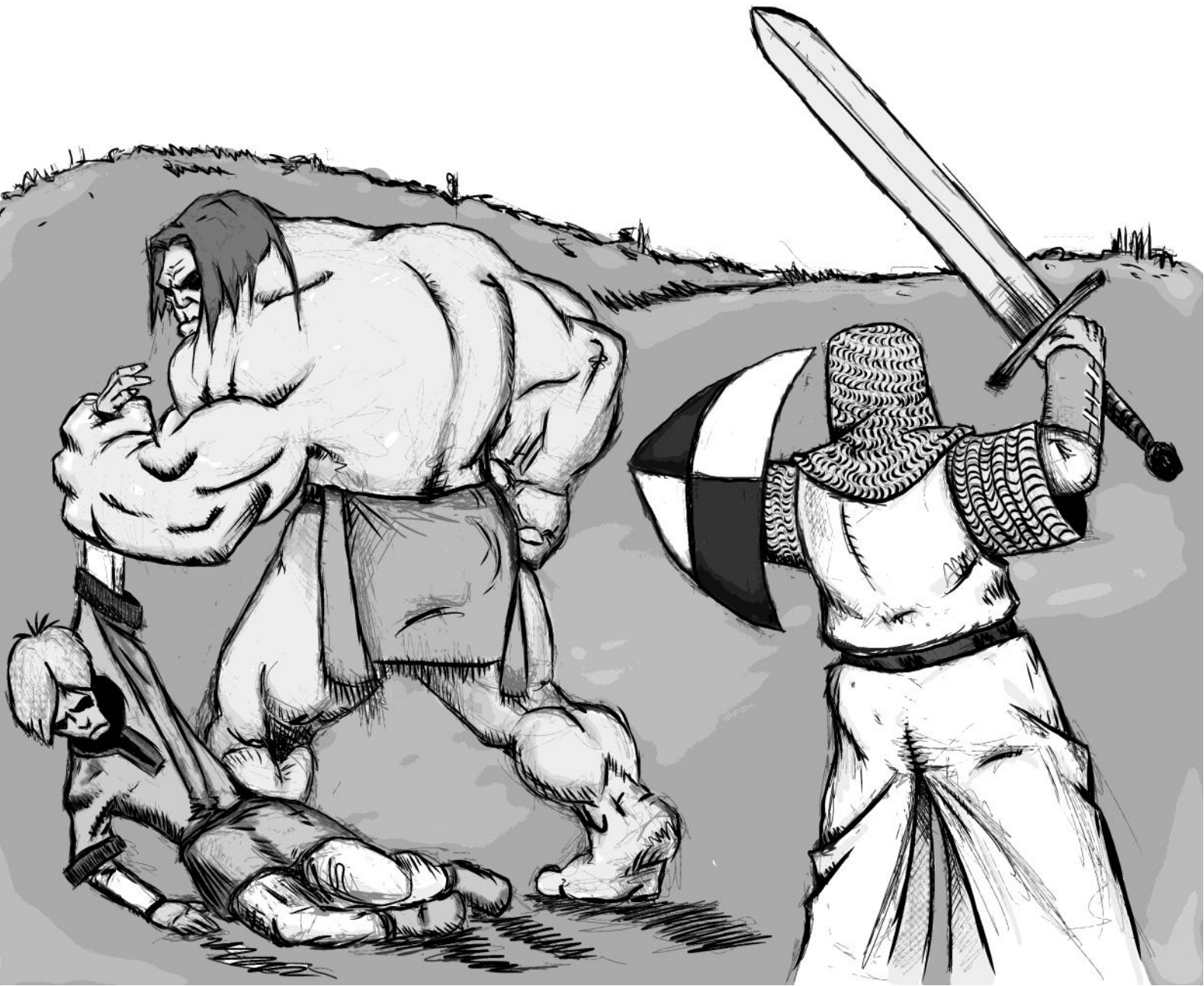


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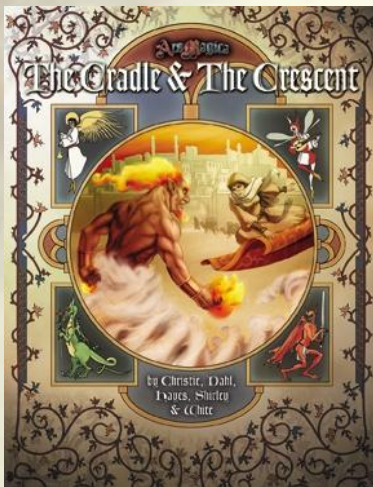
The Ars Magica Magazine

Issue 8, October 2011



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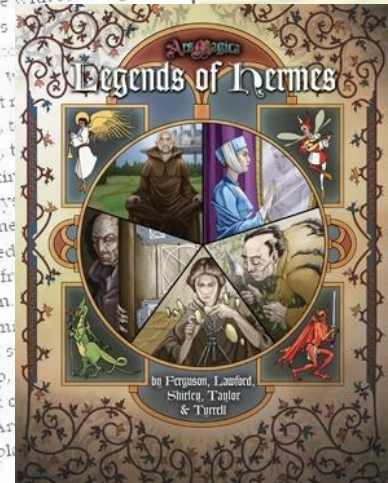
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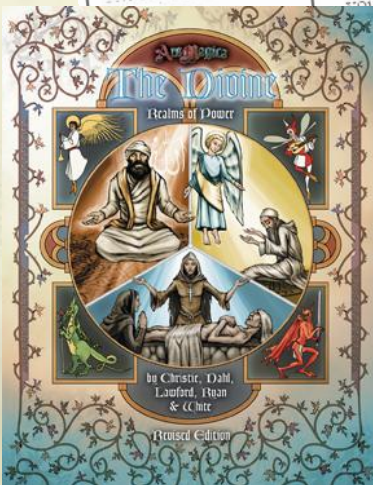
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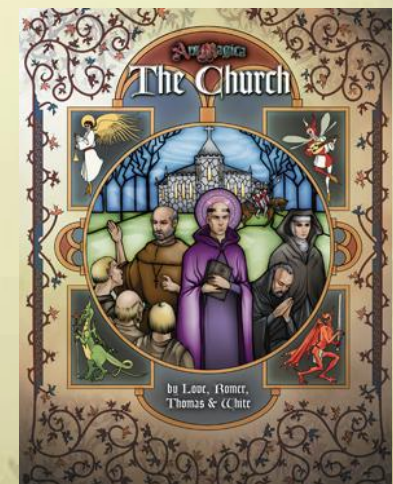


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October 2011

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Tweets from the foundation of the Order:

ThatsMrTytalusToYou: #tremereissoshorthat even his boots can't reach the floor

ThatsMrTytalusToYou: #tremereissoshorthat @BimaBird thought she'd gained a familiar

OneTrueTremere: @ThatsMrTytalusToYou I'm not playing your game.

Diedne001: #tremereissoshorthat We miscounted the founders

OneTrueTremere: @Diedne001 Oh, you've done it now

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

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Under The Rose

So that's Grand Tribunal season over and done for another year. For those of you who have been trapped in deepest twilight for the last two issues, this year's GT:UK was held in Cambridge and formed part of the overarching Consternation Convention. Unofficial figures (based largely on assumption and guesswork) show that **Ars Magica** had a pretty decent turn out of authors and the largest single group of players dedicated to any particular game. We were even fortunate enough to play host to the line editor, David Chart, who was good enough to share some interesting news about future books. You can scour his column on page 5 for similar hints. There's a brief write-up of the event available here: <http://blog.atlas-games.com/2011/08/grand-tribunal-uk-2011-wrapup.html>

And let's not detract from GT:US, this year held in Solvang, California. It was, by all accounts, another huge success. So much so that the call is already out for proposals on the next US venue. To get involved with you'll need to join the yahoo group grand_tribunal_america@yahoogroups.com and you can pitch your proposal.

So as Grand Tribunals recede into memory, we turn back to Sub Rosa. This issue we have new articles in both the Storyguide's Handbook and Companion Piece series. In *Preparing for Trouble*, Gerald Wylie takes a sideways look at turning combat encounters, sometimes the hardest scenes to play in **Ars Magica**, into meaningful and rewarding set pieces.

Ben McFarland brings us the *Way of St. James*, a road-trip scenario following the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. The scenario includes some suggested events that could form part of a pilgrimage, as

described in *The Church*. And the cathedral itself has also been given *The Church* treatment, complete with library, relics, and even enchanted items.

Erik Dahl deserves his own mention here as he brings a real *tour de force* article in *Belin of Mercere*. This legendary redcap introduces the new *Legend Spinning* Supernatural Ability, a doomed love story, and a war between magi and faerie-kind. We're really excited to bring you this article.

As if Belin wasn't epic enough we have interviews with Lisa Stevens and artist extraordinaire Grey Thornberry. In case you don't know, Lisa was part of the original **Ars Magica** design team and she takes us back to the very earliest days of **Ars Magica** and gives us an insight into the creative environment that brought us the game we love. Of course, Lisa is probably best-known as the CEO of Paizo, publishers of the hugely popular **Pathfinder** game. So we're doubly grateful that she was able to spare the time to speak to Ben over a busy GenCon weekend. Not only that but Lisa is hunting down some of her original **Ars Magica** campaign notes. If the hunt goes well, we're hoping to be able to share some of those with you in future issues.

Coming right up to date, Grey Thornberry, known to us all as the artist whose work has graced numerous **Ars Magica** covers as well

as the pages in between, shows us how his work for the line is put together. He has kindly provided some of his work-in-progress shots that help illustrate the stages the artwork goes through before final handover. Once again, we're very grateful to Grey for taking time and sharing his work with us.

And now a reminder that Sub Rosa is always open to submissions. We're looking for content for issues 9 and 10 right now. Of particular interest is any content generated in the wake of November's *The Cradle and the Crescent*.

Also consider dropping us a line at our usual email address and letting us know what you want to see more of and even what you think you've seen enough of. As a magazine written by and for the fans we do have a responsibility to be responsive to what you are looking for. As an example, one thing that became clear at the GT:UK was that the game can present hurdles to storyguides before play even starts. So we'll focus some time in the next couple of issues to making the game easier to set up. Gerald Wylie is already hard at work on some support for creating your covenant from scratch and we may even have some good library-based content from two authors new to **Ars Magica**. But enough of that in case we jinx it.

Competition

For your chance to win the Fifth Edition supplement of your choice we're looking for the perfect introduction to rules ideas and themes introduced in *The Church*. 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. We're holding this open from the last issue so entries should reach us by the close of December 2011.



Sub Rosa

News From the Line Editor

By David Chart

Either Sub Rosa is getting faster, or we are getting slower, because compared to the three books that came out between issues six and seven, only one has come out since issue seven: *Legends of Hermes*. [And the very nice softback revised *Realms of Power: The Divine* — Ed.] Since I wrote about that last time, I won't write about supplements for this issue. Instead, I'll say a bit about my vision for **Ars Magica**.

Ars Magica is the roleplaying game of medieval magic. I think it was James Wallis who told me that a game that could be expressed in one word might be a big hit, one that took two could be solid, and more than that was too complex to be anything other than a tiny niche. That would seem to fit **Ars Magica**, which is a solid RPG with a good reputation, but one that has never threatened to become a market-bestrident colossus. Alas.

In my management of the line, I try to keep both halves of the definition in mind. A book like *The Church*, or *Art and Academe*, is heavily on the medieval side of things, while *Legends of Hermes* or *Ancient Magic* is much more on the magic side. Tribunal books, of course, are supposed to balance those elements among themselves.

On the medieval side, it is very important to get things right. That doesn't mean we always do, but we do our best. However, getting things right isn't enough; they also have to be presented in a way that makes it easy to incorporate them into a game. That is an important part of the role of the story seeds, which given storyguides concrete ideas for how to incorporate things into stories. It is also the reason for things like

the devotion rules in *The Church*, or the rules for natural philosophy in *Art and Academe*. These give characters mechanical benefits for getting deeply involved in medieval practices, and players good reasons to describe authentically medieval activities in the game.

On the magic side, characters should be able to use powerful magic. Thus, I am not very interested in telling players that magi can't do certain things. I'm even willing to allow some things that make it difficult to run particular kinds of story, particularly for older magi, as limiting magi in that way just makes magic less interesting. This is the main reason why it is so easy for magi to make money with magic, either directly or indirectly: preventing it would cripple magic, so although a lack of money is a useful motivator, it's one that is not normally available in **Ars Magica**.

When I do say that magic can't do something, the main reason is to leave something important for player characters to discover. If all the great discoveries in magic theory have been made in the past, what's left for the player characters? What's left for the heroes of the story? Most of the limits of magic are there to be broken by player characters, if they want to play in that sort of campaign, which is why there are hints on how to break them in a number of supplements. (A big exception is the Limit of Time, which is there because time travel is notoriously hard to use in a role-playing game. Unlike the protagonists of books, player characters will go out of their way to create logical paradoxes.)

That, indirectly, brings up one of the

things that **Ars Magica** is not about. It is not about combat. **Dungeons and Dragons** is about combat, and so is **Pathfinder**, although not to quite the same extent. **Ars Magica** is not. **Ars Magica** is about understanding magic, creating the tools you need to do a job, and then doing it. That job might be "kill the dragon", and the tool for that might be a one-use wand of dragon killing with Penetration 100. The story, however, is in understanding the problem well enough to know what tools will work, being powerful enough to make those tools, and then dealing with the consequences.

Obviously, **Ars Magica** is not a pure form of this. It does have a detailed combat system, and we have published a scenario that is almost all about combat. However, combat is not supposed to be the central conflict. Given the tricks that can make just about any magus an unstoppable combat monster against mundane opponents, this is a good thing.

Finally, I am not concerned with game balance in terms of power. That's inherited; magi have always been much more powerful than other characters. I am interested in making all characters fun to play, which is why we have a whole book on Grog coming up.

These are the basic ideas that guide my stewardship of **Ars Magica**, so I rather hope that, as you read them, you found yourself nodding in recognition, possibly in belated understanding of why I made a particularly bone-headed decision. If not, then I obviously need to try harder.

The Storyguide's Handbook: Preparing for Trouble

While **Ars Magica** isn't necessarily as combat-focused as some RPG systems (see David Chart's column on the previous page), such as **Dungeons & Dragons** (*Wizards of the Coast*) or **Pathfinder** (Paizo) for instance,

it is still a fantasy roleplaying game and it makes full use of the conventions of the genre, including the possibility of combat as direct challenge and a means of problem resolution.

Mythic Europe can sometimes

By Gerald Wylie

be a brutal place and characters will often be moved to violence for any number of reasons; religious or ideological conviction, poverty and want, the thirst for power, or self-preservation. But combat encounters can be difficult to judge, especially on an ad-hoc basis, and especially when the principle player characters can effectively ward themselves from most damage and incapacitate or destroy large numbers of opponents very quickly.

This article looks at ways that you, as the storyguide, can prepare for combat encounters to make them challenging, distinctive, exciting, and to keep them moving along at pace.

Why do we Include Combat Encounters?

In a game ostensibly concerning powerful magicians, what do combat encounters have to offer? How does an apparent retrograde step back into combat compliment the common focus on magic, politics, investigation, and problem-solving?

Far from being out of place, the principle reason we include combat encounters into **Ars Magica** stories is to provide moments of visceral excitement; they provide a change of pace to a game that rewards consideration

Sub Rosa



Be Prepared

Running combat is a numbers-intensive affair and it helps to have everything worked out in advance. That's not always possible but there are some basic things that do help:

Magic Resistance: Make sure you have the magic resistance of your NPCs worked out. This could come from Parma Magica, relics, demonic possession, Might Score, or any number of exotic effects.

Combat Totals: It sounds obvious, but do work out the totals you need for the scene. Make sure you know what the group bonus is if you are going to be using group combat, and make sure you record things like body level ranges and soak totals.

Personality Traits: If your antagonists are mundane, the chances

are that the sight of magic being used against them is going to be hard to take. So work out how brave or driven they are. Decide up front just how much they are willing to take before they try to flee.

And it is really important that players are also recruited to do the same for their own party. Spending a few minutes at the top of the session to work out and record a group combat bonus pays dividends when you do want to get on with the action later.

Don't be afraid to use maps. The usual pace of *Ars Magica* stories often means that maps aren't necessary, but there's nothing wrong with using visual aids to set the scene and represent the relative locations of those involved in the fight.

and planning and often sees stories resolved over seasons rather than days. They also allows martial characters to fulfill their story functions as well as giving magi the opportunity to let loose with their magic, often with spectacularly destructive results.

But think very carefully about hinging a plot on a single combat encounter. What happens if the characters lose? What if they kill an antagonist in mid-plot? What does that do to your story? The risk of damage to a plot or story is a much more likely prospect given the range of magic that Hermetic magi have at their disposal.

A Quick Recap

There are some key considerations when planning combat encounters:

Initiative order remains constant through the combat: Once the characters have determined their position in the combat round it doesn't often change. Magi typically act slower as their initiative total is not

modified by a weapon. Bear this in mind for NPC magi as well as PC magi. A lone Flambeau will likely be peppered by ranged weapons and closed down by infantry before he unleashes his devastation.

Characters can act as groups: This doesn't mean that characters are necessarily shoulder-to-shoulder in formation, simply that they are working together to contain and confront an enemy in a common location. A good filmic example is the fight in Balin's tomb in the Fellowship of the Ring. The hero group arguably consist of two groups and must face an equal number of groups made up of different enemies (orcs in one and a cave troll in the other). Combat groups allow a nice abstraction that helps speed combat encounters along.

Characters can be defended: This is the key task of a shield grog; the ultimate bodyguard. No matter how large the attacking group, characters can be defended by a nominated defending character. But you can be flexible with this. A physical thing, such as a door, could be

considered a defender. After looking at the Damaged Goods rules on breaking items in *City & Guild*, page 77; a character behind a barrier is considered defended until that barrier is smashed in, i.e. all its damage levels have been exhausted.

Combat encounters take time to run: Not only does each action take a moment to resolve, but the Storyguide and players alike engage in a brief narrative description, players look for appropriate spells for the magi to cast, spontaneous effects must be worked out, and then there is the question of fast-casting defenses. This means that even the most dedicated gaming group is going to be unlikely to want to play too many combat rounds; there just isn't the time. Each combat round is assumed to be six seconds. This means that the Diameter spell duration easily covers 20 combat rounds. It also means that it takes five combat rounds before a character has to make a Deprivation check against suffocating or drowning. In practice, that's a long time at the gaming table.

Planning a Combat Encounter

There are two primary ways to run combat encounters. The first is to define a set of enemies and let the combat play out to conclusion, perhaps based on a "win condition", which is usually the death of one side or the other. The alternative is to decide up-front a rough number of rounds you want the combat to last and plan accordingly. This has the dual benefits of imposing a structure, allowing for events to be planned, and ensuring that the combat remains quick and punchy. Anything more than ten

rounds, which usually translates as ten actions for each player character, is likely to start losing impact.

In either case, it is important to decide what you intend the scene adding to the story. Does the combat act as a gate to the next part of the story, does the fight introduce new information or answer questions about the plot, has it been planned and initiated by the players, or is it part of a martial campaign? Whatever the story behind the fight, it is important for the storyguide to understand the player characters' capabilities. This allows the storyguide to provide a challenging opposition.

And not every fight has to be deadly. There is just as much drama to be had in fights where the opponents are trying to immobilize or render unconscious the player characters. Similarly, consider at which point the opponents are likely to disengage and flee or outright surrender.

Sizing Up the Opposition

The principle consideration when designing an opposing force is the number of actions at their disposal. It can be tempting to present an ominous and dangerous single opponent,

confident that it has the power to provide a challenge, only to find that its single action per round is swamped by the actions of a party consisting of grogs, companions, and magi. Such encounters run the risk of very quickly flogging the proverbial dead horse.

As the storyguide, you can anticipate the size of the the player character party pretty well along with the number of actions that they have available. Ideally, you'll want a roughly equal number on the opposing side. As we'll see later, this does not always mean the same number of characters. Unless the players have planned and worked for it, you should avoid clearly one-sided contests.

Types of Action

In any fight, combat actions are the most obvious. But they are not all equal. If you can, provide a mix of ranged attacks, through bows, slings, javelins, knives, or axes, and close-in attacks. You can even throw in scuffling and grappling attacks, the later being particularly effective at changing the style of the fight in one corner of your battlefield.

Your NPC opponents may have magical attacks at their disposal and while magi should be pretty well protected, grogs and

companions will be less so. Group targets or area effects can reach both protected and unprotected alike and providing an occasional area effect that is easily shrugged off by the *Parma Magica* can give a player a sense of power, which is always welcome.

If you really want to tie up one of the player magi there is nothing wrong with having a rival magus challenge certamen during the fight. Certamen is sometimes overlooked or relegated to a political tool. But it is the purest form of magical duel that two magi can engage in. It allows the player magus to directly engage a peer without being concerned about spells or penetration.

According to the narrative of the fight, adding a wildcard or non-combatant is often appropriate. Imagine a fight on a river bank, the opponents are trying to disengage and flee, putting everything they have into defense, so one of the opponents spends his action trying to untie or cut the rope securing the barge to the jetty. The action itself is not offensive, but it has the potential to end the fight and secure an escape. How the protagonists deal with this action is at least as important as how they deal with the combatants themselves. Similar wildcard

Tracking Initiative and Changing Actions

Keeping track of initiative can be a chore for the storyguide when magi, grogs, and NPCs are taken into account. So recruit the players to do it for you. Ask one of the players to track the initiatives for the player characters or combat groups. As storyguide, track any NPC initiatives and the timings of other events yourself. As the round progresses, start with your highest initiative and check whether the players have anything higher.

One particular problem with with **Ars Magica** initiative is that different weapons or actions

provide different initiative modifiers. So what happens if a character changes action mid-combat and the previous modifier no longer applies. There are really two options. Either stick with the earlier initiative regardless or have each player record their actual initiative roll once at the beginning of the combat and declare their initiative at the beginning of each round. They can then take into account any modifiers that apply given the action they intend to take in that round. This is made easier on the storyguide if, as above, one of the players takes responsibility for recording and ticking off player initiatives each round.

Using the Environment

One of the key things that sets a combat encounter apart and

actions may be a race to a certain point, attempting to trigger a magical device, setting fire to a bridge, etc. Consider the narrative of the combat scene, the reason for the combatants engaging, and look at adding a wildcard action that carries the intent of the scene.

Remember also that the enemies can take advantage of all the standard combat options such as groups, defenders, exertion, and disengaging. Using these introduces variety over the standard attack and defense rolls each round.

makes for a memorable gaming session is the distinctiveness of the setting. Any location can support a combat scene and the trick is to offer a different experience than the last combat encounter. Even within the same story, the Storyguide should be looking for opportunities to differentiate scenes. You can do this by varying the environment and terrain, by identifying the hazards and obstacles the location provides, and preparing early with some potential botch effects that add to the cinematics of the piece.

Environment and Terrain

As storyguide, you should plan ahead and consider the backdrop to the combat scene; what does the location look like? What

features does it have? How will the combatants use their surroundings? Picking a number of words to describe the environment starts to describe the nature of the combat that you're likely to run; rural or city, wide-open or closed-in, outside or inside, etc.

Decide what terrain is available to both sides. If the combat takes place on a road, is the road flat, is it on an elevated ridge, or is on a steep sloping hill? Is the fight taking place on a bridge? If so, is it stone or wood? Wide or narrow? And is the stream or river fast-flowing or calm?

One trick that is often used in cinematic action scenes is to take the action vertical. We can easily



picture and describe a fight between fairly even forces standing face to face, but if the horizontal space is constrained and the fight takes place on multiple levels stacked atop each other, the action has a very different feel. Imagine a fight within a bell tower. If the player characters want to reach the top, they need to ascend stairs, fight opponents with higher-ground advantage or defend against the archers on the other side of the tower. Alternatively, the bell

rotten. As the combatants fight their way to the top, the stairs must make a Stress Check (*City & Guild*, page 77) against an Ease Factor of 15 each round on an initiative of 7. If you're being particularly harsh, you could make one after each attack. Just decide upon the trigger. And when the stairs have lost their five damage levels, they break and most likely pitch those who acted last down the tower (the "Impact" rules are in **ArM5**, page 181).

sometimes an effective defense against spells. Typically, if a magus can't sense his target he can't directly affect it, in which case he needs to expend an action dealing with the obstacles.

Some obstacles can be used to help disengage. The rules in **ArM5** and *Lords of Men* both use essentially the same mechanic; the character generates a defense total, all engaged opponents generate an attack total as a reaction, if the defending character's total is greater than these attack totals he is considered to have disengaged. While mechanically sound, these rules do not take account of a character's environment. Let's go back to our fight in the bell tower. Having lost the grogs to a collapsed section of stairs, the companion is fighting a group of heavies. Seeing that he is outnumbered, he needs to disengage and regroup. So he steps back and drops through the gap where the stairs were. He needs to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll to catch onto something and prevent himself falling down the tower, but he has disengaged. Another example might be a fight at the foot of a waterfall. The cascading sheet of water provides effective cover so if an opponent steps through the waterfall, the storyguide might now treat that character as unseen and his opponent may think twice about following. If so, the parties are automatically disengaged. Also consider allowing other characters to use their own actions to help another character disengage.

One particular obstacle to consider is the bottleneck. A narrow passageway, a doorway, or the winding stairs inside a castle tower all share the same characteristic; no matter how many combatants there are on either side, only those at the front

It is important to decide what you intend the scene contributing to the story...

ropes may provide a quicker means of ascent, or a means to quickly engage with the archers.

Or you could play a fight across a number of regio boundaries. This can be a useful means of separating out the companions and grogs from the magi for a few rounds and letting them control the narrative for a change. This is especially effective where the magi have their own challenge to attend to.

Hazards

The environment itself can be recruited to provide a challenge and, importantly, additional actions in opposition to the player characters. Anything from the fire catching in the barn to the stairs crumbling beneath the combatants, from the flood waters rising to the impending rock slide. Think about what kind of hazards you want in the environment and then give them both a trigger and an initiative total.

In the case of the bell tower, perhaps the stairs are old and

An environment can have multiple such hazards. If the bell tower were to be set alight, the flames would grow with each round. Perhaps not enough to harm individuals at first, but certainly enough to cause the building itself to make stress checks each round. And if or when the building loses its last damage level, page 181 of **ArM5** may again prove useful.

Obstacles

Extending the definition provided in *Lords of Men*, page 120, obstacles are things that can be used as cover, to help disengage from an enemy, or to prevent a character's progress. A fight in a scriptorium has numerous obstacles in the form of desks and lecterns. They may count as difficult terrain to cross as the desks and stools get in the way, but they may also be considered as defending any character able to keep a desk between himself and an attacker. The same might be true of pillars in a church or even a waterfall on a river. Taking cover is

can engage. All others are considered to be defended. This even limits the size of combat groups so players should be prepared to recalculate any existing group bonuses already in play.

Botches

Fighting is dangerous by nature and beset with die roll after die roll. The odds are that a zero or three will turn up at some point in the action. When it does, it pays to consider the environment as it can provide better botch results than all the instances of “you drop your sword” you can think of.

Let’s start with the easy ones. If the footing is loose, such as in a ploughed field or the shore-line surf, then characters can slip, giving the opponent an advantage to their next action. Or if the character is defending another in the scriptorium, they trip on a desk and expose their charge to danger. Even the trusty old “you drop your sword” is given more impact and drama when that sword is dropped into the river. A botch while fighting in a barn might see the character topple backwards onto a pitchfork, prompting a soak roll; a botch in our trusty bell tower may see the character pitch themselves over the side of the stairs; and a character botching in a cave might trap their foot in a crevice and be unable to remove it without spending an extended action (*Lords of Men*, page 118).

Whether the botch effects are a result of the environment, such as an oil lamp knocked into a haystack, or are simply colored by the environment, such as the sword sliced into an stuck in a lectern, you should use the environment to help sell the story.

Planning The Narrative

Consider the combat scene as its own three-act narrative. The opponents must first engage, they contest over some set of aim, and they disengage. Most combat encounters tend to focus on the first act and leave the dice to resolve the second and third acts. As storyguide, you can build more of a narrative into the scene. You need to know what the fight is over, how far the combatants are willing to go, and how they intend to get out of the situation if it all goes south. Take one of the old staples; bandits on the road. We’re going to allow for five rounds for the first act, ten rounds for the second, and five for the third and final act.

The first the player characters know of the bandits is when they see a small tree dragged across the path ahead of them. Have the

loot, and their charismatic leader.

From reveal to the start of rooting around the travellers’ possessions, we’ve allowed five rounds. For a magus able to caste spells subtly, it is important to allow that time. The characters are still under initiative so allow the players to time their actions accordingly. For the robbers, searching for loot is something like a ten-round extended action, each step of which is taken on their own initiative. Each round that passes without intervention, assume that one of the robbers grabs a tenth of the troupe’s stuff (you can work out what later).

Ultimately, the robbers have what they came for and they leave, taking five rounds to disengage, backtrack to the tree line, and disappear from view.

That’s assuming nobody intervenes. But if one of the player characters strikes out, treat those ten rounds as the maximum

One option is to make concentration rolls only until the maga is successful. Once the maga has the measure of the situation she can cast at will...

players roll initiative, but as this is an ambush, apply a -3 modifier to their totals for this round only. The bandits include a number of archers, who loose warning shots at the party - they’re robbers, not murderers - and the leader demands that the travelers throw down their arms. If the player characters act otherwise, the robbers run from the treeline to take them on. But if they cooperate, the tension can build as the robbers ease themselves from hiding and take what they want. The parties are now engaged either way; One group of archers, one group guarding the travelers, one group searching for

time that the robbers are prepared to spend on their criminal venture. Once those rounds are up, they’ll try to disengage and flee, entering the third act of the story. They’ll do this regardless of whether they are “winning” or “losing”.

The Layered Reveal

The structure of the robbery above is fairly simple and all the pieces appear to be on the table from the outset. But what if the robbers are actually hired men in the employ of another magus or hedge wizard? At any time in the fight, the real force behind the

ambush could make himself known and enter the combat encounter. Or what if there's someone stowed away in the player characters' cart, who then takes an active part in the fight? This "layered reveal" injects a new element into the fight midway through, which can be used to reveal more about the narrative.

Revealing a new character or opponent during the fight is one way, but you can always reveal one of the existing antagonists to be something more threatening than first appearances suggest. What you're looking to do here is to reveal more about the encounter as it progresses, which should support the wider story that you're telling.

Reinforcements

Similar to the layered reveal is the approach of reinforcements on either side of the conflict. Backup for the enemy can curtail a fight, prompting the player characters to try harder to finish the fight and leave the scene, or to disengage and leave their opponents behind them. Similarly, there's nothing wrong with having the player characters face overwhelming odds and challenging them to stay alive until reinforcements arrive in about ten rounds.

The important element here is the clock element. A player scout may hear the thunder of enemy hooves and know that they have ten rounds until the knights charge into the scene. Or the grog captain may be in magical communication with the magi and know that they have one minute until the magi arrive. Be up front about how long the player characters have until help (or the larger enemy force) arrives, and work with them to count the rounds down.



The nature of the reinforcements should reflect the story. A denouement set on the slopes of an rumbling volcano belching fire and ash may give ten rounds until lava starts flowing, at which point sensible thoughts should turn to fleeing the volcano altogether.

The Pregnant Pause

Similar to the layered reveal, the pregnant pause introduces a new element to the story mid-

way; something happens to disengage the two sides for a round or two. The idea here is to build a sense of concern in the player characters. Why did the knights just disengage? What are they waiting for? Why aren't they pressing their advantage? Alternatively, what if the bell-tower, now ravaged by fire, cracks and pitches to one side? The sides are automatically disengaged as they are all focused on clinging to the tower and not fighting each other. The player

characters now have something else to think about mid-way through the fight rather than just their next attack roll.

