

Sub Rosa

The Ars Magica Magazine

Issue 7, April 2011

From hunting The Ghost in the Snow...



...To The Coven of the Golden Stripe



A Distant lands Publication
www.subrosamagazine.org

Out Now and Coming Soon

Legends of hermes

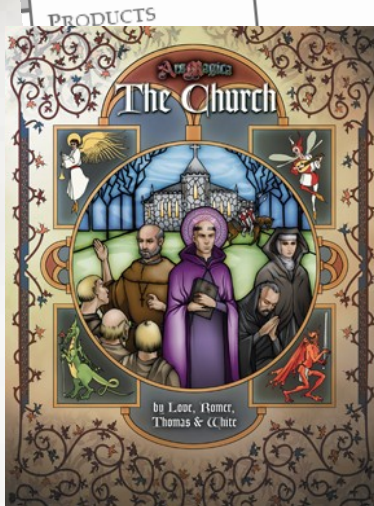
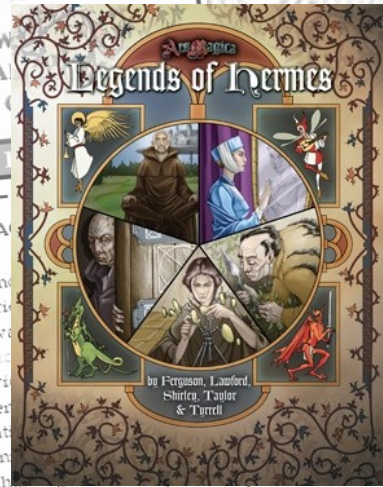
Authors: Timothy Ferguson (Thomae), Mark Lawford (Conciatta), Mark Shirley (Hérisson), Neil Taylor (Fortunata), Erik Tyrrell (Hermanus)

Cover Artist: Grey Thornberry

Stock Number: AG0297 | ISBN: 1-58978-121-X | MSRP: \$29.95 (US)

Format: 144 pages, hardcover

Release Date: June 2011



MAGICA 5TH EDITION

The Church

Authors: Richard Love (Diocese), Christian Jensen Romer (Congregation, Rule, Corrupt), Sheila Thomas (Rule, Women, Franciscans), Alexander White (Templars)

Cover Artist: Grey Thornberry

Stock Number: AG0296 | ISBN: 1-58978-120-1 | MSRP: \$29.95 (US)

Format: 144 pages, hardcover

Release Date: Available Now

Rival Magic

Authors: Timothy Ferguson (Soqotrans), Chris Jensen Romer (Augustan Brotherhood), Matt Ryan (Amazons), Mark Shirley (Muspelli)

Cover Artist: Grey Thornberry

Stock Number: AG0294 | ISBN: 1-58978-115-5 | MSRP: \$29.95 (US)

Format: 144 pages, hardcover

Release Date: Available Now



The Sundered Eagle: The Theban Tribunal

Authors: Chris Jensen-Romer, Matt Ryan, Mark Shirley, Andrew Smith

Cover Artist: Grey Thornberry

Stock Number: AG0295 | ISBN: 1-58978-116-3 | MSRP: \$29.95 (US)

Format: 144 pages, hardcover

Release Date: Available Now

This Issue

Issue 7

April 2011

Contents

Under the Rose	Page 4
News from the Line Editor.....	Page 5
The Magi of Thebes.....	Page 6
By Yan Prado	
Storyguide's handbook: The Enemy Within	Page 8
By Gerald Wylie	
Mappa Mundi	Page 16
The Story of Nelda's Lament	Page 17
By Mark Lawford	
Grand Tribunal 2011 Announcement	Page 23
From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens	Page 24
Beyond the Fields We Know: The Rûbezhal	Page 28
By Timothy Ferguson	
The Ghost in the Show.....	Page 30
By Robin Bland	
The City of Bruges	Page 43
By Sheila Thomas	
More Mythic Mongols	Page 45
By Yair Rezek	
Playing First Edition / The Next Generation.....	Page 59
By Mark Lawford	

Contribute to Sub Rosa

Sub Rosa is made up of fan driven content. Contributors receive a complementary copy of the issue their work appears in.

To contribute articles or illustrations, visit the Sub Rosa website (<http://www.subrosamagazine.org>) and follow the guidelines.

Contributors

Publisher: Distant Lands Publishing

Contributors: Ben McFarland, Yan Prado, Robin Bland, Gerald Wylie, Mark Lawford, Sheila Thomas, Yair Rezek, Timothy Ferguson, David Chart

Cover art: Jeffe Menges

Interior artists: Barrie James, Ben McFarland, Jeff McFarland, Gerald Wylie, Kyle Cabral, Angela Taylor, Anoeska Buijze, Jason Tseng

Editor: Ben McFarland, Mark Lawford

Design/Layout: Alex White, Mark Lawford

Contact Sub Rosa

Email: subrosa@distantlandspublishing.com

Web: <http://www.subrosamagazine.org>

Twitter: @subrosamagazine

Snail mail:

Sub Rosa Magazine

C/O - Mark Lawford

119 Royal Sussex Crescent

Eastbourne, East Sussex

BN20 8RJ

England

Legal Disclaimer

Sub Rosa is an independent publication not affiliated with Atlas Games or White Wolf Gaming Studios. Distant Lands Publishing is not affiliated with Atlas Games or White Wolf.

Ars Magica is © Trident Inc. d/b/a Atlas Games. Ars Magica, Mythic Europe, Covenants and Charting new Realms of the

Imagination are trademarks of Trident Inc.

Order of Hermes, Tremere and Doissetep are trademarks of White Wolf Gaming Studios.

Ars Magica was created by Johnathan Tweet and Mark Rein•Hagen.

The intellectual content of Sub Rosa is © and held by the authors. All rights reserved.

Reproduction of any issue of Sub Rosa for commercial use by any means without written permission from the Publisher, except short excerpts for the purpose of reviews, is expressly prohibited.

References to any Trademarks, Registered Trademarks or Copyrights held by any company or individual in Sub Rosa is for promotional and recreational use. Use of these terms should not be construed a challenge to their ownership.

This issue was laid out using MS Publisher 2010 and makes use of the MagicMedieval and GoodCityModern Plain fonts.

Tweets from the foundation of the Order.

BonisagusOne: First.

TeeNoma: RT @BonisagusOne: First.

MMEMercere: @TeeNoma @BonisagusOne Ugh, get a room.

Subliminal messages: You want to buy the *Requiem of Power: The Divine* reprint. It really is very good. And, for the sake of my sanity alone, next issue is going to be smaller than this one.

Subscription

Individual Single Issue: US\$4.50

Individual Subscription – 4 issues: US\$16

Troupe Single Issue: US\$13

Troupe Subscription – 4 issues: US\$35

Under The Rose

Here we are again, another issue filled with more content than you can shake a wand at. This issue, Gerald Wylie seeks out the enemy within when he investigates demonic possession in *The Storyguide's Handbook*. Mark Lawford finally brings us the story of *Nelda's Lament*, a short scenario originally planned for last issue but we just couldn't find room for. Those of you who have read *Tales of Mythic Europe* may recognise the name, so now you have the backstory to go with it. And later in this issue Robin Bland hunts the *Ghost in the Snow* when he goes looking for one of the Muspelli, as featured in *Rival Magic*, a tortured and fractured soul with the blood of frost giants in her veins.

We also have an article from newcomer to Sub Rosa, Yan Prado. In support of his own Thebes saga he has put together a spreadsheet listing all the magi of the Tribunal, their covenants and the political affiliations. Given the nature of the Thebes Tribunal, this is a very useful resource. Yan tells us how he went about it and how you can make use of it.

We are not done yet as we've also found room for an interesting take on the Mongols from Yair Rezek making a superb companion to *Rival Magic*.

But we really should call out the fantastic artwork that we've been blessed with this issue. Not only do we have an all-original cover image by Jeff Menges but we also managed to catch a couple of new guys. Kyle Cabral has given us a beautiful piece to accompany *Nelda's Lament*, and

Barrie James, who some of you may have met at last year's UK Grand Tribunal, has really brought the *Ghost in the Snow* to life in all her ungainly glory. And seriously, please take a look at what Angela Taylor has done for us this issue. Thank you all. Great work.

At this point, it's worth taking a moment to enjoy the strength of the **Ars Magica** brand. We're by no means the largest gaming community out there but I think we're punching above our collective weight. We have four new book releases every year with more and more PDF editions from both the current and past editions also being made available. The official forum is as popular as ever; Sub Rosa has been very well received (thank you); and we're already looking forward to Grand Tribunal 2011, which we're hoping will be the biggest and best to date.

And all those new books are written by a dedicated team of authors. It is a team that works exceptionally hard on each book, and all for the love of it. **Ars Magica** is a very difficult game to write for, from the in-game history to real-world history and on to the layers of rules that make up the current edition. The game has built up such a rich

tapestry over the years that sometimes certain threads need to be pulled in favor of others, whether that's background-related like alterations to a House's history, or rules-based like revising the way crossbows work. Or combat. Or ward... No, let's agree not to go there. This is always contentious, seen as unwarranted revisionism by some and essential evolution by others and the topic pops up regularly on the Atlas Games forum. There's never any clear consensus and there likely never will be, at least not within a community as broad as **Ars Magica** fandom.

So by way of demonstrating just how much the game has developed, we have the first in a series of articles that take us back through each edition. We'll be playing a vanilla rule-book-only game of **Ars Magica** for each edition in sequence, starting with the **First Edition** published back in 1987. We have a write-up of the experience later in this issue as well as the scenario that was used.

I don't know about you, but this issue already feels bigger than the last one. It has certainly felt that way putting it together. Enjoy!

The Church Competition

This issue's competition is connected, as you might guess, to The Church. For your chance to win the Fifth Edition supplement of your choice we're looking for the perfect introduction to the Church rules. This could be an article in the Companion Piece series, a scenario with a strong Church setting or connection, or a fully described church, abbey, or cathedral location that others can drop into their sagas. It's a short competition this time around and entries should reach us by the close of May 2011.



Sub Rosa

News From the Line Editor

By David Chart

Three books have come out since I last wrote notes from the Line Editor, and another two have been announced. One of those announcements, for *The Cradle and The Crescent*, explains why the Order of Suleiman weren't in *Rival Magic*; they are in the later book. Of the released books, *The Sundered Eagle* describes the rather different culture of the Byzantine Empire, as well as one of the more remote Tribunals of the Order, while *The Church* covers one of the central elements of Western European society. The next book to be released will be *Legends of Hermes*. I'd like to say a little bit about *The Church*, and a little bit about *Legends of Hermes*.

The Church is, really, an essential sourcebook for the game. The Church had enormous influence over all aspects of medieval society, and operated in ways that are far from being common sense today. It can't be ignored without missing an important part of the background, but it can't be played without quite a bit of information. This book fills that gap.

One chapter, *The Corrupt*, handles the issue of infernally corrupt churchmen. This is a topic that had to be covered, because it is a classic trope, and makes for excellent gaming material. However, it also has the potential to be offensive, because we are saying that some part of the medieval Church was demonic, and even though we are doing it in fiction, people still get offended. To try to minimise the risk, the chapter suggests ways in which various groups of monks could be corrupt, without saying that any of them necessarily are, in Mythic Europe. That way, storyguides clearly have the option of avoiding any demonic corruption, if they want to. As an added

bonus, players can read the book without discovering which, if any, monastic orders are corrupt in their version of Mythic Europe. So far, there have been no howls of outrage, so I am hopeful that this choice has been successful.

Legends of Hermes covers five legendary Hermetic magi, describing their activities and discoveries, and how player magi can find the treasures that they left behind. Some of those treasures are actual treasure, but magical knowledge is much more common, and, in any case, much more valuable to magi. *Legends of Hermes* is thus the Hermetic version of *Ancient Magic*, providing something for Seekers to look for while staying within the history of the Order.

However, most of the legendary magi mentioned are new to the line in this book, and none of them have been treated in any detail before. Some people have asked in what sense they are legendary. They are legendary because your magus has heard of them, even if you haven't. That's a glib answer; the real question is why I chose to extend the background in this way, rather than give more information about magi who had been mentioned previously.

The first reason is that I think it's important to expand the background of the Order. It just wouldn't be sensible to restrict the Order's entire history to material that appeared in the first Order of Hermes book, back in 1990. This book is part of that expansion.

The second reason is that the Order's established history stopped after the Schism War, which is over 200 years before the standard start date. That gap needed to be filled in, so three of the Legends of Hermes were active after the

Schism War. Since it was a gap, there were no established magi to fill it in.

The third reason is that the established legends have been around for (real world) years, and have been used in people's sagas. Nothing we wrote could be consistent with all the versions that people have created and enjoyed, so the book would just annoy some players. Why do that when we can create completely new material for people to play with?

In fact, it's probably good for a game setting to have elements that are defined as being important, but not defined in any detail, as it gives individual groups something obvious to work with to customise their own sagas. The biggest example in **Ars Magica** is House Diedne, which we are deliberately avoiding defining in ArM5. Storyguides who don't have the time or inclination to fill in details can leave it as background colour, while those who do have a free hand. It's true that this hasn't really been a deliberate policy for **Ars Magica**; I've always had a deliberate policy of leaving House Diedne undefined, but that's because it already had 12 years of history before I took over the line. Nevertheless, I think it's worked out well, and so it's an important reason for not treating established legends in this book.

Changing tack, I'm having another Open Call for **Ars Magica**, for short adventures that provide a hook into something described in another **Ars Magica** book. Full details are available on the Atlas website; please consider submitting something.

The Magi of Thebes

When I first opened my copy of *The Sundered Eagle* I was expecting a traditional outline for a Tribunal of the Order, dotted here and there with the usual Byzantine oddities – castration, slavery, harsh politics and so on. I was very surprised to find that although all of those things were certainly included in the setting, the most interesting element was an unexpected one: a completely reworked model for the politics of the Order. TSE (as I will refer to the book from now on) depicts a Tribunal filled with intrigue in all levels of society and myth. The turbs question their leaders' decisions, the Epiroteans fight the Latins to expel the invaders, the Venetians vie to maintain their mercantile dominance, the Faerie struggles against the Divine, and amid all this the Infernal rejoices and corrupts all. In this highly insalubrious environment, the Tribunal of Thebes stands as an utopian organization of magoi (it stands to reason to refer to them in the Greek plural instead of the Latin magi!) with strong democratic and cooperative values, all working for the greater good rather than pursuing their own selfish ambitions. Or at least that is how it was until recently, when the 4th Crusade destroyed the hope of many and killed, maimed or maddened the rest. In 1220 the reality is that struggle and conflict have reached even this apparently ideal institution.

The Tribunal of Thebes offers a variety of possibilities for stories and sagas, but in true Byzantine flavor, political intrigue is where it really shines. But for that to work the SG must create a very detailed political outline, not only with information on factions and individuals and their short and long term goals, but also with their relationship with one another. The first step in the process, then, is to create a solid foundation of NPCs with which to work, and this is what we are offering in this article, as well as insight on the creation process and hints on how to proceed from here.

Populating your Tribunal

The first thing I did when I started this index of NPCs and factions was to scan TSE and list all those detailed in the book. 'The Leagues' and Covenants' descriptions were of course the most obvious places to look, and so I ended up with a grand total of 47 magoi, 13 covenants and 7 factions. Considering a population of 1200 or so for the entire order and 12 Tribunals, I assumed an average of 100 magoi per Tribunal, give and take, and settled upon the entirely arbitrary value of 107 for my version of Thebes, which meant I had to come up with 60 NPCs. The average number of magoi per covenant in TSE, with the exception of Erebos and Alexandria which have over 10 each, is 6, so I decided to create 2 covenants as well to balance it out (both shortly described below). I then checked the Houses of Hermes books for the favored Tribunals of each of the Houses and made a note of them, so I could decide what percentage of

By Yan Prado

my 107 population each House had. As it turns out, Ex Miscellanea, Jerbiton and Verditius are the Houses which favor the Tribunal the most, and considering their individual populations as well as my views on the other Houses' interest in Thebes I came up with the **House Distribution Table** (see the nearby insert), which changed very little afterwards.

The next step was to create a spreadsheet with the information I had and complete it with the information I wanted it to have, so I compiled whatever TSE had to offer me on the canon NPCs and covenants and created the rest. One of the hardest things to do when creating NPCs is to establish their lineage in relation to the canon NPCs and the ones you created previously. I made sure to try and create a link or two for each new NPC, but left them purposely vague at this point as I knew I would have to adjust and change as I progressed and checked my work. Only after they were all done I started adding their real and apparent ages. It is very important, when doing so, to keep in mind a minimum age difference between parens and filius, as well as frateri (I decided on 30 years on average for the former and 20 for the latter). A hundred individuals do not make for a very big group, so you might want to check if you are not adding too many different concurrent lineages for the Tribunal. If all your Bonisagus have different parens, then it means that there should be more Bonisagus than there currently are, either because frateri have died or moved away or because, for whatever reason, the previous generation of Bonisagus decided to train a single apprentice each during their lifetimes.

Once you have your spreadsheet full with NPCs, complete with age, parens, filii and frateri, you need to consider other aspects of a more political nature, such as the number of times each NPC has served as arche, to what League they are

House Distribution	#
Bjornaer	4
Bonisagus	6
Criamon	3
Ex Miscellanea	18
Flambeau	7
Guernicus	7
Jerbiton	17
Mercere	15
Merinita	4
Tremere	7
Tyталus	7
Verditius	12
Total	107

connected – if any, their status in the Tribunal (Polites or Metroikos), the number of Psephos and Ostrakon possessed, and last but not least, favors owed to and by. Calculating the average number of times any magos would have served, based on the population of each phyle and the number of Tribunals said magos has lived through, will tell you that 80% of the magoi served between 0-1 times – in other words, it's best to decide upon it arbitrarily. Just keep in mind that the actual position the magos held as arche is more important than how many times he's served (since archai cannot serve on the same board more than once), and that older magoi would have served more times than younger ones most of the time. League membership is, once again, an arbitrary decision. TSE mentions but a few members of each canon League, and so you should scan your NPCs for goals that match those of the Leagues, and assign membership. I suggest not creating new Leagues before the game starts, because of their temporary nature. Leagues are, as TSE describes, associations of like-minded magoi with one common objective, and they are formed and dissolved constantly. As the game progresses you will see many Leagues created and ended, with both short and long-term goals. Tribunal citizenship should be obvious to determine

– only those very new to the Tribunal should be Metroikos, and those rare few outsiders who have yet to prove their good intentions towards Thebes. Psephos and Ostrakon are, at this point, likewise arbitrary, but keep in mind a minimum of Psephos for those who served recently as archai and polemarch. Favors owed to and by are a bit more complicated, and as with the Leagues, I recommend not assigning too many from the get go, as they will certainly pick up as you start play.

Overview of the Index

The magoi are sorted by Phyle and covenant, for easy comparison between populations. The suffix –istes was added to the House name instead of the Latin ex or aedes, for flavor. Thus, Leo ex Mercere would be listed as Leo Merceristes. Likewise, Moero's Garden and Michael's Table were changed to Moero Kepeia and Michalis Pinakion. Each magoi's age is followed by their apparent age “()”, where a dash indicates the magos is dead. Bear in mind the Index provided is not entirely canon as it was adapted to my saga. Two NPCs, in particular, have had their ages modified, Boustaphan and Krum, and the latter is marked as dead.

Perhaps the best use of the table, other than as an NPC index, is to easily visualize

a faction's inherent political strength. Sorting it by League or by Parens will give you a general idea of how influential each League or magos (through their filii) is in the Tribunal. Sorting by Favors Owed To will give you an idea of which magoi are most influential individually, and Favors Owed By will tell you which magoi are more indebted – and potentially the most dangerous as they have little to lose. Playing with these a bit you can easily determine NPCs reactions to motions in and outside Tribunals, as well as repercussions to events and actions.

It is of course very important to keep track of all changes in the table, and if you are running a fast-paced saga it can get to be quite a lot of book-keeping! Make sure to print updated versions of the table for your own use if you don't use a laptop or tablet while playing. You can also print player versions by clearing the grey areas and ask your players to help you by keeping track of the changes that take place during the sessions, so you can focus on storytelling and still keep your information updated.

The spreadsheet is included with the Sub Rosa #7 download and is also available through the Sub Rosa website: www.subrosamagazine.org.

#	Name	Age	()	Status	House	Covenant	Phyle	League
70	Marcellus aedes Verditius	24	24	Metoikos	Verditius	Gramvousa	Kretan	
15	Antiphon Bonisagistes	102	57	Polites	Bonisagus	Polyaigos	Kretan	
72	Maria Laskarina Guernicuistes	94	58	Polites	Guernicus	Polyaigos	Kretan	
16	Apollodoros Flambonistes	92	64	Polites	Flambeau	Polyaigos	Kretan	
56	Kristophoros Bonisagistes	84	52	Polites	Bonisagus	Polyaigos	Kretan	
5	Agaxter Guernicuistes	83	50	Polites	Guernicus	Polyaigos	Kretan	
42	Gerasimos Flambonistes	54	44	Polites	Flambeau	Polyaigos	Kretan	
25	Caterina da Vigonovo Jerbitonistes	53	53	Polites	Jerbiton	Polyaigos	Kretan	Legion of Atlas
51	Ioannes Bonisagistes	49	41	Polites	Bonisagus	Polyaigos	Kretan	
103	Trifonas Flambonistes	36	35	Polites	Flambeau	Polyaigos	Kretan	
22	Boustaphan Tremmeristes	145	113	Polites	Tremere	Gigas	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
50	Iapetos Tremmeristes	83	50	Polites	Tremere	Gigas	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
61	Lancea Tremmeristes	58	38	Polites	Tremere	Gigas	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
76	Monorchis Tremmeristes	46	33	Polites	Tremere	Gigas	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
10	Allectores Tremmeristes	33	33	Metoikos	Tremere	Gigas	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
37	Flavius Tremmeristes	66	48	Polites	Jerbiton	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
80	Nikolas Jerbitonistes	62	48	Polites	Jerbiton	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
58	Kyrillos Jerbitonistes	53	42	Polites	Jerbiton	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	League Against Idolatry
71	Maria Argyros Jerbitonistes	51	43	Polites	Flambeau	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	League of the Vigilant
107	Wilnich Flambonistes	40	35	Polites	Jerbiton	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	
54	Konstantinos Jerbitonistes	36	11	Polites	Jerbiton	Michalis Pinakion	Propontian	
83	Petros Jerbitonistes	129	65	Polites	Tytalus	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	League of Constantine
109	Ziper Tytalistes	123	94	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	Seekers of the Fallen
36	Evantia Jerbitonistes	107	91	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	
52	Ionnia Jerbitonistes	102	43	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	
94	Syagricus Jerbitonistes	74	56	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	
28	Damianus Jerbitonistes	46	17	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	
39	Ganymedeus Jerbitonistes	43	40	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	
53	Kassandra Jerbitonistes	29	29	Polites	Jerbiton	Moero Kepeia	Propontian	League of Constantine
47	Helladius Jerbitonistes							League of Constantine

The Storyguide's Handbook: The Enemy Within

By Gerald Wylie

On how Demons can Live Inside People

Novice: Some people assert that demons cannot exist inside people but must assault them from the outside, just as a fortification is besieged from outside its walls.

Monk: When it is said that a demon is inside a person, we must not understand this to mean the soul, but the body, for the demon can live inside the body's open spaces and is most often found in the bowels where the shit is contained.

Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*

with controlling the physical form. It shows that people were aware that demons could infiltrate a person and, by implication of the warning included in the *Dialogus*, that we should be wary.

This article takes a closer look at possession as represented in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**, examining the rules, their implications, and the storytelling potential inherent in having an enemy hidden in plain sight.

What is Possession?

Let's start by addressing one very important and uncomfortable truth: the average covenant of magi will likely have proficiency in enough

The quote above is taken from Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue on Miracles* (*Dialogus miraculorum*), written around 1220. It tells us two things; firstly that the topic of

demonic possession was notable enough to be recounted by learned men in books of instruction, and secondly that demonic possession had little to do with the soul and all to do



Sub Rosa

Caesarius of Heisterbach

Born in 1180 and educated in Cologne, Caesarius of Heisterbach joined the Cistercian Order in 1199 and assuming Mythic history follows its course, he becomes prior of the Cistercian House at Heisterbach, near the town of Oberdollendorf in the Rhine Tribunal in 1228. He remains in the position until his death in 1240, making him a character that could be easily encountered in most sagas set around the official **Ars Magica** start

date.

He compiled his insights into miracles around 1220 and they take the form of a dialog between an elder monk and a novitiate. They cover all manner of supernatural occurrences including many on the nature and behavior of demons and their kind. It is said that he suffered at the hands of the supernatural in his youth, though specifics are scarce. It seems clear that he writes from an informed position and magi may wish to seek him out to learn his supernatural secrets.

cannot be constrained by wards; it simply ceases to be. But this does allow the original demon to fully regenerate its Might Pool.

The rules were initially presented in *Realms of Power: The Infernal* as a standard demonic power. They have not been explicitly restated in the other *Realms of Power* supplements and so Possession remains an Infernal power, at least in the official line. But there is no reason why other supernatural entities could not use the same power.

Perdo Vim spells to very quickly destroy any demon foolish enough to present itself to them. The much-discussed tactic of mastering a low-level version of Demon's Eternal Oblivion and multi-casting at high Penetration has the ability to make a brief mockery of the Might Scores of all but the most powerful of demons. Surely no self-respecting demon (assuming such a thing exists) would be foolish enough to face magi of the Order head-on. But as we will see

This article doesn't reprint the description of the power but in short, the power allows the demon to place a portion of its Might Pool (*Might Pool*, not *Might Score*), inside a target. The description of the power suggests a "creature" for the obvious reason that the possessing demon then has a host that can act under its influence; an unwitting pawn to be used as it wills. But the opportunities afforded by possessed things are also discussed later. The points expended from the

Powers of the Energumenus

If the possession attempt penetrates the host's magic resistance the energumenus takes "direct control" of its host, literally controlling the hosts actions. The energumenus has full access to the hosts abilities, including supernatural abilities (though using these requires the possessing spirit to expend might

...*Demon's Eternal Oblivion* cast on a possessed target does NOT affect the possessing demon...

many demons have other options.

Possession within **Ars Magica** occurs when an infernal spirit places some part of its consciousness within a target, or host. This allows the possessing entity to use its powers through the host, influence or control the host's actions, and observe the hosts surroundings.

The host is termed the "energumen" while the possessing spirit is the "energumenus".

The Mechanics of Possession

Chapter four of *Realms of Power: The Infernal* describes demons and the common powers at their command. The potentially most important power is Possession, described on page 32.

Might Pool are not regenerated until the possession is ended. But points spent on other powers used by the original demon are regenerated as normal.

Demons may place all or some of their current Might Pool into a host, but the power must Penetrate any resistance the host has. And the demon may continue to do this all the while it has points left in its Might Pool. This means that a single demon could potentially possess a large number of hosts.

Finally, the energumenus can choose to end its possession, at which point the Possession Pool effectively reduces to zero and the host is freed from its possession. The Might from the Possession Pool does not "travel" back to the original demon and so

from its Possession Pool).

But note; this is bodily possession. The demon effectively replaces the host's personality and the host has no control over his actions. The demonic power of Obsession is used instead

Story Seed: You Can't hang a Demon

A murderer, having claimed sanctuary at a nearby church, begs the "learned men" to prove that he was possessed by a devil and that his actions were not his own. But the term of his sanctuary is nearly up and the manorial lord on whose land the crime was committed wants the man handed over to him. Was the man ever possessed? If so, is he still possessed? And if not, where did the demon go?

where the demon tries to tempt the soul. So is the energumen blameless of any crime the demon commits?

Unless the energumenus expends might points on its own powers (all of

individuals the demon hopes to hide its influence behind the apparent actions of others. And even in this there is a degree of protection as accusing a member of the nobility, the clergy, or even the Order of

inconvenience; the Might lost is taken from the Possession Pool, not the Might Score. This may destroy the energumenus but the points lost from the Might Pool regenerate over time and the demon suffers no long-term harm. This is a crucial point for Storyguides looking to build a long-term demonic antagonist. An energumenus works towards the demon's goals, but death or destruction holds no fear for the energumenus; it is free to plot, act, and taunt the protagonists from a position of near absolute security.

What's more, as a demon can possess multiple hosts at the same time, and each can be carried across the Aegis, it may not just be a single grog that has been possessed. As if that's not bad enough, each energumenus has access to the Possession power. The implication of this is that each energumenus could conceivably use its own Might Pool to possess others, including moving its entire Might/Possession Pool from one host to another. This allows the energumenus to jump from host to host to further its goals or to simply avoid detection.

Relics and Scourging the Infernal

The Divine Scourging the Infernal power inherent in relics (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 45) radiates an "aura of hostility" to a range equal to the relic's Divine Might (defined as number of Faith Points in the relic x 10) in feet. This aura causes damage to all demons, physical or spiritual, within the area of effect. But the energumenus is in an implied third state, a state shielded from the effects of relics by the physical form of its host. So to be explicit, the energumenus does NOT take damage from the presence of relics.

Demons with Might less than the relic's Divine Might cannot normally approach within Divine Might feet of the relic. While produced by the Scourging of the Infernal power this

If one of the Gospels or the relics of the saints were placed on the possessed woman's mouth, the devil would take refuge lower down her throat; and if they were then moved there, he would crawl down into her stomach... 'You silly fools, what you are doing is of no use at all. You are giving her food for the soul, not for the body. My power is over her body, not over her soul.'

Gerald of Wales, Book 1 Chapter 12 The Journey Through Wales

the demon's original powers are available) or to use its host's supernatural abilities the energumenus does not fade over time. This means a possessing demon has the tools it needs to impersonate its host over a long period.

The energumenus can be carried across wards. This includes an Aegis of the Hearth of any level and, going by the wording, Rego Vim wards designed to exclude or contain those with Infernal Might. But this ability is suspended if the energumenus extends its Might to give the host Magic Resistance (equal to the Possession Pool).

Understanding this aspect of the Possession power, the ability to use a host to carry it across wards, reveals one of the true threats of possession to a Hermetic magus; anyone in your covenant could potentially be possessed. Your trusted shield grog could, at this very moment, be possessed. The cook who is right now preparing your evening meal could be under the sway of an energumenus. And your Hermetic magic cannot detect it.

The Implications of Possession

By working through possessed

Hermes carries severe implications. This forces the accusers to be sure of their facts, never an easy thing when the duplicitous forces of Hell are concerned.

But the key benefit is of as much interest to Storyguides as to their fictional antagonists; possession limits the exposure of the demon to Hermetic danger.

The description of the Possession power states explicitly that the energumenus can be affected by targeting the energumen (the host). But one nuance of this that isn't so easy to find is that the standard Demon's Eternal Oblivion cast on a possessed target does NOT affect the energumenus. Special Perdo Vim spells, with the same mechanical design, must be invented instead in order to target the energumenus through a host. The canonical example of this is *Exorcize the Filthy Spirit*, described on page 122 of *Realms of Power: The Infernal*. This nuance is reinforced by the passage on *Art & Academe*, page 56 that suggests that normal Demon's Eternal Oblivion spells cannot target the energumenus.

But given that the energumenus is only a part of the demon, even dedicated Perdo Vim spells cause the demon little more than temporary



is a separate effect to the damage caused by the relic and it seems fitting that even the energumenus suffers under this restriction. So again to be explicit, the energumenus may NOT willingly approach relics with Divine Might greater than its own Possession Pool. And while it takes no damage from the relic, proximity is likely to be uncomfortable.

There is a good example of both of these ideas in the writing of Gerald of Wales. He describes a scene of attempted exorcism of a woman possessed by a demon. Talking through the energumen, the demon taunted the clerics attempting to drive the demon from its host through the application of relics. Each time a relic was brought near the demon, the presence simply shifted, physically and visibly, to another part of the energumen's body, undiminished by the cleric's efforts.

Observations

There are some logical issues presented by the Possession power:

Firstly, if the energumenus has access to the all of the demon's powers, how do we treat Coagulation, the ability to create a physical form? This would seem to allow the demon to create bodily copies of itself by splitting out an energumenus, which then uses the Coagulation power. While it's probably not within the

intention of the rules, Storyguides should feel free to apply whatever is the most dramatic answer to this on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, the crafty energumenus may well spit out a coagulated form, sacrificing some small part of itself, in order to fool those who would try to rid the host of the infestation.

