

Tales of the Dark Ages

A Collection of Ars Magica™ Fantasy Role-Playing Adventures



Ag Atlas
Games

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first anthology of adventures published for the **Ars Magica™** game, and the first product to appear under the label of Atlas Games. While we have obviously designed this product for players of **Ars Magica**, we would hope that players of other RPGs may be intrigued by this collection. In the tradition of **Ars Magica**, our emphasis has been on writing a good story, not legislating rules or catering to their peculiarities. We hope that we have successfully done so, and that these stories will appeal to adherents of every game—and perhaps even intrigue non-gamers.

ABOUT ATLAS GAMES

Atlas Games is a brand new company, a small publisher of role-playing games and related materials. By special arrangement with Lion Rampant Games, we are licensed to produce materials for the **Ars Magica™** game. Atlas Games is envisioned as a small company, one that caters to the sophisticated gamer, the reader willing to delve into the unusual and experimental, as well as to enjoy creative new variations on mainstream design.

This vision is informed by the belief that any art, such as role-playing, grows through risk and experimentation. Large companies, because of the scale on which they operate, are often hesitant to take such risks. As in other arts (and technologies), many of the exciting innovations originate in the small, obscure, “underground” companies. These ideas, and the companies that spawned them, may later—often in “watered-down” form—become accepted as “mainstream.” The creation of role-playing games in the first place attests to this process.

This all means that to renew and grow, the hobby requires a continuous supply of small ventures, business risks that may survive or fail, but which inevitably make their impression on the hobby. While the average gamer may never have read **Ars Magica**, for instance, he may have already felt its repercussions. This is because the best designers, though they may be employed by the larger companies, keep a close eye on the “underground.” They know

that new ideas and approaches will show up there. Consciously or not, each designer is influenced by those ideas to which he or she has been exposed; in this fashion, the best ideas are distilled out and preserved as a legacy for all games.

Atlas Games is pleased to be a small company. Certainly we will not throw away profit, should it come our way; but at the outset our dedication is foremost to innovation, to experimentation, whether exploring new territory or re-charting the familiar. We believe this approach will have a crucial impact on the gaming hobby, whether or not a particular product is widely recognized; and we hope that the core of quality that survives the ravages of time and criticism will redeem whatever inferior contents may have been discarded along the way.

Tales of the Dark Ages is the first step toward our vision. In it, we invite you to taste the cutting edge of role-gaming design. Won't you join us?

WHAT IS ARS MAGICA™? (AND WHAT IF I PLAY SOMETHING ELSE?)

Ars Magica is a fantasy role-playing game published by Lion Rampant Games (P.O. Box 29942, Atlanta, GA 30359). The game focuses on the medieval wizard in an authentic setting, as close to the historical Medieval Europe as possible. It has received critical acclaim from nearly every quarter for its fresh approach to role-gaming, and its innovative magic system.

Tales of the Dark Ages was designed specifically for **Ars Magica**. If you use another game system, do not fret; you can still adapt these adventures for your campaign (—or “saga,” as we would say in **ArM** terms)! Here we'll give you a quick introduction to the basics of **ArM** game mechanics. If you have some idea of what all the numbers and abbreviations mean, it should be easier to draw up analogous details for the game of your choice.

There is only one sort of die, 10-sided, but two sorts of die rolls that are the heart of **Ars Magica** game mechanics. A *simple die* is read as it is, like a "1d10" in other games. When the situation affords extraordinary success or failure, or involves a lot of pressure, the Storyguide (an **ArM** gamemaster) usually requires a *stress die*. A stress die is read normally from 2 through 9. If a "1" is rolled, then the die is rolled again, and the result doubled. (If another "1" is rolled, then a third die is rolled and quadrupled, etc.) If a "0" is rolled, the die must be rolled again. If it is anything other than a "0", the result of the roll is zero. If a second "0" is rolled, however, it is a *botch*—something goes terribly wrong. For instance, in combat a botch may mean the character strikes a companion rather than a foe. The exact nature of the botch is left to the gamemaster.

Die rolls are modified by a *characteristic* (sometimes by more than one) and an *ability* (again, sometimes by more than one). The eight characteristics are Intelligence, Perception, Strength, Stamina, Communication, Presence, Dexterity and Quickness; they have scores from -5 to +5. Abilities are the talents and skills of a character. Hence, one might have a roll such as "stress die + Com + Speak French." The player would roll a stress die, and add to the result his Communication characteristic and his score in Speaking French.

Success or failure is determined by comparing the modified die roll to an *ease factor*; if the roll is equal to or greater than the ease factor, the character has succeeded in his action. Ease factors may be anything; they typically range from "3+" (extremely easy) to "15+" (extremely difficult).

Many gamers should spot ways to translate or adapt this for the games they play. For instance, if one were to adapt this for the *Dungeons & Dragons*® game, one would not add straight D&D® ability scores (since they range from 3 to 18, as opposed to **Ars Magica**'s range of -5 to +5) to game rolls. Instead, use the bonuses or penalties that the D&D ability scores confer: -3 for a score of 3; -2 for 4-5; -1 for 6-8; 0 for 9-12; +1 for 13-15; +2 for 16-17; and +3 for 18.

The **Ars Magica** magic system consists of *techniques* and *forms*, two sorts of magic *arts* that are combined to create magical effects. The five techniques are the action—*Creo* ("I create"), *Intéllego* ("I perceive"), *Muto* ("I transform"), *Perdo* ("I destroy"), and *Rego* ("I control"). The ten forms are the medium or object of that action—*Animál* ("animal"), *Aquam* ("water"), *Auram* ("air"), *Córporem* ("body"), *Herbam* ("plant"), *Ignem* ("fire"), *Imágonem* ("image"), *Mentem* ("mind"), *Terram* ("earth"), and *Vim* ("power," the

substance of magic). For instance "Intéllego Imágonem" would describe a spell for gaining knowledge about an image—detecting an illusion, for instance.