Increasing the Challenge

Increasing the challenge is not simply about increasing the antagonists' Magic Resistance to the point that they can shrug off the spells of the player magi, though this is one tool open to Storyguides. There are other ways in which the challenge can be increased that also make the combat more enjoyable.

Consider opponents larger than size +1, which start to negate at least Individual spells that affect any human target of up to size +1. This makes the

Single-Spell Combat Encounters

Some spells have an inordinate effect on combat encounters despite their low level. Some are often sufficient to affect all enemy combatants at once, assuming a moderately sized combat encounter. And a personal ward against metal doesn't so much end a combat encounter as take the drama straight out of it.

Targeting the Group

Some magi, for reasons of their own, have invented spells that inflict debilitating effects upon a group of people in one casting. A maga might decide to turn the opposing combatants into mice. Or inflict an overriding

Other spells target opponents indirectly, through the environment for instance. A good example would be a spell that opens a chasm beneath the opponents. Usually large enough to send them all plummeting, and often with the after effect of closing it again. Rapidly. In such cases, there's nothing like variety to stem the flow of these spells. If you vary the setting used for combat, it is unlikely that the same spell can repeatedly be used to the same effect. A spell to open a chasm in the earth is no use inside a church, or on a bridge, or on an ice-sheet, a frozen river, or even on the desert sands. So give other players the opportunity to shine by varying the location and supporting different tactics each time.

Wards of any Kind

If you've thought ahead, you may already have a range of combatants and weapons facing the player characters in order to provide variety, and this may already be useful to threaten the cautious magus warded against metal. But in case you still need more, consider adding a dog into the mix. If we go back to our robber scenario, assuming the robbers were armed with short swords and knives, any magus can easily ward against them. He could ward against all humans and be done with it. But what if they had a dog? It should be trivial for the magus to ward himself against that too, but it means spending another action. Remember also that a knight on a warhorse potentially has multiple attacks each round, his own and his horse's, another example where multiple wards are needed to fully protect the magi.

The "layered reveal" injects a new element into the fight mid-way through, which can be used to reveal more about the narrative...

magus work harder by needing spontaneous variants to affect that given target. Or consider invisible opponents, or for a less supernatural approach consider fighting in smoky, foggy, or dark conditions. Such things are usually easy to overcome through magic, but it gives the players something other than attack that they need to do, namely find their opponent.

Swarms make interesting challenges (you can find some rules supporting swarms in *Legends of Hermes*, page 44) as do opponents with immunity to certain types of attack or damage. And just as magi have fast-casting defenses, consider giving the same to your supernatural protagonists.

fear into the group. There is nothing wrong with such spells, but they often have the effect of subtracting from the drama rather than adding to it. How we make provision for those spells is very important, especially if other players are losing out because of the very logical actions of another player.

The first thing is to acknowledge that the Group target can be employed, not only in formulaic magic but through spontaneous effects too. The best way to engage with this is to split the opposing force into multiple discrete combat groups. That way, if one maga has the power to remove a combat group from the equation, the other magi at least have something else that they can cut loose upon.

Remember Spell Concentration

Sometimes overlooked for the sake of brevity, magi have a limiting factor; concentration. In order to cast their spells, magi need to be able to concentrate on what they're doing. Factors such as imminent threat or being jostled make this harder.

Why is this sometimes overlooked? Essentially because it's an extra die roll against an Ease Factor that the storyguide probably has to look up in the rule book. So what can you do to balance the need for concentration with a need to keep the game flowing?

One option is to make rolls only until the maga is successful. This pays lip service to the concentration rules by asking the player to check for concentration, but once the maga has the measure of the situation she can cast at will. If the maga's situation changes, the storyguide can ask for the same again against the new Ease Factor.

Most magi in the same combat situation (unless wounded, jostled, etc) will have the same concentration Ease Factor, so storyguides should add this to their notes for ease of reference. And remember that the Ease Factor may change over time. For example, Ease Factors during a fight in a burning castle may increase every three or four rounds as the fire spreads and the conditions worsen.

Getting Around Resistance

There's mileage to be had from an opponent who has worked to beat a magus' magic resistance, but getting around player magic resistance isn't about negating a player's cool stuff, it's about presenting a

different challenge. So the giant wurm's magical acid blood can't affect the magus? What about the wooden bridge he's standing on? What about the peasant woman behind him?

When you have the giant acidic wurm bleed all over the magus, you'll probably know already whether that particular effect is going to get through or not, so turn it into some other kind of event. It's not about the magus resisting, it's about the bridge being eaten away, or the woman about to die unless the magus does something.

Playing with the Rules

The combat rules from the published rulebooks can be seen as describing the best case scenario; they're the rules to use when all other elements are equal. But as storyguide you shouldn't feel constrained by them. We have already seen that the environment can be used to help with disengaging, and there are other modifications that can be introduced too.

Inspiration from other systems

It may come as a surprise to some of us, but there are other game systems and they have their own ways of handling combat mechanics. **Ars Magica** can certainly learn from those and borrow some of the interesting bits.

Minions

Dungeons and Dragons has a well-developed combat system designed to match the level of

Lords of Men

The *Lords of Men* supplement contains two very good chapters on single combat and field and siege warfare. The enhanced single combat rules provide additional structure for round-to-round activities within a combat scene and include movement, types of action, options for mounted combat, etc. There are many elements there that can be exploited independently to enhance your combat sessions. Conversely, the massed combat and siege rules present a more story-driven approach to handling combat events rather than round-by-round activities. This chapter is useful for identifying the aim of a combat encounter and how it relates to a much wider story. Both chapters provide useful and flavorful examples and are worth a read.

challenge against the characters' advancement level. In particular, there's a recognition that the players feel rewarded when they are able to deal very quickly with a set of minions ahead of tackling the real threat. You can take inspiration from this and have groups of minions designed to soak actions, to provide a set of threats that are easily dealt with, and to act as defenders of more powerful opponents.

Lords of Men, page 124, provides the option of assuming 6 on defense rolls rather than taking time to roll them. It is recommended for NPCs to help speed up the run of play. But there's another angle to this. Why would we have to assume 6 all the time? Actually, if we reduce the assumed roll to 0 we effectively weaken the NPC antagonists by removing a valuable bonus to their defense totals. This makes the player characters more likely

to hit and subsequently more likely to inflict higher damage.

This provides an effective throttle on the strength of the opposing forces and allows for more cinematic action scenes as the heroes quickly deal with the minor opponents before reaching the real threat. Nefarious storyguides may also be thinking the reverse and looking at assuming a higher default roll to increase the challenge. Whichever your preference, it is an option to keep open.

Special Effects

The venerable old comic-book Marvel RPG has a system designed to model the grand over-the-top combat scenes that you might see in anything from Daredevil to Hulk and on to The Mighty Thor. This is a combat system filled with ground-strikes, area attacks, dodging, and evading. Importantly, characters may also be stunned and/or slammed as a result of attacks.

As a starting point, look for the Special effects section in *Lords of Men*, page 132 and the Mitigating Deadly Wounds option on page 125 and build from there. Any minor effects of combat that you impose on a character should be transient and last no more than a round or two. A character taking a light wound may also be winded or stunned for a round or two, while a character taking a medium wound may be knocked to the floor. If you do intend to supplement wound penalties with

additional temporary effect, remember that they should also be applied to NPC characters too in response to player actions. The intent is to make the results of attack/defense rolls more exciting and memorable.

Carrying the Bonus Forward

Previous editions of **Ars Magica** allowed combatants to carry an attack advantage forward rather than applying it directly as damage. The player builds an increasing advantage each round, choosing when to apply the accumulated bonus to damage.

Reinstating this option is certainly one way to address the “death by a thousand cuts” problem that can sometimes afflict **Ars Magica** combat; evenly-matched opponents spending an age inflicting minor wounds on each other without progressing to anything more decisive.

But allowing the character to carry an advantage forward increases the chances of real damage. If we assume a potential 5-point advantage (which we’ll translate for simplicity into a damage over soak of 5) then applying the damage each round results in a wound penalty of -3 after three rounds. But if the advantage is carried for three rounds, we could inflict a wound penalty of -5 after those same three rounds.

Consider the consequences!

The end of the combat encounter should bring a number of consequences. If the encounter was part of a wider story, the characters should have learned something new (we go back to the robbers on the road supported by the mystery hedge wizard, or the unknown stowaway), something that helps them understand or engage with the wider story better.

Reputations can be won and lost in battle and the covenant is no exception. Consider the behavior of the characters involved (or not) in the fighting and make a judgment call on who might be discussed back at the covenant and why. Points towards increasing reputations are usually in order, especially for those who handle the dynamics of the combat scene the best.

And covenant morale may either gain a boost or take a kicking, depending on the outcome of the fight. Take a look at the Prevailing Loyalty rules in the *Covenants* supplement, page 36 to see how cowardly or ineffectual magi have a negative impact on the covenant’s loyalty.

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The Way of St. James

Since the 8th Century, pilgrims traveled to the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela in the Kingdom of Asturias. By the beginning of the 12th Century, the pilgrimage was well organized and known across Europe. A dedicated support structure existed along the path—a path that began in France, converged at Puente la Reina in Navarra, and then continued across the Kingdom of Castile, then the Kingdom of Asturias, and terminated at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Devout Christians established hospitals to feed and

house pilgrims, generating a rich source of revenue which the Kingdom of Leon protected by a royal decree.

The road wends through areas littered with Roman ruins, Basque fey, and ancient stone circles as it travels fragments of the old Roman highways of the Via Agrippa, Via Lusitanorum and Ab Asturica Burdigalam. Ancient symbols are concealed along the way, sacred to Astarte and Venus. Lamiae lair in the hills of the Basque country while giants and Jentilak lurk amidst the menhirs.

By Ben McFarland

Into all of this, come the player characters...this trio of encounters can provide opportunities for a saga set in the region, for characters actually participating in the pilgrimage, or for a troupe simply traveling through the area. They are meant either as short, supplemental individual encounters for a larger arc, or possibly a nearly complete arc for a magus traveling the pilgrim's route.



Sub Rosa

Dramatis Personae

The characters likely to be encountered through these scenes on the pilgrimage route are:

The Mercurian Ghost

The Mercurian Ghost is the unquiet spirit of a Hermetic magus killed while traveling the Way. Alfonso was not on pilgrimage, though, but sought to unlock the secret fertility magic he believed existed encoded within the route. Ambushed by wolves as he performed his Parma ritual, he was mortally injured and succumbed to his wounds while hiding. Now he cannot rest until his bones are properly buried.

The Knight's Demon

Exorcised from a French Knight by Domingo de la Calzada, this vile creature has been biding its time and slowly gathering a gang of bandits to terrorize the Way of St. James in revenge.

The Demon's Bandits

With no stomach for the Reconquista, these men find themselves displaced and isolated. They fell under the sway of the Knight's Demon and now prey upon pilgrims for the easy wealth, goods, and occasional captives—despite the widespread knowledge that such behavior draws down God's Wrath.

The Lady of the hills, a Lamia

Cunning and devious, the Lady of the Hills hunts for children and young men who stray too far from the local towns. She tends to specialize in shepherds and foragers. Using her powers, she lures them close and devours them. Her lover, the giant Bonebreaker, often assists by stealing flock members or creating hazards that drive potential victims to her. She thinks of herself as a minor noble,

beholden to none, and speaks with a tone of entitlement and arrogance—this area is her demesne, and she hunts by her own privilege.

The Lady's Lover, the giant Bonebreaker

Short for a giant, Bonebreaker is dedicated to the Lady of the Hills, watching over her and doting on her every whim. He's a simple creature, smitten by the Lady's beauty and cruelty and eager to cause more mayhem at her command. He does have a weakness for the taste of mutton and the sparkle of silver.

Summary of Events

The three key events or encounters on the pilgrimage are:

Travel through the hills

The Lady of the Hills prefers to observe and lure away stragglers and those alone on watch. She and Bonebreaker do not attempt to ambush groups unless there are children present. The Lady parlays if engaged peacefully or if entrapped, but she always seeks a way to take advantage of the situation or distract captors until Bonebreaker can attack.

Groups are likely seek her out.

Dealing with a Demon

The Knight's Demon controls a group of the bandits, using them to terrorize the Way of St. James in a vendetta centuries old. It ambushes groups of pilgrims who camp near the path, ignoring those who do not show paraphernalia associated with the journey.

Ghost of the Road

The Mercurian Ghost approaches encamped groups, trying to lead travelers to his bones. Once close to his bones, he tries to possess someone in order to explain his situation. He tries to convince others

to help bury his bones in a churchyard, possibly the graveyard of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, but does not explain what he was doing until his proper grave is dug and his bones laid within. Alphonso secretly discovered a text that incorporated non-Hermetic rites and locations to improve and extend longevity rituals. In the process of performing these rites, wolves overran him after a botched spell. Badly mangled, the magus found a small cleft and succumbed to his wounds.

Pilgrimage Options

These encounters might easily provide a Pilgrimage for characters departing somewhere in the Normandy or Provence Tribunals, traveling over the Pyrenees and eventually stopping in Santiago de Compostella.

For minor Pilgrimages with a Target of 18, consider the following options (using the mechanics on pages 16-18 of *The Church*):

Swords and Sodales

+03 1 Season of Travel

+03 Encounter with the Mercurian Ghost

+12 Encounter with the Demon and its Bandits

Lady and the Bandits

+03 1 Season of Travel

+06 Encounter with the Bandits (mundane)

+09 Encounter with Lady and Bonebreaker

The Trouble with Bones

+03 1 Season of Travel

+09 Encounter with Lady and Bonebreaker

+03 Encounter with the Mercurian Ghost

+03 Difficulties with the Clergy of Compostella when trying to bury the Ghost's bones

A higher-value and longer Pilgrimage, with a Target of 30, might use the following series of encounters:

A Funny Thing happened on the Way

+06 2 Seasons of travel, with winter spent in Ostabat or Roncevaux

+09 Encounter with Lady and Bonebreaker

+12 Encounter with the Demon and its Bandits

+03 Encounter with the Mercurian Ghost

The encounter with the Lady and Bonebreaker might happen on either side of the Pyrenees, in the hills of Basque country. The encounter with the Demon and its bandits might happen on either side of the mountains, as well, but north of the Pyrenees, the bandits should be deserters from the Albigensian Crusade, currently being prosecuted in Toulousain. South of the Pyrenees, the bandits may be deserters from the Reconquista, as written.

Additional opportunities for mundane issues might occur in Ostabat, where thousands of pilgrims muster and depart to traverse the pass at Roncevaux in the Pyrenees or even in the village of Roncevaux, where there is a hostel for pilgrims, an Augustinian Abbey and a collegiate church dedicated to San Salvador which possesses some relics of Roland. The Templars are active all through the area and a pious brother knight with Sense Holy/Unholy might cause a Hermetic party trouble. Such an encounter could be an Oppositional Element worth an additional +3 or +6.

Further fantastic encounters might include the faeries of Gascony which interfere with pilgrims along the road for Vitality, or the drakes and worms

which lair in the caves and foothills of the Pyrenees. A non-Hermetic sahir, attempting to recover lost treasures or texts left by a former master in Castile or Navarre could bring bound creatures, elementals, or spirits of any Might and consider Hermetics to be searching for the same goods (which may not even exist!). Such an encounter would be considered an Oppositional Element worth an additional +9.

Locations

The Menhir Circle

Known and shunned by the surrounding villagers as a cursed site once used for Basque folk witch gatherings called akelarre, this lonesome place is nestled amidst rolling hills and windswept plains. The Lady of the Hills lairs each day at a ring of standing stones, watched over by the giant Bonebreaker, who often lounges beneath a twisted cypress tree. With the sunset, the pair begins hunting the surrounding area for shepherds who foolishly bedded their flocks nearby. In summer, they range further afield for more potential victims, but avoid attacking those staying close to the Way of St. James.

Magic Aura: 2

The Bandit Camp

This roving encampment is a rough collection of hard men with little to their names. They subsist on what they steal from pilgrims traveling the Way of St. James, and don't tend to get much. The influence of the demon tends to dull their complaints and inflame their bloodlust. Several of their number keep an inattentive watch, and, if ambushed, the whole group might scatter after the fifth casualty.

Infernal Aura: 1 (rising to 2 at night)

The Roman Road Remnant

The fragment of the Roman road passes through a wild section of rolling hills and undergrowth. Wolves boldly hunt at night and some peasants seek unpilfered portions of dressed stone to scavenge for their own constructions.

Magic Aura: 1

St. James' Sepulcher

The shrine of St. James the Apostle, St. James the Greater, in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela houses the saint's bones and draws hundreds of visitors and pilgrims a day, who come to pray, seek miracles and atone for transgressions real or imagined. It is not directly involved in any of these encounters, but might be visited as a result of them.

Dominion Aura: 5 or 6 on the Feast day of St. James the Great (the 25th of July).

See below for more details on this location.

Scenes

Meeting with Lady of the hills

Those who seek out the Lady of the Hills may find her sleeping at the Menhir Circle during the day, rising to hunt at sunset, and roaming the area at night. She might be found as she leisurely consumes a shepherd or foraging youth, permitting Bonebreaker to take the marrow from the long bones or feast upon the herd or flock.

The Lady of the Hills does not immediately run, considering herself the true ruler of these wilds. She fights until moderately wounded twice or heavily wounded once, then attempts to retreat, using Into the Rushes. If somehow prevented from fleeing, she begs mercy, offering favors, knowledge, treasure, whatever

Lady of the Hills, Lamia

Magic Might: 30

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

Size: +0

Season: Summer

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Human; Improved Characteristics, Intuition, Keen Vision, Lightning Reflexes; Magical Monster; Compulsion (to devour children), Delusion (it is noble), Weakness. (children), Wrathful.

Magical Qualities: Gentle Air, Greater Power (Hunger), Improved Abilities, Improved Attack (x2), Improved Confidence, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative (x2), Improved Might (x5), Improved Soak (x3), Personal Power (Maiden's Deception), Personal Power (Into the Rushes), Personal Power (Talons), Personal Power (Viper's Kiss)

Magical Inferiorities: Monstrous Appearance

Personality Traits: Devious +1, Glutton +1, Greedy +2

Reputations: Fearsome +2, Greedy +2, Stealthy +2.

Combat:

Dodge: Init: +2, Attack N/A, Defense +4, Damage N/A

Claws: Init: +5, Attack +12, Defense +10, Damage +4

Bite: Init: +2, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +1

Tail strike: Init: +5, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +2

Soak: +8

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

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

Abilities: Area Lore 3 (Basque Hill Country), Awareness 4 (onlookers), Bargain 2 (bandits), Brawl 4 (claws), Concentration 3 (maintaining powers), Folk Ken 4 (attraction), French 1, German 1, Guile 5 (children), Spanish 4 (greetings), Stealth 4 (outdoors)

Powers:

Maiden's Deception, 1 points, Init +1, Imaginem.

MuIm 5

The Lady takes on the appearance of a young maiden carrying a basket.

(Base 4, R: Personal, D: Conc, T: Individual)

Into the Rushes, 2 points, Init +0, Imaginem.

PeIm 15

The Lady becomes invisible and silent.

(Base 4, R: Personal, D: Conc, T: Individual, +1 additional sense, sound, +1 changing image)

Hunger that cannot be Sated, 4 points, Init -6, Corpus.

MuCo 40

The Lady turns her target into a small stone, which she swallows and keeps in her gullet.

(Base 25, R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Individual)

Viper's Lasting Kiss, 2 points, Init +0, Animal.

CrAq 20

The Lady's kiss or bite gains a venomous saliva, which inflicts a Heavy wound. See **ArM5**, page 180.

(Base 15, R: Personal, D: Conc, T: Individual, Mastery 1 (Penetration))

Talons of Rending Wrath, 3 points, Init -1, Corpus.

MuCo 25

The Lady's hands become vicious claws, like that of a bear.

(Base 10, R: Personal, D: Conc, T: Part, +1 added sharpness)

Equipment: None

Vis: 6 pawns of Perdo in tail.

Appearance: The Lady of the Hills has a wild appearance with fierce eyes, sharp fangs and the lower body of a great serpent. Her hands grow to become sharp claws.

she thinks might most interest her captors. She only negotiates in earnest if she has seen Bonebreaker fall in battle. Otherwise, she attempts to delay and distract enemies until the giant ambushes whoever is in charge of negotiations.

For statistics on the Lady and Giant, refer to the nearby inserts. For an alternate foe, consider the lamia in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 68.

Captured Children

The children taken by the Lady of the Hills aren't eaten, but rather turned into stones she swallows and keeps in her belly. Desperate parents of a one such victim seek out the magi and beg for revenge or liberation—the true fate of their child may have been revealed through a vision, a seer, or a guardian angel.

Collaborating Creatures

The Knight's Demon and the Lady of the Hills have established an

arrangement. The Lady convinces Bonebreaker to occasionally aid the bandits and the Demon's minions capture and deliver children to feed the Lamia's hunger.

The Bandit Camp

Infernal Aura: 1, at night: 2

Rough men, deserters, cowards and bullies, these bandits prey upon pilgrims at the direction of the Knight's Demon—who has possessed their leader, Juan Miguel. Juan Miguel deserted the host of a

Bonebreaker, Giant and The Lady's Lover

Magic Might: 25

Characteristics: Int +0, Per +1, Pre +0, Com -2, Str +10, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik -2

Size: +4 (14 ft / 4.25m and 2775lbs / 1261kg)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Season: Summer

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human; Improved Characteristics, Intuition, Keen Vision, Puissant Stealth, Sharp Ears, Tough, Warrior; Magical Monster; Baneful Circumstances (when drunk), Fury (Lady's Incapacitation), Overconfident, Weakness (wine), Weakness (silver).

Magical Qualities: Gigantic (x3), Improved Damage (thrown stones), Improved Might (x5) Improved Soak (x2), Lesser Power (Stony Mien), Lesser Power (Stone in Hand), Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics x2)

Magical Inferiorities: Susceptible to Deprivation

Personality Traits: Devoted +2, Gluttonous +3, Greedy +2, Violent +2

Reputations: None.

Combat:

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

Fist: Init: -2, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +10

Kick: Init: -1, Attack +9, Defense +8, Damage +13

Cudgel: Init: -1, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +17

Thrown Stone: Init -2, Attack +9, Defense +8, Damage +15

Soak: +10

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-9), -3 (10-17), -5 (18-26), Incapacitated (27-35)

Abilities: Area Lore 3 (Basque Country Hills), Awareness 4 (on watch), Brawl 5 (kicking), Guile 4 (Remaining Still), Great Weapon 4 (cudgel), Spanish 3 (threats), Stealth 5 (moving quietly), Thrown Weapon 4 (stone)

Powers:

Stony Mien, 5 points, Init -3, Imaginem

MuIm 25 (Base 3, +4 for size, +2 Sun)

Bonebreaker can sit and take the semblance of a large boulder. For sun duration, until Bonebreaker moves, he looks, feels, and sounds like a rock.

Stone in Hand, 5 points, Init -3, Terram ReTe (Base 3, +1 for stone, +4 arcane, +1 part) Bonebreaker can reach into the raw earth at any point, and pull out a large rough stone, suitable for throwing as a weapon.

Equipment: Cyprus wood cudgel, hide armor

Encumbrance: 0

Vis: 5 pawns of Terram vis in heart.

Appearance: Nearly three times the height of an ordinary man, Bonebreaker is a fearsome but ugly giant with a hooked nose, a bushy brunette mane, and squinty black eyes. He's dressed in a rough patchwork of filthy sheepskins and scraps of crudely flattened, captured armor. Bonebreaker wields a huge cudgel of cypress wood, its end spiked with the broken blades of previous foes. He keeps a sack made from the whole hide of an ox and managed to fashion a pair of crude sandals out of two crushed saddles.

knight of Leon and pondered his next option when the Knight's Demon possessed him and began the process of creating this mob of ruffians.

Their ramshackle encampment takes up a space about 50 paces square with four guard posts of two guards. None of the guards take their jobs seriously, regularly playing dice, talking loudly, or drinking on duty. It is not uncommon for one of the sentinels to wander off to relieve himself and later return.

They have a handful of horses, used by one of the four scouts to watch for pilgrims and then ride back to alert the bandits. A regular tactic involves a bandit joining a group of travelers as a fellow pilgrim, leaving in the night so that the bandits can attack the following day. When

attacking, they engage enemies until suffering eight or more casualties, then retreat while trying to carry away wounded. Dead or immediately unrecoverable incapacitated bandits are left behind to the mercy of the defenders.

They shift camp locations every three days, but never on a Sunday—on the demon's orders. They don't have any particularly brilliant strategy; they're really just a collection of thugs assembled by the Knight's Demon. Juan Miguel has the best tent and stays in the center of the camp with two possessed bodyguards. These defenders never break morale and fight to the death.

If someone ambushes and inflicts five obvious casualties, other than sentries, the group scatters and flees.

They regroup at one of their other encampments in a week's time.

Bandit Statistics—There are 25 bandits other than Juan Miguel, use stats for "The Tough Guy" (See **ArM5** pg22.)

For Juan Miguel, use "the Grizzled Veteran," but eliminate his decrepitude and replace Order of Hermes Lore with Infernal Lore. (See **ArM5** pg21.)

For statistics on the Knight's Demon, see insert. To use these foes as a mundane force, make them more disciplined, with alert sentries and a morale which breaks only after half their number fall.

Story Seeds on the Road

To Gain the Grogg

Magi who purge the Knight's Demon from Juan Miguel and have no compunction employing some questionable men could find an easy addition to their turb. The issue lies in finding a way to engage the Knight's

Turn the Other Cheek

Simply slaughtering the bandits is an elementary task for most magi. Such bloodshed does nothing to stop the Knight's Demon, who simply causes Juan Miguel to flee or abandons its pawn in search of another. However, the Knight's Demon is powerless against those

and force the demon to exhaust its Might discover a weakness unique to this infernal creature—voluntarily running out of Might points banishes the Knight's Demon back to Hell.

The Road Remnant

Magic Aura: 1

Thick brush and long grass coat this desolate section of rolling hills. Hidden amongst the overgrowth lie ruined portions of a Roman road—the Ab Asturica Burdigalam. Wolves occasionally yip and howl, watching from afar. A bold peasant might even be found, seeking out bits of the road to scavenge for building material. The air feels heavy here, laden with some unknown weight, as if one were always under observation.

When the group approaches a

A regular tactic involves a bandit joining a group of travelers as a fellow pilgrim, leaving in the night so that the bandits can attack the following day...

Demon without provoking the rest of the gang into panicked retreat or bloody melee.

who willingly surrender to it, and furiously expends its Might attempting to provoke members of the gang into attacking captives. Those who can frustrate these tactics

The Knight's Demon

Order: Deluder

Infernal Might: 25

Characteristics: Int +0, Per +2, Pre +1, Com +2, Str +3, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik +3

Size: -2

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Weakness (Unwilling to accept surrender)

Personality Traits: Credible +3, Cruel +3, Sly +2

Reputations: Deceitful +5, Vengeful +5, Vicious +5

Hierarchy: 3

Combat:

Fangs: Init +3, Attack +12, Defense +10, Damage +4

Shortsword: Init +5, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +8

Soak: +3

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12)

Abilities: Brawl 5 (fangs), Charm 6 (convincing), Folk Ken 6 (sensing desire), Guile 6 (provoking anger), Leadership 6 (create jealousy), Single Weapon 5 (short sword)

Powers:

Delusion, 1 or 5 points, Init +3, Imaginem: A consummate deceiver, the Knight's Demon can create elaborate illusions. As per RoP:tL, page 41.

Silver Tongue of Reasonable Lies, Variable points, Init +1, Mentum: the Knight's Demon can duplicate any Hermetic Mentum spell.

This costs the demon 1 point of Might per magnitude. It cannot create any effect with a level greater than its Infernal Might, or duplicate ritual effects.

False Mettle, 4 points, Init +2, Corpus: the Knight's Demon grants a target the benefit of Endurance the Berserkers for Sun duration.

Fortify the Deluded, 5 points, Init +2, Corpus: the Knight's Demon grants a target Gift of Bear's Fortitude for diameter duration.

Coagulation, 3 points, Init -1, Corpus: As per RoP:tL, page 31.

Obsession, 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Anger, Brutality, Greed. As per *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Envisioning, 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentum: As per *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Possession, variable, Init +2, Mentum: As per *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Weakness: Protected Group (Pilgrims), Protected Group (Surrendering Foes)

Vis: 5 pawns of Mentum, in its eyes.

Appearance: In its natural form, the Knight's Demon resembles a pig's head with lupine features and a swollen hook-tipped tongue, balanced upon two human-like hands—upon which it walks like a spider. It conceals this appearance with an illusion of an older man in farmer's garb carrying an implement of some kind, a rooster, or a well-fed beagle.

The Knight's Demon stays close to St. James' Way, seeking out the pilgrims and other travelers and attempting to corrupt them or test their faith. The truly devout have little to worry from it directly, but its favorite tactic is to find some less pious traveler and fill the unfortunate victim's mind with thoughts of greed and misplaced anger—driving them to attack its preferred targets.

small mile marker, barely visible in the grass, Alphonso manifests and attempts to lead someone to the rock cleft containing his bones. He's quite animated, and regularly seems to fend off unseen attackers, re-enacting the terrible flight he took before his death. Once within 10 paces, he tries to possess a member of the group and explain his needs verbally. While attempting to complete a long ritual detailed within the encoded copy of book five of the Codex Calixtinus, wolves overcame him. He botched a spell during his defense. The wolves badly wounded him, and he died after scrambling into the small cleft where his bones now rest.

What exactly must be done to put his spirit to rest is up to the

Storyguide. Two options are detailed in Story Seeds below:

Story Seeds on the Road

Much Needed Rest

Alphonso was a pious man, despite his magical background. He desperately wanted to be buried with the rest of his family in the cemetery of the church near his home. If the group is willing to transport his body there and pay for his burial, he reveals the key to deciphering the encoded message within the Codex Calixtinus volume.

The Long Path

Alphonso deeply desired to

complete the pilgrimage of the Way of St. James once he'd completed his ritual research. If the group carries his bones to the Cathedral of Compostela and arranges for him to be buried in the catacombs there, he reveals the key to deciphering the encoded message within the Codex Calixtinus volume.

Either of these seeds helps enable the other two encounters.

At night, wolves attack groups camped out here. (See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 144 or the *Mundane Bestiary PDF*) A magical wolf leads the mundane wolves. (See *ArM5*, page 193.)

For statistics on Alphonso, see the nearby insert.



Alphonso, Ghost of the Mercurian Spectre

Magic Might: 30

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

Size: 0

Season: Spring

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Magus; Arcane Lore, Improved characteristics; Magic Monster; Driven, Mute.

Magical Qualities: Improved Initiative (x5), Improved Might (x10), Improved Recovery, Improved Soak (x2), Lesser Power (x2)

Magical Inferiorities: None.

Personality Traits: Cheerful +1, Pious +2

Reputations: None.

Combat:

Dodge: Init: -2, Attack N/A, Defense +3, Damage N/A

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

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

Soak: +6

Fatigue levels: N/A when nonphysical. OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious, when manifested.

Wound Penalties: N/A when nonphysical. -1 (1–5), -3 (6–10), -5 (11–15), Incapacitated (16–20), when manifested.

Abilities: Area Lore 3 (Iberia), Artes Liberales 2 (Latin), Brawl 2 (dodge), Code of Hermes 1, Concentration 3 (remaining

conscious), Folk Ken 2 (adults), Italian 5 (mill terms), Latin 4 (Hermetic Terms), Magic Theory 3 (Longevity Rituals), Penetration 3, Order of Hermes Lore 2 (Covenants)

Powers:

Display the Final Form, 1 points, Init +4, Imaginem: CrIm 2 (Base 1, R:Personal, D:Conc, T: Ind)

Alphonso manifests a translucent image of himself as he was torn apart by wolves. He may not speak through this image, only gesture—and he must also reenact the events leading up to his death, including the motions of his botched spellcasting.