And secondly, we know that the Possession Pool cannot regenerate, and neither can the original Demon's

Possessing Faeries and Spirits

The excellent fifth edition work on the nature of Faerie raises an interesting question; can a demon possess a faerie? It seems that faeries may represent aspects of morality or feed off the actions of those to whom they present moral choices but they are not in and of themselves moral beings. But as Caesarius states, it is not the soul that the demon occupies but the body. So it seems that as long as the demon can

overcome the Faerie's resistance it can possess it and control it as with any other energumen.

So can a demon possess a spirit or other disembodied entity? It appears not for the same reason that it can possess a Faerie. The demon, as both Caesarius and Gerald of Wales agree, controls the body, which a spirit does not have.

Might Pool while the possession is in effect. What if the demon uses its entire Might Pool to possess a host? The most logical application of the rules suggests that even if the demon does use its entire Might Pool, it cannot regenerate until the possession ends.

There is a further question; what happens to the energumenus if the parent Might Score is destroyed? If the demon has squirreled away a portion of its Might inside a host, does that energumenus persist if the rest of the demon is destroyed through magic or divine action? This may be a question for troupes to decide upon, but there seem to be three options:

- 1) **The energumenus is destroyed.** This seems logical as it is not a thing of Might in and of itself. It is but a shadow of a thing, and once that thing is destroyed, so is the shadow.
- 2) **The energumens persists until it leaves the host.** This seems logical as the energumenus is a distinct part of the demon's consciousness. It is not tied to the parent force in any way. If you accept this option, the energumenus has little choice but to stay in the host and be careful that it does not use its remaining power.
- 3) **The demon can reform around the energumenus.** This option is perhaps the hardest to justify but the most apt to support those returning villains who just won't die. If you decide that the energumenus can survive, it can only regenerate once it has left the host. Being the last part of the parent demon left, it now *becomes* the demon. It can restore the lost Might Score over time and likely by consuming spirits, souls, or through some other hellish means.

Whichever option you decide

upon for your troupe, it is recommended that you either make this consistent across all demons or make it clear that different ranks or orders of demons may react differently. At least that way, while you keep your options open, you are providing players with the chance to research a given order for information on how to truly destroy it.

...given that the energumenus is only a part of the demon, even dedicated Perdo Vim spells cause the demon little more than temporary inconvenience; the Might lost is taken from the Possession Pool, not the Might Score...

Possessed Animals and Inanimate Objects

Just as some demons use a variation on Possession called Diseased Possession (*Art & Academe*, page 45) that afflicts the host with a disease, it may be the case that certain demons specialize in possessing humans, animals, or objects. Alternatively, the suspicion that the demon the magi are hunting could at any moment be possessing literally anything can be used to heighten tension.

Possessing an animal is an effective tactic given that people expect to see animals, whether dogs, cats, birds, etc. This means that possessed animals are often able to roam free and rarely raise suspicion, allowing the demon access to their intended targets and victims where human hosts would be barred.

Possessed "things" offer a further opportunity. Some items are used frequently by their owner, such as a knight's sword, a cobbler's knife, or the expensive hand mirror owned by a noblewoman. Others may be left in place and pass from notice, such as a corn-dolly above a doorway, or a

tapestry in a council chamber. Any of these items make useful hosts as they are often in contact with, or close to potential victims or useful targets.

Possessed things may also be granted movement, though this makes more sense for some items than others. A mirror may show a



flicker of movement across its face, a spinning wheel or millstone may turn itself, while a child's doll may move with freedom. But such a manifestation at least represents the expressing of the demon's Might and may even involve the spending of

Story Seed: A Changed Man

The priest receives a visit from a woman in his parish. She describes how her husband has undergone a sudden change in his behavior; he has become sullen, withdrawn, refuses to work, and has arranged their belongings into strange piles around their home. On visiting the humble home, the priest sees furniture and other belongings stacked atop each other into four even piles marking the cardinal compass points. Is the man possessed, subject to demonic obsession, or is something else at work? And is there something going on between the woman and her neighbour? Is this the cause of the madness or a result of the wife being driven from her husband.

Might Points, though of course demons may have access to many movement-based zero-cost powers which they may express.

Multiple Possession

A frightening prospect, as if being possessed by a demonic spirit isn't frightening enough, is the prospect of being possessed by multiple demonic spirits. There seems to be nothing to stop more than one energumenus from invading a given host. Indeed, this may be a valid tactic for powerful demons; possess an individual and then draw other spirits into the host. By hiding itself within a crowd, the principle demon makes itself harder to target. This also allows the storyguide to add logic to scenes in which a possessed character is talking with many voices at once.

Playing Possessed Characters

For player characters, troupes essentially have two options:

- 1) The player/troupe knows of the possession and plays along with the scenario
- 2) The Storyguide alone knows of the possession and simply asks the player to undertake certain actions

The first option is useful when the character occupies the Companion or Magus slot and the possession forms part of a longer-term plot. By involving the player in this aspect of the story the Storyguide can take a more hands-off approach and let the player assist him. It also has the benefit of misdirection; most troupes look for plot developments to be flagged by the Storyguide rather than another of the players.

The second option is more useful when grogs or rarely-played

characters are possessed. This allows the Storyguide to control the off-camera actions of these characters. And these characters usually have a very subordinate role when played, which supports the energumenus' own drive to remain hidden. So an energumenus in possessing a shield grog intent on bringing harm to a given magus may feign a mishap and leave his magus open for attack. The player in control of the grog at that time can play the character as normal (the principle deceit employed by the energumenus) but must derelict the primary duty of protecting his charge. The player is told the bare minimum; "do not protect your magus. If challenged, claim you made a mistake, take responsibility, and promise it won't happen again".

The benefit of this approach is that player attention is drawn to the character over time. This player attention naturally seeps into character attention and suspicions are organically raised.

Identifying Possession

Clothed in the flesh of its host, the energumenus is undetectable to abilities such as Second Sight unless it extends its Might to envelope its host, in which case the normal rules apply. Sense Holiness & Unholiness can be used to detect possession, or at least identify the presence of evil within a host. The rules on page 67 of **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** give an Ease Factor of 15 to detect the presence of evil in a person or object. The roll must also beat the demon's Magic Resistance. In the case of possession then the Ease Factor of 15 can be seen as a minimum needed.

Also, what about targeting the main demonic presence? When the demon sends out an energumenus the main part of it, the part that possesses the original Might Score, can still be targeted. Indeed, if the energumans can be contained, it actually provides an arcane connection to the original demon. This is something that could



be exploited by magi with preparation and planning.

Some demons have certain weaknesses or compulsions that they cannot overcome. *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 34 provides more details on this. But in short, any compulsion that normally affects the behavior of the demon (a compulsion to count scattered things, the inability to cross running water, etc.) also manifests through the energumen. But things that affect the demon's body do not, or are at least weakened. So a possessing demon that cannot stand the taste of sea wormwood (*Tales of Mythic Europe*, page 159) must make a Stamina roll against Ease Factor 6 to remain in its host if the host is forced to drink a brew of sea wormwood. In this case, failure on the demon's part is likely to end the possession, forcing the energumenus out of its host.

The *Diseased Possession* power manifests as illness, not bodily control. Using this as inspiration, other variations can be developed by the Storyguide; the possession could impose a flaw or physical defect, prevent the energumen from using its abilities, or even manifesting simply as voices within the host's mind. In particular, some instances of possession may impose the Tainted with Evil flaw (ArM5, page 59) and all such effects may be recognized by those with Infernal Lore.

And of course, some possessing demons have no interest in hiding themselves, preferring instead to use the possession to cause fear and challenge the faith of those around it. In some cases, this is enough to cause the frightened to harm the possessed victim, perhaps even killing them. And so the demon has caused innocent blood to be spilled.

Defending Against Possession

Demonic possession is a vital tool in Hell's armory but it can be defeated.

Hermetic Magic

Special Perdo Vim spells must be designed in order to affect the energumenus through the energumen. The design parameters are the same as for Demon's Eternal Oblivion, knowledge of which counts as a similar spell, but these are distinct spells.

By extension, it appears that Rego Vim, typically used to ward against demons, should follow the same model as Perdo Vim. That is, a ward could be designed to affect the possessing demon through its host. Rego Vim spells are also used to compel demons to some action. Additional variants could be created to compel an energumenus too, again with the same design parameters as for bodily or spiritual demons.

Divine Intervention

As discussed, relics exert an active effect against Infernal spirits and even weak relics present a painful challenge to demons. Wearing a relic about one's person is an effective ward against minor demons.

The Rite of Exorcism is mentioned in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 81. And The Church, page 34 clarifies the mechanic to be used. The exorcist expends one or more Confidence Points and generates an Exorcism Total:

Exorcism Total: (Confidence Points spent x 3) + Divine Aura + Modifiers + Stress Die

Ease Factor: Possession Pool

The Storyguide may allow positive and negative modifiers and the suggestion on page 81 is that the use of holy water and a crucifix each provide +1. The person performing the exorcism does not need to be ordained but must be free from sin and follow the prescribed rite. This means having either memorized the rite or being able to read a copy present throughout the ritual.

Of course, from a roleplaying perspective, a certain resistance from

the priest concerned must be overcome. Meddling with demons, especially where exorcism is concerned, is dangerous to both the energumen and the exorcist. It is likely that the energumenus will use all its available powers to remain within its host. It will try to disrupt the ritual, cast the seeds of self-doubt in the mind of the exorcist, and threaten the host's body with harm. Storyguides may want to impose Personality Checks, Concentration rolls, or other events, usually no more than three, to mark the progression of the ritual. Failure at any of these may result in the loss of a long-term fatigue level or the total disruption of the exorcism.

The power of Adjuration as described in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 49, provides for exorcizing demons.

And while not Divine in origin, medical treatment sufficient to cure the presented disease will expel an energumenus using *Diseased Possession* on its host.

Mysteries and Hedge Traditions

The Ex Miscellanea society of Donatores (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 115) knows the Divine form of the Banishing Supernatural Accelerated Ability. This allows the magus to expel creatures of a stated Realm from an area indicated by the magus. Given the origin of the ability it is fair to say that use of Banishing WILL affect an energumenus within the range specified by the magus. The compulsion is for the affected entities to leave the area by the quickest means possible. Storyguides may decide that a possessing demon may either use its bodily host to flee or simply give up its possession.

The Warding Ability used by the Columbae society, also found within House Ex Miscellanea (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 110), is an ancient form of warding magic that exhibits great flexibility. It allows the

magus to define wards that affect particular classes of entity, such as all birds, or all birds-of-prey. This can be extended to apply to demons, including demons possessing a host. While not a defence against the Possession power, a Columbus magus can ward against the possessed.

Demonic Defenses Against Exorcism

With the various Divine and magical powers arrayed against the possessing demon it is tempting to assume that an energumenus, once found, is easy to shift. But demons are fearful, duplicitous, and cruel. They are likely to hold onto their host

There is a reason why priests and magi alike should tread carefully in trying to exorcise a demon; the possessing spirit has the power to harm both the energumen and the exorcist...

for as long as possible.

It is important to play through the exorcism, whether it is conducted through magic or Divine intervention, as this is where the true character of the demon is revealed and the player characters can be faced with difficult choices.

Breaking the Exorcist's Concentration

All the various options for ridding a host of the possessing spirit, casting spells, reciting exorcism rites, etc. can be interrupted. The energumenus is unlikely to simply wait to be exorcised. Instead, it fights back; calling out in ancient languages, spitting bile generated from the host's own body, exercising its powers to assault the exorcist and/or the room they both occupy. It is safe to assume that any act designed to exorcise a demonic presence must include a concentration roll. As a rule of thumb, use a standard:

Ease Factor of 6 + (Magnitude of the Energumenus' Might)

This represents the general sense of dread exuded by the demon as it fights the exorcism with any means at its disposal.

Alternatively, use an Ease Factor dependent on the spirit's specific actions. For instance, attempts to wound the exorcist should be handled as per the table on page 82 of the core rulebook.

Secrets and Lies

Lies are simply tools to a demon. They use them to shape the responses they desire. A demon under assault from those trying to exorcise it will



use the secrets of the exorcists, if it has access to them, threatening to reveal them or finding some weakness to exploit. The demon will also lie. It will lie about the exorcist to his companions, and it will offer trades in return for being allowed to remain. Of course, remaining in the host once discovered is unlikely to be a priority, but making life as difficult for the exorcist is.

As mentioned above, the energumenus may also try to trick the exorcist into thinking that the host has been freed, perhaps by coagulating some small portion of its Might, or by receding deep into the host and allowing its personality to come through again.

Warning the Energumen and/or the Exorcist

There is a reason why priests and magi alike should tread carefully in trying to exorcise a demon; the possessing spirit has the power to

harm both the energumen and the exorcist. This may be through some power held by the spirit or simply by using the host's body as a weapon against itself and those around.

It is for this reason that preparations such as tying or binding the energumen are made, to protect the host from the actions of their own body.

Calling on Outside help

Demons are not altruistic in any form, but they can be coerced by those of greater Might or influence. The possession of certain individuals, or more likely the testing of the faith held by the exorcists, may be so important to other demons that they send other demonic spirits to bolster the energumenus' defense. All of the above defences are made more effective when a number of spirits are forced to work together in distracting the exorcist and preventing their exorcism from taking place.

Conclusions

Demonic possession is well catered for within **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** and a careful reading of the rules and consideration of the aims and needs of the possessing spirit can help inject a frightening and challenging episode into your saga. The Infernal presents difficult decisions to priest and magus alike and nowhere is this more the case than in demonic possession.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Simon Turner for introducing me to Gerald of Wales, to Erik Dahl for a very long chat on the potential of demonic possession, Mark Shirley for taking time to answer some quite esoteric questions, and Matt Ryan for general enthusiasm.

Mappa Mundi

Last issue we provided a round up of interesting sites dedicated to or in some related to **Ars Magica**. This issue we look further afield for resources that players and storyguides might find useful for inspiration, information, or just setting the atmosphere.

Music

Most troupes have experimented with playing music in the background of their sessions to heighten the tension or capture the right mood. But there are only so many times that you can listen to Carmina Burana and Holst's Planet Suite.

Search for "two steps from hell" under music on Amazon (other online music retailers are available). This is a music production company and you'll likely have heard their music in TV and movie trailers without realizing it.

As for film scores, current favorites are 300, from the Zack Snyder film, and Beowulf, from the CGI animated film. These are fairly short but actually make useful entries in a longer playlist. And there's enough variation in each one that individual tracks can serve different moods.

And on a related note, computer game scores are increasingly being released and if you're looking for something with an infernal bent, you could do worse than looking for Dante's Inferno. Give that a go next time you send your magi into an infernal regio.

Movies

There are two fairly recent movies worth noting this issue. The first is *Arn: Knight Templar*, and the second is *Black Death*.

Arn: Knight Templar is a Swedish film based on the Arn Magnusson trilogy by author Jan Guillou. The film tells the story of Arn who is raised in a Cistercian monastery and taught martial abilities by a

former Knight Templar. His love for Cecelia ultimately condemns them to confinement to a convent for Cecelia and serving the Knights Templar in the Levant for Arn.

From then on the story is played out over 20 years or so and we see key events of the Third Crusade through Arn's eyes.

The film is great for providing inspiration, from combat and battle scenes, to family and political dynamics, and even descriptions of dress and equipment. While lacking Hollywood gloss of something like *Kingdom of Heaven* (which arguable covers similar ground), the production is accomplished. And being a Swedish film they're not shy about using multiple languages throughout, which actually gives the film a texture that's quite refreshing.

Black Death, on the other hand, is a little outside the **Ars Magica** timeline but could so easily be a one-shot **Ars Magica** story that it's really worth including here.

Starring fan-favorite Sean Bean, *Black Death* tells the story of a witch hunter (Bean) looking for an Infernal power that if not causing the plague is certainly using dark powers to protect a distant village fallen back into corrupt and pagan ways.

Like *Arn: Knight Templar*, we follow the story with another monk given over to temptations of the heart and exposed to a world he is unprepared for. But this is a very different story to Arn's with a very different outcome.

It is an interesting film and certainly plays the heightened-reality card, which ensures that the viewer is never sure just how real the magic actually is. There are some nice set-pieces but while the film itself is enjoyable enough the plot is probably more interesting than any of the characters.

Podcasts

There are three podcasts of note this issue:

BBC's long-running *In Our Time* programme, hosted by Melvyn Bragg is a weekly science, history, and culture round-table discussion. Each week a different topic is introduced and discussed by leading figures in the field. And by the end of each discussion the listener gains if not expert knowledge at least an understanding and appreciation for the topic. You won't find **Ars Magica** content every week but recent discussions have covered *The Unicorn*, *the Volga Vikings*, *Maimonides*, and *The Medieval University*. And aside from any **Ars Magica** use, this is simply one of the best podcasts around.

The podcast is available here:

www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/iot

The Oxford University Medieval English Lectures is a more academic approach, and perhaps less accessible, but if you want to stretch the brain cells into some hard academia then this is a great option. At the time of writing there are ten episodes to download (they stopped in 2008 so we can assume that they have finished altogether) and they include readings from *Beowulf*. This is really useful to get a flavor of the past even if it doesn't translate directly into session preparation.

The podcast is available here:

itunes.apple.com/podcast/medieval-english-lectures/id213059275

The last podcast for this issue is *The Medieval Archive*. Like *In Our Time* it is an active podcast, and like the University Lectures it is entirely on-topic. But it lacks the energy that the others offer. That said, the episodes seem well-researched and cover some interesting ground. They have also just concluded a run covering a number of castles, a discussion on the first episode of the *Pillars of the Earth* TV series, and even taken in St. Valentine's day.

The podcast is available here:

www.medievalarchives.com/tag/podcast

The Story of Nelda's Lament

By Mark Lawford

This brief scenario is designed to be used either as a stand-alone story or as a prelude to *What Lies Beneath*, a scenario presented in the *Tales of Mythic Europe Ars Magica Fifth Edition* supplement.

There are some stories that are as old as time, and this is one such tale. Many years ago Nelda, daughter to a rich and powerful chieftain, succumbed to the charms of a beautiful yet lowly shepherd. She fled her father's house and his riches in order to marry her beloved Eadgar. Nelda and her lover were happy until the chieftain's men found them

and chased Eadgar out into the marsh. Nelda followed swiftly on but being lost, alone, and despairing she slipped into a stream and was drowned, never knowing if her beloved husband had lived or died.

But now, a faerie who draws vitality from human despair has awoken to find that Nelda's story is nearly forgotten and ripe for the retelling. Disguising itself as a minstrel, the faerie has stolen the heart of a knight's daughter. After causing grave offence to her father, the faerie stole away into the night with his prize, eager to play out events mirroring those that led to Nelda's death. Will the covenant intervene to save the girl and can they reach her in time?

In order to lead into *What Lies Beneath*, this scenario assumes that the covenant is near both a marsh (the location of a new vis source) and a small priory (by way of introducing a new ally to the covenant). But these details can easily be changed to better fit the covenant's location as described in the sidebar.

Precis

Sir Robert is a wealthy and influential local knight. His daughter, Anna, has fallen for the charms of a faerie who visited Robert's household in the form of Eadgar, a minstrel. Eadgar wooed Anna, and then made it known about the household that not only had he taken her virtue but that they planned to elope and be married. Convincing Anna that Robert intended to kill him, Eadgar and the girl fled Robert's house and headed westward to a

nearby priory.

Eadgar ensured that their trail was easy to follow and on the night of their arrival at the priory, Robert and his men caught up with them. Robert forced entry and, finding Eadgar, he and his men set about him. Apparently finding Anna in Eadgar's bed, the knights stole her away back along the north road. But it was not Anna that they had found but a working of faerie glamour; a pillow given the illusory form of the young girl. The real Anna, unwittingly following the course

Adapating the Setting

If your covenant is not situated near to a marsh you could instead use a river, stream, or brook running through woodland. A waterfall makes for a particularly effective image, with the threat of Anna plunging onto the rocks below providing an immediate tension.

The nearby priory could instead be a farm or croft, or even a mill with a family living in the adjoining house. All that's really needed is the presence of one or more characters to show Robert's violence in seeking his daughter and multiple witnesses who will attest to seeing Anna leaving both with Sir Robert and by herself.

The Prior Michael character could instead be one of the covenant's existing companions who, upon discovering the conflicting reports of the girl's disappearance asks his magi friends for assistance.

That said, the inclusion of Prior Michael in this story provides another useful lead-in to running *What Lies Beneath*.

If you are not intending to set this story in England, you may wish to exchange Prior Michael's Common Law Ability for something else.



of the story, fled to the marsh.

Prior Michael, realising the girl has gone missing, and hearing two conflicting reports of her fate, calls upon the nearby covenant for urgent help. The magi must discern the truth of the events and save Anna from a watery grave out in the marsh.

Expected Sequence of Play

For the troupe, the story starts mid-way through with Eadgar already beaten and apparently killed, Anna fled to the marsh, and the illusory Anna taken by her father and his men. The first the covenant knows of the events is the urgent ringing of the priory bell in the middle of the rain-

lashed night, followed a short time later by a young novice racing to the covenant to ask for aid.

Once at the priory, the player characters are likely to investigate the scenes of crime and then pursue Anna, Robert, or both. The denouement to the story will hopefully be the rescue of Anna from the faerie's plan.

The Priory

The main doors have taken some damage from the pommel of Robert's sword and the tracks of a number of horses (heavy or well laden) leading up to and through the gates are clearly visible. Appropriate ability checks or investigative magic show that the iron strap hinges of the priory

gates have been unnaturally rusted through.

The priory has a level 4 Dominion aura, which is likely to hamper supernatural powers.

What the Monks Saw

The two lovers arrived early in the evening and asked for sanctuary. This was granted by Prior Michael on condition that Eadgar and Anna had no nighttime contact while within the priory.

Late in the evening, Sir Robert and his men forced the gates (the iron strap hinges having been weakened by Eadgar's faerie glamour) after demanding and being refused entry. There was little resistance, but some of the monks were beaten in attempting to stay Robert's hand.

Robert quickly found Eadgar's room and apparently found Anna there too. Swords were drawn and Eadgar was grievously assaulted.

There is some confusion as to what happened after this. Some clearly saw Sir Robert lead his men off with the unconscious Anna across his saddle. But one, looking out of a high window to follow the trail of Sir Robert's torch thought he saw Anna running away from the road and towards the marsh.

With Robert gone, the bells were rung and Prior Michael sent a messenger to the covenant.

Eadgar's Chamber

When the player characters arrive, a number of monks are waiting anxiously outside the room, the door closed. One is apparently trying to force it, his diminished strength unable to push it open.

In an attempt to delay the monks from discovering Anna's

Michael, Prior of Battle Abbey

Prior Michael is visiting from nearby Battle Abbey.

Something of a rarity, Michael knows a little of the Order thanks to his travels across England and France. He even counts a number of magi among his friends and correspondents though he still knows little of magic itself. His duties at Battle Abbey are as master of the inning works, the efforts to drain sections of the marsh and reclaim the land, thereby expanding Battle's profitable estate.

Divine Resistance: 10

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

Size: 0

Age: 45 (45)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Faith Points: 1

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Senior Clergy, Relic, Social Contacts (Senior Clergy), Well-Traveled; Monastic Vows, Compassionate

Personality Traits: Pious +3, Open-Minded +2, Helpful +1

Reputations: Dedicated 1

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack N/A, Defense +2,

Damage N/A

Fist: Init +0, Attack +0, Defense +1, Damage +0

Kick: Init -1, Attack +0, Defense +0, Damage +3

Soak: 0

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20)

Abilities: Sussex Lore 4 (churches), Artes Liberales 3 (rhetoric), Brawl 1 (Dodge), Charm 4 (parishioners), Church Lore 3 (local diocese), Civil and Canon Law 4 (regulations for the clergy), Common Law 4 (Lex Marisci), Dominion Lore 3 (angels), Engineer 5 (marsh inning), English 5 (preaching), Etiquette 3 (Church), Folk Ken 4 (people he knows well), Intrigue 1 (parishes), Latin 4 (the Bible), Leadership 4 (engineering work), Norman French 4 (English courts), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (personalities), Philosophiae 3, Ride 2 (long journeys), Theology 3 (angelology)

Equipment: Priest's clothes; Missal

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: A man of late middle age, with a soft rounded and rumpled face topped with sparse white hair. But his keen brown eyes show that there's more than enough life in the old dog yet.

fate, Eadgar tipped the washstand over so that it jammed between the door and the bed. A Strength + Athletics simple roll vs 9 is required to break the door and/or the washstand.

Eadgar lies apparently dead, blood seeping from a wound in his side. His face is beaten and his eyes swollen and purple. One arm appears broken and bent unnaturally.

But those with Second Sight realise that the wounds are illusions on a Perception + Second Sight simple roll against Ease Factor 10. Those examining Eadgar's body can roll Perception + Chirurgy or Medicine against Eadgar's Presence + "Play Dead" pretence, with success also revealing the wounds as false and little more than glamor.

Once revealed as a charlatan, Eadgar's flippancy comes to the fore. He simply refuses to take the situation seriously. He does not willingly help, preferring to play for time by crying out for his wounds to be healed, or bewailing the harsh treatment Anna's father will mete out to her.

He also claims to love Anna with all his heart and cannot see her impending death as anything other than a fantastic romantic ideal that saves the girl the indignity of growing old in obscurity. He does however know where Anna is really going.

Anna's Chamber

There are no signs of a struggle but Anna is missing along with her shoes. It should be a simple matter to collect Arcane Connections to Anna as most of

Eadgar, the Faerie

Eadgar is a troubadour, Anna's lover, and a faerie. He is cognizant and understands both his faerie nature and its needs. Now that he has awakened, his intention is to lure girls to the vicinity of the marsh and the spot where Nelda drowned herself, engineer some reason for them to despair and become lost and then drink in their vitality as they drown themselves re-enacting Nelda's doom.

Faerie Might: 20 (Mentem)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex +1, Qik 0

Size: 0

Apparent Age: 23

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: External Vis (Major), Humanoid Faerie, Narrowly Cognizant, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Might Recovery Requires Vitality, Immunity to Iron Weapons, Focus Power, Lesser Power x3, Enchanting Music (granted by the external vis in the form of his lyre)

Personality Traits: Flippant +2, Hedonistic +2, Passionate +2

Combat:

Dodge: Init -1, Attack N/A, Defense +4, Damage N/A

Fist: Init -1, Attack +5, Defense +5, Damage +0

Soak: +3

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20)

Pretences: Bargain 2 (room and board), Brawl 3 (Fist), Carouse 1 (staying sober), Charm 5 (courtly love), Enchanting Music 4 (romance), English 5 (romance), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Hunt 1 (tracking), Music 5 (sing), Play Dead 5 (grievous wounds), Ride 2 (tricks), Stealth 4 (hide), Survival 2 (forest)

Powers:

Am I Not Charming, 1 point, Init -1, Mentem: Causes Eadgar to seem more attractive and pleasant than he really is, granting a +3 bonus on all rolls to impress or charm others. (Lesser Power)

They're Right Behind Us, variable points (equal to effect magnitude), Init 0 - effect magnitude, Terram: Eadgar can use any Terram-based effect of up to level 25 to make the following of the story easier. This also includes making his own trail more direct so long as the effect persists long enough to allow followers to also use the same trail. Specific uses in this story include making the trail to the priory easy to follow, weakening the doors, and giving Anna a clear path to the marsh (Focus Power)

That's Not What You Think It Is, 3 points, Init -1, Imaginem: This power changes the appearance of any one thing that Eadgar touches into the apparent form of his current beloved target. The illusion always shows the girl as having fainted or swooned and so she will remain unconscious until the effect ends and the item's appearance returns to normal. (Lesser Power)

Now See What You've Done, 0 points, Init 0, Imaginem: This power is invoked at will or each time Eadgar is struck in anger. It creates the illusion of an injury that may be cancelled at any time. Eadgar uses this in conjunction with his "Play Dead" pretence to fool angry fathers and his beloved targets into thinking that he has been slain. (Lesser Power)

Equipment: A lyre in which Eadgar's external vis is kept. Characters using the lyre may also use the Enchanting Music supernatural virtue at level one.

Vis: 4 pawns Mentem in his lyre

Encumbrance: 0

Appearance: a youthful attractive vibrant man with fair hair and green eyes.

...Eadgar lies apparently dead, blood seeping from a wound in his side. his face is beaten and his eyes swollen and purple. One arm appears broken and bent unnaturally...

her clothes are here.

Pursuing Robert

Robert has been tricked into taking a pillow, enchanted to appear as his daughter, and the knight is focused on getting her home as quickly as possible. If Robert and his men are accosted on the road, Robert will ride hard to Warehome and leave his men to deal with pursuers.

If a combat breaks out, it should be played on the run, while Robert's men trail behind him to deter pursuers, they will not stand and fight unless forced. Use the standard Knight combat statistics from ArM5, page 23 for Robert's men.

Robert, Knight of Warehome

Robert is a proud man known locally for his fearsome ability in combat and also for the strength and security of his household, which numbers three knights bachelor and a handful of other fighting men. He is wealthy and used to being obeyed. It is a foolish man who crosses Sir Robert.

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

Size: 0

Age: 40 (40)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence: 1 (10)

Virtues and Flaws: Knight, Wealthy, Improved Characteristics, Puissant Single Weapon, Educated, Oath of Fealty, Proud, Overconfident, Infamous

Personality Traits: Proud +3, Brave +2, Chivalrous -1

Reputations: Knight of Good Standing (local knights) 4, A Harsh Master (his tenants) 4

Combat (mounted in brackets):

Long sword & Heater shield: Init: +2, Attack +13 (+16), Defense +13 (+16), Damage +8

Dodge: Init: +0, Attack N/A, Defense +4, Damage N/A

Fist: Init: +0, Attack +5, Defense +5,

Confronting Robert

Characters may decide to chase Robert, but must bear in mind the darkness and the well-trodden nature of the paths. Assuming sufficient light, a Perception + Hunt + Simple Die versus Ease Factor 15 is required to follow the trail. Of course, those knowing the location of

has the "unconscious" Anna put to bed and orders the servants to ensure that she is neither disturbed nor given the opportunity to leave.

Gaining access to "Anna" in order to prove her true nature to Robert is a role-playing task. Robert is not a man used to being made a fool of, so you can

...Unless magic is used, finding Anna's trail from the priory to the marsh will be almost impossible...

Robert's Warehome manor have a distinct advantage.

Once Robert reaches home, he

Damage +2

Soak: +11

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20)

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (horses), Warehome Lore 4 (nobles), Sussex Lore 3 (geography), England Lore 4 (politics), France Lore 3 (politics), Artes Liberales 2 (arithmetic), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 3 (battle), Brawl 3 (Fist), Chirurgy 1 (sword wounds), Common Law 3 (local laws), English 5 (giving orders), Etiquette 3 (noble), Great Weapon 5 (long spear), Hunt 2 (deer), Intrigue 3 (noble courts), Latin 4 (formal treaties), Leadership 5 (soldiers), Music 1 (singing), Norman French 4 (politics), Ride 5 (in combat), Single Weapon 5 (long sword), Survival 2 (Forests)

Equipment: Full Chain Mail; Heater Shield, Longsword

Appearance: Robert is a sturdy and stout man, not overly tall but broad and stocky with a full graying beard. He has a steely gaze beneath a heavy and rumpled brow, which caps a once-broken nose. He is dressed in full mail over an arming coat. Above this he wears a coat of arms; a green field charged with a sable leopard rampant. The same device appears on his shield and on his horse's barding.

imagine how he might take the suggestion that he has just fled the priory with a pillow over his saddle.

Convincing Robert that he hasn't rescued his daughter is perhaps difficult. Unless the characters enchant him to remove his resistance or to create understanding directly in his mind Robert will not readily believe any magic or trickery. After all, any talk of magic or entrancement will seem like nonsense; his daughter was simply led astray by a roguish troubadour.

And worse, if the faerie glamour is removed from the pillow, Robert is aghast and likely to believe that these messengers were the tricksters. And remember that he's armed and in charge of plenty of other armed men. He won't kill anyone until his "daughter" is returned to him for fear of losing her to the magic.

But swearing upon relics or the bible for instance, any act of deference that Robert, as a lord of the mundane world, would understand is enough to make him listen. And when his ear is gained, characters should take things slowly and explain clearly.

Once Robert has been

convinced, he will put his resources at the characters' disposal in order to find his daughter.

Leaving Well Alone

It's possible of course that the prospect of involving themselves in a domestic dispute between father and daughter is a long way from being a priority for the magi.

If the covenant or its companions choose not to involve themselves, then the story does not have a happy ending. Anna remains lost, alone, and distraught in the marsh until she either slips and drowns or succumbs to exposure. In either case, she dies at the site of Nelda's Lament and until the body is found and removed or disappears into the marsh, the corpse sheds tears of vis each year as per the vis source described nearby.