Magi (wizards) have scores in each technique and form that they use. They can can *formulaic* spells from memory, or *spontaneous* spells off the cuff, with their success and efficacy depending on their intelligence and scores in the arts involved.

ARS MAGICA™ ABBREVIATIONS

Following is a list of common abbreviations used in the **Ars Magica** game, and what they stand for.

1st	First Strike Bonus
An	<i>Animál</i> ("Animal")
Aq	<i>Aquam</i> ("Water")
ArM	Ars Magica ™
Atk	Attack Roll Bonus
Au	<i>Auram</i> ("Air")
Cnf	Confidence
Co	<i>Córporem</i> ("Body")
Com	Communication
Cr	<i>Creo</i> ("I create")
Dam	Damage Bonus
Def	Defense Roll Bonus
Dex	Dexterity
Enc	Encumbrance
Fat	Fatigue
He	<i>Herbam</i> ("Plant")
Ig	<i>Ignem</i> ("Fire")
In	<i>Intéllego</i> ("I perceive")
Incap	Incapacitated
Int	Intelligence
Me	<i>Mentem</i> ("Mind")
Mu	<i>Muto</i> ("I transform")
Pe	<i>Perdo</i> ("I destroy")
Per	Perception
Prs	Presence
Qik	Quickness
Re	<i>Rego</i> ("I control")
Stm	Stamina
Str	Strength
Unc	Unconscious

STATISTICS FORMAT

A few notes may clarify game statistics presented in this anthology.

- Any time that a characteristic, ability, etc., is not listed for a character, but needs to be used in play, presume it to be 0 (zero—that is, average). Hence, if a character is described as having just “Stm +1” under **Characteristics**, the character has a score of “0” in the seven other characteristics.

- Sometimes, after an **Ability**, something follows a slash mark—e.g., “Church Knowledge/Monastic Orders—2.” That something following is a *specialty*. Any time the character is faced with a die roll for the ability that also involves the specialty, the ability is treated as one higher. (In the example: If this character was faced with a question about the Benedictine Rule—which concerns the monastic order of St. Benedict—his ability would be effectively 3.)

- For convenience, in the **Grimoire** of each spellcaster, the caster’s total casting bonus (Int + Tech + Form, plus any other bonus for affinities and so forth) is totalled and presented after the name, technique, form, and level of the spell. This bonus does *not* take into account special considerations such as the aura of an area, or difficult casting conditions (e.g., being unable to make hand gestures or vocalizations).

MYTHIC EUROPE

Mythic Europe™, the recommended setting of **Ars Magica™**, is very much like historical Europe of the Middle Ages—except magic really does work, and things (even the laws of physics!) are as the medievals believed them to be. The setting suggested by the **ArM** rulebook is the Mistridge Saga, based on a covenant in the Pyrenees in the late 12th century. Additional contemporary covenants are described in the supplement, *Covenants™*. —But there is no reason why you should not use a different place or time.

If you do, you will want to gather information about it. What is the political situation? What are the economics? What major events have happened there in the last century or so? The upcoming **ATLAS EUROPA™** product line from Atlas Games will answer these questions (and more!) for various interesting times and places—but you should certainly put together sagas of your own devising! In doing so, do take liberties with history. Just as your Saga may affect the course of events, so that they differ from the real Europe, you may decide that somewhere along the line in your Mythic Europe, things happened differently. Perhaps in your alternate universe Duke

William of Normandy lost the Battle of Hastings in 1066, leaving England under Anglo-Saxon power. At the same time Norman power could have been greatly weakened, permitting the King of France to consolidate his power earlier than was historically the case...

With the wealth of information that only the real world can give, plus your imagination, you have all the right materials to craft a Mythic Europe to serve and to grow as the setting for your rich saga of exciting stories.

Every adventure provided in *Tales of the Dark Ages* is given a specific setting in mythical Medieval Europe, from the Rhineland to the Pyrenees. The setting chosen by the author is used for detail and atmosphere; in Thomas Kane’s “Tongue of Vipers,” for instance, it is interesting that many of the non-player characters know both French and German; this means that characters from a wide area of Europe could effectively participate in the communication-intensive adventure.

But don’t feel constrained by the setting described. As the adventures note, they often can easily be translated to other places or times, to suit your troupe’s saga. Doing so, along with altering other details to your taste, are part of the creative end of a Storyguide’s job.

UPCOMING PRODUCTS

Watch for exciting new products coming up from Atlas Games! In particular, you’ll be interested in seeing our **ATLAS EUROPA™** line of supplements, detailing the setting of Mythic Europe in diverse places and times. For more information on products and availability, write to Atlas Games at the address below.

COMMENTS, CRITICISM, &C.

Your thoughts on *Tales of the Dark Ages*, or any other germane topic, are most welcome! Please write to:

Atlas Games
P.O. Box 406
Northfield, MN 55057

If you have comments for a particular artist or writer, indicate their name, “c/o Atlas Games,” on your envelope, and we’ll gladly forward your letter to him or her.



Holz

Tongue of Vipers

by Thomas M. Kane

TIME AND LOCATION

This story takes place during the thirteenth century in the Lorraine region of France, near the Rhine. If your campaign takes place in another place or time, you should have little difficulty adapting it. All beings encountered speak French (or whatever language the PCs use in your campaign, if it is in a different region). Many know German as well.

SUMMARY OF PLOT

For many years, the party's covenant has yearned for access to the Seir Waters, an enchanted spring in the private forests of the Viscount von Orstadt. The viscount, however, is formidable and feels disinclined to humor wizards. When this adventure begins, the Lady Claire, a new favorite at Von Orstadt's court, suddenly entreats the party to pay her viscount a visit. Naturally, the group accepts.