Seize the Unwilling Mouthpiece, 4 points, Init +3, Corpus:

ReCo 20 (Base 10, R:Eye, D:Conc, T: Ind)

Alphonso takes over a person and replaces their mental traits with his own. He must spend the Might necessary for this power to maintain it each round the possessed body is damaged. He must be within 10 paces of his bones to use this power.

Equipment: None, Book 5 of the Codex Calixtinus is with his bones, wrapped in oilskin.

Vis: 6 pawns of Mentum.

Appearance: Alphonso was an Italian magus interested in improving his longevity ritual. He seemed to be about 50 and was quite vain, taking great strides to maintain his thick, dark hair and healthy physique. Now, in death, he appears to be translucent, dressed in shredded, bloodied clothes and wearing a desperate look. His throat is badly wounded.

The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Dominion Aura: 5, 6 on the Saint's Feast day of July 25th.

The Way of St. James terminates at the beautifully constructed Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Construction began in 1075 with the majority completed in 1128 and its consecration overseen by King Alfonso IX of Leon. It holds a Holy Year in years when the feast of St. James falls on a Sunday. This privilege was made permanent in 1179 by a papal bull and is what elevates the status of the cathedral to the same level as Rome or Jerusalem. In 1122, Pope Calixtinus II first granted the archbishop of Compostella the privilege of granting a plenary indulgence to any who visited the shrine of the Apostle in each Holy year, or Jubilee year, when the saint's

day fell on a Sunday. While there, the penitent must make their confession, attend Mass, give a donation for the upkeep of the shrine, and undertake a vow to perform good works. The years 1221, 1227, 1232, 1238, 1249 and 1255 are Jubilee years. Holy Years at Compostella occur every 6, 5, 6, and 11 years. Confession and communion remained essential to the granting of the certificate of having completed the pilgrimage. The archbishop, or his designated officer, hand-writes and seals such documents with slips of paper attesting confession and communion attached.

Entrance to the cathedral is through the magnificent Pórtico de la Gloria, carved in 1188 by Maestro Mateo. The three doorways of the shafts, tympana and archivolts offer magnificent displays of painted sculpture depicting the Last

Judgment. Prophets of the Old Testament, including a smiling Daniel, stand on one side. The arches over the other side represent Purgatory, with Christ in glory presiding in the center. The Four Evangelists flank Jesus and the twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse surround Him while playing musical instruments. These doors produce 5 pawns of Divinely aligned Intelligo vis when viewed in the light of the dawn on the Feast day of St. James.

As the seat of the archbishop, the cathedral has 1000 Build points which might be spent on books, enchanted items, relics, specialists and vis sites. A suggested expenditure of these points follows:

Books: 339 Points

The Cathedral keeps a sizeable library, including two beautifully

illuminated bibles. Kept in a locked, magical walnut chest detailed in the Cathedral's enchanted items, the books are released for review only with permission of the senior priest or the archbishop's secretary, and are not allowed to leave the Cathedral. The available books include:

Two copies of the Bible

(Theology Summa, Church Lore Summa) L:10 Q:3, L:3 Q:3 [90 Points]

Parish Register

(Area Lore: Asturias Summa) L:5, Q:5 [25 Points]

The Missal

(Church Lore Tractatus, Music Tractatus) Q:8, 7 [15 Points]

Breviary

(Church Lore Tractatus) Q:10 [10 Points]

Historia Ecclesiastica Iberia

(Church Lore Summa) L:5 Q:10 [25 Points]

Codex Calixtinus, Folio IV

(Area Lore Tractatus) Q:8 [08 Points]

Historia Compostellana

(Area Lore: Northern Iberia Summa) L:6 Q:7 [25 Points]

A rare copy of the Historia Lausiaca

(Divine Lore Tractatus) Q:9 [9 Points]

Legenda sanctorum*

(Hagiographies and Divine Lore Summa) L:4 Q:7 [27 Points]

Epilogus in gestis sanctorum*

(Hagiographies and Divine Lore Tractatus) Q:10 [10 Points]

Matter of France

(Area Lore: Iberia, Area Lore: Gaul Tractatus) Q:12 [12 Points]

Matter of England

(Area Lore: England, Faerie Lore Tractatus) Q:10 [10 Points]

Matter of Rome

(Faerie Lore Tractatus, Magic Lore Tractatus) Q:8, 8 [16 Points]

Roman d'Alixandre

(Area Lore: Thebes Tribunal Summa, Magic Lore Summa) L:2 Q:5 [15 Points]

Le Roman de Troie

(Folk Ken Tractatus, Leadership Tractatus) Q:10, 10 [20 Points]

Roman de Thèbes

(Magic Lore Tractatus) Q:8 [8 Points]

Digenes Akrites

(Area Lore: Asia Minor Tractatus, Magic Lore Tractatus, in Greek) Q:7, 7 [14 Points]

Books noted with an asterisk did not historically appear until after 1220, but it is not beyond consideration that precursor, equivalent texts existed which might have inspired the future author.

Enchanted Items: 130 Points

The Cathedral has a number of enchanted items either acquired from Verditius magi through proxies, claimed as spoils of war, or donated by the devout. These items include:

A Large Copper Bell which can be clearly heard for miles

ReIm 35

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

Each time the bell is rung, its peal is perfectly audible up to 10 miles away until it fades away naturally.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 Sun, +5 maint conc, +10 Unlimited times per day)

A Bronze Censor which keeps the rectory comfortable

CrAu 20

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

This censor, when swung gently from side to side, makes the air in the



room crisp and fresh, very pleasant and about 70 degrees Fahrenheit for Sun duration.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 unnatural, +1 Ig req, +10 Unlimited times per day)

A Walnut Chest which protects the books against the environment

ReAn 15

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

Books kept within this chest are kept in pristine condition. It does not repair serious damage to books, but prevents them from suffering minor wear or fading over time.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 He req, +10 Unlimited times per day)

A Brass Fountainhead which keeps the water cool

MuAq 20

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

(Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 Ig req, +10 Unlimited times per day)

Shaped like a cherub holding an urn, this item cools water it touches, making it refreshing and chilled.

The Pillar which relieves a Fatigue level

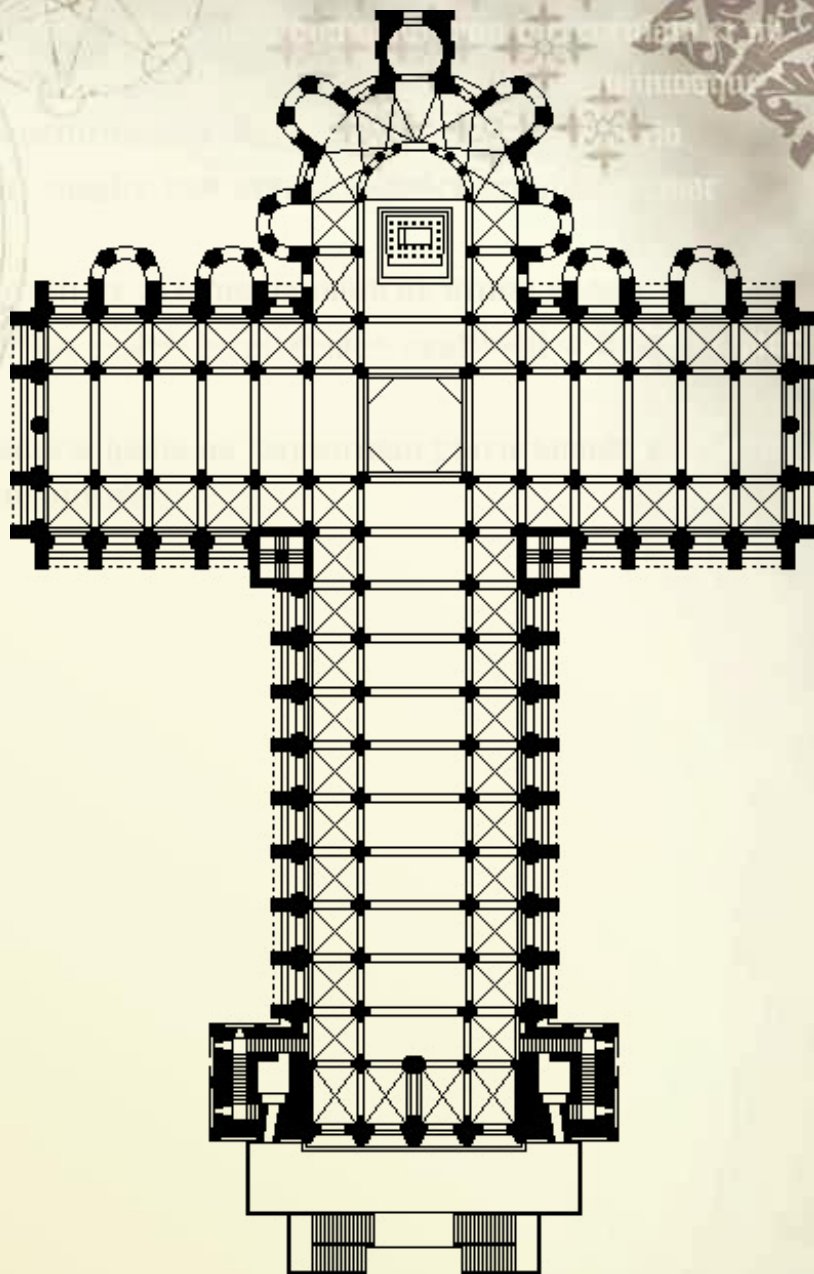
"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Transcendence, Purity, Level 40

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind

Called St. James' Pillar, the provenance of this Divinely enchanted item is unknown, but its benefits are renowned amongst pilgrims. Those who pray at the pillar, placing their hands and forehead to the stone column, find a Fatigue level restored. A constant stream of pilgrims means no one generally benefits from this item more than once per day.

(Base 25, +1 Touch, +10 Unlimited times per day)



Plan of Santiago de Compostela as it would have been in the late 12th century

Relics: 81 Points

The crypt, beneath the main altar, houses the relics of Saint James and two of his disciples, Saint Theodorus and Saint Athanasius. The cathedral's Chapel of the Reliquary contains a gold crucifix, dated to 874, which holds a piece of the True Cross.

The Relics of Saint James

These include the saint's skull and bones. The skull has a small, square

fragment, which has broken away from the rest of the bone, but still fits snugly into the space. The remains are said to have arrived in Compostella, carried by angels in an unmanned, rudderless boat to Iberia. There, the relics were enclosed in a massive rock which later split open and revealed themselves to the bishop of Compostella.

The Relics of St. James have 5 Faith points and a Divine Might of

50. In addition to the usual powers of relics (See *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 45), the relics are known to have powers involving evangelism, inspiration of zeal & fervor, and granting wisdom in punishment. They cost 30 Build points.

The Relics of St. James' disciples, Saint Theodorus and Saint Athanasius.

This is a collection of three relics, the remains of St. Theodorus, the shawl of St. Theodorus, and the smaller remains of St. Athanasius. These relics have respective potencies of 3, 1, and 2 Faith points and Divine Might of 30, 10, and 20. They each have an additional power to the usual powers of relics; they are known for relieving pain, granting Visions, and inspiring the bearer when persuading others. These relics cost a collected total of 25 Build points.

Reliquary contains a gold crucifix, dated to 874, which holds a piece of the True Cross.

Saint Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, sought and found the Christ's burial place. She had the existing temple destroyed and the Sepulchre uncovered, where she discovered three crosses and the titulus from the crucifixion. The leader of her guard, a Legionnaire named Macarius, had the three crosses placed in turn on a deathly ill woman. The touch of the third cross miraculously healed the woman, and

it was declared the True Cross. This fragment was verified by Pope Marinus.

A relic with 6 Faith points and a Divine Might of 60, the True Cross is known to have healing powers in addition to the usual powers of relics (See *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 45). It costs 26 Build points.

Specialists: 175 Points

The Cathedral has 175 points of tradesmen and professionals at its disposal. Such craftsmen include bookbinders, brickmasons, carpenters, goldsmiths, painters, scribes, sculptors, stonemasons, and tanners. The clergy can find nearly any appropriate craftsman within a four day period. The leader of the clergy here is best represented using the Priest companion. (See **ArM5**, page 23.) He would be willing to bury Alphonso's bones in exchange for the volume of the Codex Calixtinus, a copy or an equivalent text. The archbishop is not currently at the Cathedral, unless this is the Saint's Feast Day. His secretary might be represented by the Brother Elias Bonibarone, who is responsible for generating the pilgrimage certificates. Use the statistics from *The Church*, page 133.

Vis: 100 Points

The Cathedral controls a site which produces 5 pawns of Creo vis,

in addition to the vis created by the Portico de la Gloria each year. A former faerie dolmen on a church property produces 5 pawns of Aquam vis with the runoff of the first Spring melt. Large insects shed their whole exoskeletons on the branches of a wild mulberry bush on a different property, which may be collected as 3 pawns of Muto vis. Finally, a pair of small menhir, standing on the seaside, generate 2 pawns of either Aurum or Imaginem vis on the Summer Equinox—the day's weather determines the type; if any kind of storm rages, the vis is Aurum. If the day is clear, then the whistling of the wind through the stones at noon generates 2 pawns of Imaginem vis. The churchmen do not gather the vis and are not aware of the nature of these sites. The Cathedral may control other vis sources as appropriate for your saga.

The Cathedral has 175 build points remaining for customization. It might have more specialists at its disposal, possess more vis sites or enchanted items, or even have a larger library (see **ArM5**, page 71-72 for the respective costs; enchanted items cost 1 point/level of effect). It is possible the Cathedral has a few more minor relics associated with local saints. These would have no more than 2 Faith points and a single power beyond those normally associated with relics. See *The Church*, page 49 for details, but relics with 1 Faith

What is the Pilgrimage Path?

The Pilgrimage along the Way of St. James was one of the few ways to earn a plenary indulgence—a full pardon of temporal sin. The others were pilgrimages to Jerusalem or to Rome by way of the Via Francigena. *The Church* discusses pilgrimages in detail, and Wikipedia has some useful references on the road and other aspects of this material:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Way_of_St._James_\(route_descriptions\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Way_of_St._James_(route_descriptions))

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._James_Way

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathedral_of_Compostela

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Year

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominic_de_la_Calzada

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Calixtinus

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ab_Asturica_Burdigalam

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrespil>

The scallop shell symbol is prominent all along Way of St. James, representing the return of St. James' body from the sea, the convergence of many pilgrim paths in Compostela and some also claim that it has a more ancient link to pagan fertility cults of Venus or Astarte as well as the Basque legends associated with the builders of stone circles. Pilgrims would use the shells as cups or bowls and afterwards, it served as the symbol of their completed journey.

point cost 1 build point, and relics with 2 Faith points cost 3 build points. Add 5 build points if the relics have an additional holy power.

Greater, possibly arriving on St. James' feast day, July 25th.

to serve as grogs. The Knight's Demon also has a collection of (possibly tainted?) vis.

If the Knight's Demon is only driven away, it rebuilds its band of thugs and begins to torment magi responsible, granting those involved the Enemies flaw.

The Ghost

Those able to properly meet the demands of Alphonso's spectre and place his spirit to rest should acquire his book, a copy of the fifth book of the Codex Calixtinus. Encoded within its pages are the rituals, sites, and process necessary for adding a bonus of +3 to one's longevity ritual. The ghost explains the key to deciphering the folio's secrets and departs.

It is possible that Alphonso belonged to some sort of Mystery cult or Societas, such as the Cult of Sol Invictus (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 70) or one attempting to reconcile the Divine and the Magic realms. This cult may later seek out the book.

If magi claim the Codex folio without Alphonso's permission or destroy Alphonso's spectre, it reforms a week later and begins to haunt them until they bury his bones in a consecrated graveyard and return Book 5 of the Codex Calixtinus to a magus named in a letter held between its pages. They gain a minor version of the Plagued by Supernatural Entity flaw.

With the monster defeated, it might be possible to free the children trapped within her gullet by breaking the enchantment which keeps them transformed into stones...

Other Story Seeds

Tower of Hercules

This structure, just outside Compostela, claims to be one of the oldest lighthouses in Europe—its design mirroring that of the Lighthouse of Alexandria. Those seeking to unlock the mysteries of Hermetic Architecture (TMRE, pg 97) may consider visiting it as part of their research, as travel to Galicia does not require passing through the Strait of Gibraltar and running the gauntlet of the Moorish pirates that hunt there.

The Lost Sodale

A Quaesitor magus approaches members of the covenant. One of his sodales, Alphonso, recently took a trip into Iberia and has not returned, though Alphonso's pet crow has. Intelligo magics targeting the bird indicate something might have happened, but exactly what is unclear. The magus cannot quit his current project to search for Alphonso and doesn't want the trail to go cold. Would the magi pick up the investigation?

Pious Magi and Pilgrimages

Traveling the Way of St. James is a pilgrimage on par with traveling to Rome or Jerusalem. A magus seeking enlightenment might depart from any one of the starting points in France, Germany, or the Netherlands and make the trip on foot to Compostela and the sepulcher of St. James the

Rewards and Developments

The Lamia

With the monster defeated, it might be possible to free the children trapped within her gullet by breaking the enchantment which keeps them transformed into stones. Restored children may return to grateful townsfolk who can later provide services to the covenant. Orphans might join the covenant. Over the years, the Lady and Bonebreaker have likely acquired a number of interesting items and bits of mundane wealth—possibly including some device sought by the magi. There is, of course, the vis in their bodies and their stone circle, which generates Vim vis each spring equinox.

The Lamia and Bonebreaker do not pursue enemies beyond the local area, but nurse a grudge until someone destroys them.

The Demon

Magi able to banish or destroy the Knight's Demon might gain a bit of Divine gratitude, as Saint Dominic de la Calzada rejoices in the creature's demise. The responsible characters could gain the benefit of the Intuition, Luck or Guardian Angel virtues for a season or longer. If nonlethal means were used to defeat them, the bandits might be persuaded

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.

The Tribunal has now broken from its main session and I consider that Donum Chanuti has done well for itself out of the proceedings.

There were a number of issues

that were brought before council, few of which, truth be told, had any connection with Donum Chanuti or its interests.

On the issue, brought by the Quaesitors, of banning magically conjured silver being introduced into the Tribunal's economy Bellatorius suggested that two pounds of magically created silver for each covenant inhabitant should be permitted each year.

Such an amount, he reasoned, was sufficient to provide basic provisioning while not overburdening local Lords through inflation. The Tribunal embraced this compromise with enthusiasm. It seems that Bellatorius is a canny politician as well as being an accomplished worker of magic.

The accusations against Blackthorn by Voluntas

Sub Rosa

concerning the poisoned sheep seemed even more ill-considered when voiced before the council. The facts were stated as follows, that the magi of Voluntas were alerted to the death of their sheep. On investigating through means magical and mundane, they determined that the small stream from which the beasts drank had been poisoned by an unnatural brew. Voluntas claimed that the magical sigil of Goliard had been detected in the magic.

The Quaesitors (including Valeria of Donum Chanuti) investigated and, to Goliard's favour, found no trace of any magical sigil; it seemed then that Blackthorn had nothing to answer to. Personally, I consider the connection between Blackthorn and the Quaesitors too strong, and as there is little to commend the trusting of an investigating Quaesitor I saw no reason to dismiss the case outright.

I proposed instead that as Voluntas had been wronged in some way by agents undiscovered, that there should be further investigation of the matter. Voluntas appeared to take this compromise in the spirit in which it was intended and Blackthorn found itself unable to object lest they bring suspicion back on them.

The dispute between Schola Pythagoranis and Ungulus over an undiscovered but rumoured Vis source took longer than necessary, thanks in large part to the magi of Schola treating the event as an opportunity to cover every corner of learning that they had ever encountered.

Very quickly the debate became mired by an open examination of Code and Periphery concerning Vis rights, Hermetic and Mundane property law as pertains England

(including a discussion on whether Saxon or Norman law prevailed – before concluding that in this instance little of note separated the two and that the distinction could be set aside) and a debate on whether finding the description of the location and its Vis is sufficient to claim discovery or whether the location itself must be visited in order to claim that right.

As Astrolabe of Schola Pythagoranis was, presumably, about to suggest a further recap of land allocations given what had been learned during the previous hour's discussion, I opted to join the process.

I offered the motion that further debate on the issue would be conducted better when the council could be afforded the full facts, namely whether the rumoured Vis source actually existed, where and when it could be found, how many Pawns it

I rebutted his accusations as best I could with recourse to shifting blame for the unfortunate outcome away from Benedic and onto "his travelling companions", by which I meant Bellatorius and myself, who could have found a more conciliatory way to solve the situation.

This was accepted with some conditions attached, which Benedic must agree upon with both affected Covenants.

The final issue to be brought before the council was the Maga Julia of Jerbiton's call for a separate Tribunal hall to be built and maintained on ground neutral of any Covenant. London was mentioned as a candidate location. Personally, I care little for Tribunals. I can stomach an occasional journey to Blackthorn and one seat is just as hard as another. I voted for the motion as I had no pressing need to do otherwise.

Personally, I care little for Tribunals. I can stomach an occasional journey to Blackthorn and one seat is just as hard as another...

yielded and whether either Covenant still laid claim to that same source. As incentive to the council I suggested that Benedic was supremely qualified to search the subject forest for the source and report back to both Covenants.

Gerfallon of Criamon, showed that his smile, in truth, held little good humour towards the younger magi of Donum Chanuti. The magus we had trusted with conveying us to the Tribunal took pains to belittle Benedic's encounter with the wood spirit on our journey.

But I can see what will happen. Despite being neutral, discord will soon be borne of concord as one Covenant or another believes it is paying too much or is too far away or some other invented grievance. Once the hall has been dragged into existence from the bitter will of the Tribunal it will soon become a focus for largesse as each Covenant seeks to bestow the best and most expensive adornments and outfittings. Before long we will become hopelessly ensnared in foreign silks just walking from door to

chair, every bit as a rabbit is caught by the generosity of the poacher. At the first sign of golden door handles I hereby vow to proxy my sigil to the first who asks.

As for my own interests, after much effort and very little sleep I completed the proposal for the Unseen Opponent last night. I presented it to Golias who appeared skeptical that such a device could be made to work to all, though Conrad assures me that he was merely “angling for a deal” as he put it.

In truth I realise the purchase cost is high but I can do nothing about that. House Verditius imposes such a high tariff that many devices that could be popular are unnaturally restricted. True enough, the high tariff ensures that all within the House are granted fitting payment for the superior services that we are able to provide, but in exchange for that we must send out our agents to attempt sales of devices that we know full-well cost but a third of the asked-for price. Other magi with a leaning towards items, even without the Verditius secrets we safeguard, are able to charge less for a device that may cost them more than us to make and walk away with both profit and reputation.

One day I hope to have such understanding of my House and its policies that I will come to accept such a high margin. Until then I must conform to the line and bite my tongue when thoughts of charging a slight amount cross my mind.

In any case, Conrad says he has a number of ideas on how Golias may be tempted into the commission. Thankfully, that is his remit and so long as he keeps my affairs on the correct side of the Verditius line I am content to

let him manage them as he sees fit.

*Extract from the journal of
Vulcanis Argens:*

We left Blackthorn early this morning. I awoke having endured dreams and waking thoughts all night concerning my sanctum. My faculties would not alight from the notion that there had been an accident, or a fire left to run unchecked or worse that my tools may have been rearranged into some other order thought sensible by Halbert. I have not confessed these thoughts to Conrad as he would only chide me for “mithering” – a word Tostig tells me he acquired from some of the northern companions and has since been using with some regularity.

*Extract from the journal of
Vulcanis Argens:*

As noted in earlier pages of this journal, I have completed the attunement of my talisman to my person. From all the works I previously read on the subject of talismans I understood the strong physical pull I feel to the spear to lessen over time. I have not yet experienced this and the feeling that I and the spear are one is as strong now as it was when the dam first broke and our essences ran together.

*Extract from the journal of
Vulcanis Argens:*

Benedic has announced that he will be leaving for Sherwood Forest in the spring. He has apparently agreed that one magus from each of Schola Pythagoranis and Voluntas will accompany him in his search for their contested Vis source.



I have not yet offered but I am tempted to go also. Not from any sense of adventure, of course, but of responsibility; I offered Benedic's service in this matter and if he must waste a season on the pursuit, then so should I.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

The servants have packed my travelling things into my coach,

Loxley.

The food this night was simple and had little taste.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Benedic made contact with Sherwood's Genius Locus. The forester, Robin, claims the spirit is Herne, a fact that will possibly aid us as we have previously encountered an aspect of Herne.

Benedic seems intent on finding pagan sympathies wherever he looks. As I explained to him, the old ways are old; their time has passed...

Driver Tom has hooked up the horses and Tostig is ready. I find myself not so ready. My studies on Bonisagus' grand theory have gone well this last season but I still have a number of experiments not yet complete. I am waiting for Halbert to return so I can remind him to stay away from the north corner.

Conrad is not here. He is in Rye or Winchelsea. He has promised to wait for word from Golias on whether he desires the commission. When word is received I can expect a messenger.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Julia and Lumen have led us to Sherwood Forest where a forester took us to a place where a number of people are said to have disappeared.

Roger de Coursey, a singer of songs known to Donum, seems to know of this forester, as does Tostig and Lumen's turb. I do not think I have heard of this

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

It appears that the spirit desires adoration. It also claims to have no name. But most intriguingly, the spirit seems to banish iron from its presence. My suspicions are that we are working within a fairy woods and that the spirit Benedic has contacted is a powerful fairy.

Roger de Coursey found himself ejected from the spirit's presence when he apparently expressed an inward prayer to God while in the higher Regio level. He still nurses his head and the songs he had been singing are not to be heard.

I found myself having to chide Benedic for his probing of the forester's inner thoughts tonight. Benedic seems intent on finding pagan sympathies wherever he looks. As I explained to him, the old ways are old; their time has passed. The most he can hope for is that some such as he continue to remember and revere the old

ways and the spirits and ensure that they are never forgot. This apparent desire to replace the true faith with a widespread supplication to spirits is at best doomed to failure and at worst dangerous. He will have to be watched.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

We have had further discussions this morning on what we need to achieve within the woods. Both Lumen and Julia appear content to let us solve this problem in its entirety. Benedic is enjoying his time on stage as we are lost without him. I, on the other hand, am a little more uncertain. It would not surprise me to find both Julia and Lumen have instructions to let the venture succeed or fail off the back of Donum Chanuti.

Regardless, Lumen's turb were deemed unworthy by the spirit and so our first suggestion, that we could, bit-by-bit, support the old rituals and devotions in direct exchange for Vis was rejected by the spirit.

Our second suggestion was to create a saintly persona around the spirit and so support Christian devotion to this new saint. I confess, this is another of my ideas that I am growing more uneasy with.

Roger has at least recovered somewhat from his assault and has been considering stories about this new saint that could be spread.

But I am concerned. I stood before it and sensed its power, power enough to strip my talisman from my grasp. To give this creature Christian validity could be a very grave mistake...

Magical Art: An Interview with Grey Thornberry

Grey Thornberry is a name well-known to players of *Ars Magica*, having contributed numerous books covers and pages of internal artwork over the years. Barely a new release goes by without Grey's contribution enriching the experience somewhere along the way. But who is he, what's he done, and how does he work? We take a look behind the curtain and learn a little about the artist at work.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

I grew up mainly in the south-eastern US (Tennessee, Florida, Maryland), and knew from early on that I wanted to be an artist. When other kids were begging their parents for toys or candy, I was the kid begging for a sketchbook and pencils. Comics and an early love for D&D also contributed to my delinquency.

You mentioned D&D – are you still a gamer?

I used to be an avid gamer but the pressures of family and work have pushed that to the margins. These days if I pick up a game it's usually just to admire the art, I rarely get to spend any time playing through the material.

How long have you been a professional artist and how did you break into the design and illustration industry?

I've worked as an artist off and on for over 15 years, sometimes as staff, sometimes as a freelancer. I've worked with video game companies, silkscreen studios, tattoo parlors, the children's market, book covers, and of course the RPG/Fantasy market.

A lot of people starting out in a creative industry have to balance other jobs to pay the bills. Is that your experience too?

I definitely ran through a gamut of staff jobs alongside my illustration career. I've been fortunate enough that most of those have been in creative fields so I was able to develop skills that are complementary my artwork. Like learning advanced Photoshop, type design, etc.

Were you working with Atlas Games before *Ars Magica*?

Atlas Games gave me my very first gig in the games market. I started

By Mark Lawford

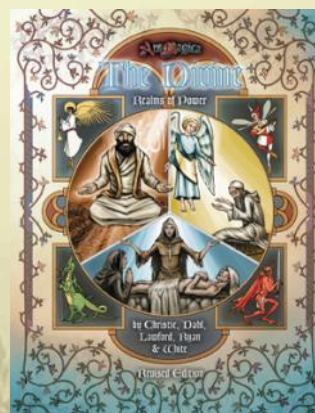
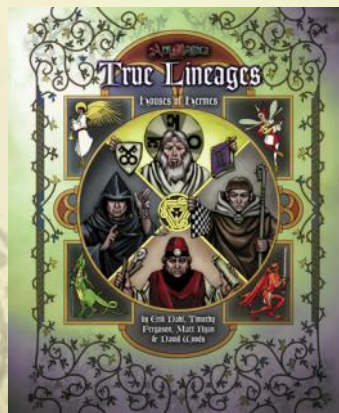
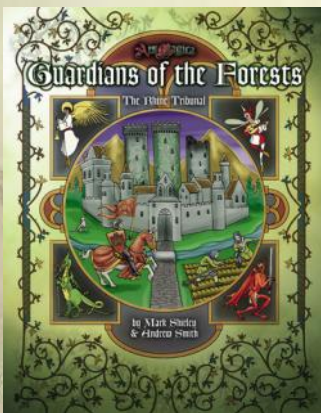
working with them years ago on their *On The Edge* card line, and have been on their roster ever since. I have to say they're fantastic people to work for, I'm grateful for the experience and feel a strong loyalty to them.

There seems to be more demand for RPG/Fantasy artwork than ever. Is there more work or is the craft becoming commoditised?

I think while the growth of the industry has created more job opportunities for artists, the parallel growth of digital painting with programs like Photoshop and Painter has given an unprecedented number of people the ability to jump into the market. Essentially, anyone with a Wacom tablet and a bit of talent can take their shot. That's ultimately a good thing, but it does make for a very crowded field.

How flexible do you need to be with regard to style?

The answer to that question is double-sided, I think. An artist needs



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to be flexible in order to change and grow with the fluctuating needs of the market, definitely. But at the same time developing a strong, fixed style is important so you don't get lost in the crowd. If it's distinct enough, your style becomes your brand and the market will chase you, rather than vice versa.

Do you get pleasure from your work or do you find yourself needing to detach from it?

Both, really. You have to be capable of some detachment and professionalism to be able to bring your efforts in line with the client's needs, ego or preciousness can get in the way of that. But I love what I do and put a lot of my self into it, nothing makes me feel so good as putting together a really good piece and getting a little recognition. On the flip side, nothing makes me feel worse than not meeting my goal in a piece, or getting some harsh criticism. An artist's ego can be a motivator but a vulnerability too.

Could you give us an insight into the tools you use? Are you a pencil and paper man or do you work straight to electronic media?

I love digital painting, in spite of what I said about it leading to industry overcrowding, the tools available to an artist are more

powerful and far-reaching than ever before. Photoshop, Painter, and what Wacom's done with pressure sensitive pens and monitors, it's just amazing. It's an exciting time to be an illustrator and have this amazing tech at your disposal.

That said, I'll never give up paper and pencil. All of my work starts out in a sketchbook, I need to feel that real world connection between the image and my hand. Once the drawing's done, however, I go right into Photoshop for every other step of the process.