But of course, with Anna's death, the faerie has no need to sustain its glamor and the false Anna is revealed to be what it always was; a lifeless pillow filled

Anna

Anna is a flighty girl of fifteen who has run away from home with what she thinks is the love of her life. She knows neither his true nature nor his true intentions.

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

Size: 0

Age: 15 (15)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Gentlewoman, Privileged Upbringing, Long-Winded, Ability Block (Martial), Dutybound, Weakness (Poets)

Personality Traits: Easily Led +2, Flighty +1

Combat:

Dodge: Init: +0, Attack N/A, Defense +0, Damage N/A

Fist: Init: +0, Attack +1, Defense +0, Damage -1

Kick: Init: -1, Attack +1, Defense -1, Damage +2

Soak: -1

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20)

Abilities: Village Lore 3 (customs), Artes Liberales 2 (arithmetic), Awareness 2 (alertness), Bargain 1 (household purchases), Carouse 2 (ladies' games), Charm 2 (first impression), Covenant Lore 1 (people), English 5, Etiquette 4 (nobles), Folk Ken 3 (nobles), Intrigue 3 (ladies), Latin 2 (vocabulary), Ride 1 (safely), Steward 2 (manor)

Equipment: Fine clothes

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Anna is a fifteen year old girl, fresh of face and soft of hand. She has fair hair and dusty blue eyes. When encountered by the troupe, Anna is wearing a full length nightshirt, sodden and dirty from the marsh..

with nothing but feathers.

Robert, an influential man, cries witchcraft and those with appreciable signs of the Gift, or those who openly profess to using magic or the philosophic arts are treated with additional

distrust for D10 years in Robert's lands and those neighboring his while the memory of Anna's strange disappearance persists. This translates into an additional -1 penalty to social roles made by affected characters.



Searching the Marsh

Unless magic is used, finding Anna's trail from the priory to the marsh will be almost impossible due to the boggy conditions, the rain, and the lack of light. A Perception + Hunt stress roll (with 4 botch dice) against Ease Factor 24 is required to pick up and follow Anna's trail. If Eadgar is still alive, he also uses his glamor to mask

cries are accompanied by other ghostly lamentations (Perception + Awareness vs. 9) and a strange double image seems to surround her. This is the ghostly echo of Nelda.

If Eadgar is present, he adopts a ghostly aspect to convince Anna that Robert has killed him and that without her by his side he is condemned to hell. He pleads with Anna to join him.

...If the covenant or its companions choose not to involve themselves, then the story does not have a happy ending...

Anna's trail so as to help Anna complete her story, which increases the Ease Factor by a further +2. However, if Robert's resources have been gained, i.e. he has been persuaded that his daughter is not yet safe, the characters gain a bonus of +6 to the roll.

Going into the marsh at night is dangerous with a botch to the above roll meaning someone has slipped into the freezing water or is trapped and being sucked beneath the mud. A rescue effort is required to release them.

If magi join the search, actually finding Anna will likely be down to magic, possibly using an arcane connection collected from her room at the priory.

The characters may make three attempts to find Anna, but each must include a different strategy. For instance, a straight check to follow the trail may be followed by using hunting dogs, followed by drafting the covenfolk and the monks into the search. If the final attempt is not successful, the site of Anna's drowning is found along with her body.

Denouement

If Anna is found alive, her

At this point, as Anna is about to cast herself into the water, her tears begin to glow and glisten. This is the moment when they turn to Mentem vis.

The site of Nelda's drowning has a magical aura of level 3. When autumn turns to winter, the place where she died seems to remember her. It starts with echoes of her voice, calling out again and again for Eadgar, her husband. The echoes can be followed to the place where Nelda drowned, and there she appears, bent double on her knees, grasping at the earth, wailing and crying, a despair like no other.

Those without magic resistance or supernatural abilities experience a temporary +1 Despair Personality Trait. Those affected by the trait who break down and cry with Nelda's spirit find that their tears contain Mentem vis.

Six pawns of Mentem vis can be collected on the night that the spirit of Nelda returns.

Conclusions

The covenant should now have

a potential new Vis source in Nelda's Lament. They just need to work out what the conditions of its use are.

If Anna is returned to Robert, though he may not acknowledge it, he owes a debt to those who rescued his daughter. But if the girl dies, Robert will look around for someone to blame. The priory, the obvious target for his anger, may be too well protected by its position and status. But the magi, because of the trickery used, are seamless proxies.

Prior Michael is not so reticent to show gratitude, whatever the outcome. He is already well disposed to the Order and may become a useful ally to the covenant in future stories.

And of course, there may still be the matter of Eadgar and his search for vitality to contend with. Unless Eadgar is killed (by reducing his Might Pool to zero), he will eventually return.

Required and helpful Resources

When dealing with faeries, it is always useful to have *Realms of Power: Faerie* to hand, but Eadgar's included stats should be sufficient.

And as the story has been designed as a lead-in to *What Lies Beneath*, it would certainly pay to use *Tales of Mythic Europe* in order to continue the story.

Grand Tribunal 2011

As in previous years, there are two Grand Tribunals being held in August 2011 serving both the US and the UK.

Grand Tribunal US

Grand Tribunal America 2011 will take place August 19-21 in Solvang, California, or Mythic New Denmark.

The early registration fee is \$35.00, which you can pay via pay-pal using directly to uza_ars@yahoo.com.

If you want to arrange a different form of payment, such as via regular post, send Toshi a private message through the Atlas-Games forum (just look for *BellaDonna*).

The convention will meet at the Holiday Inn Express, Solvang and the address is 1455 Mission Dr Solvang CA 93463. The phone number is 805-688-2018.

Rooms are running \$149 to \$159 per night but there is a page on the Atlas Games forum where you look for roommates to help reduce the cost.

More details are available at the new Grand Tribunal site: <http://us.grandtribunal.net/>

Grand Tribunal UK

Grand Tribunal UK 2011 will be held on August 19th-21st 2011, at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. As in 2009, the Grand Tribunal will be hosted by the BRS Convention taking place at the same time - Consternation II.



We'd like to invite all **Ars Magica** fans to come to the Grand Tribunal - either in the UK or to our sodales at Grand Tribunal US (held the same weekend - we hope to establish an Intangible Tunnel between the two Tribunals.)

The Grand Tribunal will offer games, talks and panel discussions, and a Charity Raffle of **Ars Magica** related items. We also hope to run another **Ars Magica** Freeform game. If previous Grand Tribunal gatherings are anything to go by, we hope to have a number of **Ars Magica** authors present, too.

Full details can be found on the Consternation II web-site: www.consternation.org.

Membership of Consternation II, which includes membership of Grand Tribunal UK, is available at the early booking price of £22 per head until the 12th of August, when advance bookings will close. Entry on the door will cost £25 for a full weekend, or £6 for the Friday or £12 for Saturday or Sunday.

Also we are now taking bookings for accommodation. Details will be sent to those who register to attend.

Age Limits: As the venue includes a licensed bar, and we aren't set up for younger people, we have to require that any members under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times, and pay full membership rates. Babes in arms may be classified as hand luggage, at the committee's discretion.

Non-Gamers: If you want to bring a non-gaming Significant Other or family member for the weekend, we can offer Non-Gaming Memberships for a nominal £1 each. Just add the name and the extra cost to your membership form. Non-Gaming members can enter the venue and share accommodation, but not play any games.

Accommodation: We will be able to offer a range of rooms in the college at very reasonable prices. We're not taking



bookings yet, but we do now have some prices; see the Accommodation page on the web-site. For those who haven't been there before, Murray Edwards is a five minute stroll from the historic centre of Cambridge, with good parking and other facilities.

Traders: Please contact us to discuss rates and arrangements if you'd like to book space in the dealers' room.

Signing Up and Payments

If you want to sign up, download and print off our flyer on PDF (<http://www.consternation.org/Flyer.pdf>), fill in the form on that, and send it to the address there with your cheque. We prefer cheques for payment, as we don't pay transaction fees...

If you lack a UK bank account, you can send your membership details by e-mail to membership@consternation.org, and the membership secretary will get back to you with a Paypal "Request for Payment" - this lets you send us money, even without a Paypal account. (We prefer to avoid Paypal if possible, as they charge transaction fees which reduce our income.)

More Information

The Atlas-Games forum has dedicated sections for both the 2011 US Grand Tribunal (<http://forum.atlas-games.com/viewforum.php?f=53>) and the UK event (<http://forum.atlas-games.com/viewforum.php?f=54>).

From The Journal of Vulcanis Argens

Being the journal of Vulcanis Argens of House Verditius, discovered during the Vernal Inquisition after the fall of Donum Chanuti. Let its secrets inform the Order.

How can such a mundane start lead to such a fantastical end? I agreed to help investigate the mystery of the disappearing pigs only in order to gain favour with the elder magi and further my case for gaining use of the old abandoned barracks as my sanctum. But in its resolution that outing may have proven to be more important than a score of laboratories. Great things may start with nought but simple chance.

Deep within the forest, as the inaccuracy of my map shows I am uncertain of the best or even correct path, there existed an area where the aura took on a darker temperament. It was here apparently that the swine had been disappearing. At the heart of this place was a wintry group of trees that as we discovered anchored a regio level to the mundane level.

But the start of this story is not what I am compelled to record, nor is the manner or reasoning for arriving in the Magic Realm.

I will, I think, write a volume on the magic realm but I think this journal is not the place for much detail. Suffice to say that the Magic Realm is like a stained glass window, fractured and broken. And as we may look through coloured glass and see certain colours changed or even masked entirely so it seems with the magic realm.

Following a path through the regiones, we arrived in a world of Herbam, specifically a grove similar in aspect to the grove we had left on Oxney. In place of the wintry trees there stood a statue of a woman clutching at her breast, not carved, but seemingly shaped from wood, rooted to the strange earth.

Nothing but that made from the matter of Herbam was visible. Valeria's grog was only visible by virtue of his

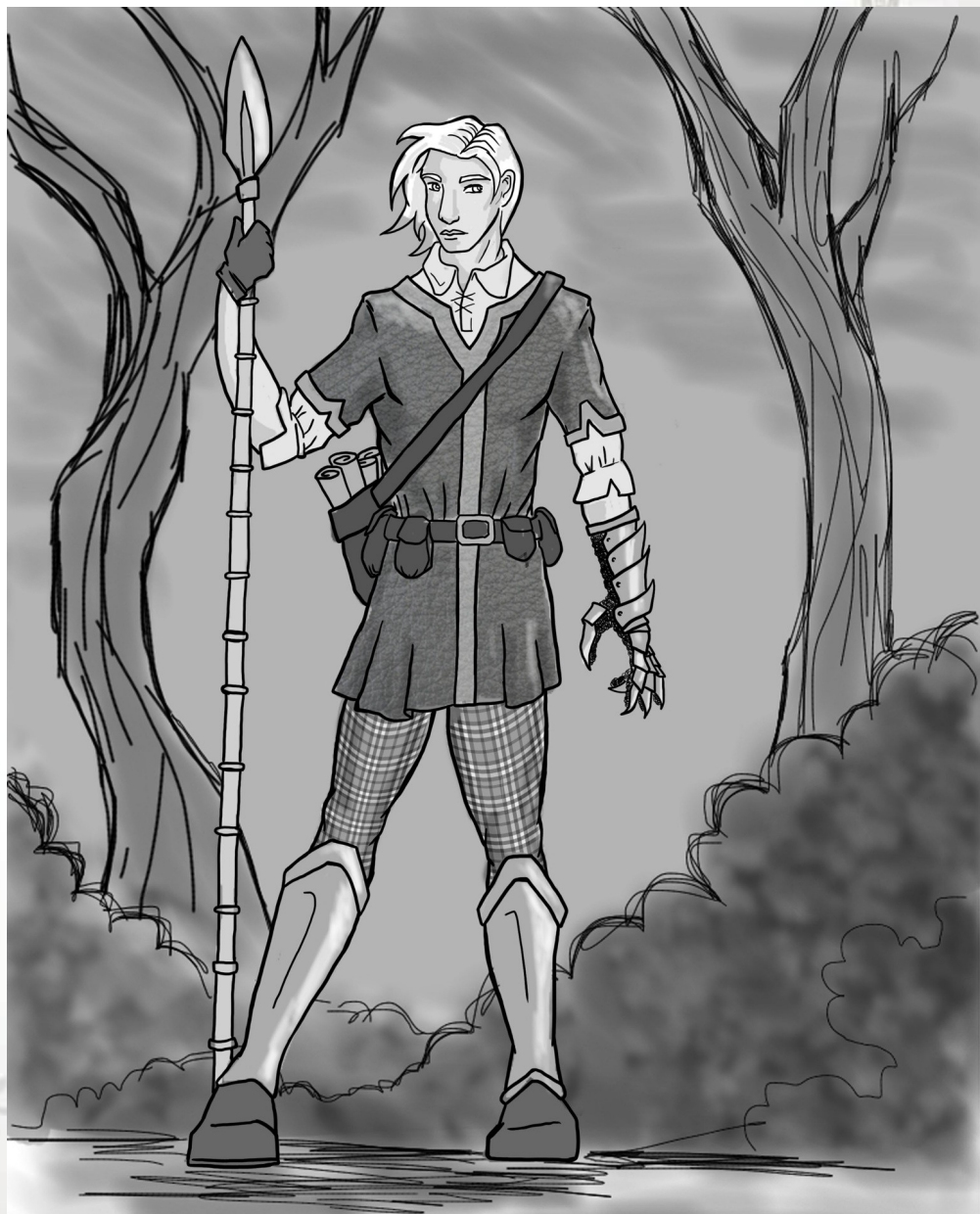
hemp shirt, his wooden shield and a few other items. It seems though that he could see nothing whatever of his surroundings.

There followed a discussion between the magi on the possible reasons for the grog's apparent situation, a discussion that became highly theoretical despite all conceding that in truth we really knew nothing. I wonder now what the grog must have been thinking, essentially alone and unable to perceive anything around him for all the time the magi stood talking.

There is no shame in admitting that I felt

entirely without ideas until two things happened. The first, Benedic, for I remember it being he, addressed the wooden maid. The maid instantly spoke back and claimed that the cycle had been broken. The second, and most important, event was the finding of the broken spear.

A staff of wood was found in the undergrowth, splintered and broken into two shafts. Picking the two pieces up, Valeria instinctively touched the two pieces together by way of ascertaining that the two were originally one. The magic of the place instantly healed the staff, making it whole again.



It was then that we realised that there was a blade on the end of the shaft. We couldn't see it of course and if we were too heavy-handed we could push our fingers straight through the space the blade occupied but we determined that a blade was present, though in itself the blade had been shattered, the pieces lost and invisible in this Herbam domain.

Here events moved quickly. Valeria concentrated on the spear and saw a great horned man, either dressed in or made from all manner of plants and bark, great branches in place of horns. Valeria saw him wield the spear and thrust it into the heart of the wooden maid.

Here I wonder what secrets the Quaesitor knows that the rest of us don't. In an instant she flung the spear as far as she could. Far from being an act of madness, we found ourselves somehow following the spear through a void in which we were immobile for what seemed like an age or just a moment.

Our senses returned and we found ourselves in a cave, harsh gravel beneath our feet and dark stone surrounding us.

The only way out was marked by a familiar glow and the welcome sound of iron being worked in a forge. This then is where I met Wayland Smith.

How best to gain the attention of a magical being so large and powerful? Between the strokes of his great hammer, I struck my steel-capped staff on the ground. The sound was clear and heightened in the forge and the great

smith stopped his work and addressed us.

It was indeed this smith who had forged the broken spear, but to re-forged it he needed a most special metal. Valeria and Benedic both took the request to mean that we should find something and bring it to the forge but I thought otherwise and with little hesitation but much immediate regret I offered up my

staff to both fuel the fire and for the enchanted iron that bound the shaft.

Wayland Smith looked on me kindly and accepted my sacrifice. I believe he understood that my staff was destined to become my Talisman, for indeed was it not but a few seasons before that I had started the binding? It was my honest belief that I would never hold that staff in my hands again.

The great smith smelted my talisman before my very eyes in a forge fed by molten stone. He took that enchanted metal and shaped it into a new spear point. Then, with blows that seemed to shake the very walls sing out in a strange magical tongue, he joined the new blade to the old.

I received the newly remade spear from Wayland's own hands, but it was soon taken from me by Valeria. We left with wicked haste. I rue the secrets I could have learned but were snatched away from me by the Quaesitor and her quest to return some pigs to the village.

I will chide myself when I read back these words in years to come but I resented then her hands on what I rightly

Ah, Conrad. What to say of Conrad?

Vulcanis Argens, let me tell you this. Watch carefully your money for if you do not Conrad will watch it all the more carefully until you lose sight of it altogether. The man is a thief and a scoundrel and will, if allowed, look after his own interests above nearly all others.

His monastic vows mean little to him, as though taken by someone else, though occasionally his conscience may be pricked. He is too fond of his appearance, his comfort, his safety, and his security to ever return to his holy foundations. He will rob from you, and lie to you, and lie about his lying and robbing.

So why then have I not struck him down, or cast him out or turned him over to those who would do those things for me? Because, filius, for every penny that he does embezzle, he may make you a score or more. For every lie that he tells for every covered track, he will uncover a truth and a trail and a reason and a doubt and a fear.

I had experimented with paying him more in the hope that his natural tendencies to thieve might be abated and only his virtues would shine out, but in all honesty that simply served to convince him that I was a soft target with more money than he initially assumed.

Pay him little and keep him close. He will steal from you only those things you should care little about. Your knowledge, your power, and your reputation are safe in his hands and will, I venture, increase with his aid.

From a note scribed by Aurifex Antigonus, found in the chamber of Conrad of Pevensey after the Vernal Inquisition and the Fall of Donum Chanuti



considered my staff. The iron had been re-forged but I still felt the enchantment.

The spear took us to him who had wielded it against the woman in the woods. He dwelled in a realm of beasts and hunters and Benedic took him for Herne the Hunter, a figure of import to him and his old ways. Safe from Herne's hounds within Benedic's circle we listened as he offered a bargain, He would complete the job he had left undone and slay the woman of winter if one of us would agree to be hunted. My companions took an uncomfortable age to respond so I agreed to the challenge, conspiring to lead them a merry dance. But here my offer was rejected; I was, to my disgust, considered unworthy prey.

So it was that Valeria was prompted into action, or rather her grog, in the form of a great stag. Astride him, my spear in her hands still, she launched herself far away.

Later she returned and, handing me back the spear, she confirmed that the task was done and that winter was slain.

We left the Magic Realm by the same way we entered and it was clear that I should take the spear with me. On returning to Oxney, the spear and the staff were as one. The shaft and the head were those forged by Wayland but the fifteen rings that had bound my own staff now bound the shaft. And that shaft was of rowan, just as mine had been. It is exactly as it is now, standing in the corner

before where I write these words.

My sacrifice had earned me more than I had thought; a lesson for the future perhaps. My talisman has been worked by the greatest smith of them all, I wonder now what my own hands will make of it.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens.

Conrad has persuaded me to accompany him to the Tribunal. It seems strange to write that for one might think him the magus and I the Venditore, such am I instructed to do this or be there or attend to that, and my objections met only by heavy sighs and tiresome glances.

The journey so far has been most strange, with the entire covenant of Semitae appearing within the common ground between the upper and lower villages. Semitae work and study and travel in a convoy of covered and uncovered wagons. Their horses have a touch of the fae about them I am sure for they did not react as unfavourably to my presence as our own animals do.

Their apparent leader, Gerfallon of Criamon, instructed those who were to follow them to Blackthorn to clamber inside my coach and to refrain from looking out of the windows. Tostig and Driver Tom were apologetic at least but I think Conrad was disappointed as he had professed to looking forward to riding his horse for the few days.

I was not comfortable. My coach can



carry four with a little room to spare between them but their proximity made me hot and I am not so used to sharing my space with others, especially not grogs, much as I value their service and loyalty.

Semitae appear to have powerful magic at their command as they are able to transport themselves through some place like a regio, perhaps even through the magic realm as we experienced this week just gone. Our first stop brought us to a place not far from one of the reputed forges of Wayland Smith. I took the opportunity to pay my respects and thank him again for the gift of the spearhead. As I left the stones that formed the forge-site I stumbled on a thing half-buried in the ground. Uncovering it I saw it to be an ingot of iron, untouched by years or weather.

With another gift from Wayland Smith I wonder whether I have been too hasty in naming myself after Vulcan.

This evening by the fire I had the chance to talk with Junius, the most accomplished Verditius in the Tribunal. We discussed the House for a while and spoke softly of the secret things. Junius agreed that when the time came he would guide me through my first initiation into the deeper knowledge of the Verditii.



*Extract from the journal of
Vulcanis Argens:*

I learned a valuable lesson today. I should not have neglected my Parma Magica. Bonisagus developed it for a very distinct reason, that it might protect us from all those who wish us harm or mischief.

Benedic became entranced by a tree spirit in the forest where we camped last night and could not bring himself to attend to either his own needs or his friends. He refused all food and would not return to the camp even after staying at the foot of the tree all night. We must be thankful that the weather last night was fair.

Bellatorius and I, alerted by loyal Tostig, went to fetch him. He refused to give up his vigil by the tree. It was at this stage that events moved somewhat quickly. The spirit, affronted at our insistence, lashed out at Bellatorius, hefting him aloft on a great wind. I set myself for a casting but was entwined by roots that sprang from the ground. I was locked, helpless, my parma magica unable to resist the magically motivated roots.

I learned then that Bellatorius is more than just a scholar. Rarely have I seen such a destructive swathe of magical fire. What's more, it was magical fire that was potent enough to pierce through the spirit's might and set ablaze the tree in which it housed itself. The spirit immediately released Benedic and he was incandescent with rage, though not, it has to be said, as incandescent as the tree itself. As I write these words, Benedic is in the next room, presumably still wearing the angered face I last saw.

*Extract from the journal of
Vulcanis Argens:*

I have just left Golias of Tylalus, resident of Blackthorn, talking to Conrad. I had to excuse myself on pretence of attending my colleagues from Donum Chanuti while secretly attending to these words instead.

It seems Golias is open to commissioning me to craft for him a device which could earn me much recognition and wealth. Conrad, doing what Aurifex once assured me he could do, piqued the interest of Golias through his salesmanly banter. To my

disappointment, Golias was not interested in the elegant solution to aura awareness that I had planned, but instead bemoaned his lack of chess partners.

While I know little of the game myself I do know my parens worked on a vexing version of the game in which the opponents could not see the enemy pieces until the armies drew close to each other, and even then only through a rather artistic mist. I was led to believe that this emulated the sense of uncertainty experienced by generals when they found themselves needing to plan both offence and defence.

I made a poor effort of describing the game to Golias and regret now attempting to do so. Then it struck me! His problem was not that he was bored with the game he played, but that he could not play as often as he wished. He had few opponents and had of late resorted to corresponding with far-flung magi and including chess moves with each missive. I cannot imagine how long a game might take using this method; like reading some great fiction when an entire season must pass between pages.

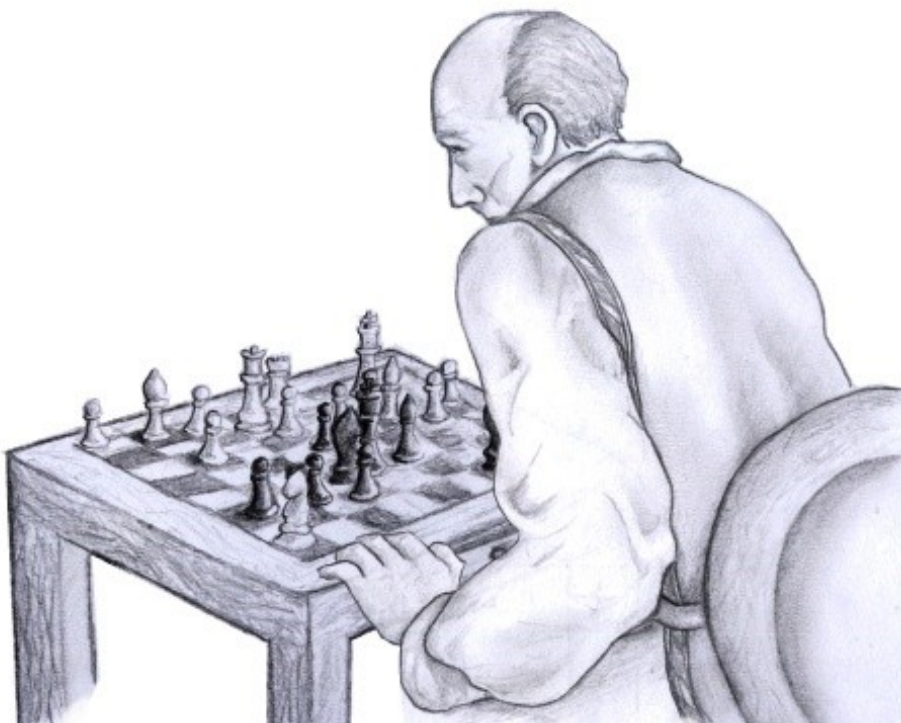
The solution to his problem then is to play at a board where the opponent could be many miles distant. The idea fell from my lips before I realised its potential. But even as realisation gathered behind my eyes I found myself judging how such a device might be constructed and instilled.

Clearly, the board would need a twin. If two players are to play and both must perceive the moves made by the other, then both must have a board. If there are two boards, they must be made one through Arcane Connection.

Each board will have an enchantment instilled in it which watches for movement on and around the other board, which is possible as the boards are connected so intimately. But this watchful eye on its own is not sufficient. It must act as incitement for a further effect designed to move the pieces in perfect mimicry of the pieces at the other board.

The cost of such a thing will be high as two boards are required in order that two magi might play. Both effects may be up to sixth magnitude and the device itself must be opened with sufficient Vis to contain the magic. Luckily I do not think the pieces themselves will need to be enchanted.

I find myself cursing the distance between myself and my lab for I would happily begin preparations for the device this night. In truth though, I know that I need a deeper understanding of Intellego before I commit to the project. But, Golias has said he looks forward to seeing a proposal. If I forgo sleep tonight and request coloured inks from Blackthorn I think I may have that proposal for him by morning.



Beyond the Fields We Know: Rûbezahl

Rûbezhal is an interesting faerie, because he demonstrates the way roles can drift over time. Many of his features are clearly those of the god Wotan, but softened as his territory has localised. He is no longer a lord of creation, as the All-Father, but is now only responsible for a single mountain range, the Riesenbergr on the edges of Bohemia. This range is forested in 1220, and uninhabited except for woodcutters and miners, who sneak away into its dark heart to return with treasures.

Rûbezhal's physical form is described variously. In some versions of his story he is like the leshy from *Realms of Power: Faerie* (page 92-93), a wild man of the woods, gigantic in size. In this form he acts as a protector of the forest. In others he looks like a classic devil, complete with tail, and in this form he acts as a tester of virtue. In still others he is a gnome, where he acts as a bringer of wealth to the deserving. Two versions

are described here: the first is a gigantic robed figure, superficially similar to a Cistercian monk, with elemental powers. The second is as the king of the gnomes. Neither is well suited as a player character.

I don't feel I have quite grasped the core of this faerie, so I apologise to the original poster if I have misinterpreted him. My sources are in English, and for children, both of which tend to erase out some of the more interesting features of the creatures being discussed.

Rûbezhal as a Storm God

This faerie embodies the elemental forces of the forest, but unlike storm elementals he can be propitiated with rituals. He allows humans to gather treasure, hunt and cut wood in his domain provided they are polite. Politeness includes verbal expressions

By Timothy Ferguson

of thanks, small offerings, and limiting the amount of material removed during a single visit. In Rûbezhal's own area, no storm elementals are found: he destroys magical spirits that undercut his role as lord of weather.

Rûbezhal as The Gnome King

The gnomes that serve Rûbezhal are useful for combat, but also are the creatures that hide gems for humans to find. They build dykes that hold back the liquid rock under the earth, and if they channel the rock nearer the surface they can use it to warm the soil, allowing crops to be grown in winter. They can also shatter the dykes, allowing the rivers of magma to flow to the surface. The gnomes keep scalding gases that transform

Rûbezhal as a Storm God

Faerie Might: 30+10 (Auram)

Characteristics: Int, +3, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +9, Sta +3, Dex +6, Qik -1

Size: +4

Virtues and Flaws: Positive Folktales: External Vis (major), 2 x Focus Powers, Greater Power, 3 x Huge, Increased Might (major and 2 minor), Faerie Sight, Humanoid Faerie, Place of Power, Sovereign Ward (geographically limited), Traditional Ward (politeness), Incognizant,

Combat:

Gauntlet: Init -1, Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +11

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-9), -3 (10-18), -5 (19-27), Incapacitated (28-36), Dead (37+)

Pretenses: Brawl 4, others as suit story. Skilled in all matters relating to home territory.

Powers:

Focus power (storms), 8 points, Init. -4, Auram: This power allows the character to create the equivalent of Hermetic effects of level 50 or less, as related to storms. 2 intricacy points have been spent to increase the

maximum level of effect. The character's Might pool isn't really deep enough to slug it out using these sorts of effect, but countryside-destroying storms, blizzards and lightning allow it to keep its foes at a distance and wear them down. Rûbezhal plays the storms harp to use this power, and theft of the harp can sometimes rob him of the chance to use some of his effects.

Steps that Shake the Earth. 3 points, Init -3, Terram: This power causes the ground for 100 paces to violently shake. Characters fall unless they make a Quickness - Encumbrance stress roll of 10 or more, modified as follows: +2 standing still, +2 on solid stone, moving slowly or on earth +0, running -2, on a narrow bridge -6. (as Earth Shock described in *ArM5* page 56.) Note that the faerie is unaffected by his own power.

Equipment: Storm harp: this is an External Vis source.

Vis: 6 pawns Auram, storm harp. A human holding the harp can control the weather with one Greater Faerie Power. A useful one for most Mythic Europeans is the ability to decide when it will rain. Magi are more likely to be interested in flight (it is so large it can carry four humans of average size) and combat effects.

Appearance: A gigantic man, clothed in a robe of clouds, and carrying a harp. The ground trembles when he walks.

Sub Rosa



stone into noble metals. They do not merely hide gems for humans to find, they construct the seams of metal for which humans mine.

The version of Rúbezhal that is lord of the gnomes has many strange treasures, the most interesting of which is the striped wand. Rúbezhal gave it to his captured princess, because she was pining for human company. He instructed her to touch a turnip and call the name of a friend. The princess believed she had summoning her friends, and even her cat, to the underground realm. These versions of her friends rapidly aged, however, and were ancient within a week. Rúbezhal explained that as the sap was expended in the turnips, these

puppets aged. They could, however, be replaced, simply by touching a new basket of turnips.

The princes then used the wand to create messengers to her mortal beloved, by touching turnips and creating a bee, a cricket and a magpie that carried her messages. Eventually she escaped, using the wand to create a horse. She appears to have retained the wand.

Arguably, the wand calls a faerie and gives it a shape, using the very limited vitality of the root vegetable as a battery. It also, however, allows the faerie to read the memories of the human, in a very detailed way, to make sure it plays the role of the created friend perfectly.

An interesting element of the gnome king version of this faerie is that his personality alters with his shape. For example, while in gnome form he sees a beautiful maiden and decides to spy on her. He takes magpie form and sits in a tree that overlooks her garden. While doing this, however, he is far more interested in the worms at the base of the tree than the girl. He takes the form of a handsome prince and is immediately smitten with her.

Rúbezhal as The Gnome King

Faerie Might: 30+10

Characteristics: Int, 3, Per +2, Pre -3, Com -2, Str 0, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +4

Size: -2

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Sight, 3 x Great Characteristics, Humanoid Faerie, Immunity from Terram, Place of Power, Monstrous Appearance, Observant, Little, Sovereign Ward (Geographically bound), Incognizant.

Personality Traits: Varies by shape +5

Combat:

The character's pretences vary markedly by form, and he tends to use minions for combat.

Gauntlet: Init +4, Attack +9*, Defense +12*, Damage +2

Pick: Init +5, Attack +12*, Defense +12*, Damage +5

* includes pretense specialisations

If the character changes to human shape, he may use a great sword instead of his pick. He is slightly slower, but stronger, in human form.

Pick: Init +4 Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +11.

Wound Penalties (gnome form): -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

Pretenses: Athletics 2 (mining), Awareness 2 (vitality sources), Bargain 5 (with mortals), Brawl 6 (humans), Carouse 1 (feasts), Craft 6 (smith), Faerie Speech 5 (orders), Great Weapon 6 (pick).