When the adventurers arrive, talk of Lady Claire brings them little favor. The viscount has imprisoned her as a poisoner. Apparently, the viscount discovered remnants of a strange herb dissolving in his wine-cup, which, when fed to a cat, caused immediate cramps and apparent death. After a quick meeting of his Council, he selected Lady Claire as the most likely suspect, and indeed, a search of her chambers revealed more drugs with similar powers.

The party does not know if Lady Claire committed the crime or not. Most of this adventure consists of clues in the castle and grounds, which do seem to incriminate Claire. Viscount von Orstadt has delayed her execution, hoping to uncover any remaining conspirators, and the party could persuade him to grant access to his spring in return for detective work. On the other hand, bumbling adventurers might implicate themselves as Claire's accomplices. As the party probes deeper, they learn that Claire is not the only mysterious person at court.

Claire arrived at the palace amidst a fierce struggle between two other courtiers, Father Gaston and Jacques de Bray, the viscount's private soothsayer. She quickly outshone them both, impressing the viscount with her skills as a seer and her willingness to serve him instead of bickering with his other advisors. Naturally, the two old advisors despised her. She summoned the adventurers as protectors, but before they arrived, Jacques de Bray managed to frame her for the poisoning. She wrote the viscount a letter from prison naming witnesses to her innocence. Father Gaston intercepted it. Meanwhile Jacques had his henchmen beat her into a confession. Now Father Gaston plans to wait for Claire's execution. After that, he will give the Viscount her letter and denounce Jacques as the real culprit. The party must expose the actual villains first—or find themselves enemies of the new powers in the castle.

This outline is of course just one possible way the story may go. Role-playing in general, and “Tongue Of Vipers” in particular, depends on the ability of the troupe to create its own story.

THEME

The theme of this story is trust. Whom can the adventurers rely on when they arrive at a strange court and find their patroness condemned? What does the Viscount do when he finds his drink poisoned, and how does he respond when strangers arrive claiming to be friends of the poisoner? If they accuse Jacques and Gaston of treachery, will Von Orstadt believe the newcomers against his old advisors? Claire must find an advocate too, especially since Father Gaston, who should have helped prove her innocence, has betrayed her. When a grog keeps his word despite awful temptation, when a character reveals the secrets lives hang on, this adventure has reached its pinnacle.

RUNNING “TONGUE OF VIPERS”

This adventure is primarily a mystery, in which the party gathers clues from encounters at the castle. However, the adventurers cannot be satisfied with simply learning the truth. They must exploit their discovery to win the viscount’s gratitude, and, presumably, Lady Claire’s freedom. Only you, as Storyguide, can bring out the dynamics of the power struggle in von Orstadt’s castle. The adventure concludes, not with a pre-planned encounter, but when the party finally chooses its enemies and launches a maneuver against them. Develop the NPCs’ reactions as imaginatively as you can.

CLAIRE’S MESSAGE (PCS’ INTRODUCTION)

A hired courier delivers Claire’s letter to the Covenant. In his German accent, the man explains that it comes from Claire, a seer who has won great favor from the Viscount von Orstadt. Then he rides away, eager to leave the uncanny grounds of the wizards’ covenant. His message immediately creates excitement among the magi, who want water from Von Orstadt’s Seir Springs. It would add urgency to this adventure if a PC magus needs the water for some ongoing magical project. Feel free to give this spring properties which will interest the party.

Claire’s letter reads:

Honored Magi:

I’d welcome the presence of a wizard at my lord’s manor as soon as one of you can spare the time. The Viscount von Orstadt could well use the wisdom of Hermes (or any other kind, p’raps), and certain of his advisors could also benefit from your corrections. Knowing you to be exceptionally skillful at the crafts this court requires, I guarantee that I will find a way to make this favor worth your while.

Claire Beaucamp

Humble guest of the honored Viscount Stutt von Orstadt

Everyone at the Covenant covets this assignment. Presumably a PC magus eventually gets it.

ARRIVAL

When the PCs arrive at the estate, they find a wooden stockade surrounding a keep, with a few towers of damp stone. A cloud hangs over the manor. It may rain. If, for whatever reason, adventurers try to sneak over the wall, they must first make a Climb + Dexterity roll of 6+, and then a Stealth + Dexterity roll of 14+ (9+ after dark) to avoid attracting attention. Fifteen men-at-arms (see insert for statistics) rush to capture intruders. Assuming the party tries to enter more conventionally, they meet two porters at the gate. These men have orders not to let strangers pass.

If anyone mentions Claire, the porters give a nod of recognition but take care not to betray either pleasure or disapproval. Then, after taking any obvious weapons, the taller porter leads new arrivals to the Great Hall, where they wait several hours until the viscount can speak with them. The servants who pass avoid looking directly at the newcomers but sometimes peek curiously. The porters do not permit servants to speak with the adventurers, nor do they let PCs leave the Great Hall. If the party tries to run away or offer a bribe, they summon ten men-at-arms, who arrest the adventurers and imprison them. See the *Event Notes* for ideas on what happens next.

When the viscount arrives, he asks for an exhaustive account of Claire’s invitation. Once satisfied that the newcomers have told him all they know, he narrows his eyes and intones, “Does it interest you to know that this Claire has tried to poison me?” After savoring the party’s reaction, he decides their fate. The viscount is a superb judge of character, and unless the adventurers say something

truly stupid, he will recognize their innocence. Then he asks his guests what they wanted from Claire and himself. This is a moment for the PCs to be audacious. The viscount admires forthrightness, and if the party asks for some boon, such as springwater, he would be glad to propose an exchange. If the adventurers can learn the motive for his attempted poisoning and apprehend any remaining assassins, he will give them free use of his Spring, and a purse of gold besides. If the party asks for nothing, he will allow them to leave, or stay on for a few nights as guests. The map shows guest rooms where they can stay.