What canvas size do you work against for the *Ars Magica* covers? how much space do you give yourself?

My formula is to typically work actual size, in terms of dimensions, but at double the pixel count needed for the final. In other words, if it's going to print as a 5.75" circle at 300 dpi. I'll work 5.75" at 600 dpi. That's really where you get the extra real estate when you're working digitally, zooming in, etc. It may sound backwards, but it works for me.

And when you work on interior art, what sort of size does each piece come in at before it is passed to Atlas Games?

Typically the same formula as above.

How far in advance do you see the schedule and how long do you typically have to work on a piece?

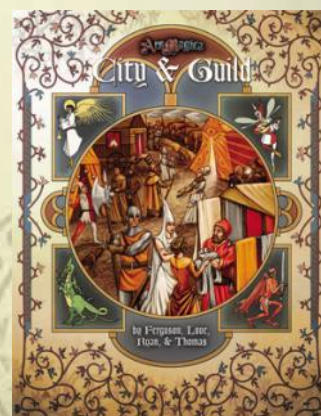
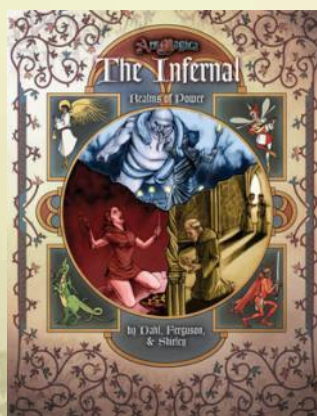
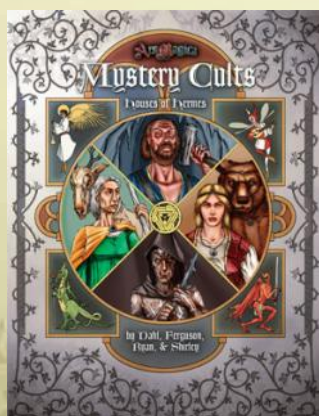
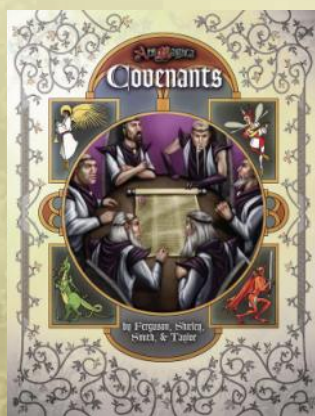
Atlas has always been good about schedules and deadlines, typically giving me a month or more between assignment and completion. Rarely, things have to move faster to fit a certain publishing schedule.

What kind of guidance do you get before starting and what feedback do you get along the way?

Atlas is particular in that they give very specific, in depth guidance on the look, accuracy and content of all of their projects. For a fantasy genre, *Ars Magica* is very concerned with historical accuracy, style of dress, gender and race representation, etc. The brief for any given project is usually full of links to clothing, weaponry and architecture reference.

Does that work the same for both covers and for interior artwork?

No, I think the interiors are typically more freeform and experimental. That's usually where I can have fun with action and creature/monster design, not because they care less about accuracy on the interior illos, but they seem to have more fun with them.



Which cover should we particularly look out for? Which one is your favourite and why?

That's a hard question! I hope my next one will always be the best and favorite, how's that for a politically correct answer.

Have the authors ever given you a brief that's left you scratching your head?

Ha ha, absolutely, and more than once! I think it's your aforementioned love of detail and accuracy that can lead to some very complex image descriptions. I love the challenge

though, and we always seem to find a happy medium in the end.

Are you able to tell us what you are working on at present? Where should we look for your next published pieces?

I have two covers lined up for *Ars Magica*, and hopefully more interiors if time permits. The rest of my energies are being spent in magazine production right now, so I've cooled my heels a bit chasing games freelance. Temporarily, I'm sure!

What kind of setup would you recommend to someone

looking to develop their artwork?

I'd recommend a Wacom Intuos (no larger than Medium, bigger tablets just get in the way) and Photoshop (\$\$\$) or Painter (\$). There's cheaper to be had (a Wacom Bamboo tablet, and maybe ArtRage Pro) but that's kind of like buying a cheap brush and student grade paints. You'll get your feet wet but if you're serious you'll outgrow them quickly - better to make the initial investment and make it only once.



"After the kids came along I gave up my larger work space for their room.

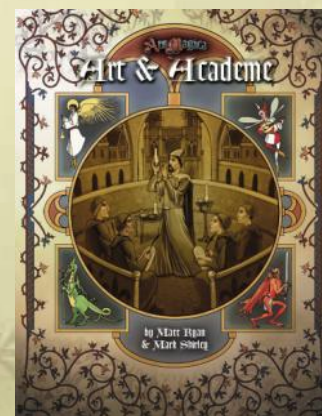
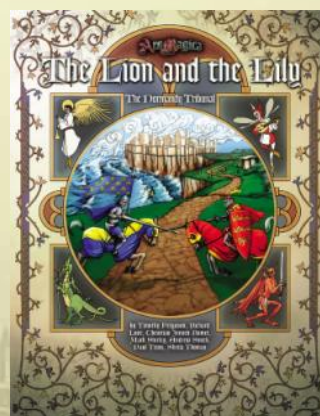
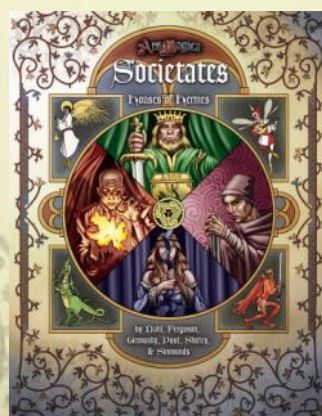
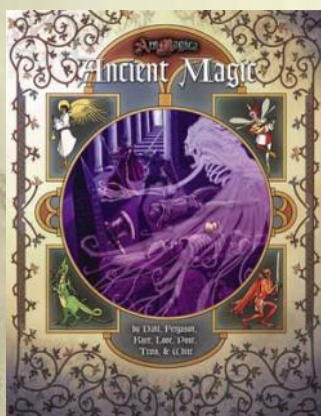
"Although I have less work area now, the switch to a completely digital workflow makes up for it. I'm actually using far more 'virtual' workspace now..."

To see more of Grey's work and keep up to date, check out his blog over at:

www.greythornberry.blogspot.com

And you can follow him on twitter at:

[@grey_thornberry](https://twitter.com/grey_thornberry)



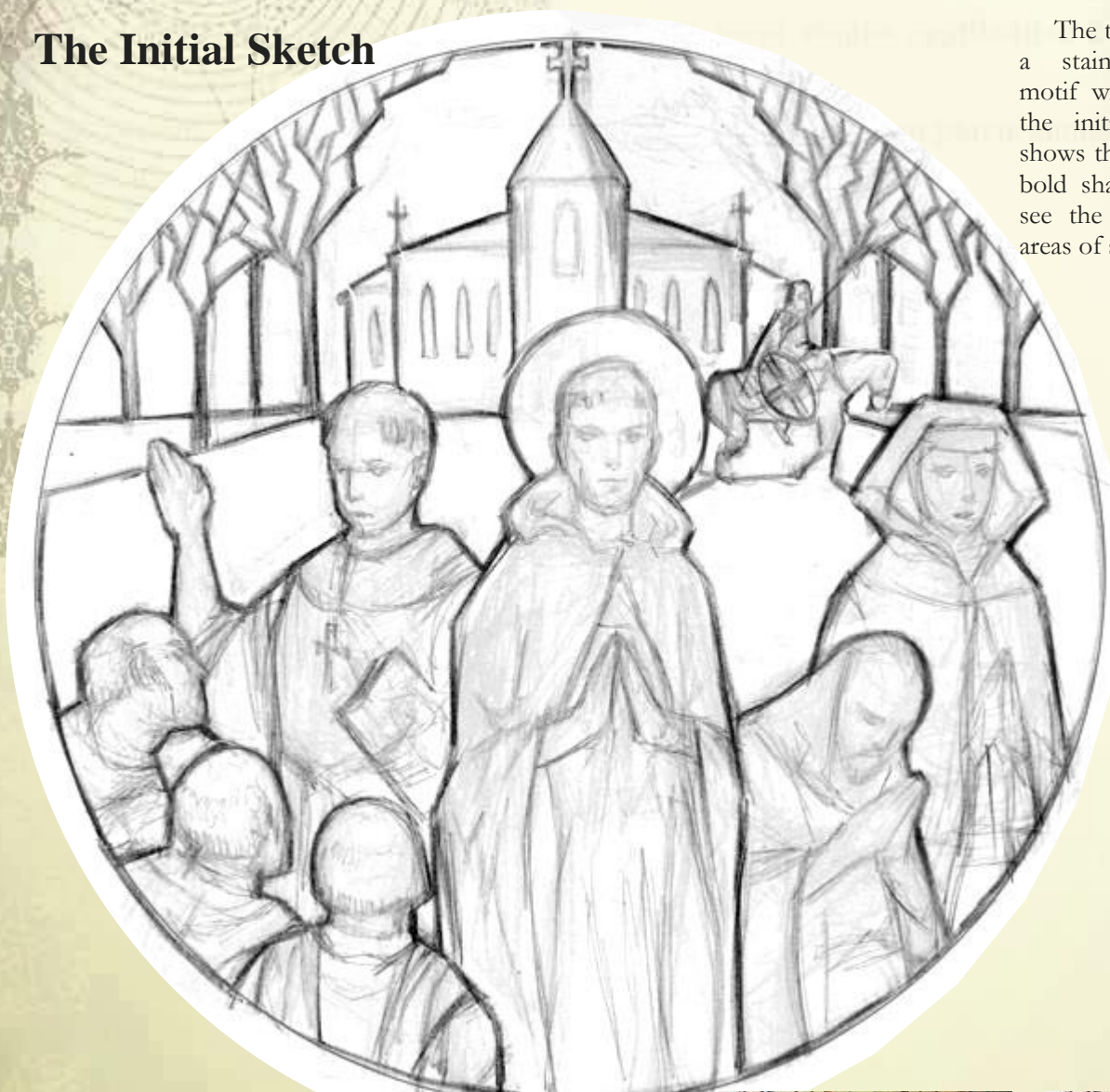
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The Artist at Work

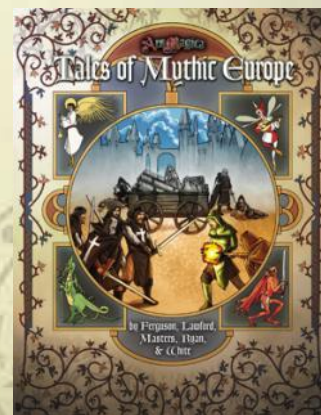
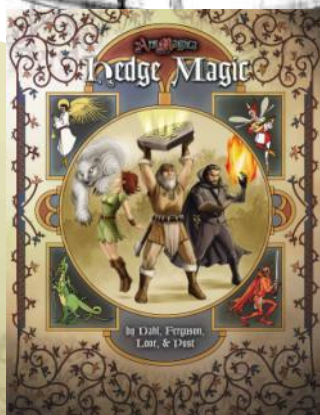
Grey shares with us some of his work-in-progress shots for the covers of two recent releases, *The Church* and *Rival Magic* so that you can see how the pieces develop from sketch through to final cut.

The Initial Sketch

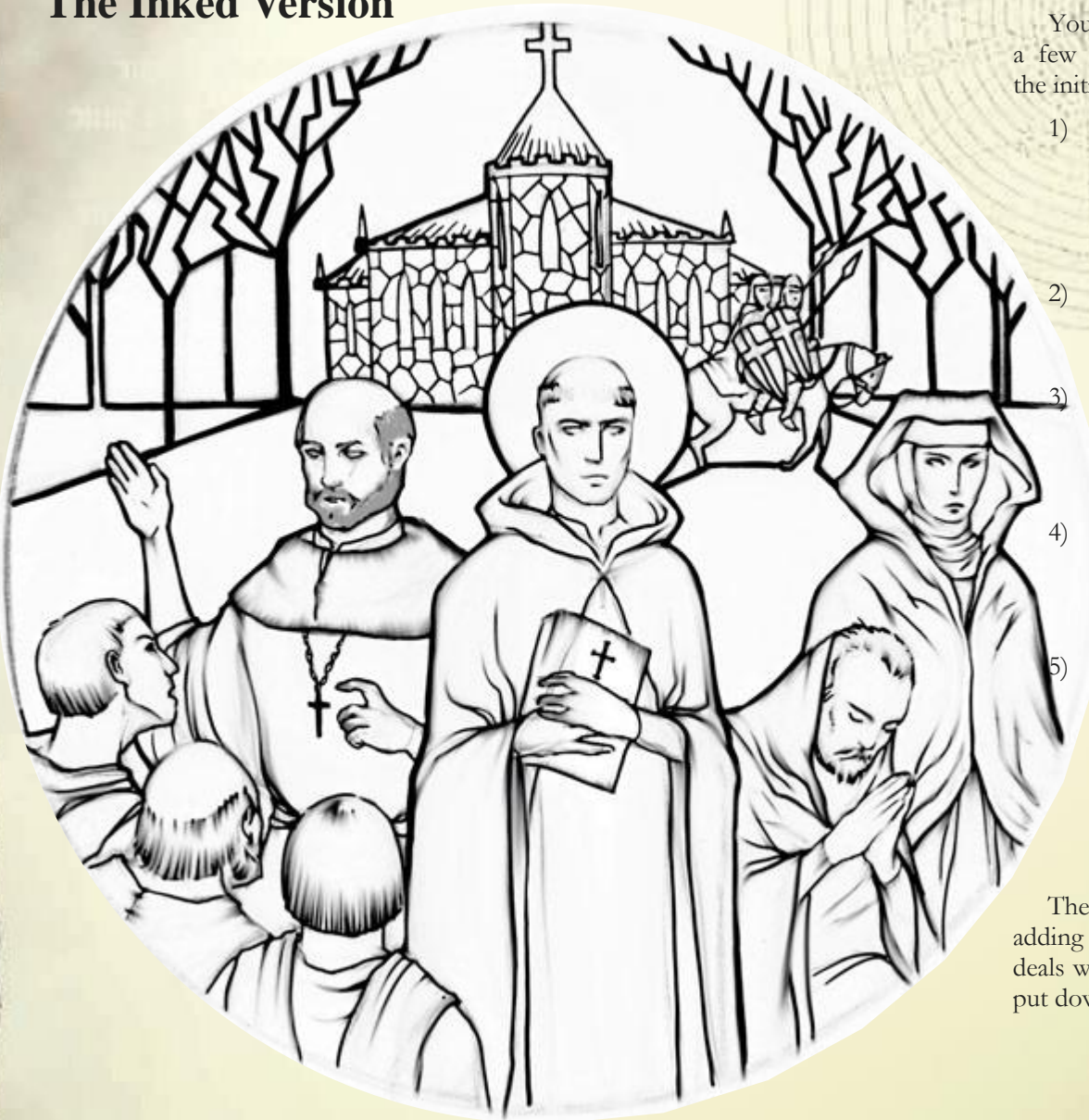
The theme was to create a stained-glass window motif with this cover and the initial sketch already shows the outlines of some bold shapes, just as you'd see the lead marking out areas of stained glass.



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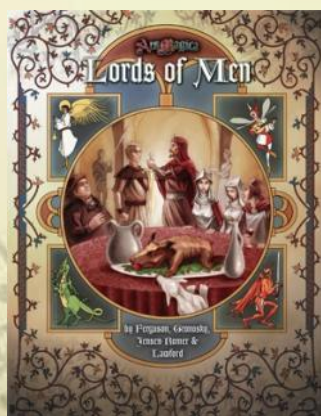
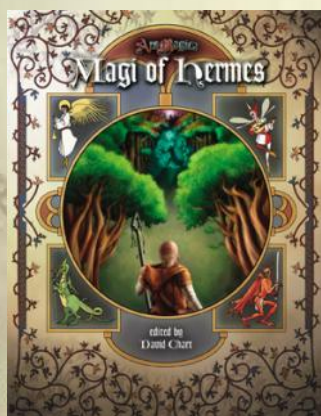
The Inked Version



You might have noticed a few small changes from the initial sketch.

- 1) The church has lost its crucifixes, gaining simpler shapes at its corners instead.
- 2) There are now two nights on the horse.
- 3) The bearded figure to the left of the piece has lost his bible.
- 4) The bible moves across to the central figure instead.
- 5) The nun no longer has her hands held in front of her in prayer.

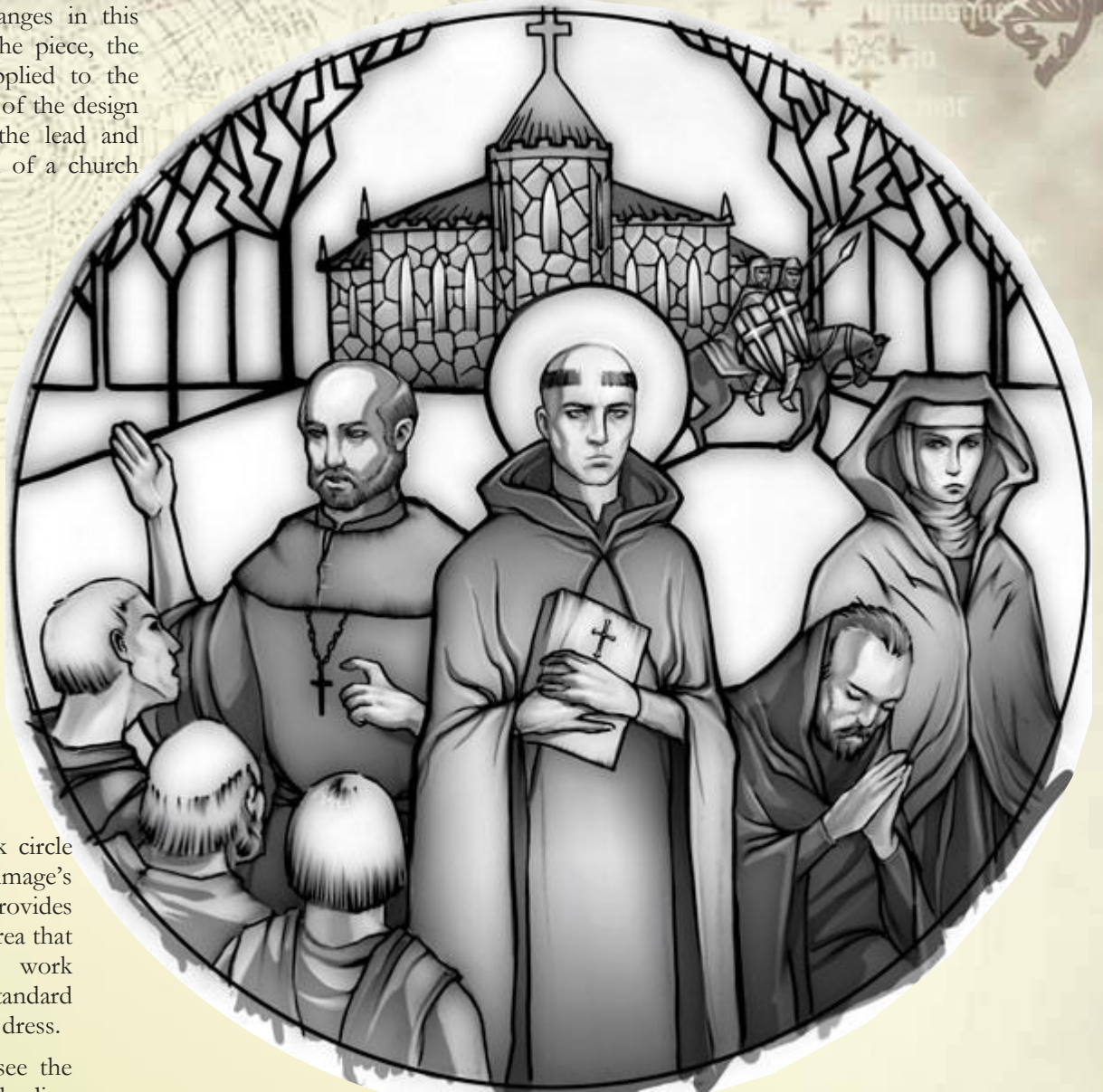
The inked version, while adding important detail, still deals with the broad shapes put down in the sketch.



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Grayscale Tones Laid Down

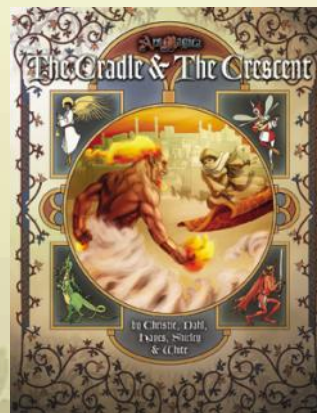
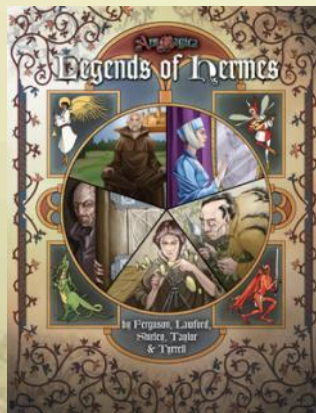
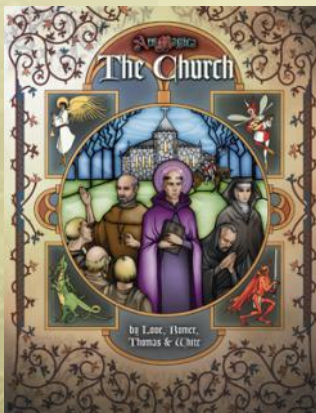
While there are no compositional changes in this next version of the piece, the subtle shading applied to the larger “flat” areas of the design start to suggest the lead and glass construction of a church window.



The hard black circle provides the image’s boundary. This provides the exact canvas area that Grey needs to work within to fit the standard **Ars Magica** trade dress.

You can still see the underlying work bleeding through that line, something you never see in the finished piece.

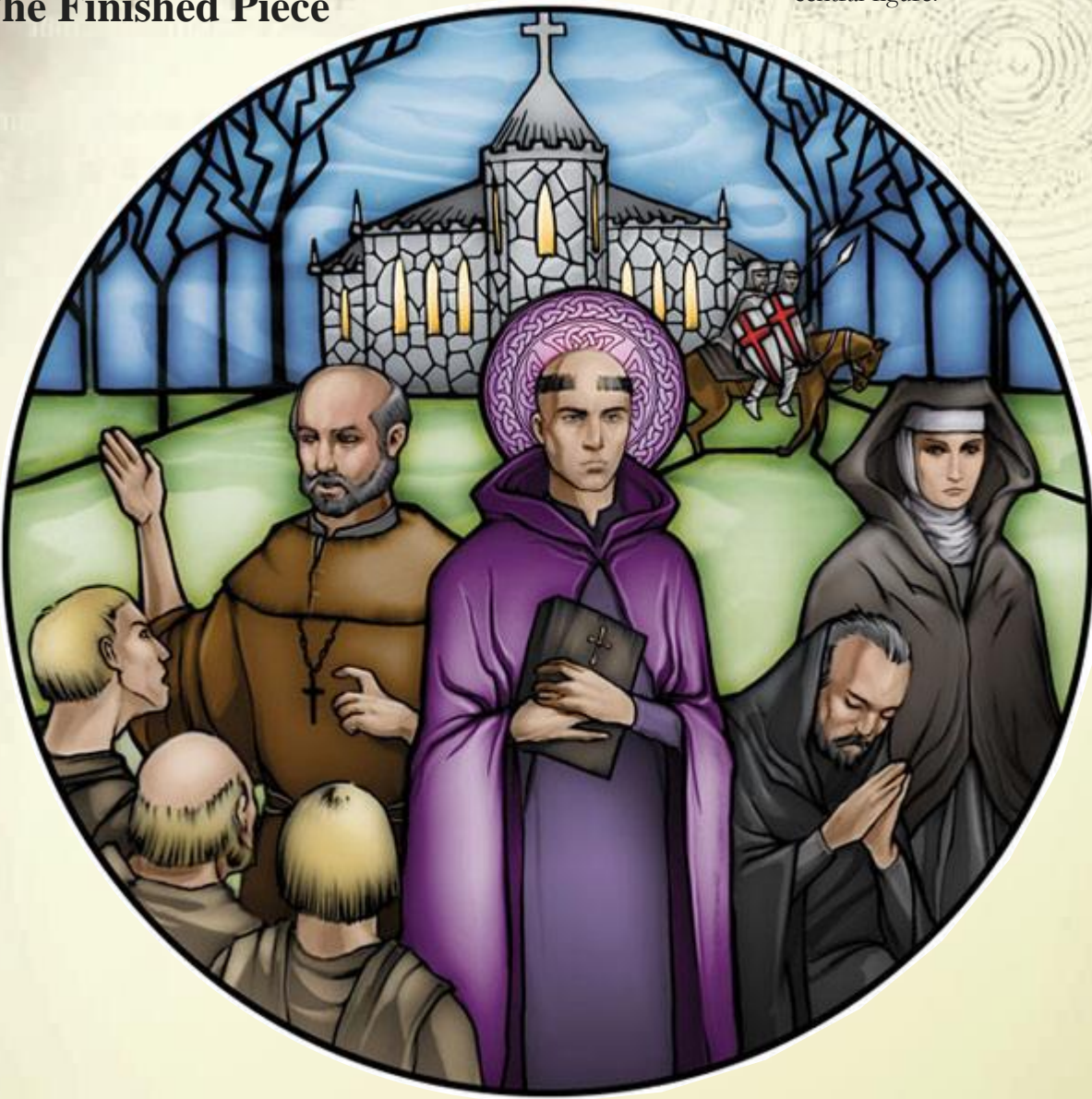
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The Best
Yet?

The Finished Piece

Washes of digital color applied, this is the final piece. Even at this stage we can see new detail being added. In particular, the halo surrounding the central figure.



With the colors now laid down the theme of stained-glass becomes very apparent in the final and there is a feeling of light that flows through the piece. As Grey notes, “I achieved the exact goals I set out for initially (stained glass look, formal composition, etc)”

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The Sketch Stage

The cover to 2010's *Rival Magic* shows another aspect of the working artist's role, to be responsive to feedback, which we'll see when we reach the final image.



Still working within the familiar size and format constraints, this sketch outline is developed to a greater level of detail than the initial sketch example for *The Church*. Despite this added detail, there's still room for change as the image evolves.

The characters, their clothing, and their equipment are already fairly well defined. Even the Amazon's complex belt buckle looks very close to the final picture.

"Rival Magic follows the same workflow as most of my covers: a rough sketch followed by a refined drawing, an inked version, then a stage where I lay down tones (typically in grayscale or a neutral color). Once those stages are resolved, I move on to final coloring and detailing."

Grayscale Tones Laid Down

Unlike The Church, Grey is working off a darker canvas for this image, and the gradient, from light to dark is a feature that makes it to the final image.

Have you noticed the Muspelli's raised hand?

... and look again.

The Muspelli's hand changes its pose slightly, an example of the tweaking that goes on between stages.

More Detail and Tone

The Finished Piece?

The final image is now complete with detailing on the Virgillian's book, smoke from the censer, and the geometric pentacle. The Amazon's shield has even lost one of its cracks.

Well, it looks finished, right? But at any stage before the image is signed-off and accepted, there is room for revision. And that's what happened in this case.

Even against the "finished" image, a round of revisions were requested, which resulted in some alterations to the Amazon's face and to the ethnicity of the Soqotrans sorceress to better fit the book's content.

The Finished Piece

This is the cut that made it to the book's cover.

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If you've enjoyed this look at Grey's workflow, follow him on twitter at:

[@grey_thornberry](https://twitter.com/grey_thornberry)

Tweet him and say hi.

A New Legend of The Order: Belin of Mercere

This legend is an adventure through the early years of the Order, in the footsteps of one of the most famous magi in the history of Mythic Europe — the Redcap known as Belin. Though she did not have the Gift, she proved herself through terrible adversity and challenges, and earned herself and all of her followers the honor of standing as equals with

the great Hermetic wizards through the ages.

Belin was the quintessential Redcap, for she embodies in her stories everything that a Redcap should be and strive to do — she was humble, dutiful, adventurous, and clever. Among Redcaps, Belin is generally revered like a saint, and her

By Erik Dahl

stories are traded and circulated throughout the Order like precious pawns of vis. Among magi, it is often heard said that a disloyal servant is “no Belin,” or that a companion performing a desperate mission is on a “Belin’s errand.” Referring to a Redcap as “Belin” after a job well done is a high compliment.

Belin was taught by Mercere the Founder, said to have been her grandfather, after he lost his Gift and began to train apprentices without the ability to work magic. She was his only female student, as well as the youngest, and was the last apprentice that Mercere produced. In her final year of study, war against Damhan-Allidh the Spider broke out in England, and her task was to ensure that communication between magi continued during the conflict.

In the many tales describing this period of her life, she constantly carries messages into deadly peril and then adroitly escapes capture. Her methods usually involve trickery of some sort, though the sort of playful, admirable trickery where no one is hurt by her actions and she sneaks past without being recognized. The more involved Belin stories often feature a cunning stratagem involving her impersonating something supernatural like a faerie queen or a ghost to distract guards or to make her way around enemy lines.

While it might be thought that most of these stories about Belin are exaggerated (especially given the tradition among certain Redcaps to tell “stories that are not true”), this is



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considered a very sensitive subject among Redcaps. It is generally as offensive to question the validity of a Belin story as it is to question the storyteller's parentage or virtue. Even among Redcaps, Belin stories seem to engender a peculiar credulity, as though there is no possibility they did not actually happen.

Perhaps this is because Belin's actions in the war were held to be so admirable that the magi at Grand Tribunal agreed to allow her and her fellows full membership into the Order. All Redcaps are indebted to her for their special status among magi. Mercere gave his red cap to her before he died — a symbolic gesture making her the first Prima of Mercere — and many of the policies and traditions of the House are said to originate in her years of leadership.

Belin did not give the Founder's cap to her youngest daughter when the primacy eventually passed to her, and though Belin is often depicted wearing a red cap in pictures, it is absent from the statue that stands outside her tomb at Harco. Many have wondered what became of the cap, as it is thought to be a potent symbol of leadership in the House, and perhaps a powerful enchanted device.

Belin's history

Belin was born near the end of the eighth century, the youngest granddaughter of Mercere the Founder, who according to tradition was her mother's father. As an infant she was brought to Harco, the domus magna of the House, and when she was still a young girl Mercere adopted her as his apprentice, the last of a group of four unGifted followers to whom he had decided to teach his ways, and the only female apprentice he trained. In the spring of each year, Mercere would take Belin with him as he traveled from covenant to covenant in the various tribunals that

made up the fledgling Order, and taught her how to serve the magi of Hermes loyally and faithfully.

The young girl was quick to learn and matured even more quickly. By her twelfth year, she was leading expeditions from Harco through the mountain passes and down to Lyon, and overseeing the transport of goods and messages to Harco from nearby Turin and the seaport at Genoa. According to legend, she had a great deal of freedom at the growing covenant as Mercere's apprentice, and was always underfoot. She would get involved in whatever activity was going on, and do her best to help. In later years, the residents of Harco sometimes say Belin touched every stone of the old house.

With her master, Belin traveled throughout the lands of the Order, which Mercere divided into four tribunals and referred to with the name of the most powerful covenants found within each of them: the Val-Negra Tribunal, the Branugurix Tribunal, the Durenmar Tribunal, and the Coeris Tribunal. Their duty required them to visit every covenant once a year to bring news of the Order, and to bring word of the exact dates when Grand Tribunal would take place every seven years, so each covenant could send representatives. Mercere intended for his four unGifted apprentices to each see to one of these tribunals as they grew in size and membership, to help organize their regional gatherings and facilitate communication between covenants; Belin always paid special attention to the lands of Northern France and Britain as the lands intended to be hers to serve.