Powers:

Illusory Home: 4 points, Init -4, Imaginem: creates a splendid underground kingdom, to charm his abducted princess.

2 Focus power (transformation), 5 points, Init -3, Corpus/Animal. Rúbezhal's range of possible transformations is far wider than a single selection of the Focus power allows. He is able to, at minimum, change into a magpie, a handsome prince, and a version of himself so small he can walk through a keyhole. This has been represented by purchasing Focus power (transformation) twice, once for human forms and once for animal forms.

Equipment: Vast wealth, Servants, striped wand, noblising gases.

Vis: 6 pawn Terram, a gemstone.

Appearance: This variant is a skilled shapeshifter.

The Ghost in the Snow

This article presents Gyda Gymisdottir, a grotesque misshapen woman from the cold far north. As one of the Muspelli, magical giants presented in *Rival Magic*, she presents an interesting challenge, both magically and morally. The magi first encounter Gymisdottir when they hear of a giant's rampage in the snowy hills to the north. But on setting out to stop the beast in its tracks, can they be sure they're the hunters and not the hunted?

Introduction

This article serves two purposes. The first is as a one-shot scenario designed to help storyguides make use of the *Rival Magic* supplement with as little work as possible. In this respect it should make using the book as easy as running this scenario (while keeping your copy of *Rival Magic* to hand, of course). But it also serves to introduce the Muspelli to your saga as the rivals to the Order that they are meant to be. However the magi react to Gyda Gymisdottir in this story, whether they forge an alliance, part ways as enemies, or even kill her, there are repercussions that are discussed and further possibilities for using Gymisdottir herself or others of her kind.

The Muspelli

A tradition of magicians who derive their power through worship of the jotun giants, the Muspelli seek out ancient and primal powers of creation locked away in the dark places of the world. The Muspelli wield incredible ritual powers making them a formidable enemy. Skilled shapechangers, they warp their mortal body into a powerful physical form they call the Etin-Mod. This form is

an expression of their connection and sympathy with their jotnar patron. Only by unleashing the Etin-Mod can they call upon their full might.

Muspelli call their magic "Trolldomur" and it is based on the use of Supernatural Abilities. They extend their abilities through rituals known as Utiseta, in which the

By Robin Bland

Muspelli builds a ritual space, assumes his Etin-Mod form, and undertakes ritual acts of worship potentially lasting for hours.

For details on the cosmology, mythology, mind set, and power of



Sub Rosa

the jotuns and their Muspelli followers, see chapter four of *Rival Magic*. This article should give you enough information to use Gyda Gymisdottir and her powers.

Gyda Gymisdottir

It was not her Gift that caused her village elders to leave her in the woods but her horrific deformity; her three faces, the mark of her giant blood. She was left to die in the icy snowstorm, but her cries haunted the woods for three days before the frost giant Grononsonn found her, led to her by the flock of white crows that perch and nest upon him. Grononsonn scooped the baby up and cared for her, conscious of her importance. As the girl grew, Grononsonn captured humans to teach her and to talk with her. Many escaped. Many more died trying to escape. Then one day, while Grononsonn was away from his mountain hunting in the valley, a Muspelli found the girl mentioned in

local rumors. He stole her away and offered her up to Gymir the frost giant, the ruler of Jotunheim deep within the magic realm.

The girl was savage, having tasted the flesh of those humans whom Grononsonn deemed to have outlived their usefulness, but Gymir tamed her and taught her the ways of Trolldomur. Soon her savagery was restricted to the Etin-Mod she carried within her and her mortal form learned the value of control.

Gyda completed her time learning from Gymir seven years ago. Since then she has done Gymir's work in the frozen lands of the north, driving mankind back from the wilds when they encroach. But among Gymir's followers she has a moderate outlook on mankind. She sees their value, as servants to the jotun if nothing else, and does not seek to kill outright. Unless her etin-mod takes hold, that is.

Her mortal form is clearly unnatural. She still has the horrifying

appearance of having three faces that sealed her fate as a newborn and as she grew the giant blood in her veins asserted itself. She is now unnaturally tall and carries a hefty weight with it. She wears a dress stitched together from clothes taken from the travelers she has chased and caught.

Her Etin-Mod is even larger and her three faces split into three distinct heads. Two appear similar, and are rugged, robust, and savage in aspect. The third is different. It is the face of a juvenile girl, innocent and terrified. It cannot speak for crying and screaming. Sometimes, when exhausted, it sleeps and provides merciful relief. The head is a manifestation of the innocence stolen away and deprived to Gymisdottir. Her massive naked form sprouts white eagle feathers from her back, shoulders, and arms.

She is accompanied by one of Grononsonn's white crows, an animal companion that has watched over her since the day the giant found her.

Gyda Gymisdottir, Human Form

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +1, Com -1, Str +2, Sta +5, Dex 0, Qik 0

Size: +2

Age: 35

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Muspelli; Giant Blood, Greater Immunity (Exposure), Great Stamina, Warrior, Puissant Winter's Breath; Horrifying Appearance*, Mentor (Grononson), Hatred (giant-blooded who mix with humans), Lane, Animal Companion

Personality Traits: Deep Thinker +1, Hateful +2, Honest -1

Combat:

Dodge: Init -1, Attack N/A, Defense -2, Damage N/A

Fist: Init -1, Attack +1, Defense +1, Damage +2

Bludgeon: Init -1, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +4

Warhammer: Init -1, Attack +10, Defense +4, Damage +14

Soak: +6

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Finland 2 (legends), Athletics 1 (running), Awareness 2 (searching), Brawl 1 (Fist), Carouse 1 (power drinking), Concentration 2 (spell concentration), Finnese 2 (accuracy), Finnish 5 (storytelling), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 2 (lying about her motives), Hideworking 3 (skinning birds), Hunt 2 (covering tracks), Jotun 2 (deference), Leadership 2 (intimidation), Muspelli Lore 2 (history), Great Weapon 4 (Warhammer), Penetration 2 (Winter's Breath), Stealth 3 (hiding within arctic forests), Survival 2 (arctic),

Supernatural Abilities: Shapeshifter 3 (birds), Sjonhverfing 5 (natural features), Storm's Eye 5 (lightening), Wilderness Sense 3 (weather), Wildfire 5 (changing size), Winter's Breath 6 + 2 (snow)

Equipment: Partial fur armor, cloak of eagle feathers, hand cart

Appearance: An immensely tall woman with three faces and snow white hair. She is clothed in a cloak of white eagle feathers, which she covers with another heavy woolen cloak. She remains hooded and even binds her face behind cloth to disguise her three conjoined faces.

* See *Rival Magic*, chapter 4

Gyda's cart is loaded with the various tools she needs for her magic. Hatchets and rope for making her platform, her great hammer used in her etin-mod form, and a sack of coals from Surtur's forge; Ignem vis.

Intentions

Gymisdottir wants as much of the north covered by snow as her and Gymir's power can muster. And wherever the snow lays and no mortal footfall touches it, those lands are claimed by Gymir and forbidden to the likes of Man. This is a lofty and likely unreasonable aim. In her calmer moments she recognizes the goal's futility. She also recognizes that as much as it is in her power to rid the land of Man, it is in her power to grant that land to them for a time. She uses this power to demand what she needs of them, typically food and livestock.

But Gyda Gymisdottir also wants what most women want at some point; she wants a child. This is perhaps easier desired than fulfilled as none of her attempts have left her with child.

If the magi she encounters treat her fairly, or "wisely" as she would have it, she considers them only potential enemies rather than outright enemies. If the magi are in a position to impose upon her icy domain to the north then she considers ways to defend against them, to turn the land and its people against them, and to either drive them back or worse.

Powers

The magic of the Muspelli is called Trolldomur. Any supernatural ability used is part of the Muspelli's trolldomur, but their rituals are called utisetá and allow for great power. The Muspelli also use devices which are analogous to the Hermetic talisman, and they possess a limited form of magic resistance. The following sections explain each of these.

Trolldomur and Utisetá

Trolldomur is based around a series of Supernatural Abilities (we've pulled Gyda's out into a separate line in the nearby stat blocks). They can be used on their own for limited effects, but the real power comes from the practice of utisetá, or ritual magic. Cast while in the etin mod form, utisetá rituals are cast over several hours in which the muspelli accumulates power to achieve effects far beyond the normal scope of that Ability.

The first stage is determining whether Gyda can cast the desired utisetá. The level of the effect is worked out first (you'll need a copy of *Rival Magic* for this but we have included some sample utisetá rituals below to help) and then a **Casting Total** is generated.

In our case, this is:

Gyda Gymisdottir, Etin-Mod

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

Size: +3

Age: 35

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Muspelli; Giant Blood, Large, Great Strength, Greater Immunity (Exposure), Great Stamina, Warrior, Puissant Winter's Breath, Horrifying Appearance, Mentor (Grononson), Hatred (giant-blooded who mix with humans), Animal Companion

Qualities: Camouflage, Loathsome Appearance

Personality Traits: Deep Thinker +1, Hateful +2, Honest -1

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack N/A, Defense +1, Damage N/A

Fist: Init +0, Attack +2, Defense +2, Damage +5

Bludgeon: Init +0, Attack +3, Defense +1, Damage +7

Warhammer: Init +0, Attack +11, Defense +5, Damage +17

Soak: +8

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Finland 2 (legends), Athletics 1 (running), Awareness 2 (searching), Brawl 1 (Fist), Carouse 1 (power

drinking), Concentration 2 (spell concentration), Finnese 2 (accuracy), Finnish 5 (storytelling), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 2 (lying about her motives), Hideworking 3 (skinning birds), Hunt 2 (covering tracks), Jotun 2 (deference), Leadership 2 (intimidation), Muspelli Lore 2 (history), Great Weapon 4 (Warhammer), Penetration 2 (Winter's Breath), Stealth 3 (hiding within arctic forests), Survival 2 (arctic),

Supernatural Abilities: Shapeshifter 3 (birds), Sjonhverfing 5 (natural features), Storm's Eye 5 (lightening), Wilderness Sense 3 (weather), Wildfire 5 (changing size), Winter's Breath 6 + 2 (snow)

Equipment: Warhammer, partial fur armor, cloak of eagle feathers

Appearance: Gyda's etin-mod form is truly horrific. Her three faces become three separate heads, two of which are gnarled, twisted, and hideous, while the third, upon the left, is a haunting innocent reflection of what she might have been but for an accident of birth. This third face is perpetually weeping and strains as if to escape the monstrous form that bears it. Her body is immense, hunched, and clothed in a coat of white feathers that grow from her back, shoulders, and arms. These feathers can flush with color, helping to hide her within the forests where she spends much of her time. Apart from this, her Etin-Mod form is naked.

Gyda's Presence drops considerably due to her horrifying appearance. Shouldn't this be intimidating? Well, the rules as written say no. It's justified by her three heads being seemingly in conflict. True, her size is overwhelming and her three heads are something of a draw, but they are ugly, misshapen and aren't all pulling in the same direction. Perhaps all that is too much of a distraction to be truly terrifying.

Casting Total:

Characteristic + (Ability x Power Modifier) + Aura + Stress Die

We're simplifying this a little for ease of play by removing the effects of Muspelli warping. And the Power Modifier should be considered to be 4 in all cases when using Gyda.

If Gyda reaches the level of the target effect, she can move on to empower the ritual.

Penetration is dealt with in the usual way, by subtracting the Effect Level from the Casting Total and then applying Penetration.

Penetration Total:

(Casting Total - Effect Level) + Penetration Bonus

This is done as a series of simple rolls against an Ease Factor, with the excess points accumulated until the target effect level is reached.

Gathering Power:

Characteristic + Supernatural Ability + Simple Die, versus Ease Factor of 9

One roll is made every hour until the points equal or exceed the Effect Level.

One interesting aspect of utiseteta is that the Muspelli may spend an extra hour once the effect has been empowered to store it in a gandur, an object of special significance to the jotun patron. In Gyda's case, this is a cloak of eagle feathers.

The power of the utiseteta takes its toll however. Maintaining the etin mod is not easy and every hour that the muspelli spends in this form the character must make a Deprivation Roll (starting with Ease Factor 3) as per ArM5, page 180. Any fatigue and/or wound penalties gained apply only to these rolls until the etin mod resumes human form, in case they all apply as normal.

Shapeshifter Utiseteta (Stamina)

Cloak of the Snowy Weasel

Shapeshifting Ease Factor: 12

R: Personal, D: Concentration, T: Individual

Gyda has one casting of this stored in her gandur, which she can call upon at will. It transforms Gyda into a snow-white weasel (size -7). She uses this if threatened and overwhelmed on the assumption that she can make her escape before her assailants work out what has happened.

(Base 12)

Sjonhverfing Utiseteta (Intelligence)

The Ghost in the Snow

Sjonhverfing Ease Factor : 15

R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Group

Gyda has two castings of this stored in her gandur, which she can call upon at will. Once released, the magic makes her footsteps in the snow disappear. It also masks her smell, making her trail impossible to follow by looking at the ground alone.

(Base 9, +3 Sun, +3 affect smell)

The Great Hunt

Sjonhverfing Ease Factor : 21

R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Group

Creates an illusory hunting party, all identically dressed and carrying drums which they beat as they move through the woodland. They do this all day, heading in the direction determined by Gyda at the time of casting.

Gyda casts this as the dawn approaches and stores it temporarily in her gandur. She will probably have already released the effect by the time the players catch up with her.

(Base 18, +3 to affect one other sense)

Utiseteta Example: Gyda wants to cast The Great Hunt to flush out Healfdene the half-bear. This Sjonhverfing utiseteta has an Ease Factor of 21. Gyda has a Casting Total of Intelligence (+0) + Sjonhverfing (5) $\times 4$ + aura (+3) + Stress Die (5) = 28. She successfully casts the utiseteta.

She must then empower the utiseteta. She does this by maintaining the ritual for several hours. Empower Totals of 14, 8, 15, 13, 13, and 15 see the utiseteta empowered in six hours. She then spends another hour to enchant the effect into her eagle-feather cloak. She loses three fatigue levels through the Deprivation Checks as a result of maintaining the etin mod.

Tomorrow, she hunts.

The Unseen Watcher

Sjonhverfing Ease Factor : 15

R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind

Gyda has two castings of this stored in her gandur, which she can call upon at will. Once released, the magic clothes her in the appearance of a large snowdrift. It most likely looks out of place and a suitable roll against Ease Factor 6 draws the eye to it. The effect is canceled at will or when Gyda moves from her chosen spot.

(Base 9, +6 for touch and smell)

Storm's Eye Utiseteta (Strength)

The Edge of the World

Storm's Eye East Factor 6

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

This is a base Storm's Eye effect and can be summoned up without the utiseteta ritual.

Gyda calls a great fog around her for 100 paces in each direction, which reduces visibility to a mere 10 feet. It moves with her, or she can anchor the effect upon another person or object. She typically does this to obscure her casting space from those who might wander in to it.

(Base 6)

Gymir's Anger

Storm's Eye Ease Factor 24

R: Sight, D: Sun, T: Ind

As the effect described in *Rival Magic*, page 99. Gyda has two castings of this stored in her gandur, which she can call upon at will. When each effect is released amid a storm (which Gyda can summon up with a Strength + Storm's Eye + Stress Die vs. Ease Factor 12), Gyda can direct two lightning bolts at targets she can see. Gyda needs a Dexterity + Finesse roll equal to (12 - size) to hit her target. Lightning bolts do +30 damage.

(Base 9, +9 Sight, +6 thunder and lightning)

Wildfire Utisetia (Presence)

Surtur's Blade Assails the Land

Wildfire Ease Factor 27

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Group

Unleashes a line of self-sustaining fires 50 yards long that leaps between trees. The flames spawn natural fires where they find fuel and sparks and embers can carry on the wind and ignite new areas where they fall.

Gyda uses Ignem vis to empower this effect given her poor capability with casting Wildfire. She uses this effect principally to smoke out her quarry.

(Base 15, +6 Sun, +6 Group)

Winter's Breath Utisetia (Stamina)

The Icebound Woods

Winter's Breath Ease Factor 36

R: Voice, D: Moon, T: Boundary

Gyda calls down a mighty cold storm that covers a target woodland in snow, ice, and bitter chill winds for the best part of a month. The effect must penetrate, but the true effect is to rid the woods of man, thereby leaving her undisturbed in her hunt for the creature Healfdene.

Those within the woods and without magic resistance (there is limited penetration on Gyda's casting) suffer exposure as per the table on *Rival Magic*, page 105.

(Base 15, +3 Moon, +12 Boundary, +6 size)

Gandur

A gandur is a symbol of the muspelli's jotun patron. It isn't necessarily enchanted, but it is symbolically powerful and assists with casting utisetia. The effects of these rituals can also be stored in the gandur and recalled at will, allowing the muspelli to prepare well in advance of an encounter and on friendly soil.

Gyda's gandur is a cloak of eagle feathers and it contains the following effects (all described above):

- ◆ Gymir's Anger
- ◆ Surtur's Blade Assails the Land
- ◆ The Ghost in the Snow
- ◆ The Unseen Watcher

Magic Resistance

As with other traditions beyond the Order, certain powers grant the magician limited forms of magic resistance.

Gyda's magical defences are listed in the nearby table and these defenses are used as follows:

Confounding Magics: Add Gyda's Magical Defense Bonus to the Ease Factor of Concentration Rolls made by casters of effects with Concentration Duration (or similar, such as Performance Magic) that target Gyda either singly or as a group.

Magical Fortitude: If Gyda is affected by an effect covered by this defense that causes damage, then she receives a Soak Bonus equal to her Magical Defense Bonus.

Strength of Form: If Gyda is placed under some effect that changes her form, she may make a **Stamina + Magical Defense Bonus + simple die roll against an Ease Factor of 9** to return to her natural form.

The **Magical Defense Bonus** is calculated as follows:

Magical Defense Bonus:

Art divided by 5 (rounded up)
or Ability Score

In Gyda's case, all her powers derive from Supernatural Abilities, so the Bonus is equal to the appropriate Supernatural Ability score.

See *Rival Magic*, page 9 or *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition*, page 10 for further details on these magical defenses.

Here immense size also offers a

Power	Defense	Notes	Magical Defense Bonus
Shapeshifter	Strength of Form	Defense against Animal and Corpus effects	3 (+1 birds)
Sjonhverfing	Confounding Magics	Defense against Imaginem effects	5
Storm's Eye	Confounding Magics	Defense against Auram effects	5 (+1 lightening)
Wildfire	Magical Fortitude	Defense against Ignem effects	5
Winter's Breath	Magical Fortitude	Defense against ice, snow, or cold effects	8 (+1 snow)

degree of protection. Most Corpus effects used by the Order are effective on targets only up to size +1. Gyda exceeds that by some margin and is not therefor a valid Target.

Supporting Cast

The characters below are important to Gyda in some way and may be introduced if the covenant encounters her beyond the confines of this initial story.

Grononsonn Tall hammer

The frost giant Grononsonn has not seen Gydir Gymisdottir since she was taken from him but he knows her location and her fate thanks to the reports of the white crow which accompanies her everywhere she goes. He is pleased she has gained power under Gymir and while he sees no immediate need to support her, she will always have a powerful ally whether she knows it or not.

If you need statistics for Grononsonn you could do worse than to use that for Rok the Storm Giant presented in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 87 and adjust them as per the guidelines for frost giants on the previous page.

Vémundr Óttarrson

Vémundr is the Muspelli who

sought out Gyda and took her away from Grononsonn. This was done not from concern or from duty but as a bargaining tool with his patron.

Vémundr is a cruel and cowardly man. Despite his large size and fearsome appearance of his etin-mod, he is a master illusionist and hides and watches events from the safety of his illusions, remaining unseen until ready to unleash his other powers.

If you need statistics for Vémundr then turn to *Rival Magic*, page 81 and start from there.

Scenario Précis

A magical creature has left the Magic Realm having stolen something from Jotunheim. Gymir has called upon Gyda Gymirsdottir to kill the escaping creature and return the item to him through a ritual sacrifice performed in the mortal world.

But in the mortal world, the bear has gone to ground and hidden himself in a deep woodland. Gyda has brought a dread winter onto the forest and driven out the peasants so she can hunt her quarry in peace. But the savage bear has been attacking travelers on the road, looking for food denied him in the woods.

The magi are drawn to the story when one of their companions falls

prey to the beast. Persuaded to help, the magi encounter the magic of the muspelli and must separate friend from enemy to find the true culprit.

Scenario Background

The creature Healfdene is a transformed human, giant-blooded and cursed to take the form of a great white bear. The item he stole is a bear's tooth (see the nearby description) and he believes it has the power to help him control his transformation. He is wrong. It does quite the opposite. Far from giving him control over his form, it has trapped him in his savage bear aspect. Fearful or those who are coming after him and disoriented he has headed south, bringing the winter with him.

Gyda has followed on and has ensnared the woods in a deep and unnatural winter. She has found a magical aura in the woods and has set up a casting platform, from which she has been building her power for the confrontation to come with her savage prey.

She is not expecting, nor is she prepared for, magical interference. She has not encountered magi of Hermes before and is wary. She sees any magic not issuing from the Jotuns as dangerous and so she watches the magi when they enter her wintry domain.

Expected Sequence of Play

The covenant is drawn into the story when they hear reports that one of the covenant companions has been hurt on the road some way to the north of the covenant. He is gravely injured and cannot travel and so messengers have been dispatched to fetch help. On arriving to tend to him, it seems the truth is a little stranger.

Asked to investigate a strange

The Tooth of Bödvar Bjarki

The device that has been stolen from Gymir is a tooth taken from the fallen warrior Bödvar Bjarki who took the shape of a bear to fight in his many battles.

The tooth has a powerful shape-changing effect within it, put there through Surtur's own craft magic. The effect is powerful not only in what it does but in its penetration.

The Shape of the Warlike Bear

MuCo(An) 50

+30 pen, constant effect

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Individual

When this tooth is placed in the target's mouth, the target turns into a large

ferocious bear and the tooth embeds itself into the target. The bear retains much of the target's personality but becomes more savage, amplifying the target's fears and/or objectives. The target has no control over this.

The bear form is always at least standard bear size (+2 if using the free *Book of Mundane Beasts* PDF from Atlas-Games) and the bear form should be calculated as for magi of House Bjornaer (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*).

The target cannot resume their natural form until the tooth is pulled from the bear's mouth.

(special non-Hermetic, including penetration and environmental trigger)

bitter winter that has descended on the nearby woods, the magi learn of a beast that seems to be haunting it. But as they set about their hunt it seems there's more than one beast to be found in the woods, and they have a rare chance to make an ally of a strange foreign wizard.

With or with their ally, the beast in the woods is still a threat and the final act sees the hunt through to its conclusion.

Act One: The Endless Winter

The magi become involved in the search and are confronted with strange magic and a mystery as to what the ghost in the snow is.

The Call to Action

On a cold and snowy December day, a messenger arrives at the covenant with news that one of the covenant companions has been gravely wounded on the road some thirty miles away. He explains that he could not travel but that he is being cared for by his master Freiherr Otto.

Otto rules a small town on the edge of some deep woods some way off to the north. The covenant haven't had much to do with him or his people to this point but they know him by reputation; a wealthy and politically influential noble.

The messenger only knows that his injuries are grave, but that he has not actually seen him. He gives the magi a letter bearing Otto's mark and then heads back to the town.

The Road

Assuming the magi take the road north they hear all sorts of stories about the woodlands on the edge of Otto's lands:

There is talk of a bitter winter that has struck the woodlands hard and that has made it near impassable.

There is talk of livestock from near the woods being stolen, probably by poor peasants needing food to see them through the winter.

And it is said that robbers have been attacking those on the roads, taking their goods and even killing some of them.

But others say that there's nothing natural about any of these things.

I'm Fine, Really

On reaching the town, the letter gets the magi through the gates (the tax collector still tries to take a toll despite the letter) and the sight of Otto's keep rising above the low streets and markets guides them in.

The keep is the tallest and most robust building around, taller even than the church spire. It is surrounded by a low but stout crenelated wall covered with flags. It's a showy display of wealth and authority.

Once in the castle, the servants delay the magi from seeing their wounded companion, instead installing them in the great hall with food, wine, and a lute player in front of the fire. The lute player isn't important and can't tell them anything. He's there simply as a distraction to give the guests something else to think about while Otto finds out from his servants what kind of people have arrived.

Just as the magi lose their patience, in sweeps the grandiose Otto. He thanks the magi for arriving so promptly and, pouring himself a goblet of wine, speeds on to explaining how dangerous the roads are.

He defers any mention of seeing the wounded companion, instead turning to the weather, the state of his harvests, the current price of firewood, etc. He assures the magi that the companion is being cared for (by his personal physicians, no less) but that he is not well enough for

visitors. And that he should be well enough to travel soon. And if the magi are to wait for their friend, perhaps they could look into what assailed him near the woods. He should be ready to leave by the time they get back.

At some point, the magi will grow impatient with this and demand to see their friend. At this point, Otto's intentions become clear. His roads are under threat from some kind of beast that's operating out of the unnaturally bitter woods. He sent a group of men into the woods five days ago to find and kill the beast and they have not been seen since.

When the magi do gain access to their friend, as they will by hook or by crook, they find him badly injured. He has two Major Wounds, which gives him a penalty to actions/rolls of -10. He's not going to die, but he can't do much on his own. He was attacked by something on the road. His horse ran on or was taken, he doesn't know. But somehow he escaped from whatever it was and he was found, bleeding and unconscious, and brought to the town.

His wounds show four great gashes across his chest and he has a broken arm. His wounds have been stitched and tended and they no longer count as arcane connections to the beast that inflicted it.

He knows that Otto needs help. Importantly, he knows that Otto's peasants and serfs need help. They rely on the woods for their living and the winter in the woods is unnatural. He didn't see the beast that attacked him, but he knows it was large and unnatural. Use the companion to convince the magi that the story is primarily in the woods and not in rescuing their imprisoned friend.

Freiherr Otto

Personality Traits: Devious +3, Arrogant +2, Astute +1

Use the statistics for the knight

on ArM5, page 23 should you need them.

Tell Them What You Told Me

Otto has lined up a number of peasants to tell the magi what they've seen. One nervously explains that the snow came alive and dragged off his friend, kicking and screaming. Another recounts that he only had his back turned for a second and when he looked back his brother had disappeared, and all was silent and still.

Others then tell of how the woods started to become chilled, more chilled than winter even. And then there were the sudden storms - all thunder and lightening - rising up from nowhere.

And another tells of a mysterious beating of drums that he heard

coming from the woods... shortly before he scarpered in the other direction and went home to the warm fireside.

The Road to Winter

By the time the peasants have finished telling their tales, it is dark. Otto provides lodgings (should the magi take him up on his offer) with a view to them setting out in the morning. Regardless, before the magi leave word is hurriedly carried to Otto and his strange guests of another attack.

Otto firmly asks the magi to put a stop to the threat promising the friendship of his town should they succeed.

Once inside the woods, those without magic resistance immediately feel the unnatural cold and must

make Deprivation Rolls every hour. These start at Ease Factor 3 and increase each hour. Those with Parma Magica or Might do not feel unseasonably cold and are not subject to this deprivation.

The magi have the option to extend their Parma about their companions and grogs should they wish, which gives them the choice between protecting their grogs from the cold or themselves from the unseen threat.

The Scene of the Crime

The shabby old peasant takes the magi to the road near the woods, his shambling nose-picking adult son lolloping along behind. He reaches the crossroads and then stops, pointing towards the road ahead. He does not want to go further.



Along the road, there is a smashed hand cart and a confusion of tracks. Magic may be able to sort the fresh from the old and even determine the order in which they were laid. Those with the Hunt Ability have a hard time, but they can try against an Ease Factor of 9 to determine which tracks lead where.

What becomes apparent is that there are three sets of tracks walking along the road, dragging a small hand cart. Then one of the sets blurs towards the tree line and then vanishes completely. The other two continue a few paces before stopping, turning and walking back. The tracks mill around and then suddenly run in the direction of the town, knocking the cart aside.

A **Perception + Awareness roll against Ease Factor of 6** reveals a splatter of blood frozen into the snow where the first tracks disappear.

Those heading into the tree line from here soon come across the frozen corpse of the missing peasant. It's chest and abdomen have been ripped open and its innards are largely gone. But importantly, there are no tracks around the corpse. It is as though it has simply been dropped. Looking upwards, there is a dense and relatively low tree canopy.

The injuries no longer form arcane connections Healfdene the Savage.

The intention here is to tell the magi that they are dealing with an ambush predator and they must be prepared for a strike from anywhere.

The hunters Who Are Not There

After several hours in the woods, just as the cold is really biting, the party hears a drumming coming through the trees. If drawn to the noise, they hear the sound of ten men drumming and calling in Finnish. Closer and the party sees the beaters heading towards them.

Of course the figures do not respond to calls and do not veer from their paths. It takes a **Perception + Second Sight roll vs. Ease Factor 9** to see that these are illusory, until they get close enough that all can see they are not walking past the trees but through them.

This is an active non-Hermetic magical effect of fifth magnitude. A base 4 Intellego Vim spell reveals it as magic, a base 5 spell shows non-Hermetic, and a base 10 spell gives Creo Intellego as the equivalent Arts.

The sight of beaters should suggest that someone or something is being hunted, which means that the magi may be dealing with both the hunter and the hunted.

Night Falls

As night falls quickly in the woods, the magi must choose between retreating to the town or remaining within the woods. If they remain in the woods, ensure that all the characters lose any Long-Term Fatigue Levels they are due and continue to roll Deprivation Checks where appropriate. They may want to continue exploring in the dark. To anyone other than a magus that would be unadvisable given the lack of visibility. But they have means to overcome that.

By this stage, the magi have been directly exposed to two active magical effects, the snow and the illusory hunters, and have seen the results of a third, Healfdene's Cloak of the Otherworld power.

If they go back to the town, Otto's hospitality still stands and he eagerly pulls as many details of the hunt as he can.

Act Two: Searching for the Ghost in the Snow

The magi resume their investigations and head deeper into the woods. In doing so they find

Otto's previous hunting party and ultimately Gyda herself.

The big challenge they face in this act is communicating with Gyda when they eventually meet her and determining friend from foe.

The Next Day

Once they're back in the woods, or following directly on from the first act if they are remaining in the wood overnight, the wind changes direction for a moment and the sound of drums drifts their way. It is quiet and brief. Contested **Perception + Awareness** rolls with the highest-rolling player getting the note. The drumming sounds different to the ghostly beaters of the previous day. This is of course Gyda completing an utiseta.

Given a direction to search in, the party heads off.

The Frozen Hunters

The magi and their companions come across a priest praying and huddled in a pile of cloaks scavenged from the bodies of his fallen comrades. He was protected from the worst of the effect by the magic resistance afforded by the relic he carries. He is lost and doesn't know his way out of the woods. He has stayed with the bodies for days.

He can relate an encounter with the demon that has cursed the wood. He saw it last night and points out that it went in the direction of the drumming hear that morning. He describes it standing twice the size of a man, a hulking form covered in feathers. He says it stopped and looked at him from beneath its hood, he say its eyes twinkle in the snow-light. As it watched, the priest prayed to the Lord to protect him from the beast. And with a snort, it passed him by.

Allow a **Perception + Awareness roll vs. Ease Factor 6** to notice the small glass vial containing a finger

bone of saint Ansgar.

He hasn't remembered all the details of course. He has omitted the great hammer it carried on its shoulder and that it muttered something, "speaking tongues in many languages". He'll remember if prompted. He'll also remember that he heard a constant lamenting of the innocents as it passed by. These are, of course, references to Gyda's multiple heads.

The magi should learn from this that the beast covered in feathers is unlikely to attack on sight and it shows that they are getting closer to something.

Father Rambur is unwilling to stay with the bodies and wants to go with the party. Despite the effects of the Gift, he is hugely grateful for having been rescued.

Father Rambur

Frightened +3, Pious, +2, Thankful, +1

Use the statistics for the priest from ArM5, page 23.

The Foggy Clearing

With the magi and their companions searching further, they'll eventually find Gyda's ritual space. They realize something is wrong when visibility suddenly drops. The trees fade into a white fog and those barely ten feet away can hardly be seen.

Unless the party makes specific arrangements, they are liable to become separated and lost in the fog, requiring an effort to regroup. Alternatively, magi should be able to clear a path through the fog quite easily with Rego Auram magic.