The viscount will not authorize his investigators to search or accuse members of his court without clear reason. The Storyguide may decide what justifications convince him. Orstadt also has limited patience for rehashing the affairs surrounding the crime, since he has already acted on the only clues that occurred to him. The party cannot grill him. They must plead, pose "innocent" questions over dinner, etc. Role-play it!

The viscount has the following special information, in addition to general background as described in the *Plot Summary*:

- The chief evidence against Claire is her "unholy" skill with "infusions, herbs and mixtures," and the fact that Otto, the servant who brought the poisoned wine, named her under interrogation. "Tis a shame that one so mild could be so false," Von Orstadt muses. For the few months she lived at his court he had found her his most dedicated counselor, although Jacques, Father Gaston and the rest of his household had always "perceived her true treachery." They constantly warned that one cannot trust the folk from Brittany.

- When asked exactly how he got the crucial wine-cup, Von Orstadt responds tersely: "I sent for it, of course." If the questioner persists, the viscount remembers that he was returning from a hunt with the Seneschal, Garvon. Garvon wanted a drink and asked his lord to join him. They came upon Otto the pot-boy and sent him to the cellars for wine. Otto brought two cups of port. Each contained poison. Garvon mentioned that the wine tasted "stale," but the viscount proudly notes that he was the one who saved both of their lives by noticing the powdered herb.

- The only ongoing quarrel in the castle stands between Father Gaston and Jacques de Bray, who are always "at one another's throats."

Men-at-Arms and Porters

Characteristics

Str +1

Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +3—Atk +8—Dam +11

Defense/Round Shield: +6

Soak Total (Full Ring): +8

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Brawl—3

Broadsword—4

Shield Parry—4

Personality Traits

Brave +1

Viscount Stutt von Orstadt

Description: Black-bearded and hearty, Von Orstadt has grown somewhat round but still has the muscles of a bear.

Role-playing Tips: Speak in a deep, authoritative voice and never brook any nonsense from anyone. The viscount occasionally coughs and grows hoarse, but he never softens his bellowing voice.

Cnf 2

Age 35

Characteristics

Per +2

Str +1

Stm +1

Prs +1

Combat

Attack/Sword: 1st +6—Atk +6—Dam +7

Attack/Lance: 1st +9—Atk +4—Dam +11

Defense/Dodge: 0

Defense/Kite Shield: +7

Soak Total: +1 (unarmored) or +13 (chain mail)

Body Levels: OK/0/-3/-5/Unc.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Broadsword—3