While magical portals existed at Val-Negra, Coeris, and Durenmar to Harco, Branugurix had not yet built such a device at their covenant. This forced Mercere and Belin to travel there on foot from the south, or take a boat down the Rhine from Durenmar to Flanders and then

continue along the coast. Even in the earliest days, when there were only four covenants in the whole region, it was very difficult for Belin and Mercere to visit all of them in one season, and so on several occasions, Mercere had to entrust Belin with finishing the rounds for him while he returned to Harco to begin his next season with another apprentice.

Belin's Gauntlet demanded she make the entire northern journey by herself, with no magical aid, and she performed admirably. Mercere gave her a red cap for her to wear, just like his, as a sign that she had graduated. He formally assigned her as Hermetic messenger to the Branugurix Tribunal, and Hariste of Tytalus generously offered her permanent lodgings at the new covenant of Fudarus — though being almost constantly on the move from covenant to covenant, Belin rarely ever stayed there longer than a season at a time. Mercere's visits to the tribunal became much less frequent, as for the most part he remained at Harco to meet his former apprentices when they arrived each season.

By 815, Pralix had declared war on Damanh-Allidh, "the spider," and established the covenant of Cad Gadu in Wales. The next few years were perilous for Belin, as every three months she was obligated to travel in secrecy across the waters of the English Channel and through the dangerous lands of England and Scotland, riddled as they were with magical traps, deadly enemies and uncertain allies. Many stories regale her amazing deeds during this time—how she never failed to get her messages through, even during pitched battles. Her achievements remain especially impressive considering she was almost always a young woman traveling alone, yet she seemed to have no difficulty.

When the war was over, Mercere came to Britain to visit the new covenant, though he was very old and

his health was failing, and from then on Belin was always by his side. Presumably he pleaded with Pralix not to divide the Order that he and the other Founders had worked so hard to form, and it is thought that she finally agreed to form the new House Ex Miscellanea in deference to the memory of her master, Tytalus, who Mercere knew well. However, only Pralix, Mercere, and Belin were present at this meeting, and none of them revealed exactly how the compromise was negotiated.

At the Grand Tribunal of 817, Mercere presented the case that he had trained all of his unGifted apprentices for fifteen years like Hermetic magi, and that they should be allowed to join the Order as full members. That is, he argued that a person did not need The Gift to be called a magus. Trianoma also spoke in support of his request, but it was likely Belin's shining reputation among the new British magi that carried the motion. The unGifted magi of House Mercere would be known henceforth as Redcaps, and their duties and unique privileges were written into the Peripheral Code.

Mercere died the following year, and was ritually cremated in accordance with Mercurian practices. Belin inherited the Founder's cap and became the new Prima of the House, living at Harco though she continued to perform Redcap duties in France and the British Islands for several years. She gave birth to two children, both girls, who she declared to be her apprentices and taught as Redcaps, and who both subsequently raised large families of their own. In her later years, Belin returned to live in England, leaving her eldest granddaughter to look after the House, and she took the founder's cap with her. Since then, leadership of the House has usually passed to the most worthy descendant of the Prima, and the Prima does not wear the red cap at all while officially presiding.

Belin died in England in 887, and was taken back to Harco. Because of her great achievements, Belin was given the same ceremonial cremation ritual as her grandfather, establishing the precedent that the Prima of the House always receives this same honor. Belin's ashes were collected and placed in a silver urn, and displayed in a place of honor in the hall of the main building. Since then Harco has been expanded substantially, but the smaller building where she and Mercere and the other first Redcaps originally lived still remains, separate from the manor house and village, known as Belin's Tomb. A statue of Belin stands inside, thought to be an excellent likeness of her later years, but without the cap she wore in her youth.



Belin's Treasures

The legend of Belin includes three great treasures: her cap, given to her by the Founder; the power to bind herself to a faerie in a supernatural pact or alliance; and the power to change hearts and minds through stories.

Mercere's Cap

When he died, Mercere bequeathed his cap, the symbol of his House, to Belin, signifying she was to lead when he was gone. What Belin did with it is unknown, but it is thought she destroyed it. However, it

is still possible for characters following her adventures to restore the cap, either by recovering the coin once attached to the brim and sewing it onto another cap of similar appearance, or else by using a powerful Legend Spinning effect (see later in this section) to transform an ordinary cap into the Founder's. Other caps may also have been enchanted to resemble this one, but commonly known not to be the original.

Originally fashioned of heavy woolen cloth and dyed dark red, the cap possesses a rounded point which falls forward towards the wearer's brow when placed on the head. It sports a yellow band around the brim, and a large gold coin sewn into the band in the front. The cap is fairly large and loose, usually depicted as jaunty on the Founder's wider-than-average head, and too big for Belin to wear comfortably, falling down over her eyes when not worn like a hood on the top of her head.

Ophilio of Mercere (see Belin's Legacy, later on in this chapter) believes the cap would strengthen his claim to the primacy enough to force Insatella to yield to him, as it is a powerful symbol of House Mercere. He is right, in that if the cap came into the possession of a legitimate heir to the Founder, it would be regarded as a sign by others in the House of the bearer's divine favor — like a long-lost crown of a contested kingdom. A Redcap or Gifted Mercere who wears the cap and demonstrates he is descended from Mercere or Belin could easily garner enough political influence within the House to convince Insatella to step down as Prima and allow him to take her place as leader.

Faerie Pacts

The characters may learn about Belin's pact with a faerie redcap, and from them discover how to seal a faerie pact of their own. This is an arrangement between a human and a

faerie where the person gains access to the faerie's power, and the faerie receives a regular supply of the vitality that it craves. The result is similar to a magus taking a familiar — though a magus who has already bonded with a familiar can also make a faerie pact, and a faerie pact does not prevent a magus from taking a familiar, though he cannot have a faerie pact with a faerie that is also his familiar.

A human character may only ever make a pact with one faerie in her lifetime, and a faerie can only have a pact with one human at a time. Faeries are not limited to a single pact for their entire existence, but the faerie must be cognizant within its role (as described in *Realms of Power: Faerie*) to make a pact, and

must change its role in order to make more than one pact. Incognizant faeries cannot form a pact.

The pact is a formal agreement or contract between the two parties. It might be described in terms of a high priestess pledging to serve her god, or an artist promising himself to his faerie muse, or an alliance between two nobles and the lands they hold, or even as a marriage between a man and a woman, as Belin did it. It requires a special ceremony with at least two other faeries present as witness to seal the pact, which a score in *Faerie Lore* allows the character to perform, and which must be done in a Faerie aura of at least 4.

Every faerie pact places some sort of inherent restriction on the human's

behavior, such as "you must never say my name," or "you must never enter the west wing of my castle," or "you must never look upon my face before dawn." Often this restriction involves secrecy about the pact itself; for example, Belin's restriction was never to acknowledge to anyone that she was married, not even her husband. If the human ever violates this restriction, the pact is irrevocably broken.

Unfortunately, faeries are generally fickle creatures, and while many of them are quite happy to make such a pact with a willing human, they tend to tire of it easily. There is no way for a faerie to end a pact, however. They still get vitality from the arrangement whether the pact is upheld or not, and

Enchantments in Mercere's Cap

There are a few tales about the magical effects Mercere invested into the cap before he lost his Gift, or perhaps that his Gifted son Priamitus invested into the cap for him afterward. These would have been placed in the large golden coin inscribed with Mercere's symbol, sewn to the front of the cap (as a small item made of gold, it can hold up to 200 spell levels). According to the stories about it, these might have included the following effects.

To Bless Only the Followers of Mercury

InVi(Co) 30

Unlimited use

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind

This effect determines if the wearer is a human being who either possesses The Gift or is a blood relative of Mercere. The other effects in the item are linked to this one when they are activated, so that they will not function for those who do not meet one of these criteria.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 composite effect; +10 unlimited uses)

Like the Helm of Mercury

PeIm 43

Unlimited use, item maintains concentration, linked trigger

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

The wearer of the cap brushes his palm against the coin in a downward motion across his brow, like pulling the brim of the cap over his eyes or lowering a visor, to activate this effect. From then on, until the effect is canceled, the wearer produces no species. He cannot be seen, heard or smelled, and even if he brushes against someone they will not feel him. The cap maintains the effect for the wearer, but he must concentrate at dawn and at dusk or the effect fades naturally.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 changing image; +5 item maintains concentration, +10 unlimited uses, +3 linked trigger)

Like the Sandals of Mercury

ReCo(An,He,Te) 53

Unlimited use, linked trigger

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind

This effect immediately transports the wearer and everything on his person to anywhere that he has an Arcane Connection, or to anywhere in sight. To activate it, the wearer looks at his destination and leans forward, placing the side of his hand against the coin,

as if shading his eyes from the sun. If using an Arcane Connection, the wearer closes his eyes and presses the object to the face of the coin.

(Base 35, +1 Touch; +10 unlimited uses, +3 linked trigger)

Like the Wand of Mercury

MuCo(An,He,Te) 58

Unlimited use, item maintains concentration, linked trigger

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

The wearer traces the shape of Mercere's symbol on the face of the coin (up, down, left, circle), and transforms his body and everything he is carrying into another form that he can picture in his mind. He can change his features and even his clothing and possessions so that they closely resemble those of another human being, even a person of the opposite sex, though the resemblance is not close enough to impersonate a specific person. The wearer can end the effect at will.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +3 complexity, +3 requisites; +10 unlimited uses, +5 item maintains concentration, +3 linked trigger)

so after a little while most faeries generally begin to encourage the human to end it and free them from their constraints, subtly at first and then more overtly as time passes. They may not even realize they are doing this; it is said their faerie natures will always eventually compel them to rebel against the bond no matter how beneficial the arrangement. A faerie might even convince a human to break a pact and then immediately form a new one.

Sealing the pact makes the faerie a permanent Arcane Connection to the human, and the human a permanent Arcane Connection to the faerie. Through this connection, the faerie can sense the human's general health and relative location by concentrating, and likewise the human can sense the faerie ("far away to the north," for example, or "very near, just behind that hedge"). If the faerie or the human is inside a regio, this power draws the other character to the boundary where the other character entered instead.

The faerie can give the human character some of its power, if it wishes. They must touch, and the human sacrifices a long-term Fatigue level. The human character's player should make a Presence + Faerie Lore roll on a stress die, and the character gains this many Might Points from the faerie's Might Pool (not to exceed the faerie's current Might Pool). If the roll botches, the human loses an additional long-term Fatigue level for each botch. Note that this does not give the character a Might Score; the human character gains no Magic Resistance and these points do not replenish. They are cumulative, however, as long as the faerie has Might Points in its pool, though the total number of Might Points possessed by the human can never exceed the faerie's Might Score.

When in possession of some of the faerie's Might Points, the human character can activate any of the faerie's powers as if she were the

faerie, using these borrowed Might Points to pay the activation cost. For powers that require the faerie to reduce its Might Score by the activation cost, the human character must spend a Confidence Point for each point of Might lost instead. For penetrating Magic Resistance with

The power is associated with the Faerie realm. It is essentially a Free Supernatural Virtue that unpredictably appears in the blood descendants of a character who possesses it, usually when they come of age or are first touched by the fey. It can also pass to another individual

Belin possessed a supernatural power which she believed she inherited from her grandfather, known to her as "the gleam in his eye."

these powers, use the faerie's Penetration Total: Might Score – (activation cost x 5) + Penetration bonus, and substituting the human character's Penetration bonus for the faerie's.

A faerie pact is essentially a Major Supernatural Virtue, in order to design a character who takes one during character creation, though it is very unlikely that characters who have not read Belin's will and deciphered her notes would know how to perform the ceremony or realize exactly what such a pact entails.

Legend Spinning

Belin possessed a supernatural power which she believed she inherited from her grandfather, known to her as "the gleam in his eye." Others have described it as a silver tongue, or an irresistible charismatic presence. As Belin understood it, this power allowed Mercere to focus some magical spark within himself upon whatever he was saying at the time, imbuing the words with supernatural plausibility. All those who could hear his voice during these moments would know what he said to be absolute truth. In fact over time, as it seemed to Belin, these stories would actually become true — or at least she could never remember finding any evidence afterward that they were false.

present when the possessing character dies. Or, as described later, it can be initiated as a mystery as if it were a Major Virtue taken after undergoing a Major Ordeal (that is, with a Target Level of 21 for the Initiate). Most of those who have it never know it, since it has no bearing on their lives until they attempt to use it. It is left to the storyguide to decide when and if a given character ever inherits it.

To activate the power, its possessor tells a story to at least one other person, and the target of the effect must be present as well. A formal story with a beginning, a middle, and an end is not required, though it should take enough time to tell that the people in his audience have time to recognize that he is engaging them in the story, and focus their attention upon him for the duration. A good guideline is that it should be at least a minute in length, and that whoever he is speaking to must be listening to him carefully enough to be drawn into the tale. Also, the audience must have human intelligence and be able to understand his words.

If the audience's attention must be attracted, make a Presence + Charm roll. To be sure the audience does not lose interest, in circumstances that are not conducive to storytelling (such as speaking to a jailer or interrupting a brawl), make a Communication + Language roll.

The effect that the possessor can achieve with this power depends upon his reputation in the area where he is telling the story. Multiply the score of the character's highest applicable Reputation that is relevant to the story he is telling by 5 to determine the character's casting total, and subtract the level of the intended effect. Apply the modifier for the aura to this result. If this is less than zero, the power does not manifest. This does not include a die roll, as it is similar to a faerie activating an inherent supernatural power.

Legend Spinning Casting

Total: (highest Reputation score x 5) – effect level + aura

Since this is a supernatural power, it must also penetrate the Magic Resistance of the target of the effect, or anyone else who is listening to the story. Add the character's Penetration bonus to the amount by which the casting total exceeded the level of the effect to calculate the power's Penetration Total (and note that an Arcane Connection cannot be used to increase the character's Penetration bonus unless it is somehow incorporated into the story the character is telling, and thus obvious to the target what the storyteller is doing).

Legend Spinning effects take time to become "real" — those who hear the story told will generally accept it immediately, but the time it takes to spread to others depends upon the applicable Reputation of the legend spinner and the level of effect. Generally this takes a month; the legend spinner can increase or decrease this amount of time by applying a delay modifier (see below) to the legend spinner's Casting Total. By extending how long a legend takes to spread, a character can potentially accomplish higher-level effects.

Finally, the character loses one Confidence Point for every 10 levels of the effect his story is designed to

achieve. For example, a Level 25 effect would cost him two Confidence Points. The character draws upon this inner reserve of strength, putting his will and conviction into the story he is telling. If he does not have enough Confidence Points, or if the character has the Low Self-Esteem Flaw or is a grog or otherwise cannot spend Confidence Points for some reason, the character can only ever activate this power at the whim of the storyguide.

As long as the power penetrates, or the target and everyone in the audience does not have Magic Resistance, no one will ever recognize that they have been affected. While the power itself is supernatural, the results are always mundane. The storyguide determines exactly how the effect manifests, using the guideline chosen by the character's player and the story that the character tells for inspiration. However, the results are never obvious and are not necessarily immediate, especially with higher-level effects, and effects with far-reaching consequences may need some regular reinforcement before they take — the target might simply gain a Reputation appropriate to the story, with an initial score equal to one plus the number of magnitudes that the casting total exceeds the level of the effect, and does not actually experience the effect until his score in the Reputation increases to the magnitude of the effect.

Once the character is aware he has this power, he also gains the equivalent of the Legacy Story Flaw: great things are expected of the character by those familiar with his reputation, and he will often be drawn into stories where people expect a character with his degree of fame (or infamy) to act in a certain way. Also like the Legacy Flaw, a character with this power may gain Heroic Virtues and Flaws, as if he had the Blood of Heroes (see Houses of Hermes: True Lineages for details on this), perhaps

by initiating them through a mystery cult or exchanging other Virtues for them through further uses of this power.

Sample Legends

I am simply a poor pilgrim who has lost my way...

Level 10

The legend spinner describes a journey gone wrong, perhaps as a series of progressively more outlandish events, to explain what she is doing in a setting where she might otherwise seem out of place, such as on a battlefield. Her audience is convinced by the truth of the tale, and thus allows her to proceed unhindered.

Then the count praised my bravery and remarked that I would one day achieve great things...

Level 15

In recounting a tale, the legend spinner can embellish upon and even alter the words that were actually spoken, changing their significance. Say that a nobleman asks the legend spinner who she is, and asks her to fetch him a cup of wine. After this effect is spun, the nobleman might one day hear the story in which he praised the young woman, though he will not remember doing so. It is such a well-known story, however, that by then he will probably not be able to refute it.

As the flames grew higher, a man with winged shoes descended from the heavens and carried his body into the sky ...

Level 20

This legend tells how the body of the spinner's grandfather was claimed by Mercury when he was cremated, leading many to believe he was descended from the gods.

My grandfather spoke with the great lady, and convinced her to listen to reason...

Level 25

The legend spinner tells a story in

which the main character (her grandfather) speaks with a stubborn old woman alone and persuades her to abandon her plans for leaving the Order of Hermes, rather than being imperiously turned away at the gate. After word of this story spreads, the woman finds she is unable to continue her rebellion, as her supporters all believe that she has accepted the compromise.

Mercere loved the crofter's daughter, and she bore him a son, though the child was given to others to raise...

Level 30

This story tells of a child born to Mercere and a mundane woman, which was adopted by another family. The target of this legend, who must be part of the area described by the legend spinner's Reputation, discovers over the course of a season that this child is his ancestor, making him a descendent of Mercere the Founder. Thus, he will inherit the Legend Spinner Virtue after three months have passed, though he may not know it.

The wound seemed like to fester, but the old man still clings to life...

Level 35

When her grandfather suffered a terrible fall while traveling, a bad wound that worsened to a grievous one, the legend spinner told a tale to his servants and family, promising them that he was recovering. After three months he had experienced a remarkable recovery, and soon was on his feet and well again.

In fact the great magus never had The Gift at all, it was all a clever ruse...

Level 50

This story tells how the legend spinner's grandfather was not a magus at all, but simply a normal man, although still an exceptional one, able to fool great and powerful wizards into thinking he was one of their number. The fact that this story

is not now widespread throughout the Order suggests that the legend spinner was unable to perform it — or perhaps that it had a different effect than what she originally intended.

Belin's Legacy

The story of Belin's legend takes the characters on a tour of many famous places in Mythic Europe, and involves a coded secret about one of the twelve Founders of the Order, deep Hermetic politics involving the primacy of House Mercere, low and high crimes at Tribunal, and a great battle between magi and an army of faeries.

Diary of a Redcap

The characters' story that follows Belin begins with the simple discovery of a small pamphlet, entitled *Travels in Britain* by Belin of Mercere, written in what might seem to be early Hermetic Latin. The book is very roughly bound with thin strips of leather, on dark pages of vellum that look like scraps from other books rather than sheets made and cut for this purpose. There is no cover, and the title and author is written above the first line on the first page, almost as an afterthought. Unusually, the last twenty pages or so are blank, except for the final page which has a stylized drawing of the symbol of House Mercere and advertises in a different hand the death of the Founder and subsequent appointment of Belin as prima. (The announcement is signed by John-Michel of Mercere, who those knowledgeable of Hermetic history might recognize as the son of one of Belin's elder brothers.)

Perhaps the characters find the book inside a satchel like those worn by many Redcaps and buried within a cave in the wilderness, or hidden behind another unused book in the dusty library of a long-abandoned

Legend Delay Modifiers

These modifiers add to or subtract from the legend spinner's Casting Total, making him more or less likely to succeed, much in the same way that a supernatural aura affects the character's total. Keep in mind that since this is a faerie power, Divine and Infernal auras have a more drastic effect than they do for magical powers. In a Magic aura, such as that found in most covenants, there is a slight bonus.

Delay	Modifier
Moment	-12
Hour	-9
Day	-6
Week	-3
Month	0
Season	+3
Year	+6
Generation (15 years)	+9
Lifetime (50 years)	+12

It should be pointed out that unless a participating magus lowers his Parma for the entire time it takes for the legend spinning effect to manifest, the spinner must always penetrate his Magic Resistance, even if he is merely present for the story telling, not targeted directly. It is not sufficient for the magus to simply lower his Parma for the duration of the story the legend spinner tells.

covenant, or stashed in a trunk among the treasured possessions of an old and reclusive magus. It being unearthed in Britain or Scotland is especially appropriate, though there is no reason it could not be found almost anywhere in Mythic Europe, presumably having passed through several hands to reach its current resting place.

Since the book is almost four hundred years old, the physical quality is poor, and the writing is hard to

read. It seems like a pair of tractatus on the lore of Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, and southern Scotland (Britannia Lore) and Hermetic covenants and magi in the same regions (Order of Hermes Lore). The author's skill at writing is better than average, and there are small illustrations sketched in an almost childlike hand scattered throughout the text that give some additional context, but time has severely degraded it and made it difficult to read (Quality 5, which includes a -3 penalty for wear).

The blank pages hold a detailed message for Belin's heirs, written without ink. It is so faint that only

powerful magic can possibly reveal it. It takes the style of a will, using formal words and phrases appropriate to that sort of document, but also reads something like a last confession. There are three important revelations within, always through very circuitous language referring back to the main text by context ("the person who injured his toe in Leon" or "My situation with this person was similar to that of Hariste with the rest of the magi at her covenant"). These revelations are as follows:

- Firstly, she reveals that she was married to a shadowy figure she refers to only as "my spirit." The tortured language

never explicitly names him as her husband, but there are clues in that it refers to their children as "legitimate" and compares their relationship to other couples in love and united by marriage. She writes that her body and soul are bound to his for eternity, "in life as well as death." Reading between the lines, it is possible to learn that he is a faerie, and that they were joined in a ceremonial pact that she describes in detail.

- Secondly, she tells that her son is her true heir, and thus entitled to her magical

Legend Spinning Guidelines

These effects literally change the story that the players are telling, in ways that the characters would not know are possible. Essentially, the legend spinner creates a revised historical record that spreads throughout Mythic Europe, and those who hear it accept as true. Once enough time has passed and enough people have heard the story, it becomes true — true enough to change a person. As with Hermetic magic, effects of Level 30 or higher are also powerful enough to give the target a Warping Point. Note that Belin had no idea how her magic worked, and so anyone who gains this power will also have no knowledge of its specific applications. Characters will likely need to experiment by telling many different sorts of stories to learn the effects they can achieve.

While Legend Spinning can change what happened as far as history is concerned, those who were present when the actual events occurred do not suddenly believe something else happened instead. Even if they are targeted by the legend spinner directly, they will continue to remember events as they originally occurred, though they might come to doubt themselves as the story spreads. It is possible for a person to fight the pervasive nature of the legend, by gaining a reputation that overshadows the storyteller's and setting the record straight, but it is likely that some version of the legend will linger on in folk wisdom no matter what. Once a legend is spun, not even the legend spinner can remove it completely.

Level 10: Cause the target to believe that the story is true; either that the events it describes actually happened, or that it describes an allegorical or metaphorical truth if the story does not seem especially relevant to the target.

Level 15: Change spoken or written words to match the story, so that afterward the target remembers what was said in the story instead of what was actually said.

Level 20: Change the appearances of things to match the story, so that afterward the target remembers how

they were described in the story instead of how they looked in person.

Level 25: Change how characters acted to match the story, so that afterward the target remembers the events in the story instead of what actually transpired.

Level 30: Change a target's background to match the background of the story, exchanging a single Virtue or Flaw chosen by the storyguide for a different Virtue or Flaw of the same magnitude (Minor or Major) appropriate to the story. This cannot affect Special Virtues like The Gift, and the storyguide should take care not to choose Flaws or Virtues that require recalculation of the character's Abilities, like Affinity with (Art) or Educated. Free Virtues (like Legend Spinning) do not need to be exchanged for another, but conflicting Social Status Virtues and Flaws are lost in this process.

Level 35: Change a target's physical state to match the story, causing him to suffer a single injury or illness of any severity, heal a wound or illness of any severity in the standard time, or resolve an aging crisis.

Level 40: Change a target's physical or mental capacity to match his description in the story, exchanging his score in one Characteristic for his score in another. Note that for Strength or Quickness, the storyguide must remove and reapply Size modifiers for nonhuman characters.

Level 45: Change a target's learning and skill to match the story, exchanging one Ability or Art score and all its associated experience points for another Art or Ability to which the character has access.

Level 50: Change a target's identity to match the story. The target becomes an entirely different character, perhaps by trading places, though he keeps his Personality Traits and Confidence Points.

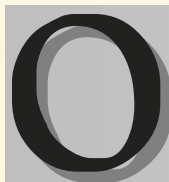
possessions and the right to lead the House when she dies. Again, her language is very difficult to puzzle out here, but a careful and clever analysis will tell, through her various forms of hidden meaning and obfuscation, that she does not want this to happen, and has somehow ensured that he will not inherit her grandfather's cap. He is unusual, she seems to say, and not like her other children, especially her daughters. This might suggest that he is also a faerie, not merely faerie-blooded.

- Finally, she tells that she has a birthright given to her by her grandfather, a gleam in her eye that makes others believe her tales when she concentrates upon them, which she hopes will pass through her to her family. (The details of this power, Legend Spinner, are found earlier in this article.) The author goes on to suggest through the most encrypted means possible that in sharing this secret, Mercere revealed to her that he had never possessed The Gift at all, but instead used this blessing to earn his place among the Founders and prove himself to Bonisagus and Trianoma. She cannot keep this secret silent, she writes desperately in her code, for it proves that the Redcaps are truly equal to magi in every way.

It should be very, very difficult for the characters to decipher all of these points without several seasons of dedicated study, though if they have read the rest of the text they should at least be able to figure out the basics of her message after a single reading (she had a husband, their son is her true heir, and she inherited an unusual magical birthright from Mercere). The reader will recognize there is much

more being said on these secret pages, but realize that understanding of the deeper layers of meaning will require specialized knowledge of early Hermetic history, as well as Britannic lore from before the Norman invasion, to figure out.

If the characters have no interest in reading the book, they may at least wish to profit from it. The Great Library at Durenmar and the library



ophilio is extremely elderly, at least 150 years old, and perhaps nearer to 200.

at Harco both already have copies — though these obviously do not include the secret writing on the blank pages at the end — and thus if inclined to be helpful they would probably direct the characters to Ophilio of Mercere, who lives at Aedes Mercurii covenant in the Pyrenees. He is well-known as an expert on pre-Schism War House lore with a special interest in anything involving Belin, and will probably give them a good price for it.

If the characters sit on the book, word of its discovery will eventually reach the local Redcaps through rumor and news, and spread from them to both Ophilio, who will make overtures to the characters in the form of letters and even a personal visit if he must, and the prima of House Mercere, Insatella, who will instruct the Redcaps to investigate further. Once Insatella learns the original text of Belin's diary has been found, or that the characters have spoken with Ophilio, she will assign Redcaps to follow the characters in secret and at a respectful distance from this point forward — ostensibly to help them with their quest, as she would claim it is very important to the House, but mostly to report their movements back to her.

Pyrenees Mountains

Ophilio of Mercere is said to be the last living former member of the Val-Negra covenant in the Pyrenees Mountains, which was established in the eighth century as the domus magna of Flambeau the Founder. It is located in a powerful magical regio nearly impossible to access from the outside world. According to Ophilio,

no one now lives on the original covenant site, and it has been more than a century since anyone has set foot on the grounds. Ophilio now lives with his servants at the covenant of Aedes Mercurii, located not far from the abandoned site of Val-Negra. He is a "Flamen," or mystagogue of the Cult of Mercury.

Those magi wishing to visit Val-Negra and Ophilio of Mercere should probably travel to Aedes Mercurii, or perhaps to Ophilio's regular haunt, the Mercere House located in Barcelona. The Barcelona Mercere House is in the basement of a public house and inn known as Yuval's, named after the chief Redcap, a bulky and dark-skinned Jewish man with a deep and infectious laugh. From there it is about four days' ride to the covenant through the mountains, or two weeks' walk. The Redcaps would be happy to escort the characters, as the Mercere prima, Insatella, pays Yuval handsomely for any information about Ophilio's business.

Ophilio's quarters include a large library with several enchantments that protect his books against age, and a small Hermetic laboratory. The covenant is protected by a powerful Aegis of the Hearth, but he prefers spending Spring and Summer months at Yuval's. He is regularly visited by

the Redcaps at Yuval's. Since he makes many of their magical devices and longevity rituals, as payment he receives enough vis and silver to live quite comfortably.

Ophilio is extremely elderly. He was born at the turn of the millennium, and though he has spent a few decades in Twilight, he is still at least 150 years old, and perhaps nearer to 200. He usually chooses not to participate in Tribunal, as that would require him to travel, and because of his strange appearance and his many infirmities, not to mention the potential danger to his health and longevity, he hardly ever travels at all.

When he learns of the book from the characters, Ophilio becomes very excited (his skin shifting in color from a bright yellow glow to almost beet red when he has it in his hand). He is

When he realizes the pages hide a message, he will be beside himself with excitement, his skin glowing nearly as bright white as the sun. Forgetting himself in his enthusiasm, he summons up a Terram spirit using Hermetic Theurgy and interrogates the book, reading aloud for the characters and explaining the basics as he goes. He may also cast some of his spells which reverse the book's age and wear, removing the penalty to its Quality, enabling him to better tell if there are differences between the original and its copies.

After making this discovery, he suddenly realizes the political ramifications and becomes very cagey, especially if there are Redcaps underfoot. He makes the characters swear not to tell anyone else about what they have learned together

managing its business and communication network, but that a Redcap leader cannot properly represent those in the House who have The Gift. All of his life, he says, he has been treated like an outsider among his own people, a resource for the Redcaps who run the House to take advantage of, but not really one of them. Ophilio believes if he can locate the Founder's cap, he can undo the tradition that started after Belin, of the primacy passing to one of the former prima's unGifted heirs instead of to a true magus. He wants to use the cap to set himself up as the new primus, for it is a powerful symbol of Mercere that he is certain he could transform into support for his ascendancy.

If the characters agree to help, he will propose they spend the rest of the season preparing, perhaps familiarizing themselves with Belin's legend while he attempts to decipher enough of the code to guess where she might have hidden the cap. He is willing to allow any of the magi to work in his laboratory while he is busy absorbing the text, giving them Aegis tokens for the duration of their stay, and has no objections to sharing his many lab texts or spells if they would be useful to his guests. He will not allow them to take any of his books away (unless it is the only way to convince them to join him).

After a few more days, Ophilio has an idea. He has not yet found any of the clues concerning the cap's whereabouts, but he might know how to find Belin's husband. The will states she is bound to him, body and soul. That sounds to him as if her body is an Arcane Connection to his. He suggests the characters go to Harco and visit Belin's Tomb, where her ashes are kept. Perhaps they can gain access to them and borrow some of them, or else use them to magically confirm the connection and locate her husband's grave. He assures them that the ashes are unguarded and that

The blank pages hold a detailed message for Belin's heirs, written without ink. It is so faint that only powerful magic can possibly reveal it...

very interested in purchasing the book for his collection, and he is willing to allow the characters to make a copy of it. He pays much more for it than it is worth, to ingratiate himself with the characters and out of great enthusiasm for his purchase. He has already read it many times, but he is also looking for a key to the code he knows Belin was using, and probably asks if the characters found any other documents with the book, in a tone he thinks is casual and innocent.

He invites the characters to remain as his guest for a season at Aedes Mercurii, allowing them to draw on the resources of this very large covenant, while he examines the book and makes a copy of it for them, assuming they want it. They may draw his attention to the blank pages, or he may stumble upon them himself.

before he explains his plan. If they refuse, or have no interest in helping him, he attempts to buy them with vis, or hint at secret magical knowledge of the Cult of Mercury into which he can initiate them. He needs them; his adventuring days are long behind him, and his only apprentice died in a laboratory accident many years before. Membership in the Cult is waning, as these days young Flambeaus generally join the Milites instead, and there are not many magi of his House. He is desperate for the characters' help.