This is an opportunity to build a little suspense. The fog muffles and distorts sound, so a broken twig under foot can sound distant. Have the priest, if he is with the party, suddenly stop and spin around looking for the source of some sound or other. He might "see" something

through the fog and try to direct one of the grogs away to investigate. Raise the threat a little.

But eventually, the party clears the fog and enters a rough circular clearing. The obvious elements first:

The trees have been splintered at their bases and knocked down. Rocks have been pulled from the ground and tossed aside, and a platform of stripped and lashed branches has been built in the center of the clearing. The clearing is calm and largely devoid of the fog, which just hangs around the periphery, swirling in the breeze.

A closer look reveals a rough bed. The magi in the party are at liberty to pick up stray hairs that have caught in the branches, which gives them an arcane connection to Gyda.

The area has a magic aura of 2 and an additional +1 alignment to Trolldomur. This is a side-effect of Gyda's magic as described in *Rival Magic*, page 92.

Any character making a **Perception + Awareness roll against Ease Factor 12** notices a snow-white crow fly into the clearing, land on a branch, take the scene in, and then fly away. Those who react too slowly just see the swirling trail its wings leave in the fog. But they know they've been seen.

The platform is rough-hewn and recent, but lashed together with old rope. It is only a few feet off the ground but it is very sturdy and is supporting in places by stones pulled from the ground. There is a large drum and a stick on the platform. There are signs of a fire having been lit upon it too.

Another **Perception + Awareness roll against Ease Factor 6** this time reveals a thin wisp of smoke emanating from a large leather sack. The sack is hot to the touch and is cracked and burned. Those opening the bag must soak +5 burning damage. The bag contains coals and burning embers. They are still alight

and seem to generate their own heat. This is actually 20 pawns of Ignem vis, which Gyda has to help her empower her Wildfire utiseta.

The Ghost In the Snow?

The encounter with Gyda starts in one of two ways. If the party didn't see, or didn't react to the white crow, Gyda knows that they are in her casting space. She stands off and summons a rain storm using her Storm's Eye Ability. She does not need to use utiseta to do this. But her voice rings around the fog as she calls to the skies.

As the rain falls, it washes out the fog and slowly the form of Gyda's Etin-Mod becomes apparent looming from the trees. As she begins to make out her targets, she chants to the skies once more and her gandur, the cloak of eagle feathers she wears, crackles with lightening. She is about to loose the first of her Gymir's Anger utiseta from her gandur. These have a +3 penetration (from the aura), but she is unaware of the Parma Magica and will direct the lightening strikes to whoever seems to be in charge.

This might be the time to roll for initiative.

Once the magi have withstood the lightening, they may realize that they have little to fear magically from the giant, as grotesque as she is, and diplomacy may prevail. If Gyda is attacked and starts to ail, she will try to make her escape. Firstly by disengaging and running, casting her spells about her to mask her path, and secondly by turning into a weasel.

If the crow has been captured or otherwise dealt with, Gyda will enter the circle in her (admittedly still large) human form. She is dressed in the heavy eagle-feather cloak covered with the woollen cloak. Her face is wrapped and hooded. She is immediately afraid and prepared to take the form of the snowy weasel to make her escape so she can assume the Etin-Mod.

If the magi are not threatening she appears to relax. This is more by way of achieving a clear round in which she can assume the Etin-Mod. She will feel more protected in this form.

Once she does, you might want to roll initiatives. But if the magi have not threatened her so far, then she does nothing rash and simply demands to talk.

Of course, she can't speak their language and they probably can't speak hers. Instead, she uses her Sjonhverfing to conjure images, which she can do without ritual.

Spotting the priest, or another character with an amulet or pendant, she also mimes Healfdene taking the beartooth from her patron by clasping someone else's hand around the relic and pulling it away. She uses the immediate outrage, holding it there, before showing herself taking the relic from "Healfdene" and giving it back to its owner. Then she shows that "Healfdene" is out in the woods somewhere.

At the end of this scene, the magi have made contact with Gyda and gone on to kill her, chased her away, or made an ally of her. The magi

should realize that they have the power in the relationship given the lack of Penetration on her part and the arcane connections they should have collected.

Act Three: The Biting Wind

The third act can go one of two ways. If the magi return the body of Gyda to Otto as proof that they have lifted the curse, there is much celebrating. The magi are the talk of the town and the toast of the celebratory feast. Their companion is returned to them and all looks well. Until the guards fling the doors open and drag the tax collector in, blood seeping and oozing from his missing arm and shoulder. He drops dead, staining Otto's flagstone floor. The beast is still out there.

But if the magi make an ally of Gyda they get to plan together and begin the hunt. The three options below set up the conditions at the start of the hunt based on what the characters did with Gyda.

Option One: Starting Again

If Gyda is dead and gone, the magi are on their own and they need to scour the woods. They may want to set up someone or something as bait. They know that the beast takes live pray. And they can, if they draw the right conclusions (as storyguide, you can help with this), infer that it's clever enough to avoid armed men and go instead for soft targets.

They may want to set up a bait and ambush scenario, but without understanding the power the creature has it could be problematic.

Option Two: Planning for Success

If they have made a truce with Gyda and agreed to hunt the beast they gain an understanding of the beast's power. Gyda is able to tell



them that Healfdene moves in the Cloak of the Otherworld, a regio that covers him and from which he can hunt unseen and in silence before dragging his prey into his own personal regio. He could be devouring your friend right next to you and you wouldn't know. This accounts for the strange marks in the snow and the corpse encountered by the road.

Understanding this ability gives the magi a means of spotting Healfdene. They need Second Sight to see through the regio, or some form of Intellego Vim spell to grant much the same power. The effective level of the regio is only one, so a Second Sight roll only needs 7 or more.

Healfdene would have no idea that others can see him. It hasn't happened so far, so those using these magical senses actually gain +1 to their initiative against him due to his complacency.

Option Three: The Enemy of My Enemy

At least Gyda is alive and out there. This option plays out much like option one, but with the bonus of throwing Gyda in as a surprise combatant.

The hunt is On

This is largely dependent on how the magi approach the problem. They may try to lure Healfdene into the open and then attack. Or they may

continue with Gyda's approach and send beaters into the woods to drive him to a choke-point. As storyguide, provide whatever features the players need to tell the story of their own hunt.

Running the Combat

Roll initiative as normal and treat Healfdene as invisible and leaving "no signs" as per the guidelines in Houses of Hermes: Societates, page 32, for all those who cannot see through his Cloak of the Otherworld power. This may at least allow him to target the grogs, so try to take them out. That's what they are there for and they deserve a good gory exit. Healfdene will attempt to take an isolated character smaller than himself. His

healfdene the Savage

These statistics are for Healfdene in his savage bear form. He was once a mortal skinchanger but his journeys through the Magic Realm in search of Gymir and the bear's tooth transformed him. The powers listed below are his own and while he has since lost the bear skin that was the focus for his skinchanger power, the bear's tooth is the source of his transformed state now.

Magic Might: 15 (Animal)

Characteristics: Cun +1, Per 0, Pre 0, Com -5, Str +8, Sta +4, Dex +2, Qik -1

Size: +3

Season: Summer

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Enduring Constitution, Second Sight, Skinchanger; Magical Monster

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Gigantic, Greater Power (Cloak of the Otherworld), Improved Initiative (claws), Improved Might x2, Improved Powers x5, Lesser Power (Mighty Leap)

Personality Traits: Savage +3, Hungry +2, Sly +1

Reputations: None

Combat:

Claws: Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +13, Damage +12

Bite: Init -1, Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +9

Soak: +10

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Athletics 3 (sprinting), Awareness 3 (hunting), Brawl (claws) 5, Hunt (deer) 4, Penetration (Vim) 4, Second Sight (regiones) 5, Survival (foraging) 5, Swim (against the current) 3

Powers:

Cloak of the Otherworld, 0 points, Init +3, Vim: A personal regio envelopes the creature and is sustained until dismissed. The creature can travel with it, though the outside world seems a little distant and distorted. The creature can pull others into the regio with him. Healfdene uses this power to ambush his prey and take them unawares. The power is magical in nature and cannot be used under any other aura. The regio is treated as one level above the current magical aura for the purposes of those trying to perceive it with Second Sight or Intellego Vim magic.

The Mighty Leap, 0 points, Init+3, Animal: Propels the creature up to 50 paces in a single round. A Dexterity + Athletics (or Finesse) roll vs. Ease Factor 6 is needed to land well. Failure means the creature can do nothing except defend in the next round as it rights itself. A botch means the creature must soak falling damage of between +10 and +25 depending on the severity of the botch.

Equipment: The Tooth of Bödvar Bjarki

Vis: Three pawns of Animal in his canine teeth.

Appearance: A great white bear with long limbs like those of a man. Its feet and hands are also more like that of a man than a bear and the remnants of its soiled clothes cling to its fur.

Healfdene is an ambush predatory able to use his Cloak of the Otherworld power to take his prey unseen. It doesn't understand that it could flee the woods, instead viewing trees as safety. Once cornered by Gyda and/or the magi, Healfdene goes on the offensive. Gyda's white crow can warn her of Healfdene's approach due to its Second Sight, but the magi must make their own arrangements.

power has a Penetration of 19 before taking any aura into account.

Those who can see through Healfdene's cloak are able to engage with no penalties. Engaging him means essentially crossing the boundary into Healfdene's regio. A combat group leader who can see Healfdene is able to lead others through the boundary and take full advantage of the group combat bonus.

Should any characters decide to grapple Healfdene, they stand a chance of wrestling him to the ground. This is unlikely for individual characters, but a group acting together could do it. Attempting to pull the tooth incites an immediate bite attack from Healfdene regardless of whether he has acted or not. The tooth is identifiable as it still has the leather thong strung around it. An opposed Strength + Athletics roll is required.

Once the tooth has been pulled from Healfdene's jaw he returns to his human form. If Gyda is still alive she demands he be given to her, otherwise it is up to the magi to decide his fate.

Conclusion

Healfdene may have been killed and the tooth taken from him, but the magi have a choice. If Gyda is still alive they can opt to give it to her and help her complete the quest she was assigned. Or they could keep it as a powerful non-Hermetic device and just let Gyda try to take it from them.

Of course, if they keep the tooth then Gyda, if not other more powerful and prepared Muspelli, will be dispatched to reclaim it. And this time the magi and their covenant are the targets and the utisetar are cast to cause as much hardship as possible.

Having cleared the forest of the beast, Otto is grateful and releases the companion to the covenant's custody.

Despite his attempted coercion, Otto realizes that he is indebted to the magi and makes it clear that he will return the favor.

The story is worth five experience points and a handful of Confidence Points. There are plenty of other treasures on offer. The white crow, though no statistics are provided here, is a magical bird and may be a willing magical animal companion or more (though you'd have to suspect its motives). The big bag of vis is a decent temptation, after all it does belong to Gyda. And if they have seen Gyda use her *gandur*, they may not understand how it works and assume it to be inherently magical.

The Treachery Yet to Come

Gyda comes from another world. She has descended into pagan idolatry and the power it grants her makes it inconceivable that she could turn away from her path. She will always work towards the aims of Gymir, trapped as he is deep in the magic realm. And as this sets Gyda up against the magi and their covenant, so there will come a time when their aims cross and the magi must decide how far friendship takes them.

Friend

If Gyda and the magi part with the blood of their mutual enemy on their hands there is a bond between them which can be exploited in future stories.

The Enemy of My Enemy

When the Muspelli Vémundr Óttarrson appears on the scene and his utisetar have the power to penetrate both Aegis and Parma Magica, the magi need advice on his jotun magic and seek out Gyda in the far frozen north. Encountering trolls and giants in their search for Gyda, the magi learn more about the

Muspelli and their allies. But will this knowledge force them to question whether Gyda can be trusted?

Tested Friendship

Gyda has no love for the world of men and serves Gymir well. When the chance to reclaim land in Gymir's name is presented she takes it, even where it harms friends to the covenant. When the magi investigate they find Gyda behind the problem. So how do they deal with it? Do they now make an enemy of her, or must they respect the actions of their one-time ally?

Enemy

By killing or otherwise betraying Gyda, the magi and their covenant make deadly enemies.

Grononsonn the Giant

The giant Grononsonn, who found Gyda as a child, sets out to avenge her death when he learns of it. And make no mistake, the death of a Muspelli will resound through the giant bloodlines. It is not just Grononsonn then that the covenant may be forced to face. Imagine giants of the mountains, of the seas, of winter, and of the storms, unleashing their vengeance upon the covenant. They must each be defeated and they each get stronger in turn until Grononsonn himself unleashes all hell upon the covenant. How does it hold up with its diminished resources? What can it do to stay Grononsonn's hand?

The Gandur

And if the covenant takes Gyda's *gandur*, word of it may reach back to the Muspelli or those who would seek to serve them, or ask for aid from them. Any kind of threat may be used in an attempt to steal back the *gandur*, or to bargain for it.



The City of Bruges as an Ars Magica Setting

By Sheila Thomas

*It's not often that we get to go on holiday with one of the **Ars Magica** line authors, but in this article Sheila Thomas points out a few points of interest in the historic city of Bruges.*

The City of Bruges

Even now, walking around the centre of the Belgian city of Bruges, one can see what the medieval town looked like, although the oldest buildings one sees lining the streets and squares are of a later date than 1220. However, there is plenty there to inspire elements of a saga. The history of the city is briefly presented in *The Lion and the Lily*, pages 93-94.

Bruges appears several times in the **Ars Magica** supplement *City & Guild*, always in connection with trade. It was the site of one of the five fairs of Flanders where cloth was the primary interest (see *City & Guild*, page 104). The square where the market was held, the canals used to convey goods and people in and out of the city, the gates where tolls were charged, and the

district of the rich merchant's warehouses can be visited now. If you want a story involving trade and manufacturing, where people from all over Mythic Europe come together, Bruges is a good setting. Magi are certainly catered for, since I found the Vis Market ...

A rich merchant usually felt a need to use some of his wealth to help secure his place in heaven, thus Bruges contained a concentration of rich monasteries

Good Works

The Church introduces a number of new seasonal activities that religious characters may pursue, one of them being *Good Works*.

The Hospital of St. John provides characters with the opportunity to undertake *Good Works*, as per *The Church*, page 27, by caring for the sick.

This is performed during a non-free season and is worth 2 experience points towards an appropriate Ability and also grants a Faith Point. In the case of the hospital this is most likely towards Medicine or Chirurgy, although more senior characters may invest in other Abilities such as Leadership.

and nunneries, and many well-supported churches. Quite a few of these places are still in existence and can be visited. The hospital of St. John was founded in about 1150 and is situated a little way south of the castle square (outside the position of the thirteenth century city wall). A courtyard was added beside the hall-like original building in the early thirteenth century. In 1220, an order of nuns, supported by donations, works here tending the sick in body and mind.

According to legend, a cloth used by Joseph of Arimathea to wipe blood from the body of Jesus was given to Diederik van de Elzas, Count of Flanders, during the Second Crusade by his brother-in-law, Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem and has been held in Bruges since 1150. Others say it was Thierry of Alsace who brought the precious relic to Bruges following this crusade. An alternative story is that the relic was grabbed by the army under a



One of the canals running through modern Bruges



There really is a Vis Market!

The Chapel to St. Basil

The chapel to St. Basil contains two relics as described earlier and has a Reputation afforded by the Prestige Boon: Pilgrimage Destination (among the religious) 3

Hooks: Urban

Boons: Buildings, Prestige (minor), Wealth

Resources: Divine Aura 3. Books: *Breviary* (Quality 7), *Missal*. Relics: Finger bone of Saint Basil (Faith Score 3), Blood of Christ (Faith Score 3). (35 Build Points)

The chapel has 15 Build Points left that may be spent on any powers that the relics possess in your saga.

later Count of Flanders, Baldwin IX, in 1204 during the sack of Constantinople. Which ever is true in your saga, this relic, held in a rock-crystal vial encased in a richly bejewelled reliquary, is even now kept in a chapel (formerly designated as a basilica) beside the castle. The chapel is dedicated to St. Basil and contains a relic of this saint. A political story could be built on the origins and ownership of the relic of the Holy Blood, involving the church and nobility. The relic was and is a popular goal of pilgrimage and, in game terms, it has a Faith Score of 3 (Divine Might 30).

The Beguines

In the supplement on *The Church*, I explain that the beguines, a community of women dedicated to prayer and good works, were only just starting in

Creating Beguine Characters

The Beguines are described in detail in *The Church*, page 72 and statistics for a sample young Beguine are provided on page 83 of that book.

1220, but provide a useful way of incorporating devout female characters into a saga because they do not take the vows of a nun, so have a great deal more freedom to move about and act. The beguine movement is described briefly in an insert on page 95 of *The Lion and the Lily*, and covered in more detail in *The Church* pages 72-73.

Bruges was, and is, the location of a magnificent house of the beguines (Beguinage or Begijnhof, depending whether you prefer to use the French or Flemish version). In reality this was not founded until 1244 by Margaret of Constantinople, Countess of Flanders. An area south of the castle square, bounded almost entirely by water, has such an air of tranquillity that the Divine aura is obvious, even today. The little houses of the beguines circle a lawn dotted with trees. On one side of the grassed area is the church where they gather frequently to hear Mass and pray together. In each house are places for work and sleep and prayer, although they would typically work together at some sort of needle craft, or perhaps lace-making (for which Bruges is famous).

A saga story might be developed around the founding of the Begijnhof, which might be accelerated in your saga to provide an interesting location for characters to live - it might even conceal a covenant.



The Beguine church



The Beguine houses across from the Church



The flower-filled lawn

The Church, available now from your favorite local games shop, provides a wealth of information supporting the religious characters in your saga, particularly female characters like the Beguines.

More Mythic Mongols

By Yair Rezek

The 4th Edition supplement *The Dragon and the Bear: The Novgorod Tribunal*, described the Mythic Mongols. While its depiction of the historical Mongols is superb, its Mythic element is too brief. One suggestion considers the Mongols an Infernal threat to Mythic Europe, but offers no more than general recommendations on how to implement this threat. Described as practitioners of Magic with limited military capabilities, *The Dragon and the Bear* offers only limited ideas on Infernal Mongol shamans and their powers.

In order to expand on these ideas, this highly-Mythic and a historical rendering presents the Mongols as a people secretly controlled by the Matriarchy, an Infernal organization that binds Mongolian diabolists much like the Order of Hermes binds the

wizards of Europe. The rules for Maleficia presented in *Realms of Power: The Infernal* are used extensively, slightly altered to better represent this threat. Additionally, a diabolist coven is described including the manner in which the coven and the horde it controls will likely act against Hermetic magi resisting the Mongol conquest.

This is not a treatment tightly bound to history. Nor would the treatment fit all sagas wanting to deal with the Mongol threat. It is most suitable for moderately-powerful sagas, due to the high level of magic. For such sagas, the Mongols under the Matriarchy pose a credible threat for the entire Tribunal, and more.

It should be noted that Mongols were also discussed for 5th Edition in *Ancient Magic* (p. 15-18). That treatment included statistics for a

Mongol soldier and general, and for their extraordinary bows. It also described a "spirit shaman" who uses the Goetic Art of Summoning. The following text is not related to this canon material, although the spirit shaman has some similarities to the shamanic infernal tradition described below. The statistics of mundane Mongols could be used if desired.

The Matriarchy

Behind the Mongol power secretly stands the Matriarchy. This Infernal society controls the Mongol hordes from behind the scenes, wielding powerful Infernal magic. All Matriarchs are Diabolists, Mythic Companions using Maleficia to

The Oath of Nonenmity

Much like the Hermetic Oath, the Oath of Nonenmity is taken by every member of the Matriarchy. The Matriarchy does not have formal judiciaries or tribunals, however, and perceives the Oath in a far less legalistic manner. Rather, the Oath serves two needs. First, it allows the acolyte to pledge her soul to Hell, thus earning her the Diabolist virtue and opening up her Favored Abilities. Secondly, it serves to formally acknowledge the importance of cooperating with her fellow Matriarchs. Matriarchs rightly perceive their unity to be the source of their power, and even slight exploitation of fellow coven members can garner one a Reputation as a "leech" - a Matriarch that doesn't cooperate well, and so is unworthy of cooperation. Blatant betrayal of the Oath is a serious loss of face from which most Matriarchs could never recover, as their enemies would quickly exploit the mistake. Despite this, covert assassinations and deadly intrigue are common in the Matriarchy - it is getting caught, not actually violating the Oath, which is the problem.

While the Oath is far from perfect, it has fostered both a stable society and cooperation for over a hundred years. But now, with the success of the Mongol hordes, it is coming under new pressures. Covens have never needed

to travel so far or control so many and so powerful armies. Never before had they needed to contend with the foreign wizards, the threats, the power and resources - which the new Empire provides, nor be so far removed from the rest of the Matriarchy. An internal squabble and resulting disintegration, perhaps even dissolution, of the Matriarchy under these new pressures is a possible route to Hermetic victory.

For historical reasons, the Nonenmity Oath refers to the practitioner as a Matron. Necromancers and Shamans also take this Oath, not daring to alter the ancient initiation script.

Oh, Vessel of Iniquity, mark my words! Carry them to your Master, the Lord of All Malignancies. Tell him that today you saw a new Dark God, for All Powers of Vengeance shall be mine. Tell him that I shall have power over all dark futures, until the Furies themselves take my soul to him. It is my Fate, it is my Dark Destiny, it is my will. But know this, oh Spirit of Deceit - that I shall not use my powers against my sisters. For I, [name], am a Matron! Mark my name! For it shall be glorified through all the nether regions. All will whisper it, with dread.

further their dark aims. The Matriarchy is unique, however; it instills its members with a sense of appreciation for the presence and contribution of other Matriarchs. The powerful and diverse Maleficia which benefit all Matriarchs are only possible due to the cooperation of many Matriarchs, a fact they keenly acknowledge. This co-dependence allows them to construct a relatively peaceful and stable Infernal society.

The Matriarchy has no geographic divisions analogous to tribunals or strict order. Instead, it is a sparse collection of covens. Each coven has precisely 13 members, although weak or young covens may use slaves or acolytes to reach this unholy number. Older, more powerful covens tend to control more powerful warlords and armies. When an opening in the coven's ranks presents itself, the position is usually filled by Matriarchs

of other covens, chosen for their Reputation (Hierarchy Score) in Hell as well as their interests and political agendas.

Like all Mongols, Matriarchs are nomads residing in felt tents. They usually travel with other women and children, perhaps far behind an advancing Mongol army. Should the horde face supernatural forces requiring their personal attention, the coven may elect to travel with the unit's command. Regardless, they invariably manipulate the generals and leaders, who are often their husbands and sons, to serve their aims.

The name "Matriarchy" is somewhat of a misnomer, for the organization includes male and female practitioners. Women dominate the larger organization with the all-female tradition of Matrons. The Matriarchy encompasses two other Infernal Traditions - the Necromancers and

Shamans. Each includes members of both genders, bringing their own capabilities and powers to the table. The cooperation of such disparate traditions is one of the keys to the Matriarchy's success.

Infernal Tradition: Matrons

Favored Abilities: Ceremony, Debauchery [used as Incantation, see below], Phantasm, Malediction

Matrons are the undisputed leaders of the Matriarchy, and the most numerous. These are witches wielding power over Fate itself. Additionally, the matrons pay close attention to politics, cultivating the temporal power of their descendants even before they are born. It is believed they engage in a complex multi-generation breeding program aiming to produce an Infernal anti-

Character Generation

Matriarchs are typically chosen at age 5. They frequently come from the bloodline of other Matriarchs, gaining the benefit of an extraordinary selection of Virtues and Flaws. However, they can come from Mongolian stock or even exceptional children of slaves. In the case where a child is preordained or marked to be a Matriarch at younger age, the youth is left to mature normally until the age of 5. Create the character as normal under Early Childhood; Mongolian children typically have an Athletic Childhood (ArM5 p. 31).

The child begins her apprenticeship as an acolyte of his adoptive Matriarch. Unlike an Hermetic apprenticeship Matriarchs devote little time and effort to teaching their acolytes, instead largely entrusting them with menial tasks and duties. They may still, however, acquire some knowledge of their adoptive Matriarch's ways. Generate the character as normal under Later Life from age 5 to 13, but allow her to learn appropriate Arcane Abilities. Acolytes often pick up a score of 1 in Infernal Lore and Matriarchy Lore; the latter is critical to pass the gauntlet.

When the acolyte reaches the unholy age of 13, she is forced to take the Oath of Nonenmity, marking her as a Matriarch. The young girl faces a powerful demon, most commonly an Infernal spirit, and must accurately recite the Oath before it. Should she misspeak, the coven ritually kills her and offers her soul as tribute to the demon. It takes considerable bravery (Brave roll of EF 9+) to pass this gauntlet. Refusing to take the Oath or fleeing are not an option. Either act casts doubt on her adoptive Matriarch's wisdom and political prowess —

something no Matriarch can afford.

Should the acolyte survive her gauntlet, she immediately acquires the Diabolist (Free) Virtue and the Wise One Social Status Virtue. She also immediately receives her tradition's Favored Abilities, allowing her to learn them without penalty. The coven immediately casts the Flowering of the New Matron maleficia (see below), bringing her to physical maturity (typically age 16-25). As a Mythic Companion she is entitled to many Virtues and Flaws, and these manifest over time. Unlike other Diabolists, these rarely include Infernal Blessings - which could be provided by the coven. This stage of advancement should include mostly more essential Virtues and Flaws. Feel free to adapt Hermetic Virtues and Flaws as appropriate.

The next step in her ascendancy is the casting of Incarnation of the Matriarch (see below) by the coven's most senior shaman. Often done one day after the new Matriarch's gauntlet, some covens conduct the ritual immediately. This Goetic ceremony binds the spirit of one of the new initiate's ancestors to her, providing many benefits.

Afterwards, the Matriarch advances under the Extremely Complex Character Generation method (ArM5 p. 33). The young Matriarch typically spends years communing with the ancestral spirit bound to her, learning the Favored Supernatural Abilities of her tradition. The Matriarch participates in casting maleficia ceremonies but still has time to pursue personal interests and plots.

Christ. Perhaps their most important contribution to the Matriarchy, however, is the Ceremony ability. Matrons allow the coven to conduct Malefica jointly through their Infernal ceremonies, which greatly empowers all the coven's members and their magic. Their supernatural foresight, mastery of intrigue, and monopoly of the critical Ceremony ability assures them the position of leadership in the Matriarchy.

Infernal Tradition: Shamans

Favored Abilities: Debauchery, Diablerie, Binding, Second Sight

Shamans mediate between the Mongols and the hidden spirit world. They protect the coven and horde from malign magic, and are experts in the powers and resources to be found in supernatural places of all Realms. Shamans detect unseen spirits, binding them into service. Perhaps most importantly for the Matriarchy, they also bind the spirits of dead Matriarchs to living ones, allowing the Matriarchs to retain their ancestor's knowledge and power, build on accomplishments from generation to generation. Similar bindings also permit shamans to create magic items, providing another useful resource for the Matriarchy.

Altered Game Mechanics

The Matriarchy generally follows the rules laid down in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, but certain liberties were taken and alterations made.

Although the Matrons use the Method of Debauchery, they employ it as if it was Incantation in the Malefica guidelines. While Debauchery itself was considered thematically appropriate as were the effects listed against Incantation. So in this case Matrons activate Incantation-linked Malefica using Debauchery. It is also assumed Ceremony can be employed on a seasonal basis, to improve Debauchery effects undertaken as Seasonal Activities.

Infernal Tradition: Necromancers

Favored Abilities: Debauchery, Incantation, Consumption, Ablation (see the nearby sidebar)

Necromancers deal with the energies of life and death, and their transmutations. They grant infernal blessings to the Matriarchs through the consumption of the life energies of humans or ghosts, a key part of the Matriarchy's success. The necromancers also serve as healers, and are often master herbalists.

The Coven of the Golden Stripe

One of the covens accompanying the Golden Horde in its attempt to conquer Europe and Russia, the Matriarchs vie for both the control of the new territories and for the success of their sons and husbands, the leaders of this detachment of the Horde. Not a particularly strong coven, its members typically possess only a few decades post-Gauntlet. Even such a young coven, however, can conduct malefica of level 180 and more.

Three necromancers, 3 shamans, and 7 matrons comprise the coven. All invariably appear as young people, of ages 16 to 25. They often linger

The Shamanic Infernal Tradition uses the Goetic Art of Binding as described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, with a single alteration - spirits bound to a person can Teach her their Abilities, instead of providing an Affinity in them. This change is necessary as it provides the Matriarchy a substitute for the libraries and book trade of the Order. The guidelines for Debauchery Diablerie were also slightly extended.

New Infernal Power: Ablation

Necromancers use a new Power, called Ablation. This is not the same as the Ablating Goetic Art. Ablation functions similarly to Consumption but applies to ghosts. It combines Malefica guidelines from several combinations, but chiefly allows the shamans to grant Virtues to the targets by draining the Might Score of ghosts.

either far in the rear of the force, with the women and children, tens of miles behind the vanguard, or near the army's central command.

Their Tumen, standing nearly 10,000 men strong, recently deployed on this dangerous, long-term and distant task. Leery of the sudden change of plans, they suspect a trap set by the more senior Matriarchs. However, the temptation of the rich lands and the success of their husbands and sons are too great to ignore - they are determined to turn the tables, gaining power and influence through this campaign. The machinations of these so-called "Hermetic wizards," which their divinations have revealed to be the most dangerous threat, particularly concern them. Spies and agents travelled far in advance of the main force, and several plots of intrigue set in motion to control this threat.

Malefica require no formulas or pre-studied rituals, the dark powers are flexible, their application spontaneous and fitted to the task at hand. It is therefore pointless to provide a definitive list of Malefica used by the coven, as they would cast effects best suited to the circumstances. Nevertheless, the following lists of Malefica provide some idea of the magic the coven employs.

Matronly Grimoire

The matrons most often conduct divinations, and their foreknowledge forms a large part of their power. They also practice malediction,

cursing their enemies with bad luck. They sometimes also employ Premonitions, which are safer. In addition to Maleficia, matrons are masters of intrigue. They frequently study Penetration to better curse or scry on their enemies, and Infernal Lore to interpret their twisted visions. As they employ Debauchery, they frequently have high Stamina, but Presence and Intelligence are also of great use to them in their intrigue.

Spirit Sight

Debauchery Phantasm 15 [B 3, +4 forsaken]

This ritual allows a matron to see spirits. It does not allow her to see

other invisible things (unlike Second Sight).

Scrying Dream

Debauchery Phantasm 35 [B 5, +1 sound, +4 arcane, +1 concentration]

The matron's trance turns into a dream where she hears and sees what the target is doing. The maleficium reveals the target's close environment, up to about 15 paces around him. The dream is not entirely accurate, and may fail to include some details or include others that do not exist; a Perception + Infernal Lore roll of 9+ is required to notice a particular detail is distorted.

Unraveling the Deceptions of Demons

Debauchery Phantasm 30 [B 5, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

This infernal blessing allows the target to see through Infernal illusions. Many Matriarchs are under this effect. Note the Penetration of this maleficium as it is cast, to compare against any Might or similar resistance. To increase penetration, this infernal blessing is often cast in a coven ceremony.

Visions of Future Intrigue

Debauchery Phantasm 35 [B 35]

Placing herself in a deep trance,

Complex Character Advancement

Access to their ancestral spirits allows the Matriarchs to learn their tradition's Favored Abilities and other Abilities their ancestors mastered. Most spirits provide a Source Quality of 9, although some can teach substantially better. Studying an Ability to level 5 (75 XP) hence requires about nine Seasons. Learning all four Favored Abilities to this level requires 36 Seasons. Matriarchs typically learn further Abilities in this manner as well, such as Infernal Lore, Penetration, Intrigue, or so on. If they cannot obtain a teacher - either a living one or a spirit - they typically Practice the ability. Overall, a Matriarch typically spends one Season and acquires about 10 XP per year in Abilities of her choice, but increasing them beyond a score of 5 is more difficult.

Each year, two more Seasons are typically spent in service to the coven. This counts as Practice in another appropriate Ability, such as Matriarchy Lore, Infernal Lore, Ceremony, Debauchery, and Intrigue. The Matriarch garners 10 more XP through this practice. Perhaps more importantly, she typically gains one Infernal Blessing every sixth year.

The fourth Season is typically spent in Adventure, garnering another 5 XP. It

is assumed further that another Infernal Blessing would be obtained through such private endeavors every sixth year. Should you seek to lower the Matriarchy's power level, you can drop this assumption, and halve their Infernal Blessings.

Overall, Matriarchs gain 25 XP per year, and 1 Infernal Blessing every three years. They have difficulty increasing their Ability scores beyond 5 (or a level of 10 in Binding), however - double the XP costs for such increases.