Courtly Grace—2

Kite Shield Parry—+3

Lance—2

Riding—1

Personality Traits

Brave +1

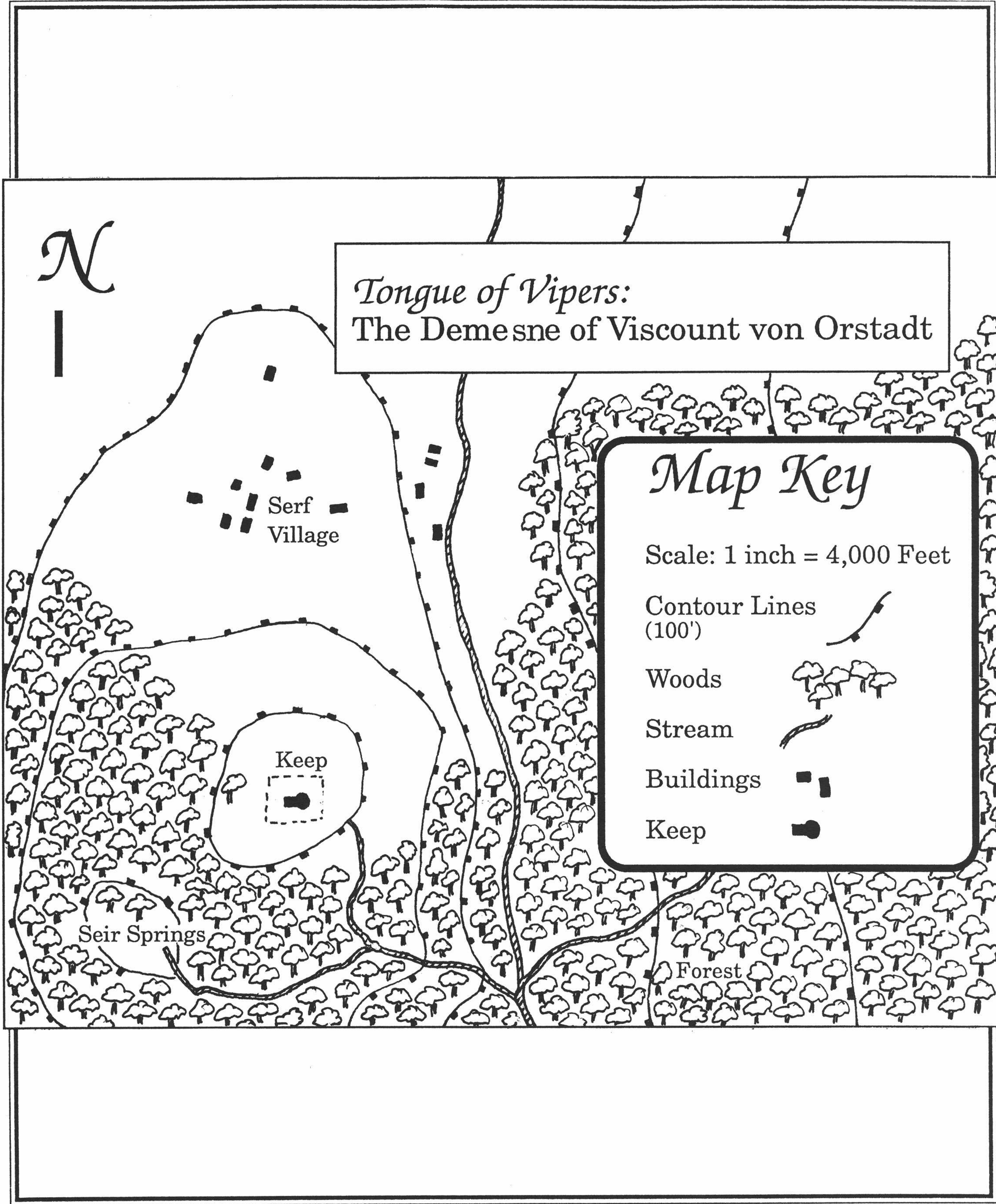
Concentrated -1

Curt +2

Friendly +1

Impatient +2

Tongue of Vipers



EVENT NOTES

These suggest some likely developments and ways the troupe can build on them. The Storyguide should flesh these out to fit other events in the adventure. Also, be sure to read the *Conclusion*, to see where the adventure might end up.

- If Jacques determines the adventurers to be a threat, he may try to poison them with another herb stolen from Claire's chambers. Whoever eats food tainted with it must pass a Stm stress roll with an ease factor of 8 to avoid cramps causing the loss of one Fatigue Level per hour. A successful stress roll of Int + Healer or Int + Medicine of 12+ reveals an antidote. Detoxifying spells may also save the poisoned character. However, if a victim runs out of fatigue levels, he dies.

- Father Gaston disposes of enemies with a more subtle approach. He approaches them as a solicitous priest, asking their thoughts on death, and how they feel a man should meet fate. Finally, his voice breaking, he reveals his "true" motive. Gaston says that the viscount has picked them as Claire's accomplices and intends to have them hanged. They could protest their innocence for honor's sake, but no proof can change Von Orstadt's mind "in this mood." Do the adventurers wish a final sacrament before they meet their doom? Or perhaps they would rather flee while they can.

If the party gets ready to escape but decides to wait, Father Gaston warns the viscount that they plan to help Claire break free and uses their secret departure preparations as evidence.

- If the adventurers commit a minor crime in the Viscount's manor, he orders them beaten and cast out. They may still rescue Claire by stealth but cannot get permanent access to Seir Pools.

- If the adventurers implicate themselves as accomplices in the poisoning, or seriously offend the viscount some other way, they find themselves in the prison. Birot chains them by the waist and ankles. Once Von Orstadt takes the step of imprisoning adventurers, only the most dramatic evidence of their innocence will convince him. Perhaps a voice from the sky or a confession from Jacques would suffice.

- Claire, Otto and imprisoned party members cannot wait in jail indefinitely. Five days after this adventure begins, the viscount grows tired of his policy of finding accomplices by keeping captured poisoners alive. He starts hanging the prisoners at dawn, one per day.

THE MANOR

Adventurers may investigate the manor in any way they choose. The Map and Key shows what is where, but the party will conduct most of its investigation, not by exploration, but by talking with the various NPCs. Almost all daily activity takes place in the Great Hall, including cooking, meals, conferences and entertainment. High-born women weave in the upper chambers, while the servant-girls rush about at their work. Birot, the manor's prison warden, barber and doctor, pursues his three professions. When adventurers wish to find a specific contact but have not arranged a meeting, they can locate him or her by passing a Folk Ken + Perception roll of 6+. When such a roll fails, the party may try again in one hour. Feel free to have the party meet people unexpectedly too, either by chance or to further the goals of the NPCs.

The guards described above intervene in any noisy battle. Obviously, the viscount imprisons anyone who attacks his courtiers without obvious cause.

The major actors in this story appear below.

Garvon, Seneschal

Description: A thin, incessantly busy man, who usually has his lower lip drawn tight with concern. He does most of the actual business of running this manor. Garvon evades questions about the poisoning, saying only that the viscount believes he has found the culprit. The seneschal does give long, penetrating stares though, as if trying to make up his mind about the party. If circumstances were different, he could tell more.

Garvon has a secret. He was the eldest son of Garvon d'Alric, a lordly knight of Flanders, but he squandered his name and fortune through riotous living in Paris. This lasted until he married and fathered a son. Now Garvon has buried his past, done penance, and acquired an honorable title under the viscount. Unfortunately, he still owes 500 livres to a Parisian moneylender. This constitutes a scandal in itself, since usury is un-Christian. Worse, Garvon has tried to pay his debt discreetly by selling the viscount's private correspondence to Jacques de Bray. He now is practically Jacques' slave. If the seer told what he knows, not only Garvon, but his wife Margarete and their three-year-old son Paul would suffer ruin.

Garvon helped Jacques arrange the "poisoning." He suggested that the viscount call for wine and then quickly commented on its odd taste to keep the

Viscount from actually drinking enough to cause harm. Now he struggles to keep his role secret. Still, he feels terrible guilt. He knows also that the viscount sorely needs more retainers like Claire, and fewer like Jacques. If the party plays on his conscience, even unintentionally, he may confess to a sympathetic PC. He does not know any details of Jacques' intentions, although anyone can surmise that a new soothsayer threatened Jacques' role at court. Before revealing anything though, Garvon demands an oath of secrecy by the Blessed Virgin's name.

If you, as Storyguide, decide that Garvon would not trust the party with his fatal secret, he may still give enigmatic hints, disguised as attempts to brush off questions. The seneschal can suggest that the ladies-in-waiting knew Claire better than he did, or that Jacques has searched her belongings.

Role-playing Tips: When avoiding a question, whisper to yourself about manor schedules, financial information, etc. Let your voice fall at the wrong times when lying. You grow firmer when telling the truth but do not drop your old habits entirely.