Assuming they decide to work with him, Ophilio outlines his belief that a magus should preside over House Mercere, rather than an unGifted administrator as it is now. He thinks whomever leads House Mercere, the primus would certainly have the Redcaps' assistance in

there is no reason the Redcaps would not allow them access.

Northern Italy

The Mercere domus magna is located in the hills at the base of the Alps, east of Turin, in a temperate valley sheltered from the elements. The covenant surrounds a small hill with a long and winding path leading to the top, and what is effectively a whole village clustered around the base of it. Most of its traffic comes from the many Mercere Portals which make up the Redcap's transportation network, housed in a large chamber underneath the hill and accessed through the many barns and sheds that butt up against the hillside. There is also a great deal of travel to and from the covenant along a paved road that leads from Turin past Harco and into the mountains towards Geneva and Leon.

Like Aedes Mercurii, the covenant is protected by an Aegis of the Hearth of great magnitude, and has enchanted devices that cause those travelers who are not concentrating on finding the covenant from accidentally stumbling upon it. The village has a Dominion aura, typically 2 during the day and 1 at night. The hill and the tunnels underneath it have a Magic aura of 2.

Insatella, the prima of House Mercere, does not seek out everyone who travels through the Portals, but she does make a point of meeting all magi who come out of the tunnels to visit the covenant. She may know something of what the characters are doing by this point, but she will feign ignorance of this and do her best to make them welcome to Harco. She is polite and deferential, not haughty or imperious, but she will insist on helping them with their business and will ask them lots of questions under the guise of being curious about them. Her daughter Marie never leaves her side, and occasionally helps her stand or whispers reminders to

her when her train of thought seems to have become confused.

Once the characters reveal their purpose and the short tour is over, Insatella leaves them to see to other matters. Two other Redcaps will accompany them in her place, and she asks them to just let one of them know if they want for anything. She grants magi one Aegis token to share, though she asks that they only use it for activating their Parmas or in case of an emergency. By unspoken custom the characters may stay at the covenant for three days if they wish, and Marie informs them which guest quarters are prepared for them, should they desire. As Insatella probably has some idea of what they are doing by now, she likely assigns her granddaughter, Imogene, to spy on them in secret, to catch any of their movements which would otherwise go unnoticed by their escort.

Belin's Tomb is one of the buildings on the hill behind the covenant. It is not actually a tomb, in that there are no bodies interred there, but it is where Belin's ashes are kept along with the remains of all the other primi. A statue of Belin stands outside the main structure, which contains a large room that was probably originally intended as a council chamber. Alcoves carved with names and dates line the sides, each with a small shelf and a silver pot, growing progressively blacker with tarnish along the length of the room. There is a colorful but faded mosaic on the floor with the symbol of House Mercere and its motto, and windows paned with stained glass depicting the original twelve Founders. Belin's marker is at the far end, in the center of the wall.

Belin's ashes are indeed an Arcane Connection to her husband, though the characters need to penetrate his Faerie Might with the spell to confirm this (see Derilch, the Faerie Redcap, later in this piece) — of course,

having a permanent Arcane Connection will make doing so much easier to manage. Corpus spells to identify her husband's location reveal that he is in a ruined tower in Scotland. Corpus spells to give other information about him reveal he still lives, ailing, and hundreds of years old. Vim spells reveal that he is a faerie. If the characters cannot cast these spells here, they can probably steal some of the ashes and take them back to Val-Negra or their covenant.

Insatella strongly suspects characters, and even has Imogene search their rooms and bags for evidence they have committed a crime, but unless they provide her a pretext for taking offense (and formally asking the resident Mercere Quaesitor to champion her in certamen against them), there is little she can do. However, she will assign two Redcaps to follow the party if she has not yet done so. If they are returning to Barcelona, she arranges with Yuval for Imogene to accompany them back to Aedes Mercurii (in a non-magical disguise if necessary), and instructs her to attempt getting close enough to them to learn what they are doing.

The characters' next step is to visit Belin's husband. The fact he is alive delights Ophilio, if the characters are working with him, as he imagines they have a better chance of locating Belin's hiding place if they can ask a living person, faerie or not. He has a device capable of transporting the characters there directly, one at a time, causing them to appear immediately beside their quarry. When they are ready to go, he happily obliges them. He urges them to go sooner rather than later, as any delay might allow the group to lose track of him. If they prefer to travel overland, Imogene might allow them to persuade her to lead them there.

If the characters could not be convinced to assist Ophilio, he attempts to proceed without them.

Flamen Ophilio of Mercere

Characteristics: Int +2, Per -2 (1), Pre 0, Com 0, Str -2 (2), Sta +4, Dex -3 (3), Qik -3 (3)

Age: 171 (109)

Decrepitude: 2 (14)

Warping Score: 8 (1)

Confidence Score: 1 (7)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Mercurian Magic; Great Stamina, Hermetic Sacrifice, Hermetic Theurgy, Minor Magical Focus (aging), Premonitions, Puissant Creo, Theurgical Spirit Familiar, Withstand Magic; Pagan, Weak Spontaneous Magic; Ambitious, Cabal Legacy, Difficult Spontaneous Magic, Susceptibility to Divine

Personality Traits: Competitive +3, Friendly +3, Generous +1

Reputations: Belin scholar 5 (Order of Hermes), Pagan 4 (Order of Hermes), Should be Praeco 4 (Iberian Tribunal), Wants to be Primus 3 (House Mercere)

Combat:

Dodging: Init -3, Attack n/a, Defense -3, Damage n/a

Soak: +4

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Artes Liberales 4 (ceremonial magic), Awareness 1 (alertness), Catalan 4 (merchants), Charm 3 (first impressions), Concentration 2 (spell casting), Cult of Mercury Lore 9 (initiation), Finesse 3 (Corpus), Folk Ken 2 (Redcaps), House Mercere Lore 8 (history), Iberia Tribunal Lore 1 (history), Intrigue 2 (plotting), Italian 5 (merchants), Latin 5 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 2 (inspiration), Magic Lore 4 (Mercurian rites), Magic Theory 7 (Corpus), Order of Hermes Lore 3 (ceremonies), Parma Magica 6 (Corpus), Penetration 6 (Rego), Philosophiae 4 (ceremonial magic), Premonitions 4 (omen reading), Profession: Scribe 2 (copying books), Provencal Tribunal Lore 3 (history), Roman Tribunal Lore 1 (history), Survival 2 (mountains), Teaching 1 (apprentices)

Arts: Cr 20+3, In 9, Mu 5, Pe 5, Re 20; An 5, Aq 5, Au 5, Co 20, He 5, Ig 5, Im 5, Me 5, Te 20, Vi 20

Twilight Scars: Skin glows different colors depending on his mood (Presence) +4, objects sometimes magically adhere to him (Strength) +1, cannot hide his emotions (Communication) -4, Unnatural appearance (Presence) -5

Spells Known:

Invoke the Spirit of Animal (ReAn 20/+29)

Cloak of the Duck's Feathers (ReAq 5/+29)

Invoke the Spirit of Aurum (CrAu 20/+32)

Bind Wound (CrCo 10/+47)

Chirurgeon's Healing Touch (CrCo 20/+58) Mastery 1 (Stalwart Casting)

Gentle Touch of the Purified Body (CrCo 20/+57)

Restoration of the Defiled Body (CrCo 25/+58) Mastery 1 (Stalwart Casting)

The Severed Limb Made Whole (CrCo 25/+57)

Cheating the Reaper (CrCo 30/+79) Mastery 2 (Lab Mastery, Stalwart Casting)

Incantation of the Body Made Whole (CrCo 40/+58) Mastery 1 (Stalwart Casting)

Invoke the Spirit of Corpus (InCo 20/+33)

Invoke the Spirit of Corpus (InCo 30/+33)

Rise of the Feathery Body (ReCo 10/+44)

Seven League Stride (ReCo 30/+44)

Leap of Homecoming (ReCo 35/+56) Mastery 2 (Ceremonial Casting, Lab Mastery)

Invoke the Spirit of Corpus (ReCo 40/+44)

Invoke the Spirit of Ignem (CrIg 20/+32)

Invoke the Spirit of Ignem (ReIg 20/+29)

Invoke the Spirit of Imaginem (CrIm 20/+32)

Invoke the Spirit of Terrum (InTe 30/+33)

Unseen Arm (ReTe 5/+44)

Unseen Porter (ReTe 10/+44)

Invoke the Spirit of Terrum (ReTe 20/+44)

Invoke the Spirit of Terrum (ReTe 30/+44)

Invoke the Spirit of Terrum (ReTe 40/+44)

Wizard's Communion (MuVi 50/+29)

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 20/+57) Mastery 3 (Adaptive Casting, Penetration, Stalwart Casting)

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 40/+57)

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 30/+58) Mastery 4 (Adaptive Casting, Ceremonial Casting, Lab Mastery, Penetration)

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 40/+58)

Circular Ward Against Faeries (ReVi 30/+45) Mastery 1 (Penetration)

Circular Ward Against the Avenging Angel (ReVi 30/+56) Mastery 2 (Ceremonial Casting, Penetration)

Circular Ward Against the Creatures of Magic (ReVi 30/+57) Mastery 3 (Ceremonial Casting, Lab Mastery, Penetration)

Watching Ward (ReVi 30/+56) Mastery 2 (Adaptive Casting, Stalwart Casting)

Watching Ward (ReVi 40/+56)

Waiting Spell (ReVi 40/+56) Mastery 2 (Adaptive Casting, Stalwart Casting)

Waiting Spell (ReVi 50/+56)

Invoke the Spirit of Vim (ReVi 40/+44)

Invoke the Spirit of Vim (ReVi 50/+44)

Appearance: Flamen Ophilio always dresses in voluminous formal robes, like those of a university dean or a toga, but does not usually wear anything on his head. His hair is long and tangled, though his face is friendly and kindly. He looks at least a hundred years old, his skin wrinkled and pinched, and it glows unnaturally with strange magical colors just beneath the surface. He leans on a wooden staff when he walks, with golden serpents entwined around the upper half, similar to the caduceus carried by the Roman god Mercury.

Ophilio has several initiation scripts of the Cult of Mercury, for those interested in joining the inner circle. These allegedly were used by members of the original cult and unearthed by Priamitus, Ophilio's ancestor. They include Mercurian Magic, Hermetic Sacrifice, Hermetic Theurgy, and Theurgical Spirit Familiar.

After some time, they receive an invitation from Insatella, who learned the characters sold Ophilio a book, and wants to know what it said. She worries about him, she says; he arrived at Harco and demanded to see Belin's ashes, and then cast a spell on them causing him to disappear and leaving the ashes behind. They have heard nothing of him since, and because they cannot ask a Quaesitor to scry on him without charging him with committing a crime, they wonder if the characters know what he was doing, allegedly for his own safety. The characters may use this opportunity to examine the ashes themselves if they wish, perhaps to discover where Ophilio went, and to ally themselves with Insatella if they choose to share with her what they know of the book.

Scottish Lowlands

The characters' destination is an abandoned and rotting guard tower in the wild lands southwest of Edinburgh, surrounded by marshy bogs and scrub-covered hills. It is haunted by an old faerie creature that once loved a mortal woman. This creature is Derilch, former husband and now widower of Belin. He is a sad and lonely thing, who waits for time to wear him away as it did his wife, hundreds of years ago. During the day he sleeps within the tower, huddled in a corner beneath the moldy boards of the collapsed upper story, and at night he climbs the rickety stairs, avoiding the ones that are ready to break with age, and stands upon the roof, looking out to the south and east until dawn comes to pierce his eyes. There is a Faerie 1 aura.

The characters will undoubtedly surprise him, as he is nearly blind. He is still quick when he is riled, but it takes a lot to get his blood flowing. He will probably treat the characters like he does any intruder, with vague menace and ominous cursing, in the

hopes of frightening them away. He waves his blood-red cap at them (surprisingly similar to Mercere's, complete with a grime-covered coin etched with the symbol of the House sewn into the brim) as evidence that he dyes it with the blood of his victims, and bares his sharp teeth at them, pointing with his long nails for them to go, to leave him.

As he is a faerie, Derilch feeds on fear. He cannot help himself, and he will continue to try and horrify the characters until they yield to him, or else offer him vitality of another sort. His need is lessened somewhat by his connection to Belin, but being around people makes him uncomfortable and causes dark feelings to well within

him. Once his hunger is engaged and he is not fed, he may very well work himself into a desperate frenzy that only terror or blood can sate — he is essentially starving to death, in the faerie sense. This means that the longer the characters go without showing fear, the more he will require from them before he can regain control and consider a deal with them.

The characters will probably ask him about the cap he wears. He will not tell them anything about it for free, but he may be willing to bargain with them, exchanging information for blood or other sources of vitality. Of course, the characters may be able to magically read his thoughts. The



facts are: he was Belin's husband and Belin gave him the cap he now wears. He is slowly dying, but he lives on through the power of Belin's memory, for even in death she is still alive enough to sustain him. Derilch doesn't volunteer anything about his children, and refuses to talk about them. He knows very little about them in any case, and his memories are muddled by the years. He is occasionally visited by other faeries who tell him things, but it upsets him

too much to think about it.

(The cap is not, in fact, Mercere's cap — it is actually the cap Mercere gave Belin when she finished her apprenticeship — but there is no way the characters can be sure of this, and in any case it doesn't actually matter, as this cap is just as fine as the other for Ophilio's purposes, or for the characters to take advantage of it in a similar way.)

Imogene, if she is with them, is

worried by this development, and tries to dissuade the characters from taking the cap from the faerie, even revealing herself as Insatella's granddaughter and offering them double anything Ophilio promised on her behalf, if she must. (If she manages to talk the characters out of it, the temptation to declare herself prima instead of her aunt Marie will prove too great for her, and she returns to the scene as soon as the characters are away to take it for

Imogene the Redcap

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +3, Pre -2, Com -3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex +3, Qik +3

Age: 29

Virtues and Flaws: Redcap; Ways of the Road; Increased Characteristics, Light Touch, Relic, Well Traveled (free); Ambitious, Low Self-Esteem; Close Family Ties, Covenant Upbringing, Lesser Malediction (barren)

Personality Traits: Loyal +3, Chaste +2, Resentful +1

Reputations: Prima's Granddaughter 3 (House Mercere)

Combat:

Fist: Init +3, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage 0

Knife: Init +3, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +2

Soak: 0

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Artes Liberales 1 (reading and writing), Athletics 2 (contortions), Awareness 5 (searching), Brawl 3 (knives), Code of Hermes 1 (Redcaps), English 2 (comprehension), French 2 (comprehension), German 2 (comprehension), Guile 4 (feigning stupidity), Harco Lore 1 (geography), Italian 5 (comprehension), Latin 5 (Hermetic usage), Legerdemain 5 (filching), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (personalities), Ride 1 (speed), Spanish 2 (comprehension), Stealth 5 (shadowing), Survival 2 (mountains)

Powers:

Ring enchanted with Disguise of the Transformed Image (MuIm 20: Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc; +5 maintains concentration, +5 24 uses per day), which allows her to adopt any sort of human disguise, activated by touching it to her forehead. She knows not to use this effect when spying on magi.

Ring enchanted with Eyes of the Cat (MuCo 5: Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +0 1 use per day)

Shoes enchanted with No Trace of His Passage (PeIm 25: Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc; +5 maintains concentration, +5 24 uses per day), which when activated by tracing a pattern on each foot masks all her sounds, smells, and feeling (such as by brushing past a person while moving through a crowd). She also knows not to use this effect when spying on magi, though arguably it is

not a crime for her to use either power in a public place, since nothing a magus does in public can be considered secret.

Equipment: Relic worn as necklace, magic rings, magic shoes, red cap

Appearance: Appearance: Imogene is a fit and plain-looking woman, probably wearing men's clothes and a red cap, the top of which falls forward towards her face. She could easily pass for a young boy. She is very good at appearing stupid, having long ago mastered the expressionless stare that says it is safe to speak freely in front of her.

Imogene is one among many in the extended family of the Mercere Prima. She is not highly regarded by her grandmother because she has no children and is thought to be too prudish about such things, but she still desperately craves elevation above her siblings and cousins in her esteem. As she was not especially sociable as a child, her father encouraged her to be quiet and watch people, and from there she learned to spy and sneak with great skill. Since then she has had a recurring dream in which God tells her that she is barren as punishment for her sins, but despite this divine curse she still tries to be at least as pious as the other Redcaps at Harco, attending weekly services when her duties do not prevent it.

During her Mercere gauntlet, which involved intercepting, reading and resealing letters from the Pope, she switched a former Redcap's finger-bone for another on display upon the cathedral altar, reputedly having belonged to St. Margaret the Virgin. She wears it constantly, praying that the saint will miraculously bless her with a baby, and she has promised herself she will return the relic when she does. Imogene takes the fact that she has not done so as evidence that the saint prefers to be with her.

Imogene is very skilled at espionage involving magi, and is very careful not to break the Code when spying on them. While she has magical devices that allow her to become invisible or change her appearance, she knows not to use these effects without informing any magi present that she is doing so. Her practice is rather to ingratiate herself with magi, and make herself useful enough to them so that they tell her what she wants to know. If she were ever caught srying and brought to Tribunal on charges of a High Crime, she knows that her grandmother would deny any involvement. She believes this is proper and correct, to protect Hermetic society, though she would regret it.

herself.)

If the characters are loyal to Ophilio and keep to their arrangement with him, he shares what he has deciphered from the book, including the clues about Belin's strange ability to change hearts and minds (though he is able to discover very little about the specifics), and the description of the faerie pact, including the ceremony to invoke it. He even tells them he already knew something of the ceremony based on certain research he did into the secrets of the Cult of Mercury. He strongly hints he has access to initiation scripts for the binding of a spirit familiar, if the characters are interested in such mysteries.

This part of the story ends with the recovery of the cap. The characters may return to their covenant with their rewards safely in hand, and proceed with their own lives. During the next few years, the parties in possession of the cap will begin pressing their claims and starting the political wheels grinding towards their ascension, while word spreads through the Order of the character's part in the discovery and recovery of such a significant artifact of Hermetic history.

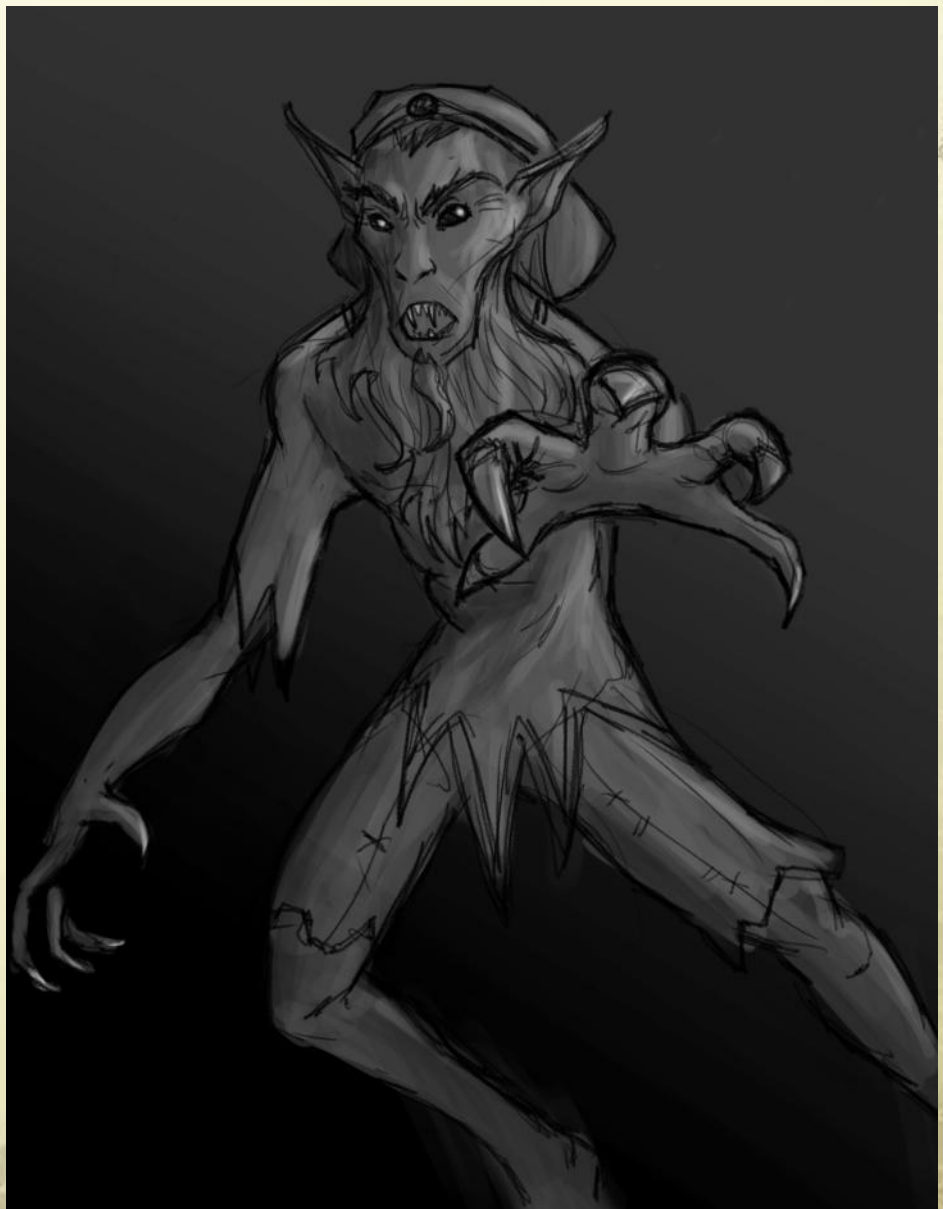
War with the Bloodcaps

Events associated with Belin's legacy begin again when the characters learn of a shocking development: a faerie army, reportedly between several hundred and a thousand men-shaped soldiers and cavalry, has attacked and destroyed a Hermetic covenant in Scotland. The survivors described the creatures as twisted and freakish, many of them with red caps like the Hermetic messengers, what the magi of the region call "bloodcaps." Such an action is unprecedented and alarming, and magi of both Stonehenge and Loch Leglean are preparing to go to war against them.

In the meantime, Derilch the faerie has died, either because the characters killed him or because without his cap he finally wasted away. Regardless of the circumstances, the faeries believe it to be the characters' fault. Through their contacts in the Hermetic Redcap network, the faeries discovered who visited him last, and what has happened to the cap he wore. Derilch's son Malott — perhaps this is Derilch reborn as another faerie — has declared himself king of the redcaps, and learned what possession of the cap means in what he views as the noble house of his mother and great-grandfather. He believes that by right of blood and title, he should be

lord over all redcaps, including Belin's descendants. At the very least, they owe him tribute and aid.

While faerie redcaps are typically very solitary creatures, haunting a particular place, there are some faerie-blooded humans descended from Derilch and Belin in the Stonehenge Tribunal who are especially clannish. These clannish fey and fey-blooded kin began ranging across the land in packs in recent years, seeking out traveling humans and waylaying them. With a mob of wild faerie bandits following Malott, he also gained the respect of other faeries in the region, especially the other redcaps, and many have sworn fealty to him. Furthermore, there are those of



Sub Rosa

House Mercere in the Tribunal who are related to these faeries by blood, and who are sometimes willing to pass information to them, via a flock of faerie ravens that now serves the Redcap King.

The circumstances offer Malott a perfect opportunity. Citing the murder of his father and the theft of his family's cap, he rallied the other faerie Redcaps and many of their human brethren in the region to join in an attack against a Hermetic covenant near the southern Scottish border, a covenant he portrayed as a constant scourge of the faeries in the region. Malott told them many stories of how their kin have been captured by the wizards living there, taken

across the moat and into the bailey, never to be seen again. Under his banner, the faerie redcaps, the human Bloodcaps, and the other dark faerie creatures descended upon the hated castle by storm—to force those who took the cap to return it, to raze the building to the ground, and to inspire more raw fear than they have ever experienced before out of the other wizards of Britain.

A Hermetic Redcap, who had been staying at the covenant, survived the initial attack. The leaders of the army granted him safe passage on the condition he would bring a message to the other “wizards and their ilk” in the region. He accepted their offer. The message states, “The king of the

redcaps demands the return of a mighty heirloom, the red cap of his father and his great-grandfather, as weregild for his death and the restoration of what is rightfully his. These murderers and thieves belong to the so-called Order of Hermes, and unless the wizards give these criminals up to the faeries for justice, the land will see bloodshed it has not seen for hundreds of years.” The message then lists several of the characters by name.

It is likely that the characters hear of this from a breathless Redcap, dispatched from the nearest Mercere House immediately upon receiving the ultimatum, to make the characters aware of their predicament and learn

Derilch, Faerie Redcap

Faerie Might: 25 (Corpus)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre –2, Com –2, Str +5, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

Confidence: 7 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Power x2 (Guide, Sidestep); Animal Ken, Berserker, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Great Strength x2, Humanoid Faerie, Increased Characteristics x3, Increased Might x4, Improved Soak x4, Lesser Power (Damaging Effect), Personal Power (Invisibility), Puissant Brawl, Puissant Great Weapon, Reputation as Confidence, Residual Power x2; Narrowly Cognizant; Lost Love, Negative Reaction, Poor Eyesight, Reckless, Traditional Ward (religious symbols), Weakness (blood)

Personality Traits: Bloodthirsty (Berserk, Reckless) +3, Lonely +2, Suicidal +2

Reputations: Husband and Father Figure 7 (Faerie), Frightening 3 (local)

Combat:

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +8

Claw: Init +1, Attack +13, Defense +12, Damage +7

Soak: +10

Wound Penalties: –1 (1–5), –3 (6–10), –5 (11–15), Incapacitated (16–20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Athletics 1 (lifting), Awareness 2 (keeping watch), Brawl 4+2 (claws), Faerie Speech 4 (slang), Great Weapon 5+2 (spear), Guile 2 (lying to authority), Leadership 4 (intimidation), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (Redcaps), Scottish Lowlands Lore 1 (battles), Single Weapon 4 (short sword), Stealth 2 (hiding), Survival 1 (ruins)

Powers:

Damaging Effect, 2 points, Init –4, Terram or Herbam: Weapons that the faerie redcap wields take on a supernaturally dangerous

aspect, increasing their Damage rating by +5 for the duration of the combat.

Guide, 1 point, Init –1, Mentem: Derilch can subtly influence a group of people towards a specific course of action using this power, with each activation lasting up to a day.

Invisibility, 0 points, Init 0, Imaginem: As Veil of Invisibility, ArM5 p. 146.

Sidestep, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: As Seven-League Stride, ArM5 p. 143. If the faerie cannot see a particular destination when it activates this power (if it is unconscious, for example), it will instead appear in a random location within about a hundred paces.

Vis: 5 pawns Corpus, in teeth and claws

Appearance: A tall faerie creature with a wool cap stained dark with blood, an impossibly wrinkled face, and fierce, sharp upper teeth pointing out over his lower lip. His fingernails are like claws, several inches long, and the skin on his weathered and bony limbs is nearly indistinguishable from the leather hauberk he wears on his chest.

Derilch (pronounced DARE-ilk) is a faerie redcap, albeit a slightly unusual one, as he married a mortal woman and gave her children. Over the years his role changed from that of a fierce guardian of the boundary between civilization and wilderness, to a twisted father figure that is the fierce guardian of his home, wife and family. As all of them have now left him, he is now purposeless, or at least has only to die and make way for his heirs, wherever they are.

In combat, Derilch claws at his opponents savagely, grappling them and trying to draw their blood. He often fights invisibly, disappearing from view as soon as the fight begins, and can leap instantly from person to person using his Sidestep power. Since he is ready to die, he will probably not do this. If incapacitated or killed, his body will fade from view and transport itself to a random location within a hundred paces, so that it cannot be harvested for vis. His bloody cap, however, will slide from his head as he collapses and remain where it fell.

their response. Word soon follows, indicating a senior maga of House Guernicus has begun formally investigating the characters in connection with a high crime in the Loch Leglean Tribunal. The Quaesitor would like to meet with them in Loch Leglean at their earliest convenience. Word may also arrive that the senior Quaesitor of Stonehenge Tribunal has begun investigating and would also like to speak with them.

Two Quaesitors are involved in the investigation because of the peculiar circumstances of the attack, having occurred in the borderlands of Stonehenge and Loch Leglean Tribunals. The magi of Burnham covenant, which the faeries fell upon, attended Stonehenge for the last two Tribunals. Yet the site is located further north into Scotland than Horsingas, which is a Loch Leglean covenant, and the surviving magi and their covenfolk have all gathered there. Caitlin of Ex Miscellanea made the charge against the characters to Whitburh, but Iudicium technically has a vested interest as senior Quaesitor of the covenant's home Tribunal, and is known to be close to

Suggested Covenants

For a satisfying conclusion to the story, both the covenant under attack and the covenant where the characters go to meet with the Quesitors should be in the area near where the players originally discovered and met with Derilch, in the lowlands of southern Scotland. This area is close enough to the border between England and Scotland that the covenants could belong to either Loch Leglean or Stonehenge, and in fact it is most interesting if both are represented in the events of the story. Ideally, the redcap army attacks a Stonehenge covenant and the survivors flee to a Loch Leglean covenant.

For the purposes of this story, the text assumes that the covenant under attack is called Burnham, a secretive covenant located further north than any other Stonehenge covenant and home to several magi of many different Houses, including a maga of

Ex Miscellanea named Caitlin, and that they have attended the last two Tribunals in Stonehenge. The second covenant is called Horsingas, and is associated with Loch Leglean, the southernmost covenant in the Tribunal and less than a day's ride from the site of the attack. It is home to the senior Quaesitor of Loch Leglean, Whitburh Frithowebba, and two other magi. The senior Quaesitor of Stonehenge is Iudicium of Blackthorn covenant.

All of these character and covenant choices are suggested for convenience, not to establish the political and cultural circumstances of these Tribunals. They are consistent with books published for earlier editions of the game, but of course storyguides should feel free to change them as necessary to work better with their sagas or to remain consistent with books published subsequently.

While faerie redcaps are typically solitary creatures there are some faerie-blooded humans descended from Derilch and Belin in the Stonehenge Tribunal who have begun ranging across the land in packs to seek out traveling humans and waylay them...

Burnham's Trutina of Guernicus. It may be that the characters will be tried in both regions, if the affected parties cannot reach an agreement regarding jurisdiction.

Another trip to Britain would seem necessary, unless the characters convince the two Quaesitors to come to see them at their own covenant. Iudicium is planning to visit them in

known to be able to do), and that the covenant is in grave danger. At the very least, Whitburh expects the characters to be there to help them defend against another attack if the faeries press their threats.

If the characters meet with Iudicium alone, he listens to their explanation and then tells them the situation as he sees it. In his opinion, the characters should offer

themselves up to the faeries, attempting to negotiate with them. If they can bring the cap with them, it would be all the better. Perhaps by doing this they can prove this attack was not their fault, and thus reduce the severity of the charge in the Tribunal's opinion. If the magi do not do this, he is relatively certain their peers will find them guilty; the facts are clear they interacted with a faerie, and because of it their sodales have suffered.

The characters from the last half of the story will be varying levels of help here, depending on how they got along. Ophilio is not in any way implicated, except perhaps by knowing they were going to see a faerie to try to get him the cap, or unless he went after it himself (in which case he has probably gone into Twilight after botching a spell). However, he certainly provides whatever assistance he can if they are allies. If Imogene has the cap, she seeks the characters out and offers to help them, as what she did will certainly come out. She admits she was spying on them for Insatella, but

points out an alliance is to their benefit, because Insatella will use her considerable influence on their behalf as well as hers.