They also gain 3 Warping Points per year on average, but do not age. Upon reaching a Warping Score of 10 the Matriarch soon finds her Final Fate and becomes an Infernal Ghost, meaning Matriarchs rarely live to be over 100 years old. Many find their death well before that time.

A Matriarch at the peak of her power, fully 90 years post-Gauntlet, has acquired 2,250 XP and 30 Infernal Blessings, and a Warping Score of 9 (270 Warping Points). The experience points suffice for the stupendous allocation of 30 (!) Abilities at level 5; in practice, much of these would be spent increasing a few select Abilities to higher levels, and seasons would be spent on all manner of other activities instead.

To present a more manageable character, this article focuses on a

young coven with a representative member only 30 years post-Gauntlet. She has 750 XP and 10 Infernal Blessings to allocate. She might spend three Infernal Blessings to increase three Characteristics to +4, another to gain Magic Resistance, two more to obtain Puissant Method and Power, two to obtain an Infernal Device, and the last two on various personal enhancements. She spends her XP to increase all four Favored Abilities and six other Abilities to 5.

In a coven ceremony, the matrons conduct a leader-less ceremony, with the participation of all Matriarchs. For this example, presume a divination—specifically, a Debauchery Phantasm maleficia cast by a matron. All members have +4 Stamina and 5 in Debauchery, all matrons further have 5 in Ceremony and Phantasm, and the ceremony is held in a temporary Infernal Aura of strength 5. The matrons, shamans, and necromancers working together thus plausibly manage to conduct a level 183 maleficium [7x(4 sta +5 De +2 puissance +5 Ce-1) +6x(4 sta +5 De +2 puissance +0 Ce -1)+6 stress +5 Ph +2 puissance +5 aura]. This total can be slightly increased through the use of sacrifice and Confidence points.

the matron receives daunting visions of the future, foretelling the difficulties faced by a particular plot or intrigue she envisions. Interpreting these symbols successfully requires an (Intelligence + Infernal Lore) stress roll of 9+, with higher rolls providing more information. A basic success usually suffices to foretell the key actors in the major obstacle to the plot.

Echoes of the War Council

Debauchery Phatasm 25 [B25, +1 touch, +1 concentration]

Touching a fallen soldier, the matron receives a vision of the war council leading to his death, but only if this occurred within the last week. The revealed information can be anything from a simple command by his superior officer to the meeting of the highest commanders of the opposing army. However, the maleficum is especially likely to reveal deceit or betrayal. Thus, it is extraordinarily effective in revealing

traitors in the ranks or enemy trickery.

Foretell the Fate of the Union

Debauchery Phantasm 55 [B35, +4 arcane]

This unholy effect stands at the heart of the Matriarchy's breeding programme. The ritual requires arcane connections to two would-be parents, and the matron must also know their names. If successful, the ritual reveals information about the Virtues, Flaws, and even fate of the progeny, should one be conceived. Matriarchal eschatology maintains that in time their breeding programme will produce an Infernal messiah, a Devil Child capable of altering Fate and remaking Creation in his own image. In practice, matrons often use this ritual to foretell favorable times for intercourse and advantageous partners for themselves and their children.

The Matron's Curse

Debauchery Malediction 110 [B 75, +4 arcane, +3 moon]

This terrible curse inflicts a -15 penalty to all the target's die rolls, and furthermore adds 15 botch dice to all botch rolls. Few survive it beyond a few days. Variants of this powerful curse are often cast on key enemies of the Matriarchy through coven ceremonies.

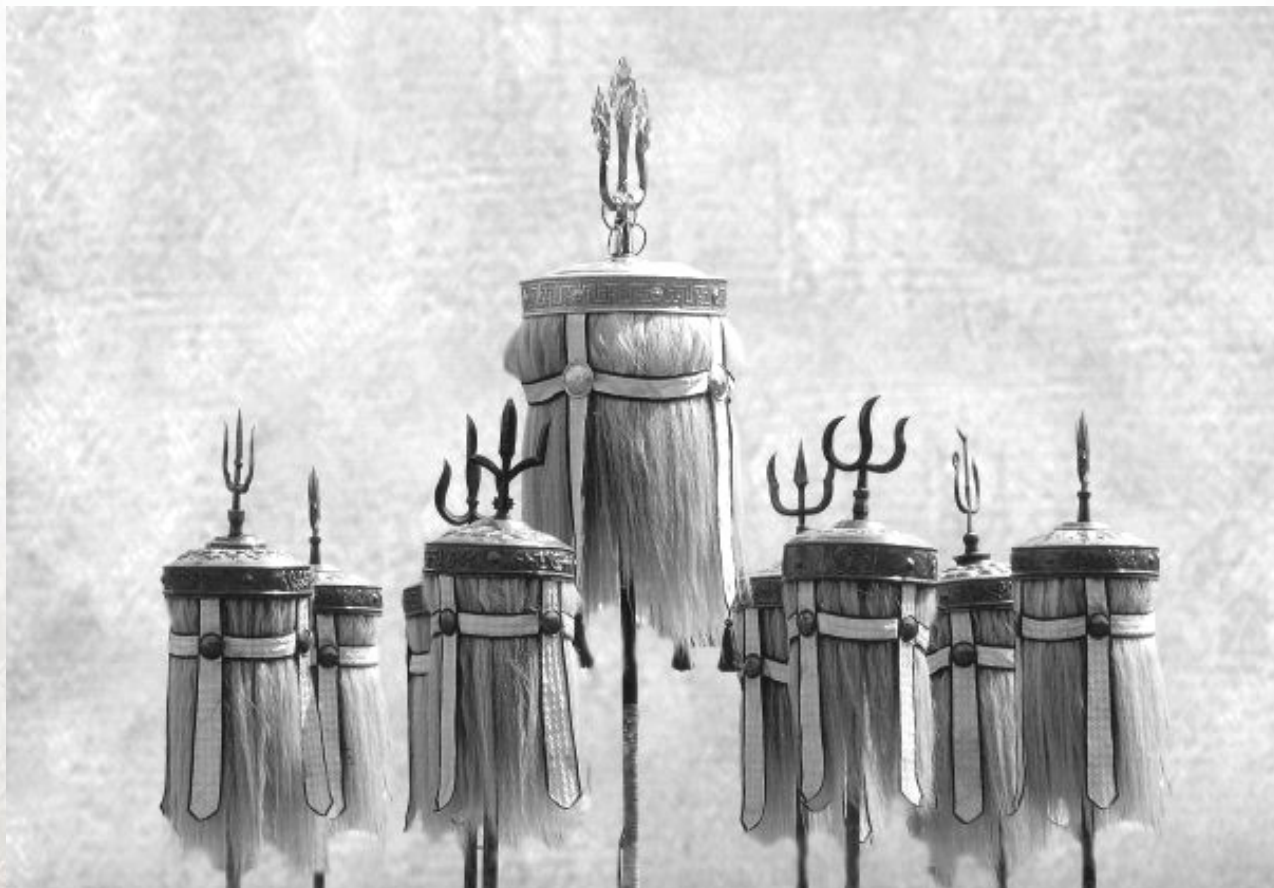
The Warlord's Undoing

Debauchery Malediction 110 [B 75, +4 arcane, +3 moon]

This curse inflicts a -30 penalty to a leader's Leadership rolls, and furthermore adds 30 botch dice to any associated botch rolls. It is a more subtle curse than The Matron's Curse, and can be even more effective strategically.

A Plague Upon Your Army

Debauchery Malediction 80 [B 35,



+4 arcane, +2 sun, +2 group, +2 size]

This powerful curse requires a living soldier, who acts as an arcane connection to the opposing army. Even so, it only affects the warrior's unit if it is in formation, so the maleficium is typically cast while a battle is ongoing and with the intention of disrupting a particular key unit on the battlefield. If successful, this ritual strikes the entire unit blind for a day (granting them the Blindness flaw).

Variants of this maleficium makes enemy soldiers Enfeebled, suffer the No Hands flaw, or inflicts them with Leprosy.

Remove the Blessing of the Foreign God

Debauchery Malediction 65 [B 30, +4 arcane, +3 moon]

In their conquests, the Mongols learned the Divine is the most formidable opponent of Infernal machinations. Even one person with True Faith can undo powerful maleficia and drive away mighty demons. This ritual concentrates the Matriarchy's malice on such people, removing them from spiritual rapport with God and thus undoing the source of their power. In game terms, it suppresses True Faith. Barring direct Divine intervention, if this maleficia penetrates, the character is unable to make use of his Faith Points or wield any Divine Methods or Powers until the new moon. Additionally, he does not enjoy a Magic Resistance because of his Faith until such time. He may still make use of Relics, just like any person without True Faith.

The King's Malady

Debauchery Malediction 75 [B 35, +4 arcane, +4 year]

This curse afflicts the target with the Curse of Venus flaw. This often leads to the disintegration of his

relationship with his foremost vassal, or something similar.

The Tumen of the Golden Stripe

This Tumen (a unit 10,000 men strong) is led by Kudai, husband to one of the matriarchs of the Golden Stripe Coven. Many of his officers are also sons or husbands to the coven's matriarchs, advanced through the ranks by intrigue and malediction. One of his trusted advisers is Adigei, the coven's senior shaman.

As the vanguard of the mongol forces, the task of this Tumen is not necessarily to conquer the territory as it is to explore it, garner as much resources from it as possible, and destroy or hamper any forces that would resist a larger Mongol invasion. This may include the full conquest of the region if circumstances allow, but establishing spy networks, destroying strategic rallying points and raising tribute and loot from a few locales would also constitute a fine achievement. The extent of the designs of the coven depends on the needs of your saga, but probably includes securing servants and spies in various regios and auras at the least. At the extreme, they would want to enslave or destroy all Hermetic covenants in the region, and dominate or corrupt all auras and regios.

The horde should generally employ its historical tactics, primarily using mounted archers to attack knights and infantry from a distance (the heavy load of medieval knights prevents them from chasing the Mongols effectively). Cities are brought down in the usual methods of siege craft, with perhaps greater expertise and cruelty; a common tactic is the use of local peasants and captured soldiers as human shields. Special tactics would be employed to deal with unique threats (such as Hermetic magi) as needed.

Modus Operandi

It is assumed that the PC covenant will be the focus of opposition to the horde. Other powers would not constitute a significant obstacle to the invading Mongols. NPC covenants, perhaps stronger and older, may fall to Infernal corruption or intrigue. The coven may promise Hermetic covenants independence and freedom under Mongol rule, if they stay neutral in this "mundane" political struggle. God will not directly intervene, except perhaps to facilitate the covenant's heroic stand, and local strategically significant Divine holy men or martial orders will be defeated, corrupted, or otherwise eliminated; the coven is likely to suppress the True Faith of a few holy men, assassinate a few others, and perhaps manage to corrupt a militant order. Faerie powers will likely largely ignore the Mongol threat for the most part, although in the long run the matriarchy would seek to corrupt them into the Infernal; few faeries would be cognizant and worldly enough to both realize and oppose this scheme. Mundane powers would simply be incapable of resisting the Mongol's martial prowess, wile, and cruelty.

The matron's auguries will therefore immediately reveal the player's covenant as the focus of opposition to their machinations, and the coven will begin gathering intelligence on the covenant and working to undermine it at least a year before the Mongol armies first appear in the tribunal.

The first step the coven will take would be to send minor demonic spirits, weak aerial powers, to explore the covenant and its surroundings and report back. They would immediately discover that the aegis wards these spirits off the covenant proper, but will soon acquire some understanding of the covenant's relations with the people, villages, and auras surrounding it. Similar tactics would

be used concurrently to learn of the tribunal as a whole, and a few select mundanes would be contacted in their dreams (using The Shared Dream) and hired, tempted or tricked into teaching the Area Lore of the tribunal. These efforts will grant the coven a basic understanding of the auras, covenants, cities, and key political and religious figures in the Tribunal. This phase would likely take a Season, during which some matriarchs (often most matrons and a single shaman) would in effect

Practice (Tribunal) Lore, with a speciality in the covenant's area. During this time the matrons would also develop agencies and spies throughout the Tribunal (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates* for rules on agencies, if rules are needed). The high concentration of malign aerial powers around the covenant is likely to create bad and strange weather, which would be seen as an ill omen.

Stymied by the Aegis, the coven is likely to arrange overt demonic

activity near the covenant, threatening identified covenant resources or disturbing covenant allies with the intention of luring out a few of the magi. This would allow the aerial powers to observe the magi in action, providing key intelligence on their abilities. Adventures like the venerable *The Festival of the Damned* may develop.

The coven is also likely to arrange for a demon to Possess one of the trusted covenfolk in the mayhem, allowing it to pass under the aegis when the expedition returns to the covenant and thus planting a spy deep within the covenant. The possessed character would probably be unusually "curious" and the demon is likely to act rashly and spread mayhem, however, so while this plot is likely to reveal vital information on the covenant's inner workings and the powers and reputations of its magi (at least amongst the covenfolk), it would also quickly lead to the discovery of the demon and its exposure (another adventure). The coven is likely to arrange for the demon's presence to be somehow linked to an enemy covenant, if they have learned enough about Hermetic politics by this point.

The information gleaned so far would suffice for the next stage of operations. Now the matrons will work to corrupt, deceive, or blackmail key figures in the covenant and tribunal. These may include Hermetic magi, including redcaps. The coven will pick some merchants and petty lords, and put them in a position to disrupt trade and instigate internal strife or betrayal when the mongol attack begins at earnest. Efforts would also be expanded to sow seeds of distrust and conflict between Hermetic covenants - through deceit, temptation, and by raising existing tensions or sources of dispute to the fore. Attempts would also be made to weaken the Divine, through selective attempts at corruption or



assassination. This is in some ways the most difficult phase of the coven's operations, and at this critical point the coven's matriarchs - especially the shamans - may travel the tribunal themselves, seeking allies, minions, and resources. This may lead to an encounter with the player characters, although at this point the matriarch should not be exposed as an Infernalist; it could remain a mysterious stranger, perhaps even a benefactor that aided the party on some adventure - such familiarity could later be employed to lure the characters or deceive them.

Focusing on the covenant, the

ideally want to turn the magi to their service through blackmail and threats. If a character has a weakness such as Dependents or True Love, the coven may attempt to hold them as hostages and demand his servitude for their life. If he has some Dark Secret, the coven may manage to uncover it and blackmail him. Otherwise, it is likely to attempt a more physical confrontation. It will attempt to lure each magus independently, and arrange a trap tailored to his own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The purpose is not to kill him, but rather to incapacitate and capture him. If successful, the magus' heart would then be removed by a quick The

make at least some preparations.

Although the Mongolian horde is arguably the most effective martial power in Mythic Europe, it is ultimately a mundane power. Arguably, many covenants can (perhaps with some preparation) resist or even route such a force. This is where the matron's divinatory powers come in. If deployed correctly, even mundane means and minor effects can seriously challenge most magi - and the coven has far more than that at its disposal. Whatever the PCs do, the Covenant of the Golden Stripe should be ready with a plan. This plan may fail, it may even fail horribly - but it should at the least challenge the players and the characters, to make the encounter significant and fun.

...If deployed correctly, even mundane means and minor effects can seriously challenge most magi ...

coven will work to undermine it as well as infiltrate it. It will make great efforts to control or possess key or trusted covenfolk like the chancellor or shield grogs - of course, magi too may be targeted, if this seems feasible. If possible, the library will be torched or an important vis source destroyed in a way that will point to one of the covenant's enemies. Said enemies, supernatural or mundane, will be approached and aided. A controlled minion will be made to come to the covenant's aid, proving himself a trusted and capable ally in time of need - to put him in a position that will allow a deep and damaging betrayal later on. Allies would be weakened or compromised, and neutral parties convinced to work against the covenant or at least remain neutral in the brewing dispute. In all of this, the matron's powers of malediction and the gifts of infernal blessings would be pivotal, as would the shaman's bargains and bindings.

Escalating to the final stages of the confrontation, the matriarchs would

Perfect Gift for the Young Khan ritual, and his predicament explained to him; should he fail to act with obedience, his life will be cut short.

It is unlikely that the coven will manage to confront and enslave the magi in this way, and the struggle is likely to not reach a conclusion by the time the Mongol horde arrives at the tribunal. By this time the coven should have put several spies and traitors in the covenant, caused it considerable trouble to distract it, and engineered much strife in the tribunal in both mundane and Hermetic circles. It likely attempted to enslave one magus, and failed. The time is ripe for a more direct approach.

The timeline for all this development can vary wildly, from a single year to ten. At one extreme, events chase each other and war comes to the gates of the covenant before it had time to prepare adequately. At the other, the characters should have some time to realize the nature of the threat and

If the player characters attempt to sneak into the Mongol's camp and spy on it, the matrons would make sure to give them misinformation - a favored tactic is for a matron to arrange a damsel-in-distress scenario, let the PCs "rescue" her, and then be "convinced" to serve as their long-term spy and ally. If the characters attempt to stealthily attack the Mongol army, they themselves will run into an ambush. If a magus is particularly vulnerable to some sort of exotic weapons, like human bones or bronze weapons - he may find the soldiers armed appropriately. A long-distance attack will turn out to be on a diversion or a decoy - perhaps local peasants, dressed in Mongol cloths to appear as soldiers from afar.

Don't be afraid to change the "plan" midstream. The coven has foreseen the turn of events, and this is all part of its master-plan. Even a clear defeat might be a lure or trap - perhaps the encounter was a diversion, or maybe the coven intends to use the dead bodies as an arcane connection to the wizard who killed them (much like Image of the Beast). Remember also that the coven will take effort to implicate others - ideally

an NPC covenant or cult, to saw Hermetic strife - and will try to maintain the appearance that the different events are due to different causes or just bad luck. Acting in secrecy is a great defense and keeps the enemy vulnerable to repeated use of the same tactics.

The coven can wield powerful effects and may be able to bring powerful allies to bear, especially as their plots advance - but will generally prefer to use the least magic to achieve the required results, unless a coven member is directly involved (in which case maximal care will be taken to safeguard her). It is better to lull the Hermetic opponents into a false sense of security and disrespect for the Mongol's supernatural powers, both to deter a deeper investigation or attack on the coven and to maintain unexpected trump-cards that can be put into use if needed.

In time, however, the coven will likely find that its full powers must be put to bear. By invoking powerful Maleficia, the coven can grant impressive Magic Resistance to much, if not all, of the Mongol forces. They can dispel Hermetic effects, and detect invisibility directly or with the aid of allied spirits. They can employ their spies and Possessed covenfolk to betray the covenant, and to obtain arcane connections. Should they manage to obtain arcane connections, they can lay down powerful curses on their enemies from safety. They can escape to Infernal regios, and may be able to bargain for the aid of mighty demons and the Infernal armies they command. Employ the lists of Maleficia above for the sort of effects the coven can muster, and add a large serving of allied and bound spirits of all Realms.

More Maleficia

One advantage that the Mongol Infernal Traditions have is the ability to work together openly alongside

their army. This tends to increase the scope of the magic they use.

The section below provides more examples of Maleficia employed by these traditions in pursuit of their army's goals.

Shamanic Rituals

Shamans rely heavily on the use of Second Sight to see the invisible and pass into regios. Unlike the core Ability, their Second Sight allows them to see through Infernal illusions, not other kinds (in particular - not Hermetic Imaginem effects). Their maleficia allow them to interact with spirits, and shamans frequently have many bound spirits and many bargains they can call upon. They are also pivotal in binding the ancestral spirits to the matriarchs and their favored minions, and in the preparation of infernal devices. They are often the most knowledgeable of the coven, investing much in learning all (Realm) Lores, numerous True Names, and many (Area) Lores. They also value Penetration to better affect the spirits. As practitioners of Debauchery they often have high Stamina, but are also heavily reliant on high Perception and typically have high Intelligence to further their knowledge and Bindings.

Undo the Works of the Wizard

Debauchery Diablerie 65 [B 60, +1 touch]

This maleficium dispells a single Magical effect of level 50 or less. It is used to undo curses laid by foreign wizards. Variants exist for all four Realms.

Circle of Protection from Demons

Debauchery Diablerie 45 [B 30, +1 touch, +2 sun]

The maleficium prevents any supernatural creature with Might 20

or less from crossing the drawn circle, or affecting the shaman behind it. This protective ward is sometimes cast through a coven ritual before more dangerous summoning are attempted.

Safe Passage of the Shaman

Debauchery Diablerie 75 [B 60, +3 moon]

Through this effect the shaman protects himself before traveling to foreign auras or regios. The maleficium wards off any supernatural creature of Might 50 or less, preventing both physical and supernatural harm from befalling the shaman. The maleficium still needs to penetrate, so it is cast as a coven ceremony. More powerful variants can still be cast effectively, as can variants at R:Touch and T:Group to affect the whole coven.

The Coven's Blessing

Debauchery Diablerie 125 [B95, +1 touch, +4 forsaken, +1 controllable]

This maleficium grants the target a Magic Resistance of 100, that she may suppress with Concentration (EF 6). This is somewhat of a double-edged sword, as it may make it impossible for certain positive effects affect the matriarch, especially in emergencies. Nevertheless, this or lesser variants of it are often enacted by the coven.

While MR 100 is about the most many covens can manage, higher MR is still achievable, and of course lesser MR even more so.

Note that this maleficium uses an Incantation Diablerie guidelines; it was decided the guideline fits Debauchery better.

Blessing of Magical Resistance

Debauchery Diablerie 180 [B 120, +1 touch, +2 group, +4 year, +3 size, +2 only Magic]

This powerful maleficia is used to protect the entire army with Magic Resistance 125 against Magical powers. While in principle it is possible to create more powerful protection against all supernatural effects, the coven prefers to keep the horde vulnerable to its maleficia. The coven is well-aware that Magic Resistance does not protect the soldiers from indirect effects of magic, but such limited protection can still be very effective against certain foes.

The Spirit Spy

Debauchery Diablerie 30 [B 3, +4 arcane, +1 concentration]

See through the eyes of a spirit, or some other supernatural creature, to which the shaman has an arcane connection. This effect is often used to facilitate spying, often with spirits under a Binding Bargain or that were contacted through a Speak with the Dead variant.

False Lock of hair

Debauchery Diablerie 20 [B 4, +2 voice, +2 sun]

The diabolist suddenly holds a lock of hair of the target's (though the target is not found wanting). The hair functions as a temporary arcane connection, allowing the diabolist to affect the target with greater Penetration.

Speak with the Dead

Debauchery Diablerie 45 [B 20, +4 arcane, +1 concentration]

Speak with a ghost, to which the shaman has an arcane connection (usually the corpse). This maleficium is usually cast with the aid of a Matron, or the coven. Variants for contacting demons and even daimons, faerie gods, or angels are possible.

The Shared Dream

Debauchery Diablerie (Req: Phantasm) 45 [B 20, +4 arcane, +1 concentration]

This ritual allows the shaman to visit the dream of the target, to which he must have an arcane connection. This is a dangerous pursuit, for if the target is capable in lucid dreaming it can harm the shaman or even capture his spirit. Fortunately, most people aren't versed in such techniques. Shamans often use this spell to bargain with mundanes, obtaining

arcane connections to them and giving them rewards through demonic spirits bound to their service. At the shaman's discretion, he can carry others that jointly cast this ritual with him through Ceremony to the dream as well; often matrons join the shaman, and do the bargaining.

The dreams influenced by this ritual are always nightmarish, ruining the target's sleep. The target thus typically would have lost a long-term Fatigue level by the morning.



Sub Rosa

Temporary Release of the Bound Ghost

Debauchery Diablerie 30 [B 15,

Pass Through the Tunnels of the Dark hallow

Debauchery Diablerie 55 [B 30,

Power: *The Infernal*, page 12).

...The coven will attempt to lure each magus independently, and arrange a trap tailored to his own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The purpose is not to kill him, but rather to incapacitate and capture him. If successful, the magus' heart would then be removed by a quick The Perfect Gift for the Young Khan ritual, and his predicament explained to him; should he fail to act with obedience, his life will be cut short....

+1 touch, +2 sun]

Releases an Infernal spirit bound to an object, for the duration of the effect. This usually follows a Binding Bargain. Shamans are fond of binding ghosts and spirits in skulls, and temporarily releasing them to do their bidding.

A Place of Dark Worship

Debauchery Diablerie 80 [B 40, +1 touch, +4 forsaken, +3 room]

This dark ritual erects an Infernal aura of level 5 in the room. The aura will fade or increase in time as normal, but will dissipate immediately if the area is consecrated by a Divine character. This ritual is used frequently to erect temporary auras in the Black Tent, which collapse as soon as the tent is dismantled. The true unholy places where the matriarchy worships are darker places, of a more permanent and high Infernal aura.

A Dark Sanctuary

Debauchery Diablerie 40 [B 25, +1 touch, +2 sun]

This ritual is sometimes used in a pinch to create a weak (level 1) secretive Infernal regio, where the shaman or coven can hide should their camp come under attack.

+1 touch, +3 moon, +1 extra entries]

This ritual opens a gateway to a unique Infernal regio, known as the Tunnels of the Dark Hallow. It is a level 2 Abyssal regio comprised of an inhumanly complex maze of dark, cold tunnels. The tunnels can lead anywhere on Mythic Europe, but navigating them successfully requires an (Intelligence + Infernal Lore) roll of 9+. Only one roll is allowed each day. A failed roll indicates travel in a wrong direction, requiring an extra day to make up for it. A botched navigation roll leads to an encounter with some other travelers or denizens of the regio, and may require several days to compensate for. An exit can only be found intentionally, i.e. if that is the intention of the day's navigation attempt.

Travel through the tunnels requires no less time than traveling the same distance on the surface of Mythic Europe, but can be useful to navigate around mountains, lakes, or enemies.

As noted in *Realms of Power: The Infernal* p. 17, staying at the regio reduces all Characteristics by 2 and requires an Intelligence roll against Ease Factor 2 each day lest the character goes insane. The Infernal aura also hinders the recovery of wounds or deprivation, and arrests the recovery of disease (*Realms of*

Binding Bargain

Debauchery Diablerie 30 [B 4, +2 voice, +4 forsaken]

Binds a supernatural creature to the terms of a bargain.

Note that this uses an Incantation Diablerie guideline; I cheated, since it fits the shaman.

Binding the Ancestral Spirit

Debauchery (Req: Binding) Diablerie 55 [B 15, +4 arcane, +4 year]

This strange effect combines Binding with Maleficia. The matriarchy serves as an arcane connection to one of her ancestors, although the shaman must also know the ancestor's True Name as an Infernal Ghost. The ghost is bound to the matriarchy by this ritual, with all the usual benefits but only for a year. This ritual is used by the matriarchy to gain access to their ancestor's spirits, especially those valued for their mastery of some Ability or when seeking knowledge that particular ancestor once had.

Note: Guideline based on Incantation Diablerie

The Matriarch's Incarnation

Binding

The shaman binds the Infernal Ghost of one of the target's ancestors to her, granting her access to her ancestor's knowledge and powers. The shamans believe only a particular ancestor is suitable for the binding, and interpret various signs to indicate who that is through (Perception + Infernal Lore). In practice, however, great Khans and matriarchs are invariably linked to great ancestors.

The shaman must know the True Name of the Infernal Ghost. As any sorcerer (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*,

page 117) the shaman generates a Binding Total of (stress die +Intelligence +Binding +Infernal Lore +aura + Penetration x 5 + Hierarchy x5). The Infernal Ghosts of past matriarchs are pleased to be summoned in this way, so he only needs to surpass their Infernal Might + Hierarchy x 5. With the aid of the coven, success is all but assured. The most powerful Infernal Ghosts have Infernal Might 50 (these are Princes of the order of Deluders), while more common matriarchs may be bound to ancestors with Might 15-25 (these are usually Tempters).

The target enjoys the full benefit of Binding, as per *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page. 117, except that instead of gaining an Affinity for the spirit's Abilities the spirit may teach them to her. This is one key reason the matriarchs bind spirits to them - this communion with their ancestors serves instead of libraries. Otherwise, the Binding affects the target as normal. The spirit is generally limited to communicating with the target mentally, although it can take over when the target is unconscious or in Vituperation. The target gains the spirit's Personality Traits, except perhaps for those she shares with it - change such a trait only if the spirit's trait is more sinful. She can learn to use the spirit's Powers. She gains a Magic Resistance equal to the spirit's Infernal Might, although this is often superseded by The Coven's Blessing. Last but not least, she becomes immune to aging, although she gains 1 Warping Point per year.

Crafting the Infernal Device

Binding

The shaman can also bind spirits into items. These are often lowly demons, aerial powers of little Might. He can then fill these items with Maleficia effects as normal (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 117), except that he can instill any effect created through a Ceremony in which he

participates - not just Maleficia he can cast himself.

Binding the Ghost

Binding

The shaman can binds ghosts in his presence (Voice range) into items. Traditionally, these are feathered tokens. The importance of this practice is that it provides necromancers with spirits they can ablate for the benefit of the coven. To increase Penetration, shamans may conduct a sacrifice, invest confidence, or utilize the ghost's name or True Name as an arcane connection. Should this not prove sufficient, shamans may occasionally bring matrons and other members of the coven to conduct an impromptu ceremony.

Sense the Mystic Veil

Debauchery Diablerie 45 [B 5, +4 forsaken, +4 vision]

The shamans often cast this Maleficia on themselves, to help them see regios. The effect detects the presence of a regio boundary within Sight, but does not reveal which Realm it belongs to or how to enter it. Shamans infer such details through Second Sight and the various (Realm) Lore Abilities.

Pass Through the Mystic Veil

Second Sight and (Realm) Lore

Shamans are well-versed in (Realm) and (Area) Lores, and often know how to enter various magical auras and regios. They also possess Second Sight, allowing them to do so more easily and recognize a regio when they see it. Shamans often travel extensively through regios, and make an effort to know the local auras; this allows them to exploit whatever resources they can glean from such locales. Regios and auras

hosting ghosts are particularly valued.

Necromantic Rites

Necromancers draw heavily on captured slaves and bound ghosts to conduct their Maleficia. Matriarchs are therefore always hungry for more exceptional slaves or ghosts to consume. In addition to enacting many Infernal Blessings, necromantic effects replenish the energy and confidence of the matriarchs, and heal wounds or disease as needed. Unlike other matriarchs, necromancers utilize Incantation as well as Debauchery in their magic, and therefore have a high Stamina. Rarely, they also practice Herbalism (taken as a Virtue) in addition to their Maleficia, and they find Penetration to be useful in ablating bound ghosts.

Steal the Slave's Vitality

Debauchery Consumption 40 [B 5, +6 for up to +6, +1 touch]

Necromancers use this vile ritual to steal the will and life force (Stamina) of the victim, transferring it to the target. The ritual requires a victim with a Stamina score of +3 or higher. Should it be followed to completion, it transfers the vitality to the target, blessing her with Great Stamina (+4). The victim, on the other hand, is drained to Poor Stamina (-4).

Variants of this ritual can be cast for other Characteristics. Stealing Stamina is most common, as all matriarchs value it for Debauchery.

Note that the rules allow for easier increases for Stamina, draining only -1 from the victim and not requiring a +3 in his score. It was considered more fitting to things this way. Achieving a higher Stamina in this manner requires truly exceptional characters, with Stamina +4 or +5 (which would allow +5 or +6 to the target); this makes slaves with truly exceptional Characteristics highly

desirable to the matriarchy. Note that since this debauchery is typically conducted as a seasonal activity, slaves selected for this fate may have several months (or more) to wait before the coven gets around to draining them - time enough for a brave rescue attempt by their friends, perhaps.

The Warrior's Respite

Debauchery Consumption 25 [B 10, +2 voice, +1 diameter]

This effect transfers the Wound and Fatigue penalties from the target to the victim. The target feels no fatigue or pain. This effect is sometimes cast by necromancers on the battlefield, but more often is invested into an item - in which case, uses per day and occasionally Penetration are added. Khans and valued soldiers are given such items, often as black arrows or daggers.

The Khan's Spiritual Armor

Debauchery Consumption 100 [Base 75, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

Adds +15 to the target's Soak and Damage, but also to his Load. This load alone requires Strength 5 to offset it, but Khans typically have Strength +6, allowing them plenty of more load (6 points) for personal gear. A lesser variant at level 55 provides +6 to Soak and Damage and Load - the same load as a full suit of chain mail, but the latter provides +9 to Soak.

Gift of Prowess

Debauchery Consumption 40 [Base 15, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

Adds +3 to Initiative, Attack, and Defense, but subtracts -3 from Fatigue rolls. Most warriors don't want a larger effect, but some do. At level 100, this effect provides a +15 bonus and malus; elite soldiers and marksmen sometimes don such mantles.