Cnf 1

Age 24

Characteristics

Str +2 Per +1 Dex +1

Combat

Attack/Dagger: 1st +6—Atk +10—Dam +9

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +5—Atk +7—Dam +10

Defense/Dagger or Broadsword: +4

Soak Total: 0

Fatigue Total: 0

Abilities

Broadsword Attack—2

Stealth—1

Broadsword Parry—1

Speak Latin—1

Courtly Grace—2

Speak German—3

Dagger Attack—5

Speak French—5

Dagger Parry—3

Scribe Latin—2

Diplomacy—2

Forgery—1

Personality Traits

Debaucher +1

Guileless +1

Loyal To Margarete and Paul +2

Secretive +2

Jacques de Bray, Court Soothsayer

Description: A tall man with wide, luminous eyes and a permanent frown trailing into his long black beard. Jacques dazzles the viscount's court with ecstasies in which not even he can tell which of his powers are true magic and which are imaginary. Some call Jacques a diabolist, but nobody has ventured to prosecute him. After especially gripping fits, this soothsayer has developed a compulsion to destroy potential rivals. He possesses a genius for intrigue.

Jacques loathes Claire as a rival and more. In his nightmares, she alternates between the "gray-eyed woman" he dreads and the "woman from abroad" he yearns to wed. He will feel relieved when the viscount finally kills her. The soothsayer now considers her execution assured, with the only threat to his plan being the party. Therefore, when Jacques gets an opportunity to speak with the adventurers, he fakes a vision for them, and in trembling voice, he warns that, "you, my friends, are the vehicle by which Claire planned to commit murder." He explains that she meant to dupe them into acting as assassins but grew impatient and attempted the deed herself. "Treachery is the nature of Woman. Beware!"

If the party seems receptive, Jacques will try to turn them against his remaining enemy. He suggests that Father Gaston had many long conversations with Claire and mentions dreams linking the two as conspirators. Then Jacques tries to nudge adventurers into destroying the priest, either by murder or by "proving" his complicity in the poisoning. The soothsayer supports his intimations with "visions" about the crimes of Claire and Gaston. These prophecies often involve uncannily accurate descriptions of adventurers' personal lives. As Storyguide, you must decide exactly what these are.

Jacques wears an ill-fitting gold link on his left ring finger, which frequently slips off. He stole it from Claire's room. This charm does not function unless worn along with an identical ring, which Jacques does not know of. When used together, the two rings confer the ability to gaze through opaque objects, to a range of 10 feet. Jacques does not know the ring's exact properties, but hopes it will help him contact the faerie world.

Role-playing tips: Punctuate your speech with long stares and answer questions with questions. If Jacques suffers a trauma, such as being accused of poisoning the Duke's wine, he collapses into a fit of epilepsy. This wins awe and sympathy from the viscount and most minor NPCs unless the evidence against Jacques is overwhelming.

Tales of the Dark Ages

Jacques' Stats

Cnf 2 Age 33
Enc 0

Characteristics

Int +1 Per +2
Str +3 Stm +2
Prs +1

Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +7—Atk +7—Dam +13
Defense/Broadsword: +5
Soak Total (Robes as Full Quilted): +6
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.
Fatigue Total: 0
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Arcane Lore—3
Broadsword +4
Broadsword Parry +2
Charisma—1
Climb—2
Enchanting Music—2
Folk Ken—1
Guile—2
Hex—2
Intimidation—3
Intrigue—2
Legerdemain—2
Scribe Latin—2
Second Sight—4
Speak French—5
Visions—5

Personality Traits

Mad Genius +1
Paranoid +2
Reasonable -2
Scheming +2

Father Gaston

Description: A short man, who has dry skin and sparse gray hair seeded with dandruff. Father Gaston loves the Church in an abstract way but spends most of his energy on the affairs of this world. He despises seers, diabolists and magi but more as rivals than blasphemers. Claire and Jacques de Bray fall into this category, and fate has given him the means to dispatch both of them, as the *Plot Summary* describes. The party has no place in his plans. Gaston responds tersely to questions, asserting that Claire apparently trafficked with demons and reaped the usual reward.

If the party seems ready to ruin his plot, this priest will bribe the manor's bailiff to arrest and search the party. Statistics for guards appear above, and a description of the bailiff comes under "Prison" on the *Map Key*. Afterward, Father Gaston quietly warns the party that Von Orstadt intends to arrest and execute them. He advises that they flee while they can.

Role-playing Tips: You speak of religion often but not with any tone of reverence. Father Gaston has a tired, slightly cynical voice and never wastes words. Remember that the bailiff and manor guards obey this priest in return for money.

As the manor's confessor, Gaston learns *everything* that happens in this castle.

Characteristics

Int +2

Combat

Attack/Dagger: 1st +4—Atk +7—Dam +5
Defense/Dagger: +3
Soak Total: 0
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.
Fatigue Total: 0
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-2/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Church Knowledge—2
Courtly Grace—1
Dagger—3
Dagger Parry—2
Scribe Latin—2
Speak French—5
Speak German—2
Speak Latin—4

Personality Traits

Dogmatic +2
Spiritual -2
Taciturn +2
Talkative -2

Rumors

Adventurers may learn the following clues by talking to servants. None of this information is quite common gossip; the text specifies that certain people know rumors. If the party tries to question random servants, the questioner must pass a Com + Subterfuge roll of 10+ to learn a rumor. Do not let this roll replace roleplaying!