Northumbria

The covenant of Horsingas is a simple castle tower that has been carved into the side of a hill, so that most of it is underground, and most of the covenfolk and refugees live in the many caves that pit the rocky terrain just below it. It is a very defensible building, and they have enough supplies to withstand a long siege and enough horsemen and soldiers that they are confident they could decimate the foe. They have several secret weapons as well that they do not show the characters

unless battle is joined, including heavy crossbows and powerful illusions covering well-placed watch posts and arrow slits.

Whitburh will meet the characters in an unused sanctum at the top of the tower, lit by natural light from a well in the roof. They are escorted by at least as many grogs as characters, very rough and shifty sort of men and women who look poised to attack at any provocation. They may also meet Edwin of Tylalus and Jehan of Jerbiton, two other senior magi at the covenant, who will probably sit in on the investigation, and who obviously have differing views on the current situation — Edwin is anxious for assistance and stronger incentive to bring battle to the faeries, while Jehan

would like to turn magi with sympathy for their position into allies against their many other enemies. They are all fiercely Saxon and hate the Normans, which may prejudice them against the characters from the start.

Whitburh's position is similar to Iudicium's, once she knows the facts. If they can speak to the faeries and prove they did not cause this attack, there is the chance their sentence might be lessened at Tribunal, and Burnham might even be convinced to withdraw the accusation. Certainly their efforts to aid the other covenants of the region in their battle against the faerie menace would show them in a more favorable light to other magi. The emotional tension in

Malott, King of the Redcaps

Faerie Might: 35 (Corpus)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre -2, Com -2, Str +5, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik +2

Confidence: 7 (13)

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Power x4 (Command Beasts, Extended Glamour, Guide, Sidestep); Animal Ken, Berserker, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Great Strength x2, Humanoid Faerie, Increased Characteristics x4, Increased Might x6, Improved Soak x4, Inspirational, Lesser Power (Damaging Effect), Personal Power (Invisibility), Puissant Brawl, Puissant Great Weapon, Reputation as Confidence; Legendary Entrancement, Narrowly Cognizant; Negative Reaction, Reckless, Traditional Ward (religious symbols), Weakness (blood)

Personality Traits: Bloodthirsty (Berserk, Reckless) +3, Vengeful +3, Loyal +2

Reputations: King of the Redcaps 7 (Faerie), Frightening 3 (local)

Combat:

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +13, Defense +9, Damage +8

Claw: Init +1, Attack +14, Defense +12, Damage +7

Short Sword: Init +3, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +10/+15

Long Sword: Init +4, Attack +10, Defense +7, Damage +11

Long Spear: Init +5, Attack +14, Defense +11, Damage +12/+17

Pole Axe: Init +3, Attack +14, Defense +10, Damage +16

Soak: +10

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Animal Ken 1 (scavengers), Athletics 1 (lifting),

Awareness 2 (keeping watch), Brawl 4+2 (claws), Faerie Speech 4 (slang), Great Weapon 5+2 (spear), Guile 2 (lying to authority), Leadership 4 (intimidation), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (Redcaps), Scottish Lowlands Lore 1 (battles), Single Weapon 4 (short sword), Stealth 2 (hiding), Survival 1 (ruins)

Powers:

Command Beasts, 0 points, Init 0: As Commanding the Harnessed Beast, ArM5 p. 141.

Damaging Effect, 2 points, Init -4, Terram or Herbam: Weapons that the faerie redcap wields take on a supernaturally dangerous aspect, increasing their Damage rating by +5 for the duration of the combat.

Extended Glamour, 0 points, constant, Mentem: Mallott is constantly in touch with everything around him on a battlefield or ruined building.

Guide, 1 point, Init -1, Mentem: Malott can subtly influence a group of people towards a specific course of action using this power, with each activation lasting up to a day.

Invisibility, 0 points, Init 0, Imaginem: As Veil of Invisibility, ArM5 p. 146.

Sidestep, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: As Seven-League Stride, ArM5 p. 143. If the faerie cannot see a particular destination when it activates this power (if it is unconscious, for example), it will instead appear in a random location within about a hundred paces.

Vis: 7 pawns Corpus, in teeth and claws

Appearance: Malott looks like a younger, middle-aged version of Derilch: a tall faerie creature with a lined face and fierce, sharp upper teeth poking out over his lower lip. Perhaps instead of a bloody cap, he now wears an iron crown stained red with rust.

the chamber once this decision is declared will be strong, for a Quaesitor knows there is always the possibility that an accused magus will react with violence and strike down his investigator before becoming a renegade. Edwin and Jehan's attitudes are defiant, staunchly standing by Whitburh even if they disagree with her position.

The characters control their fate here. Unfortunately, there is a significant factor working against them, in that there are probably people with Bloodcap faerie blood among the survivors and Horsingas covenfolk, who feel conflicted loyalty to their faerie kin and still resent the treatment they or their relatives received at Burnham covenant, kept like slaves and raised for vis, or so they have been told. They have not been asked to fight against the magi, but they will send a message to the so-called Redcap King, whispering that the characters are there and what their plans are to the ravens he sends at night. Thus, Malott learns very quickly where he can find the

characters.

A meeting between the characters and the King of the Redcaps is inevitable. If the characters flee, Malott and his cavalry follow the characters, attempting to catch them in the wilds. If they stay at Horsingas, the faeries and their allies attack the covenant, attempting to cause enough damage and dread to force the Loch Leglean magi into giving up the characters for parlay with the faerie Redcaps. And, if the characters travel to Burnham, the faeries meet them there, attempting to capture them. If, by guile or trickery the characters somehow get past them and escape Britain, the faeries continue their march on Horsingas, hoping more bloodshed will force the other wizards' action. While they prefer to retrieve the cap, causing widespread terror and mayhem is an acceptable outcome.

Both parties should want this final confrontation for their own reasons. The characters probably want Malott to state he did not attack Burnham because of them, but rather Burnham

was also at fault. If they can get him to say it before impartial witnesses, it will be even better for them. Malott ostensibly wants the cap his father wore, and his sovereignty over the Hermetic Redcaps acknowledged. But if he cannot have either of those things, he wants to die in glorious battle, and start a bloody war between faeries and men. He wants his name to live on in both faerie and Hermetic history.

Malott gladly tells the characters whatever they want to hear if he thinks he has the upper hand, as he does not intend for them to survive. Even if they do survive, his death serves its purpose whether he tells them the truth or not, for the other bloodcaps will be honor-bound to avenge him. More than anything else, he seeks to frighten the characters, since he believes fear makes him and his followers stronger, and feeds their faerie natures. To that end, he tells the characters a story, if they will listen, about his mother, about how he came to power and most importantly about telling stories.

Bloodcap Soldiers

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

Size: 0

Age: 25

Virtues and Flaws: Outcast; Faerie Blood (Bloodcap), Warrior; Fear (the Divine)

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Loyal +1

Combat:

Axe and Heater Shield: Init 0, Attack +12, Defense +11, Damage +8

Fist: Init -1, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +2

Long Spear: Init +5, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +9

Pole Axe: Init +3, Attack +12, Defense +7, Damage +13

Short Bow: Init +1, Attack +10, Defense +7, Damage +8

Soak: +6 (full leather scale armor)

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Athletics 2 (lifting), Awareness 3 (in combat), Bows 4 (short bow), Brawl 4 (punching), Britain Lore 2 (ruins), Carouse 3 (drinking), Faerie Lore 2 (Redcaps), Great Weapon 4 (pole axe), Guile 2 (lying to authority), Hunt 2 (tracking), Leadership 2 (intimidation), Native Language 5 (rude words), Single Weapon 5 (heater shield), Stealth 2 (hiding), Survival 1 (ruins)

Equipment: Axe, heater shield, full leather scale armor, short bow, arrows, pack.

Encumbrance: 3 (4)

Appearance: An unshaven outlaw, dressed in full leather scale mail, and unnaturally old. His teeth and nails might look slightly longer than normal, and his skin slightly more wrinkled and tough.

The bloodcap infantry that makes up the bulk of the army is extremely diverse, incorporating everyone from professional soldiers to washerwomen. Since they are essentially fighting as a group, the stats above describe those who would be in the van. Redcap blood generally makes characters tougher and more bloodthirsty, qualities which Malott has encouraged during their time with him in the wilderness. In pitched battle, they will probably charge rather than hang back; while some of them do have bows, all of them have weapons, even if they are only clubs and knives.

He was born a faerie, the first child of Belin and Derilch, though he does not remember being young. He lived with his father, but was much more violent than Derilch. He enjoyed the horrors of killing trespassers, rather than frightening them away. When Belin came to live with them in her later years, she gave him a special red cap, but she forbid him to dirty it with blood. He ignored her, and when she discovered what he had done, she furiously threw it in the fire. They quarreled ceaselessly, and it was clear she hated him, which he enjoyed. When she left them to return to the mainland to die, he would not mourn, and his father banished him from the tower. He left, taking several

of his brothers and nephews with him, and they have hunted the wilds of Scotland as a pack ever since, growing stronger as their family grew larger.

His mother had a special power to tell a story, and through the telling change reality for the listener, and she would often try to use this power against him, but she was never strong enough to affect him. When he was very young he asked her how she did it, and she told him "I simply believe, and it comes to pass. Perhaps it was the truth all along." He never forgot this, and after some time had passed he began to wonder if he also possessed this power. He has decided he does, and he stresses what this

means: after the characters are dead, he will tell the witnesses his version of how things happened, and his version will become the truth (or perhaps it was true all along). He hopes for this revelation to chill them more than any of the other threats he has made, as much as it would frighten him.

Malott makes a point of sparing any Hermetic Redcaps among the characters. They are kin, he says, and they will be allowed to leave after the fighting, or even join their side if they wish, though if they raise their arms against the faeries they will be slain with the others. While it is not strictly true that all members of House Mercere are related by blood to Mercere the Founder, it is in keeping

Redcap Knights

Faerie Might: 10 (Corpus)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre -3, Com -3, Str +3, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Power (Sidestep); Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Faerie, Increased Might, Increased Soak, Personal Power (Invisibility), Puissant Great Weapon; Narrowly Cognizant; Oath of Fealty, Wrathful; Negative Reaction, Reclusive, Traditional Ward (religious symbols), Weakness (blood)

Personality Traits: Bloodthirsty (Reckless) +3, Loyal +2, Vengeful +2

Reputations: Frightening 3 (local)

Combat:

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +10, Defense +8, Damage +6

Claw: Init +1, Attack +11, Defense +11, Damage +5

Short Sword: Init +3, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +10

Long Sword: Init +4, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +11

Long Spear: Init +5, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +12

Pole Axe: Init +3, Attack +15, Defense +11, Damage +16

Soak: +5

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Athletics 1 (lifting), Awareness 2 (keeping watch), Brawl 5 (claws), Faerie Speech 4 (slang), Great Weapon 5+2 (pole axe), Guile 2 (lying to authority), Leadership 3 (intimidation), Scottish Lowlands Lore 1 (battles), Single Weapon 4 (long sword), Stealth 2 (hiding), Survival 1 (ruins)

Powers:

Invisibility, 0 points, Init 0, Imaginem: As Veil of Invisibility,

ArM5 page 146.

Sidestep, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: As Seven-League Stride, ArM5 p. 143. If the faerie cannot see a particular destination when it activates this power (if it is unconscious, for example), it will instead appear in a random location within about a hundred paces.

Vis: 3 pawns Corpus, in teeth and claws

Appearance: A tall faerie creature with a wool cap stained dark with blood, and fierce, sharp upper teeth pointing out over his lower lip. His fingernails are like claws, and the skin on his weathered and bony limbs is like a suit of leather armor.

Redcaps (or *bloodcaps*, as they are called in the Order of Hermes) are faeries that guard the boundary between civilization and wilderness, typically ruined towers and battlefields. They generally draw vitality from fear, and also from blood — they stain their caps red with it. They are generally found only in the lowlands of Scotland and northern England, at the sites of the many battles fought there over the centuries.

These redcaps have sworn an oath to follow Malott, their king. They are essentially knights, though they do not ride horses and are a very rowdy bunch, more like a gang of outlaws than a court of nobles. They have been designed with ten points of Virtues and Flaws, in case events should work out that they survive and a player would like to take one of them as a companion character.

Once full-scale battle is joined, Malott uses his powers to command them like pieces on a gameboard, as if they were a trained group, using their *Invisibility* and *Sidestep* powers to devastating effect as they can easily leap past armored warriors and skewer their unarmed opponents unawares. They generally set their pole axes when defending and throw them down to use their swords on the attack. They also tend to lose discipline at the sight of blood, going into a reckless frenzy from which they can even attack each other, since they are generally used to fighting alone.

with his father's pact with Belin, and he wants to impress upon the other Redcaps that he is a good king, and will not kill the people he considers his subjects.

It should be an epic battle. Worthy characters will be selected to fight the faerie lords in single combat if they wish, to get things started, sparring in the area directly before their battle line. Malott attempts to hold back unless he is challenged specifically, spilling blood causes him to enter into a fury he cannot control, and he wants to watch and enjoy the melee. He would like to generate as much fear as he can before the fighting devolves into chaos.

It is barely possible slaughter might be avoided if any of the characters willingly form a faerie pact with Malott or one of the other faerie Redcaps, assuming the characters have learned about the ceremony Belin used. It should be a union between equals, so the faerie must

admire the person in some way. For example, perhaps the character who has recovered the cap proposes to ally House Mercere with the faeries, speaking as the new Praeco. Or, perhaps the characters sense Malott or one of his followers is strangely attracted to one of them, and they may consider the prospect of a marriage treaty. If the characters are uncowed and intimidating enough on the early battlefield as to give the faeries pause, the others may seem willing to negotiate and make a deal even if Malott is not.

The blood of the fallen contains much vis, and Malott holds a valuable treasure, though he does not know it: the golden disc that holds the enchantments in the Founder's cap. Sewn to the brim of a similar cap, it will be just as it was when Mercere wore it.

Aftermath of the Battle

Assuming most of the characters

survive, the remaining knights and soldiers scatter. Without Malott to unite them, it is unlikely the other faerie Redcaps can muster an army and attack again, though they nurse a grudge against the player characters and the other magi of the region for many years after. Humans with faerie blood who fought against the magi try to surreptitiously return to their homes or the wilderness where they live, and many claim they were under a spell forcing them to fight. Justice is left to the characters.

The characters also need to deal with the charges leveled against them at Tribunal, including any new charges as a result of their actions on the battlefield. The affected covenants may be grateful for the characters' aid, but also anxious for someone to blame, to help make reparations. If the characters learned the faeries allegedly attacked in retribution for crimes committed against them, this may be enough to convince the



Sub Rosa

covenant to drop their charges, rather than submit to investigation. (This is not necessarily damning— Burnham is a very secretive covenant, but Malott could have used his Legendary Entrancement power to cause the faeries and mortals who joined him to falsely believe Burnham covenant had committed crimes it did not, and there could be other secrets they wish to keep hidden.)

If Malott has not been slain, and the characters have allied with him or his kin, they may be able to convince the fey not to attack magi, but rather turn against other supernatural threats in the area to satiate their bloodlust. Perhaps the player characters will simply wash their hands of it, claim Burnham covenant brought their doom upon themselves, and let the faeries wage their war without interference. The site of either Burnham or Horsingas might make a fine outpost in the British Isles for the characters, assuming they don't mind that most of their neighbors fiercely hate them. There is a strong Faerie aura in the lands surrounding Burnham, and so a faerie Redcap presence there is likely to last for some time regardless.

With the information Malott told the characters about the nature of his mother's storytelling power, Ophilio will eventually make the discoveries necessary to self-initiate himself with the Legendary Enchantment Virtue, much as if it were a Major Mystery Virtue taken after a Major Ordeal. He feels it is the characters' right to share in this knowledge, as it was their actions which brought it to light. In gratitude, he will act as Mystagogue for any of them, but he asks them to keep this secret limited to a select few, perhaps only those who join the Cult of Mercury.

Ophilio is not long for this world, and if he has established himself as primus of House Mercere with the characters' help, he seeks a worthy replacement among them. A Gifted

Alternative Paths

Depending on the characters' situation and location, there may be other ways to bring them into the story of Belin the Redcap, with a few minor changes to the order of events. Here are three examples:

Magi and Redcaps in Northumbria have reported a great many attacks by brigands and bandits, possibly rebels driven into hiding in the aftermath of civil war, but many of them are said to possess supernatural powers, attacking invisibly or moving with unnatural speed and agility. When the characters investigate, they learn many of the darker faeries of the region have united under a new king, and he is preparing for war. He claims to be the heir to House Mercere, and demands fealty.

The political schemers of another House — Tremere, Tylalus, possibly Bonisagus, or perhaps Verditius — are disgusted with how Insatella manages

House Mercere, and believe her heir will bring more of the same. The characters are tasked with finding a wedge may be used to remove her authority. This should lead them to Belin, as the first prima, and eventually to Ophilio's assertions a Gifted magus should oversee the House.

The Cult of Mercury is strong among Mercere and Flambeau magi, and while there are many flamens who follow the teachings of the cult ceremonially, there are few who initiate its deeper mysteries. Those interested in Mercurian lore will most likely seek out Val-Negra, where the Great Temple of Mercury is said to lie hidden in its magical regio. Before inducting them into its secrets, or perhaps as part of their initiation, Ophilio asks them to perform a quest for him: to obtain a book from somewhere too dangerous for him to go.

Mercere is obvious, but he might even consider a magus from another House to serve as acting primus until a suitable heir to the Founder can be discovered. The tradition of the primacy passing only to Mercere's descendants is probably too deeply ingrained to set aside, though. Besides initiating them into the secrets of Belin's legacy and Mercurian theurgy, he may also describe for them some of the mysteries which still lie hidden in Val-Negra, such as how to reach it and what they might find there.

Insatella also has a few cards left to play in the game, if she wishes to do so. She has had the characters followed for most of the story, and she may have evidence of their wrongdoings. She has a good political relationship with Magvillius, and might point a young Quaesitor, one looking to establish a reputation, in the characters' direction. She might also attempt to blackmail the characters, threaten to tarnish their reputation among the Redcaps, or offer them wealth and favors to

simply stay out of the politics of her House. She has Imogene assigned to the region near the characters' covenant, since her identity is revealed, in hopes both she and the characters become accustomed to working with each other, and in the desperate desire to steer them towards a less drastic course of action.

Overall, the characters have had the opportunity to recover a potent magic item and a historical artifact, and learned about two unusual Faerie powers. They have gained access to the secrets of an ancient mystery cult, and gathered vis from a group of fallen faeries. Because of their actions, they have taken a major part in great events that affect the entire Order, and have contributed in their own way to the legend of Belin the Redcap. They have, in a sense, become legends of Hermes themselves.

The Magic of the Founders: Talking to Lisa Stevens

Lisa Stevens was part of the development team for the first edition of **Ars Magica**, working hand in hand with Mark Rein-Hagen and Jonathan Tweet. She's now the CEO of Paizo, the Seattle-based publishers of the **Pathfinder RPG**. I met with Lisa at Gencon this August, catching up with her at the Paizo booth in the dealer room. She has the comfortable, relaxed smile of someone who wouldn't be anywhere else. After shaking my hand and exchanging hellos, we sequestered ourselves in a less noisy corner of the convention center annex to talk. Her schedule at the convention was busy, and so I wasted no time starting my questions.

How did your involvement in *Ars Magica* come about?

Good question. So, we've got to go back. I was a student at St. Olaf's College in 1981, where I

Then my sophomore year starts and I start playing with a couple of guys. Through them and some connections, the game grows. At one point we had twenty people in the game, and I had to split it into two tables of ten. Even that was a lot. But it was first edition, so it was easier to run. During the course of this expansion, I get a couple of guys who had been playing in Mark Rein-Hagen's **Hârn** campaign. He was running **Hârn** with **Runequest** rules. These two guys come in and they like it so much they drop out of Mark's campaign. I'm running Friday and Saturday, sometimes a Sunday. And so then Mark comes to me, and says, "I've got to play in your campaign, I need to see why people are quitting my campaign to play yours."

Mark was always competitive. We make a deal; I'll play in his **Hârn** campaign and he'll play in

Mark comes to me, and says, "I've got to play in your campaign, I need to see why people are quitting my campaign to play yours."

was introduced to **Dungeons and Dragons**. I just immediately grasped it; I got the red box with the Erol Otis art. I started wanting to run a game, but I didn't know anyone who gamed, and so I ran for my sister and a friend.

my **D&D** campaign. And that's what we do for a while. Then I find out he has a friend, Jonathan Tweet, who's running a **Call of Cthulhu** campaign, and so I get into Jonathan's **Cthulhu** campaign. It wasn't long after that, about six months, when

By Ben McFarland

Mark and Jonathan come to me and say, "We want to do this game, this game where we do magic right. We want to do one where wizards bring down mountains; where wizards are feared." **D&D** was all about balance. They didn't like the Vancian system. They wanted to set it in Mythic Europe, Jonathan was running **Pendragon** at the time. This was '85. I remember, they gave me the first draft of the rules before I went home for Christmas, those and Whimsy cards. I think I still have the Mac Paint and Pagemaker files for the old **Ars** material. They asked me to playtest it with my **D&D** group. It lasted about two sessions, and my players wanted to go back to playing our campaign. I was really excited, I thought it was great. I said I'd help however I could. They gave me the manuscript to look at, and asked me to edit it. It was in rough shape. The first line was something like, "this is our baby, **Ars Magica**." Almost stream of consciousness, but so vivid.

And from there?

I graduated in '85 and stuck around to run my game and be involved with **Ars Magica**. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I'd applied to two schools for marine biology, schools that accepted like two

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people a year, and I didn't get in. So, I decided to stay on the couch of a friend for a couple years, run my game, work on *Ars Magica* (she says it as *Maa-gaa-ka*, a pronunciation I haven't heard before, but I think I love). We end up staying at House Rampant.

What was house Rampant?

This house with Mark and Jonathan, and a bunch of students were in, and they let me have a room. They went to school and I stayed and edited and worked on *Ars Magica*. Mark and Jonathan were the two designers and if they agreed on something, it was in. But if there was a disagreement, or an impasse, I was the passing vote. They were each 49.5% and I was 1%. They usually agreed, but when they didn't, they'd each come to me, pitching me why their idea was best. I was editing and I was the person with the most industry experience, since I'd been playing in the RPGA for a long time, before the Living City campaign, when it was competitive roleplaying. You'd play a session and then vote on who was the best roleplayer. It was crazy but so much fun. Our troupe style play grew out of that; the multiple characters, the grogs.

Who came up with Troupe style play?

The name? I don't know. The style? It just came out of the fact the wizard is going to be the strongest character, and if only one person ever played the wizard then the game would grow tiresome. They wanted to play up the idea of the wizards being the strongest people in the world. It was the whole premise.

Did you play arcs with multiple wizards then?

We did. Our first covenant was in England, then crossed over to Ireland. We had to flee to Ireland in the middle of the night. Our games started off with all of us playing our wizards, and then a storyline would come up and we'd switch off, deciding who would best handle the storyline. Whoever was the Storyguide would present it, and we'd all discuss it as the wizards and say, "We're sending you, and you, and you," and then usually a wizard or two would go investigate. It depended on the size of our group.

How big were your groups? What were sessions like?

Sometimes eight or ten people. There weren't a lot of people hanging around. As *Lion Rampant* grew, we got a cadre of local people who joined in and helped out. It was a very fluid game, and troupe style helped with that environment. If there were a few people hanging around, we'd just throw a game together. Mark was famous for his off the cuff stories. He loved having three lines of notes and running with it. That's how *Stormrider* started; Mark just had this idea and ran with it. If I ran something, it was much more written out, with plots and notes all figured out. Jonathan was much more that way, too. Everyone had their styles. We selected the magus by roleplaying, and then the magi discussed, in-character, who would go. We would talk in-character about which companions to bring; the diplomat, the priest, the tracker... We all had several companions figured out, usually a couple of companions fulfilling roles for

the covenant, different aspects of what the covenant needed. Then they'd take the grogs. We all loved playing grogs. It was one of our favorite things, because it was such a sense of danger with the grogs. We kept a list of the dead, the roll call of the dead. I still have that list. We shared a computer and we'd all write our notes our diary entries of the session afterwards.

What kind of wizard did you have?

I had *Lupus Mortus*. He's in some of the early books. He actually has a miniature done by a company I don't think exists any more. He was a *Creo Ignem* wizard who wore a wolfskin. He was a very disturbing individual. He'd burn peasants or grogs. He was mercurial and other wizards didn't like traveling with him. He was the one I played most of the time. Jonathan had *Caecus* (She pronounces it "*Kai-koos*"), a *Rego Mentum* wizard, but he used *Perdo*, too. He'd just wipe people's minds and leave them mindless zombies. *Caecus* was a very alien sort of wizard. Mark had a couple wizards. One of them died. We didn't lose a lot of wizards, and when we did it was a big thing. One of Mark's died. I keep picturing Mark prancing around. He was very energetic. (she laughs) He was constantly moving, he'd draw, he had to do something, roleplaying, interacting. *Caecus* was very deep and thinking. We just had this crazy wizard group and loved it. If you had time you'd make up grogs and invest them in the story somehow. I created the *Sisterhood of Steel*, and they were an all-women mercenary group of twelve. They were Irish, and by the end of the campaign, they were wiped out. One of my companions, she was the head of the *Sisterhood*, she was a loyal soldier, and she got bitter toward the magi after seeing all her sisters die. We just had really fun

campaigns. That's what I remember about the early campaigns; it wasn't about the rules, it was about the game, and living at House Rampant, it was very collaborative.

With that collective development, did the game evolve from the play?

Definitely. Playing the game would lead to conversation about rules we needed. The first rules weren't much, maybe an inch thick of double spaced text typed out. It wasn't that big. We made up rules as we realized we needed them, "Oh we need lab rules..."

How long did it take?

Oh, God, from the first time? It came out in early 1988, I remember working on it, and wanted to have it ready for Gencon and didn't. We had Whimsy cards out in '87, and then I wanted it out for Christmas. I was

then Mark would wake up in the middle of the night and he'd (she taps on table like a keyboard) write it in, and you can tell when a Mark paragraph comes up, because his stuff is so stream of consciousness. I called him the Cyclone of Creativity. He's one of the most creative people I know, one of those people you get around and you're so excited because he's so full of ideas and they just flow out in a rush. That was how a few of the errors snuck in. I'd spell check, and I didn't realize the spell check didn't look at headers.

So what's the coolest thing that didn't make it into *Ars Magica*?

I don't think there was anything like that. Nothing strikes me. I don't remember anything that got chopped. It was this ongoing, collaborative, ongoing, evolving thing. It wasn't someone writing something and then presenting to all of us. It was troupe

much a communal feeling, I think the design came across as communal because of that. All these different people giving input, all these different people impacting the game, their observations in and out of game. I was a gentle guider, herding cats and trying to make a semblance of a business out of this bohemian collection of designers.

What was *Ars Magica*'s impact on RPGs?

It's huge. It was one of the first games. You can quibble, parallel game design happens, people talk at conventions. But, Jonathan came up with the idea of the difficulty number to hit in order to do something. That concept didn't happen before then, it was all on charts, but it wasn't something you came up with on the fly. ***Ars Magica*** is so freeform; you've got your freeform magic. I want to bend that sign over—ok, well let's debate how you're going to do that. Let's say it's metal, let's say it's Terram. Ok, we need Rego Terram.

But you could use Muto Terram and change the metal to wax?

Yeah. But you'd discuss with the Storyguide, you'd say "Ok this is what I want to accomplish, this is what I'm trying to do. Am I trying to bend it with force, mutate it." When you finally come up with what you wanted to do, the Storyguide would look at your arts and say, "Ok, you need a 25," and then I'll roll my Muto Terram. *Boom* "Ok, I got it or I missed it by a lot." and the SG come up with it on the fly and would say, "Ok, here's what happens..." (***Lisa uses her hands quite a bit while she speaks, accentuating the actions and the discussion.***) It was just that whole idea of coming up with what you needed to hit on the fly—that was just something that's totally prevalent now. In Pathfinder, I

I brought in my *Ars Magica* books in and I said, "Take a look."... I mean, it's the most elegant system out there, the most elegant I've ever seen.

pushing to having it out then. I went to Jonathan and said, "Alright, we need to be done with it on this day to be out by Christmas." Jonathan looked at me and said, "I don't care if it's out by Christmas. I don't care. I want it to be the perfect game." I was sales and marketing at the time, too. I was doing everything the designers were not, and helping even with designing. I realized we weren't going to hit a Christmas deadline, and so we came out in early '88. January or February, I think.

What delayed your progress?

We'd have it all edited out and

style game design. I mean, House Rampant was a big part of this. It was this group of almost bohemian game designers, hanging out, living with each other, gaming, partying with each other, and it was a commune in so many ways. It changed a little bit as people graduated, but we spent most of our time there. I had an apartment later, but it eventually became the Lion Rampant offices. But I spent most of my time there, just sleeping at the apartment. My room was in the back, and the rest of the apartment was the office, like Grand Central Station with people coming in at all hours to work on stuff with computers set up. But it was very

do that all the time now. Back then, it was a foreign concept, and that was a big idea, probably the biggest idea that came out of **Ars Magica**, because no one's really taken the magic system to the next level, and I wish they would.

What about Pathfinder's Words of Power?

Well I brought in my **Ars Magica** books in and I said, "Take a look." That was a big thing. I was trying to explain, to get them to see what we did. I mean, it's the most elegant system out there, the most elegant I've ever seen. I can't think of something that I'd want to do that I can't do with that system. It's all there. It's not like there's just one possibility. I say I want to move that sign over there, how many ways are there to do that? I mean I could do **Creo Aurum** and blow it over. I mean there's so many different ways, right?

I could do Rego Terram and use a stone to batter it down.

Right, I could use **Perdo Terram** and make it rust so it breaks. I mean so many ways to come up what you want to do, that's what's so brilliant about it.

Part of me would love to go to John Nephew and rip out the magic system and make it a cap magic system you could put on any game and go. It may still happen. I might talk to John, but it's going to be me designing it.

Are there those times you want to get back into design again?

Sure, I did the Plot Twist cards. I designed those based on Whimsy cards. I wanted to put something like that back in my **Pathfinder** game. I wanted Whimsy cards, I use them in

my game and now we use Plot Twist cards. Part of me thinks the Whimsy cards were better. I'll tell you why, because the Whimsy cards were so freeform. I think it made characters think of how to use them in really creative ways. But when I pitched Plot Twist cards, I just wanted to do Whimsy cards, but a lot of people thought "People aren't going to know how to use these. We've got to put more mechanics on them. We've got to make them more structured." I've used the Whimsy cards and crazy fun stuff would happen. Now I use the

in the open, and I'll say, "Does it matter? I say you're hit, or I say you're missed and it doesn't matter—it's the story." I find a lot of gamers today are stuck on the mechanics and not as much on the story or what we're collaborating on, and for me, that's too important. I have to struggle all the time against people trying to keep bringing rules in to bog down the game. I've always been about the role playing; I hate it when people optimize. I have to fight against it when I bring in some cool magic item and people sell it to buy

I find a lot of gamers today are stuck on the mechanics and not as much on the story or what we're collaborating on, and for me, that's too important...

Plot Twist cards, and most of the time people say, "Oh, I get a second roll." All the fun whimsy, the input into the storyline has faded from our group. Same group, same people, I just changed the card decks and I'm not getting what I used to get.

Looks like you'd like to get back into design to do more freeform gaming?

That's definitely my style of game, but I try to run my game that way. I don't know the rules very well, I know them enough. I'm not a rules person, never have been, never will be. I'd rather have someone say, "Ok this is what I want to do," and I say, "Ok this is what you need to do." Then someone will say "It's this plus this plus this." I'll say, "I don't care. Let's make a story. Let's go. Let's not allow the mechanics to get in the way." I like to play with people who want to just let the story be more important than the rolls. Every so often, I'll just be like, "I'll roll dice, but I don't care what they say because I want the story to go a certain way." And they'll say, "You should roll out

rings of protection or a cloak of whatever. I'll sigh, "I just gave you this really cool thing and how can you just throw that away?" I try to make story reasons why they should keep it so they'll hang on to it.