Flowering of the New Matron

Debauchery Consumption 25 [Base 20, +1 touch]

This ritual is cast on an acolyte when she passes her gauntlet and becomes a matriarch. It requires two young girls, born on the same day. Thus, the 13-year old acolyte is always accompanied by another 13-year old victim. The necromancer ages both girls by a man's lifetime, but spreads this aging unevenly. Thus, one girl is brought to the prime of her youth - depending on the individual, this can be anywhere between 16 and 25 - while the second is aged considerably, acquiring an effective age of 65 (for the purpose of aging rolls) and a Decrepitude score of 4. The targets still retains their youthful minds, although in time these can become

mockery of life. The revenants are filled with blind rage and attack any living thing, but they lack wisdom and tactical sense. The statistics depend on the circumstances, but the undead generally use the statistics as when they were alive, without any group benefits. This Maleficium is occasionally cast to demoralize enemy troops, but usually offers too little direct tactical benefit for its difficulty.

The Warlock's Respite

Incantation Consumption 15 [B 10, +1 touch]

Permanently transfers a long-term Fatigue level to the victim. This effect is often invested into devices, allowing matriarchs to regain their strength after an exhausting debauchery by siphoning life energy from their slaves.

...Maleficia require no formulas or pre-studied rituals, the dark powers are flexible, their application spontaneous and fitted to the task at hand....

mature (the victim, however, rarely lives that long, often dying within a few years).

The Warrior's Skill

Incantation Consumption 50 [Base 25, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

This peculiar curse is cast on a skilled captured warrior, stealing his skill and granting it to the target. The victim's rolls in one Martial Ability are reduced by -5 or his Ability score, whichever is lower, and the target's rolls with the Ability are increased by the same amount. Matriarchs can easily acquire effective skill at arms in this way.

The Risen Army

Incantation Consumption 45 [B 5, +1 touch, +3 moon, +4 boundary]

This Maleficia raises all those who have fallen in battle to a horrid

Diseases are For Slaves

Incantation Consumption 15 [B10, +1 touch]

Permanently transfers a disease or illness to a victim, usually a slave. This easy Maleficium is how necromancers commonly "heal" disease for the members of the coven or their favored minions. No care is taken of the slave's health, who is often left to die if the disease is contagious or dangerous.

Graft Organ

Incantation Consumption 30 [B 25, +1 touch]

Permanently exchange a body part, such as limb or eyes. No member of the coven is likely to have missing limbs or senses, but they may have mismatched eyes or arms with a different skin color or so on.

The Rite of healing

InCo 40 [B 35, +1 touch]

The necromancer heals all the wounds of the target. This ritual requires the sacrifice of an innocent human victim, who must be without any physical blemish (a physical Flaw or wound).

Arrest the Inconvenient Death

InCo 40 [B 35, +1 touch]

Through this Maleficia the necromancer transfers a terminal aging crises from the target to the victim, who must be a new-born baby. Matriarchs are generally immune to aging, as are their elect minions, but this Maleficia is still useful on rare occasions.

Restoration of Wrongful Aging

InCo 45 [B40, +1 touch]

Transfers a Decrepitude point to the victim, who must be a young fair maiden.

The Perfect Gift for the Young Khan

Incantation Consumption 65 [B40, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

This powerful Maleficia removes the heart of the target, and puts it in a container. It requires the sacrifice of a blood relative (brother or son; strangely, a familiar would do) of the target. The necromancer drenches himself in the victim's blood, and draws out the still beating heart from the target's chest, inflicting an Incapacitating wound on him. As long as the container is undamaged, the heart keeps beating and the target cannot be killed. Ignore any result of instant death, from whatever source. He otherwise suffers wound penalties, heals, ages and so on as normal; in particular, he would recover from the incapacitating wound caused by the

ritual itself, in time. Should the object ever be crushed or the heart otherwise damaged, however, the target dies immediately. The target is immediately aware of even superficial damage to the heart, and suffers a wound with a corresponding severity.

The matrons typically employ this magic on their favored children and powerful Khans. They maintain the stones into which they transfer the soul, ostensibly for the Khan's "safety" but in practice as a means to control him. The target serves as an arcane connection to the heart (and vice versa), so an Hermetic magus may attempt to locate the heart magically. Obtaining it may, however, prove difficult as the heart is often held in an Infernal regio.

Regaining the Lost Confidence of the Matriarch

Debauchery Ablating 20 [B 15, +1 touch]

This Maleficia ablates the life force of a Ghost, draining 5 points of its Might Score and granting 1 Confidence Point to the target. This cannot bring his total to more than (Confidence Score x 5) points.

This Maleficia is commonly used to regain lost Confidence. For this reason, the matriarchy is always eager to obtain ghosts. These are typically Bound into feathered tokens by shamans, to be drained of their power by necromancers to the benefit of the coven.

The Puissant Matriarch

Debauchery Ablating 40 [B15, +1 touch, +4 Forsaken]

This ritual must be empowered by a Might 10 ghost, at the least. It drains 10 Might Score points from the victim, and grants the target Puissant Debauchery.

Variants for other Abilities are of course common (Ceremony, Infernal Lore, Penetration, Incantation,

Ablating, Consumption, Phantasm, Diablerie, Malediction, Binding, Concentration, Second Sight, Leadership, Bows, and Single Weapon are all favorites). Other Minor virtues that can be granted in this manner may include (False) Animal Ken, Demonic Might, Enchanting Music, Lesser Immunity, Lesser Purifying Touch, Magic Sensitivity, Persona, Premonitions, Second Sight, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, Unbound Tongue, Wilderness Sense, Affinity with (Ability), Aptitude for (Sin), Berserk, Convoluted Mind, Enduring Constitution, Enticer of Multitudes, Herbalsim, Intuition, Luck, Piercing Gaze, and Tough. The drained ghost should somehow relate to the gifted Virtue; all ghosts suffice to grant Puissant Debauchery, since they are ablated using this Method.

Gift for the honored Matron

Debauchery Ablating 60 [B 35, +1 touch, +4 forsaken]

This vile ritual requires a powerful (Might 30) ghost of a child to power it. The necromancer ablates the spirit, draining 30 points from its Might Score, and grants the target a False Control Fertility (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates* page 105) Major Virtue. Some matrons use this Supernatural Ability to aid them in their breeding programme.

Other Major Virtues that might be granted include Greater Immunity, Immune to Disease, Mythic Herbalism, Sense Passions, Shapeshifter, Death Prophecy, and Ghostly Warder.



The Little Black Book: Playing Ars Magica First Edition

By Mark Lawford

2004's **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** is the award-winning current incarnation of a game that was first published back in 1987. For many players at this stage it is likely to be the only version of the game that they have played. And even for those who have played the game through previous editions the experience was probably quite some time ago.

This series steps back in time to examine whether the core **Ars Magica** game is still there as we would recognize it throughout all its incarnations and look at what's changed. For each edition, we are using an existing troupe fully familiar with **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** and we will be creating characters, covenants, setting, and scenarios from scratch and recording the experience. If nothing else it's a fun experiment, but there's also the potential to rediscover features that the current edition has lost, and to build a new appreciation for the game we play today.

Each article in the series starts with no assumptions except those

provided by the core rulebook itself. No errata (beyond that found in the books themselves) is taken into account, no supplements, no house rules, and no application of the setting described in future editions. To support each article, we're also publishing the scenario used and the characters generated as part of the process.

So it comes as no surprise that we're starting this journey with the **First Edition**, which, as you'll see, proved to be a slightly confusing, sometimes frustrating, but ultimately liberating experience.

So, What is this Game?

Ars Magica was first released in 1987 at the forefront of a creative silver age in the field of roleplaying games. If the venerable D&D represented a renaissance in the fantasy genre, then the development of **Ars Magica** is the enlightenment, taking classical tropes and developing them in combination with new ideas and techniques. The same thinking behind Rein-Hagen and Tweet's **Ars Magica** went on to produce the incredibly popular *World of Darkness* series and ultimately fed back into the third edition of *Dungeons and Dragons* itself.

There is an excellent write-up of the history of this edition here: <http://www.rpg.net/columns/briefhistory/briefhistory10.phtml> and it does a much better job of capturing the feel of those early days than I could hope to do. It really is worth reading.

But most importantly for us, the **First Edition of Ars Magica** set the scene for what has become one of the

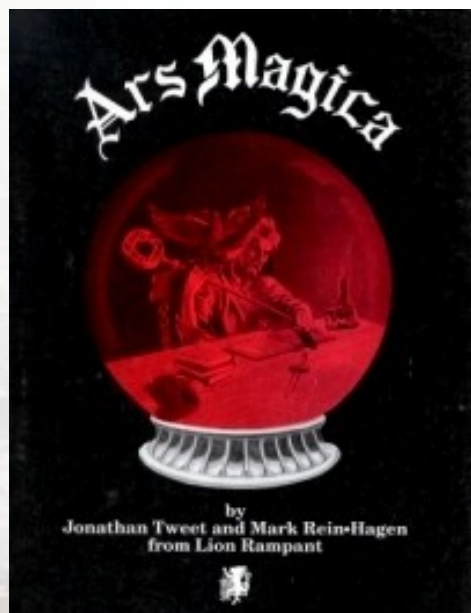
best-developed game systems available today. There were two distinct printings of the **First Edition** rule book and they conveniently have slightly different covers the better to tell them apart. There don't appear to be any appreciable differences between them with the exception of the odd typo having been corrected and a section of errata printed on the inside back cover (which corrects *Aurum* to *Auram* for the Art governing the air), and we didn't notice any differences when we used both printings in play.

Assumptions

In keeping with stepping backwards in time and playing the **First Edition**, we're taking the saga starting date back to around 770. This is probably the only assumption that we're using that is based on prior knowledge of the game as we know it today. The **First Edition** book leaves the actual setting wide open, suggesting only a medieval feel; there are no hard and fast dates that we need to keep to, so we took the opportunity to dive into our current saga's history a little.

With that in mind, we set our story around 770 with the Order in full flow (as described in the rule book) and we set it in what will eventually come to be known as the Stonehenge Tribunal (except it isn't yet as **Ars Magica First Edition** doesn't describe any geographic Tribunals).

We are fortunate enough to have a copy each of the first and second printing of the **First Edition** book. As noted above, we didn't notice any



appreciable differences between them and the second printing saw the most use.

The Setting

The rule book really doesn't give much guidance as to setting or background. Even putting the rich background material that we're used to with the **Fifth Edition** to one side, this **First Edition** abdicates responsibility for world-building and gives it to each gaming group.

The Order of hermes

Checking the table of contents for mention of the Order of Hermes points the reader to page 111, at which point the reader notices something peculiar; the content for the Medieval Society starts on page

Covenants is discussed the book moves onto the vagaries of medieval society. There are no Houses. All magi are directly members of the Order and they happen to live within covenants with other magi of the Order. And as you might expect, there is no discussion on the founding of the Order or any of the founders. The Arts and Magic Theory exist and no discussion is entered into on where they came from or who invented them.

A Medieval Society

There is a high-level run through of the various strata within medieval society, including the nobility, the Church, townsfolk, and the rural peasantry. There's enough there to suggest an early to middle medieval period.

Resources for Ars Magica First Edition

Character sheets, covenant record sheets, and a set of makeshift Whimsy Cards were included in the **Sub Rosa #7** download. They can also be found on the **Sub Rosa** website.

shines through in this edition. There is a section on calling for miracles that includes a table of modifiers that wouldn't look out of place in *Realms of Power: The Divine*. Faith Points are introduced and they provide Magic Resistance equal to Faith Points x 10. Given the die roll as well, that's not to be sneezed at. And that tallies up with what we're used to in **Fifth Edition**.

But there are some notable differences here. Firstly, aura strengths increase to 20 as the theoretical maximum with the church altar, a gateway to hell, and faerieland all enjoying top spot. The description on magical places is actually pretty sparse so we're left to guess what could possibly cause a level 20 magical aura.

The realm interaction table is a more complex affair than we're used to. Take the Dominion for example. Divine auras of all strengths penalize the other realms, but once a Divine aura reaches level three, the penalty for faeries suddenly jumps to 3x the aura strength. At level six, faerie powers simply cease to work, and the infernal suffers a penalty of 2x the aura strength. And at 16, no powers other than those from a Divine source will work. So by implication, magi are unable to cast magic at all within larger cathedrals while faerie powers do not work on consecrated ground.

On one hand all this sounds a little restrictive and cumbersome. On the other, it does allow for some good "neutral ground" encounters where opposing magi are all essentially stripped of their powers.

...If your saga is not in an earth-variant world with connections to ancient Greece, the name "hermes" may be inappropriate. Invent another name if you wish...

112. That suggests a page, perhaps a page and a half to introduce the Order of Hermes and give the players enough to go on to shape their magus and the magical society in which they operate.

And the second sentence concerning the Order invites the group to discard the name in favor of something more in keeping with their own game world. It feels quite strange.

But once over that shock, most of the ingredients are there. We're introduced to the Oath, the Code, Marching as a sanction, Wizard War as a means to conflict resolution, councils, obligations towards apprentices, Redcaps as messengers of the Order, and even tribunals (in this case meaning only a gathering of magi and not a territorial boundary).

And after the key concept of

Specifics of the setting, i.e. a location and a year, are not provided. A price list for goods and services is, however. To this reader, that's suggestive of how close the game was at this time to other more transactional-based RPGs on the market.

So it's interesting that **Ars Magica**, at this stage at least, had the potential to follow a more traditional fantasy setting and it is easy to imagine a series of supplements providing new worlds to play within. Is this a missed opportunity? The notion of playing in different time periods or fantasy worlds is certainly something that crops up from time to time in fan discussions.

The Supernatural Landscape

The power of the Dominion really

The Rules

There is a lot here that feels familiar and nobody got lost or confused except perhaps on the details of implementation.

Core Mechanics

The core mechanics are all pretty familiar. Ability checks involve a given Characteristic plus the Ability score plus a die roll. Rolls can be Stress, Simple, Quality, or Low, which treat ones and zeroes as follows:

Roll	1	0
Low	1	0
Simple	1	10
Stress	Roll and Double	Roll for Botch
Quality	Roll and Double	10

It's worth remembering that even in 1987 this approach was still relatively new and was not widely used.

These totals, including rolls, are usually either compared to another character's total or to some Ease Factor set by the storyguide. There is also a useful list of options that the storyguide can use in such rolls. Buffers provide a measure of extra difficulty in contested rolls where one character must beat the other's roll by a certain amount to ensure victory. Multipliers limit the effects of chance by multiplying each character's given Ability or Characteristic by a certain factor. And of course the Universal Modifier is simply a rules-based description for what every storyguide does; giving bonuses for exciting or clever ideas.

Abilities

The way Abilities are handled does feel a little alien. Let's start with "clusters". Clusters are groups of closely related Abilities. Page 30 uses

the example of Survival. In the example, **SURVIVAL** (all caps) is the cluster and **SURVIVAL/Grasslands** is the Ability within that cluster. Characters have a score within their chosen Ability and other Abilities within the Cluster (/Woodlands, /Mountains, etc.) use that score minus one. Once you have chosen an Ability within a Cluster you only spend experience points on that Ability. All the others are based off its score minus one. It has the feel of a **Fifth Edition** specialty... but made more complex. And there are a lot of Clusters. For instance, Folk Ken is actually FOLK KEN/(Peasant Ken, Townfolk Ken, Noble Ken, Clergy Ken); and the SUBTERFUGE Cluster includes the Abilities Intrigue, Intimidation, and Feign Emotion.

Some of these feel a little cumbersome to players of the **Fifth Edition** (Charisma and Charm are separate Abilities, but Tact, Etiquette, and Compromise all form part of the DIPLOMACY Cluster), but there are a couple that are rather broader than we're used to. The OCCULT ENTITIES Cluster covers Demon Lore, Faerie Lore, Fantastic Beast Lore, and Undead Lore. And HUMANITIES covers Arts, Classics, Music, and Philosophy.

Furthermore, Abilities are broken down into three types:

Talents cannot be trained but their use can be attempted by characters without a score in the Ability or its Cluster.

Skills are trained or practised and as such a character without a score of at least one (either directly or through its Cluster) suffers a heavy penalty, either to the role or to any botch dice, assigned by the storyguide.

Knowledge Abilities require a score of 1 in the Ability or its Cluster, which means that Cluster Abilities can be used with an effective score of 0.

Some Additional Oddities

Magi start with an Aid Knowledge at a score of 5. This Knowledge is restricted to magi as it is learned during apprenticeship and represents their proficiency with assisting on laboratory projects.

All Abilities can be assigned a negative value at character creation, making the character particularly inept, in order to provide the character with additional points to be spent elsewhere. The playtest group quite liked that idea, but conceded that character creation could ultimately do without the complication. But there are also some special Abilities that cannot be raised from their original value. The Hearing, Memory, and Sight Talents are the key examples.

Magic and Spells

All the expected techniques and forms are there, but with some slight variation in name and/or spelling:

Techniques	Forms	
Creo	Animalem	Ignem
Intellego	Aquam	Imagonem
Muto	Aurum*	Mentem
Perdo	Corporem	Terram
Rego	Herbam	Vim

* The errata list at the back of the second printing says that *Aurum* (gold) used in the first printing should be *Auram*. But with access to both printings we can still see *Aurum* clearly used both in the description of the Arts and in various headings, so it wasn't considered important enough to alter the document masters at that time.

Beyond that, there aren't any real surprises as to what each of the Arts cover.

You'll also find the same Spontaneous, Formulaic, and Ritual spells. Some of the standard elements

that we're used to, such as requisites, multiple casting, casting from a text, casting while maintaining spells, use of vis, etc. are also present.

Magic Resistance

This gets a little interesting. Resistance comes in two flavors, Passive and Active. Parma Magica is a spell cast as per the regular Formulaic casting rules. Its level provides the magus (or other target) with the same level of Passive Resistance.

But when that resistance is breached, it is ablated away: Each point by which the penetration roll exceeds the resistance roll reduces the Parma's resistance one point in strength. So the more strain the resistance is placed under the weaker it becomes.

Active Resistance essentially involves a fast-cast defense. The magus adds his Technique + Form + Int (+10 if he exerts himself) to any Passive Resistance he may still have.

So if nothing else, we can see the origins of fast-cast defensive spells even if the implementation is really quite different.

But a Fast Cast option for spells proper are also catered for. Spells are all considered "slow" by default and are all discharged at the end of the round. But by attempting a roll based on Quickness and Concentration, the magus can potentially move up the

initiative order. And a particularly high roll is rewarded by also allowing the magus to cast a second spell in the usual phase.

Certamen

Certamen is a Talent, which means you advance it as an Ability separate from your scores in the arts. The rules are fairly simple. Each side generates a total:

Certamen Total: Intelligence + Technique + Form + Certamen Talent + stress die

If you win, you have the option to take the points by which you beat the opponent and either carry them over as a bonus to your next roll or try to fatigue your opponent there and then. If you decide to fatigue your opponent, you make a damage roll against their soak:

Certamen Damage: Intelligence + Certamen + points + stress die

Certamen Soak: Stamina + Certamen + stress die

For every five points you beat your opponent's soak, he loses a fatigue level. It all seems reasonably familiar so far. But here's an interesting twist that I think is missing from the **Fifth Edition**. You can have multiple magi on each side. Just think about that for a moment. Your covenant could, if they were so inclined, enter certamen en masse.

In massed certamen each side totals up their various modifiers before committing to the roll. Damage and soak are dealt with the same way, with any damage over soak being applied equally to each affected opponent. And part of the beauty of this very simple system is that in any given round, not all of the magi need to contribute to their side's certamen totals. They could be doing other things, like punishing a fallen opponent with a spell in that round.

Now, consider the **Fifth Edition**.

Certain quarters would have you believe that House Tremere, with their inbuilt Focus on certamen, would simply bully every magus they come across and beat them into submission with the overt threat or use of certamen. It's not a viewpoint I adhere to by any stretch. But let's assume that is potentially the case. With the **First Edition** take on certamen, a magus does not need to stand alone against a clearly more powerful opponent. An entire covenant could present a unified front. Unity and allies become a deciding factor rather than encounters with a talented dualist simply being a forgone conclusion.

So could this be fitted back into the **Fifth Edition**? There must surely be a way to leverage the group combat rules; pick a "vanguard" and use their total, with others in the group contributing either Technique or Form to the total. Any "damage" is done once per member of the group. That may make an interesting exercise for someone to write up... But not in this article.

Spells

Spell descriptions are hugely important. While the character's Arts give an indication of power, it is the spell listings that describe how that power can be applied. They also provide the basic guidance for spontaneous magic, device effects, and even supernatural powers possessed by other creatures.

Looking through the spell listings it's not easy to pick out spells with which we're not already familiar. So many of the spells we recognize from today are already present in the **First Edition**; The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch, The Gift of the Bear's Fortitude, Aura of Enobled Presence, Unseen Porter, Opening the Intangible Tunnel... the list goes on.

But it is how they are described that makes the difference. Here's an

Magic Resistance: Exempli Gratia

Aetheldred the Enchanter attempts to entrance Whiglaff. His penetration is based on his Presence + Entrancement + a Stress Die, for a total of $3 + 7 + 16 = 26$. This is a Mentem-based effect, so Whiglaff defends with Active Resistance. He has a Parma Magica of 15, plus 5 for Muto and 5 for Terram. He has an Intelligence of 1 and rolls 3 on the Stress Die for a total of 29. He resists Aetheldred's entrancement, but only because he cast his defensive magic.

example:

Circle of the Faerie Stone: Lvl 30

Near, Sun/Inst., Aimed

Creates a 4 pace high stone wall in a circle up to 10 paces in diameter. It has a magic resistance of +20.

The spell only lists Range and Duration (see the nearby table for the list of available Ranges and Durations). Near range is defined as anything within 15 paces. But the Duration has two options. Cast normally, the effect last for Sun duration, which is defined just as we would expect. But if cast with one pawn of raw vis for every five levels of the spell, the second duration can be used. This does not turn the spell into a ritual however and only the normal casting time is required.

There is little guidance provided as to the levels of certain effects. If a system was used during the development of the spell effects it isn't readily apparent. But despite that, the levels are largely consistent with what we'd expect to see now. I suspect that this is more down to a desire to preserve compatibility between editions where possible and that the system of guidelines was developed around these original levels. Regardless, there is no list of guidelines to help in developing spontaneous effects or device enchantments. These must be done by analogy with existing effects rather than built from first principles.

Laboratory work

The duration of laboratory activities, as with other long-term events, is measured in months rather than seasons. This is something that made our playtest group sit up and listen. One criticism of **Ars Magica**, from those who prefer a faster saga is that once you factor in stories and adventures there seems precious little

time to spend on actual study or laboratory projects. But providing 12 possible slots in each game year that can be spent in the library or the lab certainly gives back the time needed to advance the player magus in the direction they want to go. We didn't play an extended saga with this approach so we can't make any real assessment on whether this kind of pace would lead to excessive power levels or simply too much book-keeping.

Some of the expected ideas and mechanics are there. Apprentices (and other magi) provide aid in the lab, your magus can create enchanted items, potions, longevity potions, and familiars are provided for. But talismans, as we know them now, are apparently absent. In their place, the magus can create a focus. This looks to fill the slot of a talisman as a magus can have only one focus at a time, it can be enchanted as with a standard device, but it can be opened to a succession of Technique and Form combinations. Bearing in mind that lab activities are accounted in months not seasons, once the device has been prepared (three months), each successive month of activity opens one new Technique and Form combination. This then provides a casting bonus to spells matching the focus Technique and Form combinations.

There are no suggestions that the focus is considered part of the magus, though this seems more to do with such concepts having not yet developed than any kind of oversight.

Combat and Other Obstacles

There are very few surprises here. Combat consists of contested attack versus defense rolls, with resulting damage compared to soak. Damage over soak wounds the target, which in turn imposes penalties on future actions. Some of the details are

Ranges	
Body	The caster's body and mind only
Self	The caster and the caster's clothing, equipment, etc.
Touch	Affects the caster or whatever the caster touches
Reach	Touching or within two paces
Eye	Eye contact, even momentarily
Near	Within 15 paces
Sight	The magus must be able to see any part of the target
Special	As defined by the spell
Durations	
Instant	The magic is summoned and gone instantly, but the effects may persist. This is the case for effects such as Pile of Fire, or for vis supported effects such as Chirurgeon's Healing Touch.
Concentration	As long as the caster concentrates
Ring	Lasts as long as the caster does not leave the ring
Sunrise/set	The spell ends at dawn or dusk, whichever comes first
Moon	Lasts until both the new moon and the full moon have passed
Year	Lasts until the fourth seasonal change
Permanent	The magic remains active until dispelled
Special	As described in the spell description

different. Damage is rolled and has no bonus based on the success of the attack, and Soak is also rolled so as to match the damage roll.

Then and Now

The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch: Lvl 20

Touch, Sun/Inst.

The person touched can recover a lost body level by making a Stm quality roll of 3+, to which is added the Chirurgy skill of anyone who has successfully tended the wounds. Also, subtract the Wound Penalty from the roll.

The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch

CrCo 20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

This spell heals a single Light Wound suffered by the person touched. This spell does not heal damage from poison or disease.

(Base 15, +1 Touch)

Pilum of Fire: Lvl 20

Spec., Inst., Aimed

A pace-thick pilum (javelin) of fire flies from you and strikes a target, doing +25 damage minus 1 point for every pace of distance from you. Past 25 paces, the flames dissipate.

Pilum of Fire

CrIg 20

R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Ind

A 2-foot thick spear-shaped jet of fire flies from your palms, doing +15 damage to the individual it hits.

(Base 10, +2 Voice)

Veil of Invisibility: Lvl 30

Self, Sun/Year, Corporem

You become completely invisible, but still cast a reflection in a mirror.

Veil of Invisibility

PeIm 20

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

The target becomes completely undetectable to normal sight, regardless of what he does, but still casts a shadow.

(Base 4, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 changing image)

The **First Edition** has more support for brawling than the **Fifth Edition** and includes a series of brawling maneuvers complete with attack and defense totals for each maneuver. There is even a "Fighting Close" option to simulate opponents in full contact, such as when rolling on the ground and struggling for a knife. There is also a useful list of attack, defense, and soak botches.

Body levels operate differently, with each wound moving the character in sequence through Hurt, Light Wounds, Medium Wounds, Heavy Wounds, Incapacitated, and Dead. All names we recognize. And the wound penalties are just as we expect them to be too.

There is a Wound Recovery Chart, which in quite an interesting twist gives the number days it takes to recover from wounds in sequence

based on the skill of the chirurgeon tending the patient.

As for the rest of the rules, all the expected headings are present; mounded combat charging, two weapon use, desperate defense, etc. Add in falling, fire, and deprivation, and the book has most things covered.

Generating the Characters

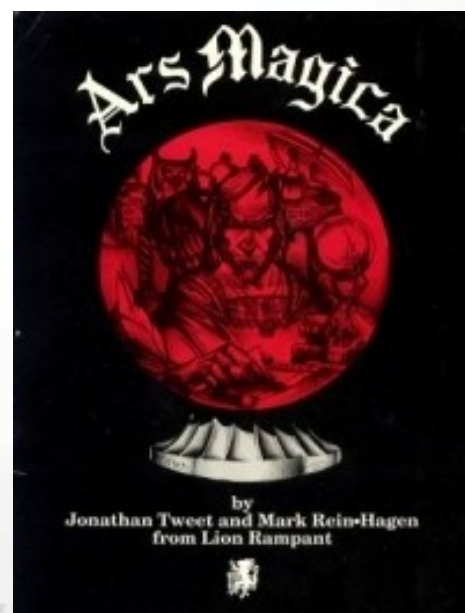
The **First Edition** offers Magi, Companions, and Grogs as playable character types, so that hasn't changed between editions. There is a different character creation process for each type of character. It isn't so much that each character has a different number of virtues and flaws, but that magi can only take things called Magical Attributes, which are essentially Hermetic Virtues and

Flaws in all but name, and grogs don't get anything.

Player Characters

There's no two ways about it, generating player characters is arduous going. Not only are there three different character creation processes to cater for the three character types but many fundamental decisions are taken away from the player. The principle problem is that something as fundamental as the character's age is rolled. It's random, within a certain range. A grog is 12 + simple die years old, a magus 22 + simple die, and a companion is simple die + any number higher than 9, representing the only level of choice in deciding character age.

Every character must then roll for characteristics. These are the standard eight that we recognize today and they are paired the same way. There are some wrinkles to this process (explored later), but the rolling aspect is where much of the pain comes in. The player rolls two dice, a high and a low. The low is subtracted from the high and the scores in both characteristics in the pair must equal the result. Unless either dice comes up 0, in which case both characteristics are 0. Or the result is 0, in which case both characteristics are



Sub Rosa

0. Again. Or the day has a “T” in it. Seemingly. Grog must split the points as equally as possible, but the other character types have a little more freedom.

Apart from personality traits, Abilities, and working out combat totals, that’s pretty much it for grogs. Companions get to select a number of Exceptional Attributes, which are Virtues and Flaws (in most cases literally as they’ve survived through to **Fifth Edition** largely unscathed) in all but name. If only it were as simple as it sounds. Stay with me on this...

The player rolls a simple die to determine the number of Exceptional Attributes they can have. If the sum of the character’s characteristics is less than 0, he can have one more Exceptional Attribute for each point below 0. Except Extreme Mystical Attributes. They count double. That’s just the start. The player then has to buy them. Exceptional Attributes work like Virtues and Flaws (as that’s what they become in later editions) and the sum of all costs must equal 0. Unless the sum of the character characteristics is less than 0, in which case the Exceptional Attributes may total 0 minus that number, which is means that if the characteristics equal -2, then the character’s Exceptional Attributes must balance out to +2. After working through this with four confused and frustrated players I can honestly say I’ve been in more comfortable situations.

Unless the playtest group were reading the rules incorrectly, Magi don’t get Exceptional Attributes but they do get Magical Attributes, which again divide into Advantages and Disadvantages. It isn’t fair to pick on a venerable old system where the genius of that system is in the innovative troupe play, storytelling approach, and the magic system. But just when we’d got to grips with the way companions pick Advantages and Disadvantages, the magi do it differently. In their case, Advantages

and Disadvantages must total 0, but the value of the Intelligence characteristic is treated as an Advantage in itself. So if my magus has a +3 Intelligence, I need at least three points of Disadvantages to balance it out to 0. Given that there are only nine Magical Disadvantages to choose from, this felt both painful and restrictive.

But once past the pain, it was back to familiar territory and buying Arts and spells with 150 points/levels apiece. That at least, the players had control over.

NPCs

We played through a fairly simple story as we were playing through this for just a session or two. So we needed a well-defined NPC wizard to present a challenge to the player characters. And this is where one key difference between this original edition and **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** becomes very apparent.

It was a difficult decision to opt for the Entrancement Exceptional Talent (yes, that has been there since the beginning) as the enemy’s key power is very costly. Taking that Extreme Mystical Attribute costs eight points. That means we have to find minus eight points of Attributes just to balance that out. In **Fifth Edition**, that would be one Major Virtue; three points.

So it is easier now to build challenging NPCs; easier to make decisions on using some of the stronger Supernatural Abilities, and easier to stack supernatural capabilities together. That is very clearly a trait of the latest edition, which practically revels in presenting alternative magical traditions. The game recognizes that there is good mileage to be had from playing magicians from a background other than Hermetic, as the new *Rival Magic* book and *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* before it clearly shows.

The Entrancement is a means to an end. It makes the character particularly useful to the ruling class as he is able to exert their political influence in a very direct magical way. And in a world where the Order of Hermes are the only ones with magic resistance, it is important that the NPC presents a different kind of threat.

Getting Down to the Game

The playtest group were impressed with the character sheets as they looked, at first glance, almost ready to play **Fifth Edition**, just about everything was there. But this initial comfort soon turned to frustration when they started generating characters.

Character Generation

Players roll for their characters’ starting ages in the **First Edition**. As we were playing straight down the line we decided to simply take what the rolls gave us and the group ended up with juvenile grogs aged 13 and 14. Not even magi or companions were immune from these dice rolls and the players felt that their decision-making for their characters was immediately taken away from them.

Even statistics are rolled, but there is a stage of “protecting characteristics” and then “taking zero” before getting to rolling for any remaining pairs. Protecting means assigning a default number to a given characteristic, +1 for grogs, +2 for companions, and +3 for magi. The player can choose the characteristic this applies to. Now, no matter how badly the player rolls for the pair containing that characteristic the protected one will always be at least that assigned value. And of course the player can assign zero to each of any remaining pairs of characteristics to avoid having to roll for them.