- While talking with a servant in his pay, Father Gaston recently remarked, "I think we've seen the end of our friend Jacques." (*True.*)
- People have seen Jacques de Bray lurking around the prison at late hours of the night. (*True.*)
- Lady Claire had an adulterous affair with the viscount. (*False*)
- Father Gaston has urged the viscount to break ground for a small hermitage. Jacques de Bray sees "terrible omens" for that. (*True*)
- Lady Claire had Otto, the cupbearer, under a charm of control. (*False—Jacques de Bray did.*)
- Lady Claire loved Jacques de Bray, but the viscount would not permit their marriage because of his own designs on Claire. (*False.*)
- After several glasses of strong brandy, Jacques de Bray once said, "Ah, if only Gaston would commit some crime too, I would be a happy man." (*True.*)

MAP KEY

This section describes people and things which the party will find only in particular places.

Ladies' Chambers

Colorful hangings cover the stone of these narrow corridors. The gentlewomen of the castle weave and sew here, and even Viscountess Marcia takes her turn. Claire too spent much of her time here, and this is one of the few places where people still discuss her without caution. Most of the women agree that Claire always seemed "a little hardened." She spoke too boldly and looked too proud. The party may take special interest in the following people.

- **Margarete**, the seneschal's wife, spent the entire day with Claire during the supposed poisoning. She knows Claire could not possibly have done it. Margarete fears also that her husband was involved, somehow, and knows that he cannot let anyone investigate his past. Therefore, although she cannot endure the thought of an innocent woman losing her head, she equally loathes the idea of defending Claire's innocence. By some miracle, Father Gaston perceived her whole dilemma. He brought the issue up before her last confession and comforted her with the thought that wiser heads had considered everything she knew. Considering the fact that he had known of her problem before she told him, Margarete was inclined to believe the priest. She has done nothing. Parts of the affair do bother her though, and if anyone asks

her about it, she may mention her doubts. The party will find her, a dour woman with drooping cheeks, quietly working among the other women.

- **Lady Marcia**, the viscountess, frisks from room to room, offering her opinions on whatever is under discussion. She hates Claire, and if pressed will say, "Thank the stars 'twas only murder." Marcia is young, with sable hair. She feels childishly possessive of her husband. The idea of him consulting a female seer does not appeal to her. Furthermore, Jacques de Bray cast a horoscope warning of "the gray-eyed woman." Marcia trusts Jacques' prophecies and recommends his advice to anyone who asks. However, whenever she mentions him, someone inevitably gasps and reminds her of Father Gaston's latest sermon against pagans.

- **Yvnone**, the manorial midwife, will soon bear a child herself. She enjoys the luxury of having others wait on her and spends most days reclining on a couch by the large room where the women work. If consulted about Claire, she chuckles that "Of course she did it—she had her reasons, that one." She thinks Lady Claire had romantic designs on Jacques de Bray, which the viscount would not allow because of his own lust for her. "Claire knew her herbs too, 'tis a wonder she didn't get the job done," Yvnone adds. A number of other people have asked about herb-lore recently, first Jacques de Bray, then Garvon, "who looked quite pale," then "nigh everyone" after the poisoning.

The castle women have average statistics. They do not fight.

Claire's Chambers

Claire lived in a tidy room, with bundles of grasses hanging against the damp stone walls. The rest of her possessions look mundane. She has a hope chest, a straw mattress, a wardrobe of several linen gowns, a black cauldron, a rosary, and a few vials of water from Seir Springs. One of her gowns has a golden band in its pocket, which goes with the one Jacques stole (see *Major NPCs*). When worn together, the two bands allow one to see through opaque objects, up to 10 feet.

A narrow window overlooks the courtyard. Anyone who examines it discovers that the lead frame has warped and pulled away in one place, apparently where someone grasped and pulled it. By passing a Perception + Scan roll of 8+, one can notice clefts cut into the stone wall, where someone climbed from the window to the courtyard below. Jacques snuck into her room here to steal the herbs for his plot.

Lidi's Hut

Whenever adventurers pass this gray hut, they hear a soft, inhuman wailing. A casual glance inside reveals no cause for it. Lidi, the dairymaid who lives in the hut, does not welcome curious people. She spends most of her time here, churning butter, making cheese and tending cattle for the viscount's household. If pressed about the sounds, she sighs impatiently and says, "You can hardly blame the poor thing." Then she shows the party a tiny gray cat, which lies in a nest of rags, twitching with some sort of palsy.

Dee, the cat, belongs to Lidi's little sister, a six-year old named Joan. The bailiff used Dee to test herbs from Von Orstadt's cup. Afterward, he threw the apparently dead cat on a rubbish heap, where it eventually revived and struggled home. Joan has tearfully nursed her pet ever since. Adventurers may make what they choose of this. The Storyguide should not give hints, but players may note if the poison could not even kill a cat, it was a poor choice for murdering the viscount.

Any attempt to survey Dee with a spell like Opening The Tome Of The Animal's Mind only adds to this clue. The Bailiff began by giving it a speck of something foul, albeit disguised with some tasty fish-grease. However, that did not satisfy the other people present. A man with a black beard (Jacques) kept insisting "Not half enough to tell! Give it more!" until he prevailed on the Bailiff to force a whole thimble-full of wine-soaked herbs down the poor cat's throat.

Adventurers might try to find an antidote for Dee, either with some personal spell, or by making a simple Intelligence + Healing roll of 9+. If the cure succeeds, Joan thanks the adventurers profusely. Lidi may remark, "Now that thing will be underfoot again," but she will also feel grateful. If the party wins Lidi's gratitude, they can hide in her house should it ever be necessary. They can also gather information without attracting attention. After a day of eavesdropping, the cheesemaker and her sister can give adventurers two clues from the Rumors list.

Lidi

Description: A thin teenager with a white apron and long pigtail. This girl has cared for Joan since they both were very young. Lidi has a healthy fear of her lord and does not dare complain much to strangers, especially after the poisoning. Nevertheless, she resents the bailiff's high-handed selection of Dee for testing the poison.