Alright, I know our time is almost up, so I have one last question. Who shot first? (For those who may not know, Lisa is an avid Star Wars fan)

Of course, Han. That's obvious. I mean Han Solo, he's a smart guy; he's not gonna let someone get the draw on him. He's always thinking two steps ahead. And so Han was ready for Greedo. When he realized Greedo wasn't gonna let him go, he was all set up for it, boom! Sorry Greedo, sorry about the mess. You know? It devalues Han Solo as a character to not have him shoot first.



Companion Piece: Bohemond of Lucerne

The Companion Piece series provides detailed characters ideal for use either as companions to individual magi or as associates to entire covenants. This article presents Bohemond of Lucerne, a dispossessed and arrogant young noble who must navigate the world of mundane politics if he is to attain manor, wife, and legacy.

Bohemond of Lucerne

Bohemond is the youngest of three brothers born in the environs of Lucerne in the Western Alps. Bright but naturally arrogant, he plies his trade as a knight for hire on the grand tourney circuit, traveling as far afield as the Lombard city states south of the Alps and distant England. He has not, so far, ventured to the Holy

Land, nor has he involved himself in the Cathar troubles of Provence, and any journeys to Iberia go no further south than Zaragoza.

He has no land of his own, no fief to support him, and no income from his brothers. When his father died, his brothers conspired to usurp those lands rightfully his and apportion them to their own supporters. His mother seemed powerless to oppose them. And so, with few options available to him, Bohemond has taken to the tourney circuit where he sells his services to nobles or fights under his own colors to gain what ransom he can. Where he goes, so goes his loyal servant Arnaud, a man of some intelligence but greater odor who tends to his master's animals, his equipment, and his all too-frequent wounds.

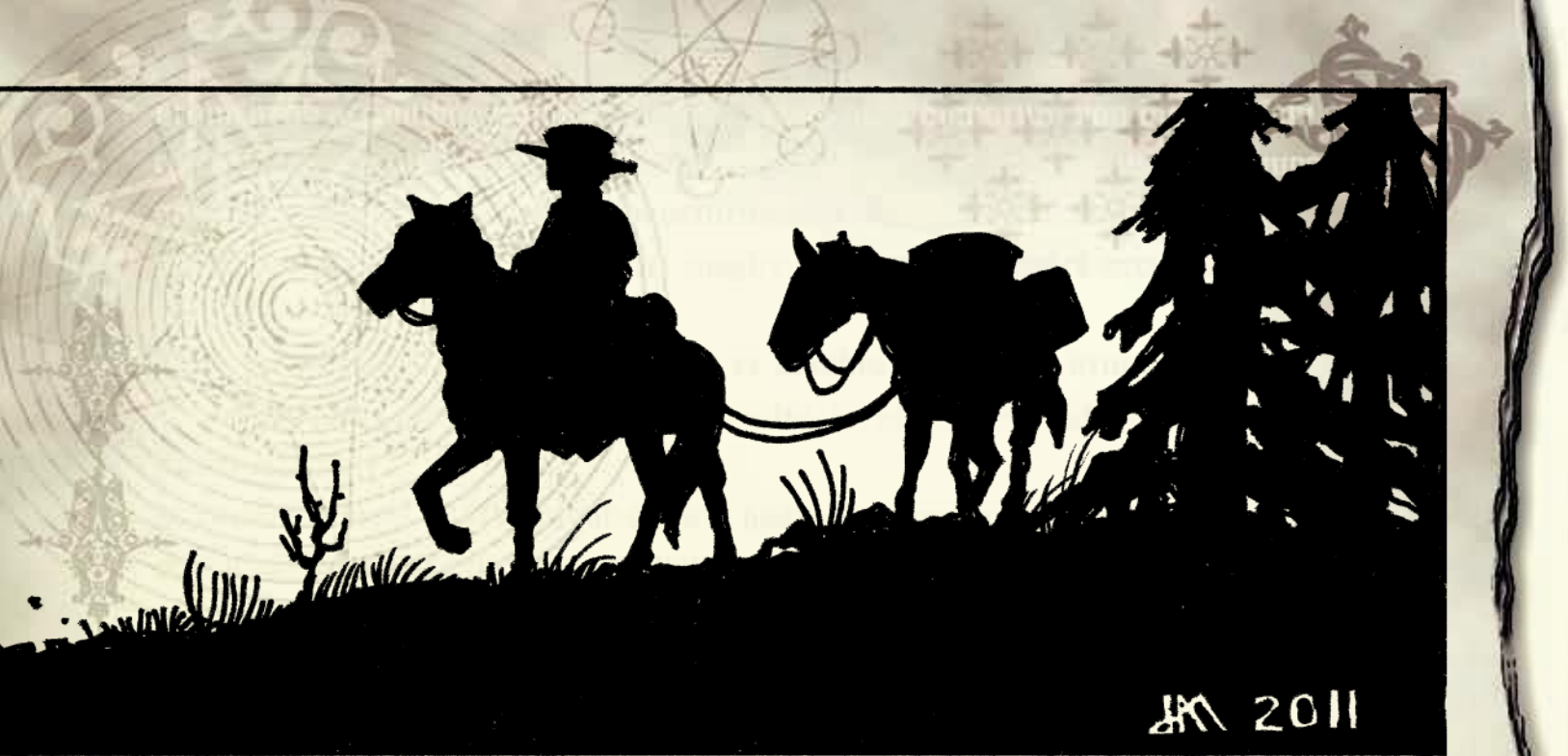
By David Agnew

Bohemond intends to gain his own lands one day, either those taken from him or to forge a new dynasty elsewhere. He will not let the treatment at the hands of his brothers define him and he will attain his aims, one way or another.

As a knight with little real influence, Bohemond is at least cautious to not make too many enemies. He is, at present, generally well-regarded among his peers. While at present he has not been noticed by those of rank, most are likely to remember his father and to know that his brother now rules those old lands.

Bohemond is by turns proud, brave, and fair. He suffers from the same prejudices as all western

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Bohemond of Lucerne

Educated as the child of a wealthy knight, Bohemond knows enough Latin to converse with churchmen and magi alike. Coming from the Tribunal of the Greater Alps, he has heard many stories of the Order of Hermes and shows more interest that most. He is a skilled knight with an affinity for single weapon and shield but he is astute enough to realize that arms alone will not win him his fief; he needs to employ every political nicety he can, and he is not above learning such games from others.

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

Size: 0

Age: 23 (23)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Knight; Affinity with Single Weapon, Educated, Puissant Single Weapon, Social Contacts (knights and nobles of the tourney circuit); Enemies (His brothers); Fragile Constitution (-3 to wound/disease recovery totals), Proud

Personality Traits: Proud of his Abilities +3, Driven +2, Rebellious +1

Reputations: Prudhomme +1 (continental tourney circuit)

Combat:

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

Mace/Heater Shield: Init +0, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +9

Mace/Heater Shield (mounted): Init +0, Attack +15, Defense +12, Damage +9

Lance (mounted): Init +1, Attack +15, Defense +11, Damage +6

Dagger: Init -1, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +4

Fist: Init -1, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +1

Kick: Init -2, Attack +4, Defense +3, Damage +4

Soak: +11 (including full mail, helm, and gambeson surcoat)

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Lucerne 3 (geography), Artes Liberales 2 (rhetoric), Athletics 2 (running), Brawl 3 (dagger), Carouse 2 (staying sober), Charm 2 (courtly love), Living Language 1 (tournament terms), Church Lore 2 (pilgrimage sites), Civil and Canon Law 1 (laws and customs of Lucerne), Etiquette 2 (court), Hunt 3 (tracking), Leadership 2 (in combat), Living Language: Saga Appropriate Region 5 (tournament), Latin 3 (church ceremonies), Music 2 (sing), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (personalities), Ride 4 (battle), Single Weapon 5+2 (mace)

Equipment: Palfrey (riding horse), Courser (mounted combat); heater shield, full chain mail (standard quality), gambeson, a range of weapons including spears, swords, and maces, tunics and sashes of various colors.

Encumbrance: 3 (4)

Description: Bohemond is a comely and athletic figure of a man, wide shoulders, fair hair, blue eyes, and a ready and even smile. When on the road he rarely shaves but he makes a particular effort when at tourney, mindful that he needs to make an impression.

Bohemond is not particularly intelligent, but he is gifted with physical attributes instead. While mindful of his status, he is also pragmatic and prepared to bow to the judgment of others.

Christian nobles; a strong understanding of his own status, a general dislike for dissimilar cultures, and scant regard for academic learning. However, he is a fair man and treats others according to both their due and their need. He's as likely to give alms to the hungry or sick as he is to cuff a persistent beggar around the ear.

And this behavior is carried over to his work at tournament. He fights to win and takes such prizes as he wins, but he will not see a knight ruined and would prefer to defer rightful ransom in favor of protecting the knight's honor and fortune. This even-handed treatment has built a healthy respect for him amongst his peers, and he has already earned a Prudhomme reputation.

Companion Material

Bohemond is not a wealthy man, but fortunately his profession is also

his passion. He makes his living on the tourney circuit, traveling between tournaments every few weeks. This makes one of his key contributions his Social Contacts Virtue allowing him to quickly find friends and gain information that magi might otherwise find difficult. He can also provide leverage in social situations, especially those requiring authority and leadership and those where representation to nobility is called for.

Lords of Men, chapter 3 provides material on running tournament events and using the circuit as a means of income. You need not play out every tournament that Bohemond attends as for the most part these are background events that provide food, lodging, and income. Bohemond provides a useful vehicle to explore those rules. He will most likely ask for magical aid to assist with the tourney, this is especially the case where he gains any decrepitude or aging points through aging or injury. This provides so-inclined magi or hedge wizards the

focus for their creativity. For instance, armor that demonstrates enhanced protection is always useful and Bohemond provides the catalyst for undertaking the project and creating the laboratory text. And beyond merely his equipment, he may seek restoratives, knowledge of his opponents, and even perhaps magical mounts.

Given that Bohemond has his own squire, a player grog character, he provides an opportunity for dedicated stories for two players away from the main troupe and/or covenant.

Bohemond as Craftsman

As a knight without independent means of support, Bohemond must ply his trade on the tournament circuit. As suggested by *Lords of Men*, Bohemond is treated just like any other craftsman and gains (Dexterity + Single Weapon) Labor Points per season worked, which in this case

Arnaud the Squire

All knights need a squire to see to the horses, to clean the armor, to arrange lodging, and help with arming. Arnaud fulfills some of those obligations but in truth, he is a lousy squire. He is uncouth, lazy, and argumentative, but Bohemond clearly sees some reason to keep him around. For all his faults, he is at least loyal and watchful and these qualities have saved Bohemond from treachery more than once.

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

Size: 0

Age: 25 (25)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Wanderer; Luck (luck bonus of between +1 and +3), Sharp Ears (+3 to hearing), True Friend (Rufus the hound); Lane (-6 on moving quickly and agility, -3 to dodge and -1 on other combat totals), Social Handicap (Unpleasant odor), Weak Characteristics

Personality Traits: Loyal +3, Brave +2, Lazy +1, Argumentative +1

Combat:

Dodge: Init -3, Attack N/A, Defense -1, Damage N/A

Bludgeon: Init -4, Attack +6, Defense +2, Damage +2

Knife: Init -3, Attack +4, Defense +1, Damage +2

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

Kick: Init -4, Attack +3, Defense +0, Damage +3

Soak: +1

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 4 (horses), Area Lore: tourney circuit 3 (personalities), Awareness 3 (alertness), Brawl 3 (Bludgeon), Carouse 3 (games of chance), Chirurgy 4 (binding wounds), Folk Ken 3 (nobles), Living Language: Saga Appropriate Region 5 (regional dialect), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Legerdemain 3 (filching), Ride 3 (speed), Survival 1 (setting camp)

Equipment: Scruffy quilted armor and a dirty eating knife

Encumbrance: 2 (2)

Description: Scuffy, smelly, and shambling, Arnaud limps along with his left leg shorter than his right. He is forever caked in the mud and dirt from the road and his greasy hair straggles out from under a split and torn leather cap.

Arnaud is the son of a Lucerne washerwoman and any one of Lucerne's household servants. Illegitimate and lame, Arnaud has always been the underdog, pushed aside and largely ignored. His lack of status manifests physically in his unkempt appearance and the appalling odor he drags behind him. His best friend is his dog, a three year old hound called Rufus. And as loyal as Arnaud is to Bohemond, so Rufus is to Arnaud.

Equipment and Resources

Bohemond has all the trappings expected of a knight including his arms and armor, one riding palfrey, one courser for mounted combat, and sufficient funds to see him from tournament to tournament.

The vagaries of what he wins or loses in any given tournament are not important unless they arise during a given story. Anything else is considered ransomed to earn money to support him on the road.

Arnaud also has a horse, a large and plodding hackney that also serves as the knight's pack horse.

See *Lords of Men*, pages 55 and 56 for statistics for the palfrey, courser, and hackney.

means entering tournaments. Each season spent in this way provides exposure experience points.

Therefore, Bohemond needs to work for two seasons in order to support himself. Excess points beyond those needed for subsistence are accrued and it costs a total of 360 Labor Points to gain the Wealthy Virtue. This is important as Bohemond's aim is to increase his social standing, gaining allies in the process. Bohemond can also gain Labor Points from stories that improve his standing at tournament. *City & Guild*, page 39 provides more information on the appropriate rewards for particular stories and situations.

Bohemond can also make use of the workshop innovation rules also found in *City & Guild*, page 66. These are intended to provide craftsmen with a bonus to their craft totals, allowing them to craft items of greater quality and to complete work quicker. In Bohemond's case, this represents a step in quality of his arms and/or armor. When Bohemond gains a point of workshop innovation bonus the player should decide whether this applies to his weapons, providing an Attack and Defense

bonus, or to his armor, providing a Soak bonus.

The raw materials bonus that craftsmen may work towards can also be applied. In this case, it is recommended that it be applied as a bonus to any wound recovery totals as he is better able to support himself and/or afford better physicians and treatment.

Advancing Bohemond

Bohemond's seasons spent at tournament will, by virtue of exposure experience, naturally improve his Single Weapon and/or Ride Abilities, but if he wants to rise above his current status it is his social skills that he will need to work on. Charm, Etiquette, and Intrigue are going to be the tools he needs to gain favor.

While he has an obvious martial use in many stories, he should always look for the diplomatic possibilities in order to apply story experience to those Abilities that will benefit his social advancement; he cannot outplay his brothers by being the better swordsman.

Introducing Bohemond

A knight and his squire on the open road traveling between tournaments can fall into pretty well any story. He is most likely to interact with other companions or grogs, with the Gift of the magi manifesting for him as an unfriendly air making for awkward social interactions; they have nothing in common and they appear to view each other with either marked disinterest.

But a knight with his own concerns is unlikely to simply attach himself to a covenant of magi with little prompting, so it is important to create a connection between them. Should the covenant be paced in Bohemond's debt, he exploits that debt through ensuring that he has a welcome at their covenant. He is not an exploitative man and is very unlikely to make unreasonable demands. Similarly, should Bohemond become indebted to the covenant, he repays this debt over time and, being an honorable man, considers all requests on his time



fairly and without prejudice.

- Bohemond strikes up a friendship with the covenant consors and grogs while on the road between tournaments, even wagering a few pennies on some impromptu sparring. But as the magi are in the midst of a story, Bohemond becomes embroiled and provides vital assistance when he offers an introduction to the very noble the magi are keen to speak to.
- After Bohemond is injured in the early rounds of the tourney, Arnaud goes looking for magical aid to heal his master's wounds. Bohemond's brother is sponsoring a knight who wears a strange emblem and Bohemond is keen to face him. Finding the covenant's consors, they recognize the emblem as belonging to a rival covenant or magus. Assisting Bohemond gives both parties what they want, a chance to get one over on their respective rivals.

Stories for Bohemond

Unless Bohemond enjoys a magically enhanced lifespan, he may have 50-years of life left to play out. This could potentially move quite quickly through fast-paced games so it is important to identify the characteristic beats in his own personal story. So across Bohemond's 50 years, a few tourney-based stories should be interleaved with some concerning his brothers and their agents. His middle years should be concerned with his growing reputation and need to gain his own lands before moving on to considering his legacy, and finally his death. And even then, the death of the character need not be the end of his influence. The nature of any will that he leaves says as much in death

as his actions in life.

The Tourney

There are numerous stories that could be told at the tourney, from coming up against his brother's champions, to losing his equipment and having to gain it back. But there is also the opportunity to put the strange and supernatural into the tourney and have Bohemond face faerie, demonic, or magically-enhanced knights. After all, if Bohemond has magical allies, perhaps others do to:

- When Bohemond's mount is injured during an early round at tournament, a horse trader approaches the knight with an offer. He has a horse the equal of the original in every way, including its appearance. Where did this horse come from? And what is the strange possessiveness that comes over the knight when he rides it during later rounds?
- Covenant rivalries are played out as Bohemond comes face to face with another knight in receipt or Hermetic assistance. Can the rival covenants get the better of each other through the tournament by supporting their respective champions.
- Bohemond's growing

reputation has attracted the interest of two mundane nobles keen to bolster their tournament teams. He must choose carefully which noble he joins. One may be stronger at the tournament, but the other seems to have more political allies off the field.

- A magus of House Verditius takes an interest in any enchanted equipment used by Bohemond. When it is stolen, he may need the assistance of his allied magi to recover it.

Enemies

Bohemond's outward arrogance and inward nobility is countered by his eldest brother, who presents as fairer but whose motives are selfish and grasping. His brother holds title to the land Bohemond wants for himself, and he makes no secret of the fact. This attitude has soured a relationship which was never truly even cordial. His brother acts through proxies and, while never meaningfully intending to thwart Bohemond, his men always happen to be just where Bohemond wants to be.

Responsibilities

For all his arrogance, Bohemond remains a knight and accepts the

Bohemond's Family

When introducing Bohemond his family consists of his two older brothers and his mother:

Johannes is the eldest of the brothers, is married, and commands the majority of his father's estates. He dislikes Bohemond and keeps Thomas on a short leash to prevent Thomas coming around to Bohemond's point of view.

Thomas is only three years older than Bohemond, is unmarried, and enjoys a number of small but lucrative estates.

Margareta enjoys the income from her own family estates and lives separately from both her elder sons. She is cool towards Bohemond, disapproving of his lifestyle and his

company. But he can be assured lodgings for at least the night. His mother's house, if nothing else, serves as neutral ground for the three brothers.

It is useful to have two elder brothers as this gives the player the opportunity to play one against the other in pursuit of Bohemond's lands. For the storyguide, Thomas provides a good rival both on the tourney field and in the noble courts when it comes to Bohemond finding a wife.

Bohemond's mother lives as this gives the storyguide chance to bring the brothers together, either to resolve their differences or to squabble over the disposal of her estates when she dies.

responsibility incumbent with the station. If called upon, he would feel duty-bound to protecting his brother's lands against an oppressor. He may secure some form of agreement from his brother in exchange but he would most likely renege or find a way to annul the agreement.

Bohemond has not seen active service overseas in either crusade or civil war. Depending on your saga's setting, a crusade may present itself where Bohemond may become involved. He considers the affairs of distant lands unimportant, but accepts he may need to become involved, if not through principle then at least through politics.

He wants to gain a demesne one way or another. In his youth, he may fixate on the lands he believes taken from him, but he is likely to become pragmatic over time. This means Bohemond eventually becomes willing to swear an oath of fealty to one or more lords. And those oaths open the way for more stories of protecting his liege's interests or siding against one lord to support another.

Forging a Legacy

As Bohemond seeks advancement, chapter two of *Lords of Men* will make itself very useful. In particular, as Bohemond seeks advancement he will need to earn Gratitude from those he serves as it is this Gratitude that allows him to gain and add lands to his manor.

Taking a wife and fathering children is an important aim for Bohemond and he is acutely aware of his desires and responsibilities in this regard. As a result, he is faced with a hard choice; marry for love or marry for political advantage. Perhaps a way exists to achieve both aims, but this is an important story in Bohemond's development. Any marriage should be surrounded by story:

- His prospective wife is already betrothed to a rival.
- He falls in love with a married woman.
- The woman's father plays Bohemond against his brother for the woman's hand in marriage.
- Bohemond is promised his patron's daughter, but only if he can woo her.
- The marriage dowry is stolen, putting the wedding at risk. Bohemond must find and return the dowry before he can claim his wife.

Children are likely in any marriage, so the troupe should determine what children Bohemond and his wife produce. As a rule of thumb, roll a Stamina + Simple Die against an Ease Factor of 6 in every year of marriage until the wife reaches 40. Apply a penalty of the wife's age/10 (rounding down) to the roll along with the prevailing Living Conditions modifier (*ArM5*, page 170).

Gaining Land

Needing to support his ambitions and his growing family, Bohemond looks for additional lands. If nothing else, he needs his own vassals as he grows older and he requires lands to award his own supporters:

- Bohemond's mother dies and her estate leaves a small manor to Bohemond, but his brothers have designs upon the land and are determined to cheat, bully, or otherwise swindle him out of what's due. Bohemond must gain support from his liege and other allies to ensure his defense against his brothers' plans.
- Word reaches Bohemond that his brother has mortgaged ancestral lands to a greedy abbot and the term of the

agreement is almost up. Can his brother repay? And if not, can Bohemond step in and save the old family estates from the abbot?

- When his brothers fall out and vie against each other, they both try to recruit Bohemond to their side with the promise of land. Does Bohemond choose one over the other, or is there another way to get the better of both?

Supporting his Family

There are many stories that can be told concerning his family:

- Illness falls upon Bohemond's manor and unless Bohemond find and addresses the cause it soon spreads to his children.
- Temptation crosses Bohemond's path and a woman from his past returns. Is the temptation natural or supernatural in nature? Does Bohemond resist? And what are the consequences?
- His liege calls upon Bohemond with an opportunity for one or more of his children to be tutored within a powerful noble household. As Bohemond learns more, he realizes that his children will actually be held as insurance against his liege's compliant behavior.
- His liege arranges a political marriage for one of Bohemond's children, but the other party is child to Bohemond's old tournament rival.
- As his children grow older they realize that their father's lands are limited and they start to conspire against each other and their father. Bohemond must galvanize his family or cut out the harmful elements.

Retirement and Death

And despite all the magical assistance, there will come a time when he must put away his sword and shield and let the younger generation take them up:

- Bohemond turns the running of his estates over to his children and retires, with his wife, to the covenant where the magi support their old consors. When word reaches the covenant of failing harvests and feuding children, Bohemond must return to his old lands to lay down the law.
- His eldest son his gravely wounded in an attack on Bohemond's old estates by a violent robber baron. With the magi unable to involve themselves openly, Bohemond sets out to recruit his old tournament contacts for one last hurrah. Magically assisted, the magnificent septuagenarians hold back the robber baron and his army.
- Bohemond's elder brother lays dying and he must ride to his side to resolve their old differences. While there, Bohemond discovers that the old family estates are failing and his nephew is out of his depth. Can the old knight teach his nephew something of leadership?
- With Bohemond dead, his children are free to make their own way in the world. The estates are disposed of and the covenant's last connection with Bohemond seems lost. But his grandson arrives seeking stories of his grandfather and the sponsorship of the covenant in the grand tournament. There's a risk of getting involved in mundane politics, but the grandson is so much like the grandfather is his youth that it's hard to deny

him. And so the story starts again.

Using Bohemond as an NPC

Bohemond is a good, but flawed, knight. As such he should take a sympathetic role in stories, generally well-inclined to his fellow man. He would easily fall into stories in the role of helping other PC knights as he looks for allies for his future ambitions.

He can also act as the catalyst for magi thinking of creating magical devices. As a successful tournament knight, he can always be relied upon to have funds available, funds that could be used to buy vis. And the enterprising magus could make good earnings from keeping him supplied with charged items that are cheap to produce.

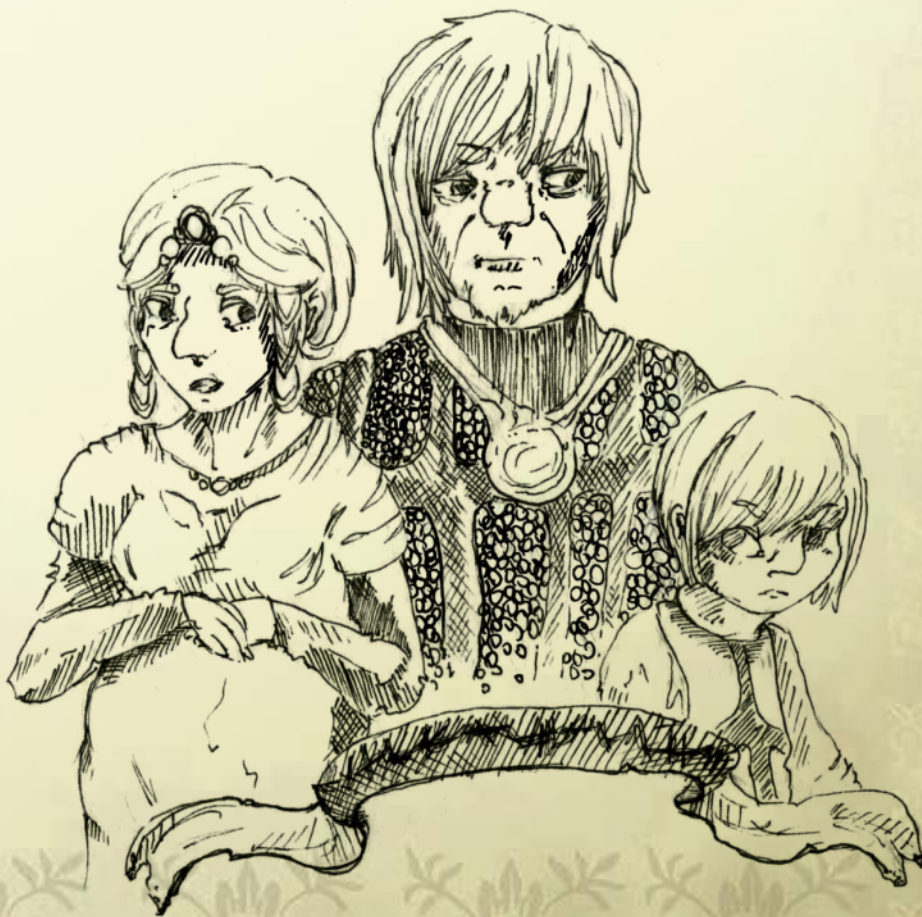
And lastly, if Bohemond becomes a regular NPC, visiting the covenant

frequently, the story suggestions listed above can all be used to entice the covenant magi and consors into stories of mundane intrigue and warfare.

Conclusion

As a player character, Bohemond, or a knight in the same mold, promotes stories of a mundane dynasty. Players can chart the rise of a knight from the tournament field to the courts of the powerful. They can see him wedded, become a father, a landowner, and a man of responsibility. They can see him resolved with his brothers, or ultimately beat them at their own political game.

As a non-player character, Bohemond can be a useful contact as he provides an entry point to mundane noble society. Providing assistance to Bohemond likely pays dividends to the covenant in the long term.



Sub Rosa

Mappa Mundi

In this issue we take a look at technology that can make the **Ars Magica** play experience simpler, easier, and more fun.

Character Sheets

The days of photocopying character sheets out the back of the rulebook are history, replaced with some more high-tech options.

MetaCreator

MetaCreator is the near essential tool for creating and managing **Ars Magica** characters, creatures, laboratories, familiars, and covenants. This software (Windows only) has support for both **Ars Magica Fourth Edition** and **Fifth Edition** along with a host of books from both. It contains all the Virtues, Flaws, Abilities, Powers, and other special rules and effects from the supported books (which includes *Realms of Power: Magic*, the three *Houses of Hermes* books, *Mysteries*, *Covenants*, and the *Rhine* and *Normandy Tribunal* books) and allows the player to advance the character season-by-season using all the supported laboratory activities and study/practice types. Characters can be printed to a range of styles, including a very nicely-formatted character sheet as well as simple rtf and html pages. Combined with a PDF converter, these are ideal for use on tablets and laptops at the gaming table. As a tool, it is pretty indispensable and while the publishers are small, the support team are second to none, and very nice people too.

www.alteregosoftware.com/ArM5Features.html

From Beyond the Grave

One of the smartest uses for a cell phone I've seen was during a scene that called for the summoning of a dead PC's spirit. The character's player was not present, taking a break from the game while the rest of the group adjusted to life without the character. It worked: to lose both the character and the player imparted a profound sense of loss.

And so the summoning: we assumed that the storyguide

Mad Irishman

For those who prefer to handle their character creation and advancement manually, there's a resource that provides superb character sheets free to download. There are a range of sheets, maps, storyguide screen, and even some story notes that could be useful. A lot of work has clearly gone into these sheets, including the custom print template for use with MetaCreator.

And if you take nothing else away from the site, the storyguide screen is a work of genius and a thing of beauty.

www.mad-irishman.net/pub_ars.html

Mapping Tools

If you want to create your own maps, there are a number of tools available. Campaign Cartographer has a good reputation and includes extensions for towns and cities as well as the default overland maps.

www.profantasy.com/products/cc3.asp

RPGTools is a free alternative, perhaps more limited but a decent entry point if you want to create your own maps. They also have a range of other tools that you can download, including a token-maker that seems ideal for creating vis tokens.

www.rptools.net/index.php?page=tools

Google Earth and Google maps should get an honorable mention here for being so quick and easy to use. The views may be modern, but they're enough to give an overview.

would handle the spirit's responses... We were wrong. Upon successfully summoning the spirit, the storyguide laid his cell phone on the table and switched it to speakerphone.

The voice of our missing player issued forth seemingly from beyond the grave and in the time we had we probed for the information we needed before releasing him to oblivion.

Simply the best summoning scene I've played in.

Documents and Notes

Evernote can be installed on Windows, Mac, and a host of mobile platforms. It allows you to make notes, including sound recordings, images, file attachments, etc. and persist them to the Evernote servers. You can then access those notes on any platform running the application or able to use the Evernote website. Seriously, you should take a look at this.

Google Docs has its own strengths and weaknesses. The interface (apart from the Android app) is web-only, but the functionality is pretty rich. Especially impressive is its spreadsheet support. For those who use such things to track saga events, you can upload your current spreadsheet to Google Docs and, like Evernote, share them with the group.

The links you'll need are <http://www.evernote.com> and <https://docs.google.com>.

Smart Phones and Tablets

Ubiquitous and very nearly inescapable, smart phones really are getting smarter. It is probably not uncommon to see multiple iPhones, Windows 7 phones, or Android phones around the gaming table. They can be used to view character sheets, check online resources, and make notes, etc.

Need an instant map of Italy? Fire up Google Earth on the tablet and navigate away. Want to take your session notes with you but don't want to print them? Copy them across to your tablet or store them on the cloud as described above.

And with Atlas Games now making its **Ars Magica** rulebooks available in PDF editions, tablets really come into their own for transporting a stack of books in one slim companion.



In the Next Issue

The Storyguide's Handbook: Founding Your Covenant

The decisions you make in designing your covenant are also some of the more complicated and influential that you'll need to make. In this article we look at the ways you can simplify the process of covenant design.

Off the Shelf

A set of real-world medieval texts that could set your magi off on entirely new adventures.

The Second Coming: Playing Ars Magica Second Edition

We move on to the second incarnation of the game, the edition that many people remember. But can they trust their recollection? Just how similar is the game to the one we play now?

Companion Piece: William of Aylesbury

A man of piety and faith trying to balance his friendship with wizards and idolaters and the pursuit of his God-given cause..

...And much more...

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