Protecting characteristics, taking zero in pairs of stats, and then rolling for the rest just made our heads hurt. It must have looked simpler on the page than it turned out to be. We suspect that the first two steps were introduced to give the player a degree of choice and control, but actually it just held things up and caused many furrowed brows.

As far as magi were concerned the absence of Hermetic Houses was both a blessing and a curse in that nobody had a framework to build a concept on. The players had complete freedom to create the magus that they wanted. But we realized at that point just how useful those broad House templates are for stoking the imagination. But during play we also lost a vital short-hand that is so useful in the early stages of a game - we had no simple frame of reference by which to understand the characters' roles.

Ability clusters started off being something of a favorite, but quite quickly proved to be counter-intuitive, especially when we realised that weapon skills weren't clustered. And we were surprised to find that magi could not choose from the standard list of Exceptional Attributes, with the effect that a neither grog nor magus could be large or small but must always be the default size 0. Only companions may take the Exceptional Attributes that allow this change in size.

The process of character creation took a long time. we devoted a whole three-hour session to it and still left with people needing to share a rulebook to finish things off. We all found the process arbitrarily difficult, especially given that each character type has a slightly different creation process. And with little focus on advantages and disadvantages we did not feel that there was enough to differentiate the characters.

The grogs become little more than

combat stats with (default) personality traits, the magi were somewhat hard to place, and the companions essentially left the play experience before we began.

Whimsy Cards

I've heard of whimsy cards of course but never used them. And yet **Ars Magica First Edition** prompts their use only five pages in (if you read up on the history of Lion Rampant, you'll have a decent understanding of why). So given that they were so prominent so early in the rule book we used took the opportunity to use them.

I used the card listing as presented at <http://www.darkshire.net/jhkim/rpg/systemdesign/cards/whimsycards.html> and printed off a deck of cards. Each player was dealt a single (completely) random card at the beginning of the scenario. We had two of them used in play and they presented an interesting diversion. We enjoyed the option to throw a whimsy card into the narrative and they did actually serve to enhance that narrative, sending some minor events in an unplanned trajectory. Personally, I'm not comfortable with making the narrative choices of the players quite so random. I'm all for allowing the players to dictate the narrative but that shouldn't be restricted to a card dealt at the beginning of that session.

We collectively decided however that they may not be appropriate for our regular style of play, but this storyguide can at least see them being used again (despite misgivings). Most likely in stories heavily involving a faerie presence, which appropriately tend to deal with the expectations around narrative structure and flow.

Business as Usual

Once the trauma of character creation was put behind us, the rules stayed out of the way and let us play the game and tell the story we wanted

to tell.

Using Abilities and Casting Spells

Abilities and Clusters worked fine in actual play despite some reservations during character creation. Clusters do tend to be less intuitive than Specialties, but we could see them working. We simply found them not worth the extra working out and inconsistent when looking across at combat Abilities.

Ease Factors were intuitive and the storyguide made liberal use of modifiers and multipliers. On the whole they were appreciated by the troupe, which is a good thing. We all want to enjoy the narrative and we all want the good guys to win so it's nice to have the tools there to reward good ideas and weight things in favor of the player characters from time to time.

We largely stayed away from the differing roll types and in practice used Simple and Stress. Perhaps that was out of familiarity, but I think it was just a little more convenient to work out whether the situation was stressed or not, rather than stress or "some flavor of not".

Spontaneous magic could easily have been a minefield, but actually there seemed to be a broad enough selection of spells that the effect we needed (creating light, shielding against rain, stabilizing a rocking boat, etc.) seemed sufficiently similar to existing examples to either use that level as is or err on the side of the players and drop a magnitude.

Penetration and the ablative effect it has on the Parma Magica introduced a little extra book-keeping, but no more than a quickly jotted note. And while the players could see their magical protection diminishing by the round at one point all agreed that it was more satisfying that the all-or-nothing nature of **Fifth Edition's** Parma Magica.

Laboratory Work

There were no real issues with regard to the laboratory work. It was simple to see what assistance each magus gave the other in the lab and the twelve months allowed by the story was used to good effect to create an enchanted device, invent a new spell, and practice Abilities.

The troupe enjoyed the extra pace afforded by using months instead of seasons but there was some concern over one aspect of spell creation. On inventing a spell it is not in an optimal state. It is essentially a first draft. Once the character has invented the spell, a further stress die is rolled and added to the spell level to give it an Effective Level, the level at which it must be cast. Each extra month spent on the project the magus can re-roll the stress die, taking that roll instead if it would make for a more optimized spell. It all seemed a little hit and miss to us. A nice idea but not implemented particularly well as far as we were concerned. We didn't spend much time optimizing the spell.

Without spell or effect guidelines there were lengthy discussions on what kind of levels to assign. But to be fair these were probably made longer because we were concerned with shaking the system down rather

than just making do and getting on.

Certamen

Despite the inclusion of two antagonistic enemy magi spoiling for a fight, the player characters opted for a negotiated solution with them rather than resorting to certamen. But having read through the rules all were agreed that had the certamen have happened then all the player magi would have joined the fray. And that's a huge strength of this early version of certamen - all the players feel involved rather than just focusing on one player character with one chance to impress or fail.

Conclusions

There's much that we're thankful has been changed in the last 24 years. We always considered **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** character creation to be a labor of love and not something that can be done quickly, but at least we don't have to cope with the **First Edition**. We would have been happy to have taken sample grogs from the book, if there had been any. And for some the chore of creating even their core magus character was simply too much. There's not much by way of guidelines for creating creatures and you'll be scratching around in vain if you want to create a challenging wizard from a rival tradition.

Some abilities sometimes felt sweeping in their scope while others felt too narrow. And we objected to buying weapon attack and parry skills separately. The distinction between Clusters and Abilities gave us another thing to keep in mind or calculate as we were playing.

But it isn't all bad. We loved those few lines on page 63 that opened Certamen up to include multiple opponents on each side. We'd like to see a treatment of that for the **Fifth Edition** to be honest. It would easily find a place in our regular saga. And the prospect of an ablative Parma

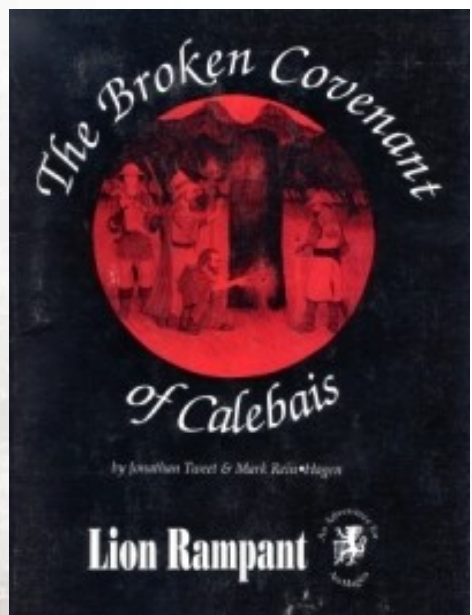
Magica is right there from the outset, which is something that I've seen several treatments of in the past.

And while we now view the Hermetic Houses as integral to the setting, the freedom granted by removing them is striking. With no Houses and no geographic Tribunals there are no expectations as to loyalties to distract from the saga. It takes **Ars Magica** back to basics; the magi in their covenant against the world. It made things difficult in the short term of just two or three sessions, by not having archetypes to refer to, but actually the world-building power that it gives to the troupe in the longer term is quite enviable.

By not defining a default setting, or even year if you assume a default "Mythic" Europe, you both bless and curse the troupe. You have the freedom (that word again) to go anywhere and do pretty much anything; you can create your own world or dive into the midst of the renaissance. But with little by frame of reference the average troupe needs to work that little bit harder to start building a game world.

We played **Ars Magica First Edition** only briefly, and to be honest it's not an experience that we'll be rushing to explore again. The age of the rule set shows, and we've been spoiled by the setting and the world building of the last twenty-odd years. All the essential components are there, but the edges are still too rough for this pampered twenty-first century player and his troupe.

But it's a great start and we can't wait to see what the 1989 **Second Edition** can bring to the table. I'm hoping it makes character creation easier, removes Ability Clusters, and tones down on the supernatural aura strengths. Oh, and removes Whimsy Cards as a core game element.



The Next Generation

"And what of my tradition? What of the knowledge of my father, and his father, and his father before him? Would you see that lost for all time? No? Then give me the child!"

Aetheldred of Wessex

In this scenario, designed for **Ars Magica First Edition**, the player magi are confronted with the effects of the Order's own dominance; there are minor traditions of magic in the world whose members lack the power of the Order and they need Gifted apprentices in order to continue their magical lineage. And when a Gifted child is revealed to the covenant, do the magi take the child as their own apprentice or concede him to a wizard from another tradition?

Precis

A diviner of the Order comes to the covenant of Deep Dawn and explains that he has foreseen a Gifted child, a child with two mothers, one of which is powerful woodland spirit. He tells the covenant that the child is destined to be apprenticed to a great magician and that the covenant must seek him out.

The magi leave their covenant to learn the boy's history and location from the spirit queen of an island woodland. The spirit will not bow to these magi until they prove themselves worthy. To do this they must bring life back to a mithraeum, a shrine to the Roman god Mithras.

Once done, the magi are told that a wizard of a rival tradition has learned of the boy by other means and is about to take him for his apprentice.

If the boy is to join the Order, they must secure him from this

wizard.

Background

The Saxon kingdom of Sussex is ruled by Offa, though this is a recent development and the land is not entirely peaceful. Neighboring Kent is contested between Offa and Egbert II and tensions are running high in 771, with Egbert in control but Offa attempting to extend his influence. While there are sporadic contacts with the vikings, they are not present in England in any great number and we'll assume them not to be in Sussex at this time.

The Covenant

The player covenant Deep Dawn consists of a small collection of huts on the English south downs atop an inverted tower sunk deep into the chalk hills. The "tower" is entered through one of the huts.

The site has a level 5 magic aura. The tower has four laboratories, one on each of levels two to five. The council chambers, libraries, casting spaces, etc. are found on the lowest level. The tower is generally quite cold and dark, being entirely contained within the earth and as such it is filled with fires and torches, some of which are magically sustained.

Adapting The Story to the Fifth Edition

The story itself is fairly straight-forward and is presented as a series of challenges. The magi are told of a Gifted child that is soon to fall into the hands of a minor magical tradition, an antagonistic spirit knows the identity and location of the child, and when found the child is about to be taken by the rival wizard. It should be easy enough to adapt and storyguides will

By Mark Lawford

Opportunities to Explore the Rules

One of the key objectives behind this story is to explore the rules of the first edition. So here's a breakdown of where they come into play.

Get your players to generate their magi and some grogs and/or companions between them. Generating a full set of magus, companion, and grog per player is probably counter-productive so concentrate on the magi.

There are natural spell-casting opportunities concerning weather, searching, affecting spirits, and rituals worked into the narrative. And these are across a range of auras.

There is also a particular opportunity to engage in some laboratory work mid-way through the story. This comes about either from a need to develop spells able to subdue magical opponents, or to persuade those same opponents to help.

The story presents opportunities to confront other magi, both of the Order and beyond, which allows for Certamen to be used as well as interacting with Supernatural Abilities.

want to use some of the modern game's concepts, such as regiones, hedge magic traditions or even the Rival Magic supplement, and most likely Realms of Power: Magic to better describe the magical creatures encountered.

Lastly, if you're using Whimsy Cards, players have the chance to swing the narrative in their favor, which involves the storyguide remaining flexible on the chain of events.

Expected Sequence of Play

Wheostan incites the story by arriving at the covenant and describing his visions to the covenant. The magi and their companions then visit an island in the marsh, long forgotten by the Order, and discover that the Order's power is not so grand as they once assumed. Either bargaining with the spirit who rules the island or enforcing their will upon it, the magi learn that the boy they seek has already been found.

This leads into the final act of the story where they must secure the boy, one way or another.

Act One: The Boy is Discovered

The young diviner Wheostan visits

Wheostan the Diviner

Wheostan incites the story by visiting the covenant of Deep Dawn and telling of the Gifted child. He is a youthful man who enjoys life alone as much as he does the company of those he visits. His constant companion is his familiar, a talking hound called Brodwick. His magic is geared towards divination, as is all those of his magical lineage, and he has a reputation as a powerful seer even within the magically-aware Order of Hermes.

But while he's outwardly personable and easy-going, he is manipulative and uses the information his visions and divinations give him to his own ends.

For a vision of how Wheostan ends up by 1220, see Sub Rosa issue two.

Wheostan The Diviner

Friendly +3, Driven (find the secrets of divination) +2, Manipulative +1

You are unlikely to need stats for either Wheostan or Brodwick, but you can assume that he can competently cast any level 30 Intellego spell across each of the ten forms.

His other visions come unbidden and cannot be called upon, at least not through any means Wheostan has learned so far.

the covenant, all his worldly possessions seem piled around him on his cart. But the weather is treacherous and he has not quite made it to his destination. After being rescued from the elements by the covenant, Wheostan tells of a Gifted boy and sends the magi on their way to locate him.

The Arrival of the Seer

It is a torrential and thunderous night. Even deep underground, the cold of the rain soaks through to the Covenant of Deep Dawn. And then the thin and reedy church bell rings out. And keeps ringing.

Investigating, the player characters are told by the covenfolk that they saw a torchlight upon the track leading to the village, but that the torch suddenly disappeared. They fear that someone may be in trouble and the night is too dark and the weather too dangerous to find him. The magi are needed.

The torrential rain dampens torches to the point that they barely throw any light at all. And the footing is so loose that there is a danger of slipping. Magi must concentrate hard in order to cast spells in such conditions as the cold stinging rain forces their eyes shut and the thunder



overhead drowns out their words. The Ease Factor for Concentration rolls is 9. Use a universal modifier of +2 to all rolls if they go prepared.

The track is easy enough to follow with magic and they can soon enough see a cart that has slipped from the ridge and upturned itself onto its side. Illuminated by a flash of lightening the characters can see a donkey struggling to free itself, a dog near the donkey's head, and Wheostan trying to right the cart. Wheostan calls to the characters. He's been trying to cast magic, but the cold, the rain, and the thunder have all broken his concentration. His belongings have been strewn down the slope and he needs help to free the donkey, right the cart, and get everything back to the village.

This is an opportunity for the characters to try out some magic in a low-risk situation. This should help get a feel for how the spontaneous system works.

He is grateful for the help and asks for a few nights to rest out of the weather and for the covenfolk to tend his donkey and fix his creaking cart. In return, Wheostan brings important news...

The Visions of Wheostan

"The vision I describe to you now has great potency as I have received it on the night of the full moon, a symbol both of power and of the ending of one phase and the beginning of another. So pay heed to my words, and act upon them.

"I saw an island surrounded by mists, yet as I peered through the mists I saw a tree give birth to a boy. I was the sole witness, with the exception of a single white bull, who knelt down to the infant and offered the child its neck to suckle from. Three drops of blood fell betwixt the bull's neck and the boy's lips and where these drops fell the trees grew strong and true. And when the boy had drank his fill, the bull became stone.

"The boy walked from the island, out of the arms of one mother and into the arms of

another, and there he stays yet. But the boy is confronted by two doors and he stands with one on either side and a single key in his hand. He can make but one choice. Behind one door waits the magus, and behind the other writhes the conjoined serpents, three-in-one."

The island is a reference to an actual place. It is surrounded by mist in the vision as it is largely unexplored by those of the Order. The tree giving birth to the boy is a reference to the magic of the place being infused into the Gifted child. The sacrifice of the bull is a clear reference to Mithras and Mithraic practice (which a roll on Intelligence + HUMANITIES/Classics or Legend Lore against Ease Factor 6 will reveal). This is supported by the strength of the trees that grew from where the blood fell on the ground; this "regeneration through sacrifice" is another important symbol.

By this stage, the magi should understand that they need to seek out an island with Mithraic importance. The boy is not truly the product of the woodland, but his Gift is, so the secret of the boy's identity may be revealed by visiting the island.

The two doors from the vision represent a choice of two initiations facing the boy. The single magus from the vision represents a member of a lesser tradition, while the conjoined serpents represent the Order of Hermes with its communal wisdom. The Order has one chance to bring the boy under their control. Should he be initiated by another tradition, his power will be lost to the Order.

The characters must use their Intelligence + SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE/Sussex History Cluster, or their library, to identify the island. A roll of 6+ identifies an island in the marsh that is thought to have once contained a Mithraic shrine. A roll of 9+ identifies the island as off-limits to those of the

Water Sprites

Faerie Might: 5

Magic Resistance: 5

Size: -1

Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com,
Str 0, Stm +2, Dex +1,
Qik +2

Soak: +2

Combat:

Brawling: 1st +5, Atk +4,
Def +3, Dam +3

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

Order by the command of the Cwen a Holt, a powerful woodland spirit who calls the island home.

The Protected Island

"No man nor woman of magic shall enter here unbidden, and no man nor woman who bears the Gift shall ever be my guest."

The Isle of Oxney is a large shallow wooded hill that rises from the marsh and is surrounded on all sides by the rivers that run from the north west to the south east. It slopes upwards to the south east and this area is largely clear of the woodland that covers the rest of the island.

There is no land bridge onto the island but there is an isolated chapel with a Divine Aura of 10, home to a handful of monks, on a small nearby promontory. Locals use the woodland for limited copicing and the collection of fruits and herbs.

The island has an exceptionally high faerie aura of 18.

The magi are prevented from landing on the island by guardian woodland spirits that bar their way. The Queen of the Forest jealously guards her domain and magi attempting to cross the marshy water to the island by boat or punt (which can be borrowed from the nearby monks) are rocked by water nymphs at the behest of their queen.

Characters must make Dexterity + ATHLETICS/Grace Stress rolls vs. 6 + a Simple die. Failure means being pitched into the marsh. A botch indicates some kind of injury gained through falling out of the boat.

Those with the Gift will be pulled and tugged by the water spirits and

Familiars

If you'd like to try out the Familiar rules you can also present the island as a place to find a magical animal. The magus may choose to bargain with the Cwen; if she would give the magus one of her subjects, he will show it the worth of magi. Given that the characters will be given a year's worth of laboratory time it is certainly viable to bind a familiar, which may come in useful later.

animated sedges under the surface. If they head away from the island, they need make a single Stamina + Swim Simple roll against 6 to reach dry land. But if they head towards the island, they must make three Stamina + Swim stress rolls vs. 6 + a Simple die. Each failure results in the character losing a Fatigue Level, but they still progress towards the island.

The child-like spirits each have a Might of 5 and can be glimpsed scowling angrily at the characters from beneath the water. They can be affected by spells targeting either their Might or their watery bodies.

If the magi reach the shore of the wooded island, they are confronted by the Queen.

Confronting the Queen

"This island is forbidden to all until my masters return."

The Cwen is forbidding and angry. She raises up an army of trees, which slowly lumber around their queen and block the passage of the magi. Groggs and unGifted companions are able to move freely upon the island as her oath does not extend to them. The trees do not attack unless they are ordered to by their queen or are themselves attacked.

The Cwen explains that those who carry the mark of magic are forbidden from the island and that they must leave or make an enemy of her. Any prevarication forces the Cwen's hand and she motions her trees to force them off the island.

But if the magi mention the boy,





or they leave and allow their companions to negotiate, the queen is interested and allows them to speak. She remembers the man and woman who came to her island and she remembers blessing their union. This was some few summers ago and many leaves have fallen since then.

The Cwen wants two things. Release from her enforced servitude and a future for the boy she helped create. Only the masters of the Mithraeum can release her from her bond and to become masters of the mithraeum, the magi must find it, restore it to life, and then carry out the sacrifice. The queen gives the magi leave to explore the island unmolested until the setting of the sun. If the characters promise that the boy will be taught the ways of magic then the Cwen will allow the magi upon the island for one day exactly one year hence.

The Dead Mithraeum

The magi and their companions can use any means to find the mithraeum site. The shrine to Mithras is built into a slope on the eastern end of the island in an area largely free of woodland. There are signs of a village that once surrounded the spot, but this has long since gone.

The faerie aura remains high at 16. The entrance is covered by the collapsed stone lintel and overgrown greenery. If cleared, this entrance is easily large enough to lead the sacrificial bull into.

Once passed the collapsed entrance, the walls are covered in cracked and broken plaster, and the

remains of a mosaic floor are evident under foot. The passage soon opens into a large chamber with stepped seating either side. In the center of this space, an altar stone sits on a raised dais. At the rear of the chamber, there are fallen tapestries, now rotted on the floor, that once covered arched entrances to other private spaces. Broken chests can be found in some of them, though anything that might once have been of value has clearly been robbed.

Every surface is covered with rubble, dust, and cobwebs. Parts of the mithraeum are charred and blacked through fire. There are holes in the walls where iron sconces have been ripped out.

There are clues as to the nature of the sacrifices that took place here. What's left of the tapestries show a bull being sacrificed. The altar stone is stained with blood beneath the dust. And there are iron rings in the ground where the bull was secured.

There are also some scraps of

What About Whimsy?

It is likely that someone will play a whimsy card in an attempt to steer the story. To help, you may consider introducing other supporting characters, perhaps members of the Cwen's court or ghosts associated with the mithraeum. You don't need to do this ahead of time, but if a new narrative twist is introduced, using a new character to introduce it sometimes helps.

parchment bearing archaic Latin text. They mention the binding of the bull's vitality to the land for a year and they stress the importance of a ritual knife.

The Setting of The Sun

As the sun sets, the Cwen's forest gathers to ensure that the magi do not outstay their welcome.

Act Two: Reclaiming Oxney

This act is concerned with claiming Oxney as a site for the Order, but there are other Hermetic magi who have come looking for the Gifted child.

The Cwen a holt

Faerie Might 30

Magic Resistance 30

Size 0 Int 0

Pre +5 Stm +5

Insubstantial

Protective of her Island +3, Regal +3

A slender woman made of wind and leaves. Her features are almost indistinct but they shimmer in the air and catch the eye. Her movements are accentuated by breezes that lift and toss leaves around her, almost like a gown.

The Cwen a Holt has several powers:

Animal Control

As per the power in **Ars Magica First Edition**, page 134. This allows the Queen to control all the woodland creatures within her realm, even those not native to it. The power uses the Queen's Might for its Penetration.

Fear

As per the power in **Ars Magica First Edition**, page 135. The Queen applies this power when she detects the presence of Gifted individuals upon her island. Those

individuals and their companions are assaulted with this power. A Brave roll vs. 9 is required to progress further. The power uses the Queen's Might for its Penetration.

Freeing the Striding Tree

ReHe 30

Near, Conc.

As per the Hermetic spell in **Ars Magica First Edition**, page 84.

This animates a tree, which can walk half as fast as a human can. The tree uses the following stats in combat:

1st +5, Atk +7, Dam +16.

Trees are generally immune to normal weapons. Except axes.

Calling the Council and Stirring the Slumbering

The Queen can also awaken and call to her an army of trees when she needs to defend her island. It takes her a day to awaken her forest, which may mean that she needs to withdraw. She must also cancel all ongoing spells and effects before she summons her council. See **Ars Magica First Edition**, page 83.

Hermetic Rivals

At some point before the magi of Deep Dawn return to the island, two magi arrive at the covenant and claim right over the boy that Wheostan spoke of.

The first magus is dressed in a cloak of living leaves and carrying a staff that sprouts green, while the other is bald, bare-chested, and marked with scratches, scars, and tattoos. The green magus is called Wulfhere and is skilled in controlling plants and animals and he has the power, potentially, to wrest control of the Cwen's servants from her. The scarred magus is called Alfridus and

he summons, controls, and destroys spirits. The marks upon his skin are the results of his magic as it inflicts wounds upon him. He specializes in Vim and Mentem.

Their claim is built on little more than a sense of justice. The elder of their covenant died during the last winter and these magi want to boy to help ensure their legacy. They demand that the magi of Deep Dawn tell them where the boy is and recognize their rights over him. If the magi do not, Wulfhere is inclined to offer some incentive of books or vis. And if the magi still refuse, Alfridus challenges any one of the player magi to certamen. Of course this being **Ars**

The Rivals

You can afford to treat Wulfhere and Alfridus fairly lightly.

The antagonist magi have 10 in each of the Arts with the exception of their favored Arts, in which they have 15.

For simplicity, assume scores of 5 in Aid, 5 in Certamen. You can also assume an Intelligence of 3 and a Stamina of 1.

You don't need to pay too much attention to their spells etc. as they are potentially only around for this one scene and then they can slink off to nurse their wounded pride.

Magica First Edition, the player magi can take advantage of involving multiple opponents in the contest and Wulfhere joins his colleague.

Wulfhere and Alfridus are gracious in either defeat or victory and either promise their help in recompense for their rash claim or they acknowledge the loss and offer up vis, books, and rights over the faerie island. The story does not need to end with the loss of certamen as the two magi still ask for help.

This section provides some interesting choices for the magi of Deep Dawn. They could let these new rivals take on the Queen of the Forest, and then simply challenge the fatigued loser for information. Or they could pool resources, defeat the Queen by force, and then decide who gains the boy afterwards.

The Tauroctony

The important factor in bringing the mithraeum to life is not the rebuilding of it but the sacrifice of the bull, called the tauroctony, and the binding of its vitality to the island for the coming year.

This binding element is left to the player magi to determine. Should the knife be enchanted? Should a ritual spell be designed and cast? Your troupe has a lot of freedom given the loose nature of the spell guidelines.



But the ultimate effect should be for the bull's spirit, or some aspect of it, to be drained from the bull and given to the land. And that effect should last a year.

Once slain the blood of the bull must be collected and given to the altar stone where it drains away into the land. If the ritual is concluded with full mithraic ceremony (see here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraic_mysteries#The_tauroctony) then some of the blood is left behind and it shimmers unnaturally in the torchlight. If collected, the blood contains 10 pawns of vim vis.

The Bargain Sealed

On leaving the mithraeum, the magi are greeted by the various spirits of the forest, all arrayed behind the Cwen. After a tension-filled pause, the Cwen bows deeply; a new bargain is made:

"While the Mithraeum stands, and the blood of the bull is spilled on this day each year, the magic of man is welcome in this place."

The Cwen then reveals the whereabouts of her son through opening a window onto his location amid the trees. The magi cannot cross through, but so strong is the connection that they know where to find him.

What they see is upwards of twenty of King Offa's men in the village of Ingleden, about three miles

Aetheldred the Entrancer

Aetheldred is not a member of the Order of Hermes. He operates outside of its code and is servant to the Saxon king Offa.

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +4, Com +3, Str -1, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 43

Size: -1

Confidence: 1

Exceptional Attributes: Entrancement (see page 35), Educated, Temporal Power, Bad Reputation, Driving Goal (gain an apprentice), Small Frame, Lack of Confidence, Fear of Dogs

Personality Traits:

Leader +2 : Follower -2

Altruistic -1 : Self-Centered +1

Reputations: Counties of Sussex and Kent, King Offa's spooky court wizard, 3 (0)

Combat:

Dodge: 1st N/A, Atk N/A, Def +4, Dam N/A

Knife: 1st +4, Atk +6, Def +5, Dam +2

Soak: -1

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

Abilities: Charisma 3, Courtly Grace 1, Dodge 3, Entrancement 6, HUMANITIES/Philosophy 3, Knife Attack 3, Knife Parry 3, Leadership 1, OCCULT ENTITIES/Faeries 3, Scribe Latin 3, Speak Saxon 5 (free), Speak Latin 3, SUBTERFUGE/Intimidation 5

Appearance: Very skinny but tall and imposing, dark-haired, with an authoritative smile

to the north of Oxney. Those with Local Lore know that Offa's men should not be where they are.

Act Three: Confronting Aetheldred and Claiming the Child

The village has a dominion aura of 4. This increases in the church grounds, and further still inside the church.

Aetheldred has the protection of King Offa and travels with a number of his soldiers. These men are on foot and armed with spears, axes, and large round shields. They are loosely gathered outside a modest thatched hut. A small crowd of villagers has gathered, but a couple of Offa's men are blocking their path with their spears.

The hut is quite near the church yard with its simple rectangular wooden church.

Arrival

The magi arrive in time to see the boy being dragged from the hut. His parents follow but seem strangely oblivious. The boy however clearly does not want to go and struggles against his captor.

And so the magi are now face to face with Aetheldred the Entrancer.

Aetheldred recognizes the effects of the Gift as soon as he sees the magi and orders his guards to watch them for any signs of magic. He loudly proclaims that he is Aetheldred, servant of King Offa, and that they have no business with him or the boy and that they should leave. He does this from behind his line of guards and their spears, of course.

His reputation precedes him and the magi should be allowed a SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE/Politics roll vs. 6 to recognize who he is and against 9 to guess at his power.

If the magi do start to openly cast magic, it is time to roll initiative and work through the consequences.

Down to combat

Unless actively guarded by their own grogs, the magi need to make concentration rolls in order to cast magic.

If he has the chance before any combat, Aetheldred attempts to entrance any grogs he gains eye contact with and tells them to throw down their weapons. This is a Presence + Entrancement + Simple Die versus Stamina + 9 (for difficulty) + Simple Die. Assume that any Penetration he might have is overcome by the Dominion, which rewards magi for planning ahead and



Offa's Soldiers

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

Age: 22

Size: 0

Confidence: 1

Personality Traits:

Brave +2 : Cowardly -2

Loyal +2 : Disloyal -2

Reliable +1 : Impulsive -1

Combat:

Axe: 1st +6, Atk +7, Def +1, Dam +12

Spear: 1st +8, Atk +7, Def +1, Dam +8

Round Shield: 1st N/a, Atk N/a, Def +7, Dam N/A

Soak: +2 (cuirass of hard leather)

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

Abilities: Axe Attack 4, Brawl 1, Chirurgery 1, Dice and Games 1, Round Shield Parry 4, Speak Saxon 4, Spear Attack 4

casting Parma Magica on their grogs.

But faced with the power of magi, he flees to the church for the safety that its aura provides against magic.

Offa's men are not supposed to be there, so there's some justification in taking them down.



A Final Plea

Aetheldred runs to the church, dragging the boy. When the magi follow, they find the priest unconscious with a gash to his head. He won't be playing any part.

In the high aura of the church, it's pretty much a stalemate. And here, with a knife to the boy's throat, Aetheldred pleads his case. He is the last of his lineage and he knows of no others of his kind. If he is not allowed to take the boy, his line will end. Can the Order condone this? Is that what the Order wants?

From here on in, if Offa's men are dealt with, it's up to the magi and their companions how they conclude this story. Do they let Aetheldred go? Do they let him take the boy with him? And in fact, given that Hlothere does not want to leave his parents, do they claim the boy as an apprentice for the Order at all?

Rewards and Consequences

As a one-off scenario, you wouldn't expect many lasting rewards or consequences. But if you do adapt this to your own saga consider siting it near your current covenant and use it, as we have, to introduce some local history. If nothing else, it implies that there are potentially two new magical sites that your current magi are unaware of; the abandoned covenant of Deep Dawn in the nearby hills, and the buried mithraeum in the nearby woods.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Christian Anderson for risking his very valuable **Ars Magica First Edition** book to provide the character sheet PDF files.

And thanks to Simon Turner, Alex Coyne-Turner, Dave Staveley, and Mark Barltrop for playtesting **Ars Magica First Edition**.

In the Next Issue

The Storyguide's handbook: Preparing for Trouble

The next part of the storyguide's handbook comes out fighting when we take a look at combat encounters. *Lords of Men* presented new and updated rules for running combat but do they give the storyguide everything they need?

The Art of Magic

We take a look behind the scenes at the Art of **Ars Magica** and see how the supplement covers go from concept to finished piece.

The Way of St. James: Encounters on Pilgrimage

A scenario tying into the recently released supplement, *The Church*.

Companion Piece: Bohemond of Lucerne

A young knight designed to progress from the tourney to the manor house as your saga matures.

...And much more...

Subscribe to Sub Rosa

Sub Rosa relies on subscriptions to continue and thrive. If you enjoyed this issue, encourage your friends to subscribe, or take out a troupe subscription. Check our website for details.

Contribute to Sub Rosa

Sub Rosa is looking for articles and illustrations for future issues. All contributors receive a free copy of the magazine their work appears in. Unsolicited contributions are welcomed.

See our website for details on how to contribute.

Check for Updates

The Sub Rosa website is updated regularly with news about the magazine and exclusive web-only content. You can also email Sub Rosa for more information.

www.subrosamagazine.org
@subrosamagazine