Teodoran, Théan [alternately, any four languages native to your campaign]), Tumble +7; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Focus (Scimitar), Weapon Specialization (Scimitar)

Crescent Royal Guard (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 0
Background: none
Advantages: Aldiz-baraji (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Tikaret-baraji; Crescent Accent (Peninsular), Pattern Welded Steel Scimitar
Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1
Spy: Shadowing 1, Stealth 1
Streetwise: Socializing 1, Street Navigation 1
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 3
Daphan (Apprentice): Beat (Fencing) 1, Lunge (Fencing) 1, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Daphan) 1

(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures*,™ Ch. 2: *New Character Classes: Swashbuckler* and *Crescent Empire*.™)

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