Role-playing Tips: Use a tired, high-pitched voice. You make an effort to sound brisk and a little heartless but actually feel extremely fond of Joan and even Dee.

Confidence 1	Age 19
Personality Traits	
Circumspect +1	Forthright -1
Abilities	
Servant Skills +1	Make Cheese +1
Noncombatant	

Joan

Description: A tow-headed little girl, with her straight hair pulled tightly into two braids. Joan loves animals both big and small.

Role-Playing Tips: Joan does not hesitate to talk with most people but can sense when her big sister feels in awe of someone, such as magi and the bailiff. The little girl shies away from these people.

Confidence 1	Age 6
Characteristics	
Str -2	Stm -3
Noncombatant	

Jacques' Chamber

Jacques keeps his door locked. One must make a Dexterity + Pick Locks roll of 7+ to get past. Inside, a riot of tools, parchments, wood scraps, dilapidated furniture and occasional bits of animal intestine litter this room. None of it has any real value. Anyone who searches this room and makes a Search + Perception roll of 8+ finds climbing spikes, which have the marks of recent use. By passing a second roll, the party can find some unusual whips of woolen cord, weighted with padded glass beads. (He uses these to beat Claire without leaving marks.) A third successful roll reveals a bundle of powdery stems, which, if tested, prove identical to the substance in the viscount's wine. If adventurers botch any of their search rolls, Jacques returns to discover them and calls the guards (so make all of the rolls stress dice).

Chapel

Father Gaston holds services in a bare wooden chamber, with a single bench for nobility and an open area where peasants may gather. A single panel of red stained glass lets in light. Father Gaston keeps

a stack of religious scrolls and texts in his section of the confessional. Among these aging documents, one can find a letter on fresh paper. It reads:

To my liege, the Viscount von Orstadt,

I swear my innocence by the wounds of our Savior! Never have I intended you the slightest harm, and never would I play the poisoner. On the day when you took that tainted mug, I had spent the entire day sewing without pause. I name Mme. Margarete Garvon as witness that I did not stir from my chambers once. She and the other ladies of your court will attest my innocence.

I pray you, reconsider your condemnation.

*Your devoted servant,
Claire Beaucamp*

This letter is in the same hand as the party's invitation. Beneath it lie several imitations of Claire's signature in a different sort of ink, none of which look quite correct.

Garvon's Chambers

Garvon the Seneschal lives in a simple room, with a chair, a straw pallet, a stack of ledgers and little more. He keeps a sack with several large seams beneath his bed. This bag holds 20 silver pennies and assorted demands for payment from creditors.

Barracks

The castle's 30 men-at-arms live here. Ten are in the room at any given time. See *Arrival* for their statistics.

Viscount's Chambers

The Viscount and his wife live in a large room, which contains few decorations except a suit of chain mail, two battleaxes, a lance and a broadsword.

Storerooms

Grain, firewood and assorted tools line this partially roofed area. A trap door opens into an earthy tunnel holding roots and wine. Two husky manser-

vants work here. They hasten to point out that they had no control over the wine. Only Otto (see the prison, below) dealt with it. To change the subject, these men will tell one Rumor (from the list above).

Viscount's Forest

Orderly rows of firs cast a cave-like shadow over the forest. As one goes deeper, the forest grows less regimented until it dwindles into a waste of briars and softwood. Deer and pheasant live here, but the viscount reserves them for his personal hunts. Franz, the forester, patrols these woods and will track down adventurers about half an hour after they enter the forest. He may simply attack ill-equipped characters who resemble serf poachers. If the adventurers kill or severely injure him, they need either the viscount's favor or a good alibi. The Storyguide may judge these factors. The party could also hide Franz's body, although his disappearance would still create a sensation. Fortunately, Franz exercises caution when he sees fine clothing or expensive weapons. He stops such intruders with a lusty shout and demands to know their business.

Officially, Franz should briskly escort trespassers out of the forest. However, he questions such people carefully about their errand because he accepts substantial bribes from Jacques de Bray and does not want to offend any of his patron's other agents. Jacques wants sole access to the Seir Springs. If inveigled into talking about Claire, he may mention that Jacques ordered him to keep her away from the Springs at all costs. To obtain this information, adventurers normally need to pass a Com + Subterfuge roll of 9+. The players must also think of a realistic way to pose the question.

Seir Springs trickles from a mossy outcrop, spreading a sheen over several flagstones. Bright bits of moss wiggle in it. Assorted cloth banners, smooth rocks and scrawled runes lie around it, the detritus of Jacques de Bray's divinations. Amongst this trash, adventurers may find a small parchment inscribed with the name "Otto" and sewn shut with iron wire. A successful Occult Lore + Int roll of 6+ reveals that hedge wizards use such talismans in order to control a victim's mind.

The moss has absorbed one rook of Aquam vis from its surroundings. One can also incorporate water from the spring into a magical item to double the Base Points which may be enchanted into it.

Franz, Forester

Description: A bulky man, whose clothes always look too tight. Franz got used to taking bribes from Father Gaston while a mere castle guard, but switched patrons in return for Jacques' help in winning the position of Forester. He worries that his old master may want revenge.

Role-Playing tips: Affect a tone of jocularly but make it clear that you would prefer to deal intruders a few blows and get back to walking the forest. Take care not to insult local factions, since you already have more enemies than you want.

Enc 3

Characteristics

Int -1	Str +2	Prs -1	Dex +1
Per +3	Stm +3	Com -1	Qik 0

Combat

Attack/Longbow: Rate +3—Atk +6—Dam +14

Attack/Short Spear 1st +5—Atk +6—Dam +9

Defense/Dodge: 0

Soak Total (Full Ring): +10

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Dodge—3

Longbow—3

Spear—2

Survival—1

Tracking—3

Personality Traits

Brave +1

Greedy +1

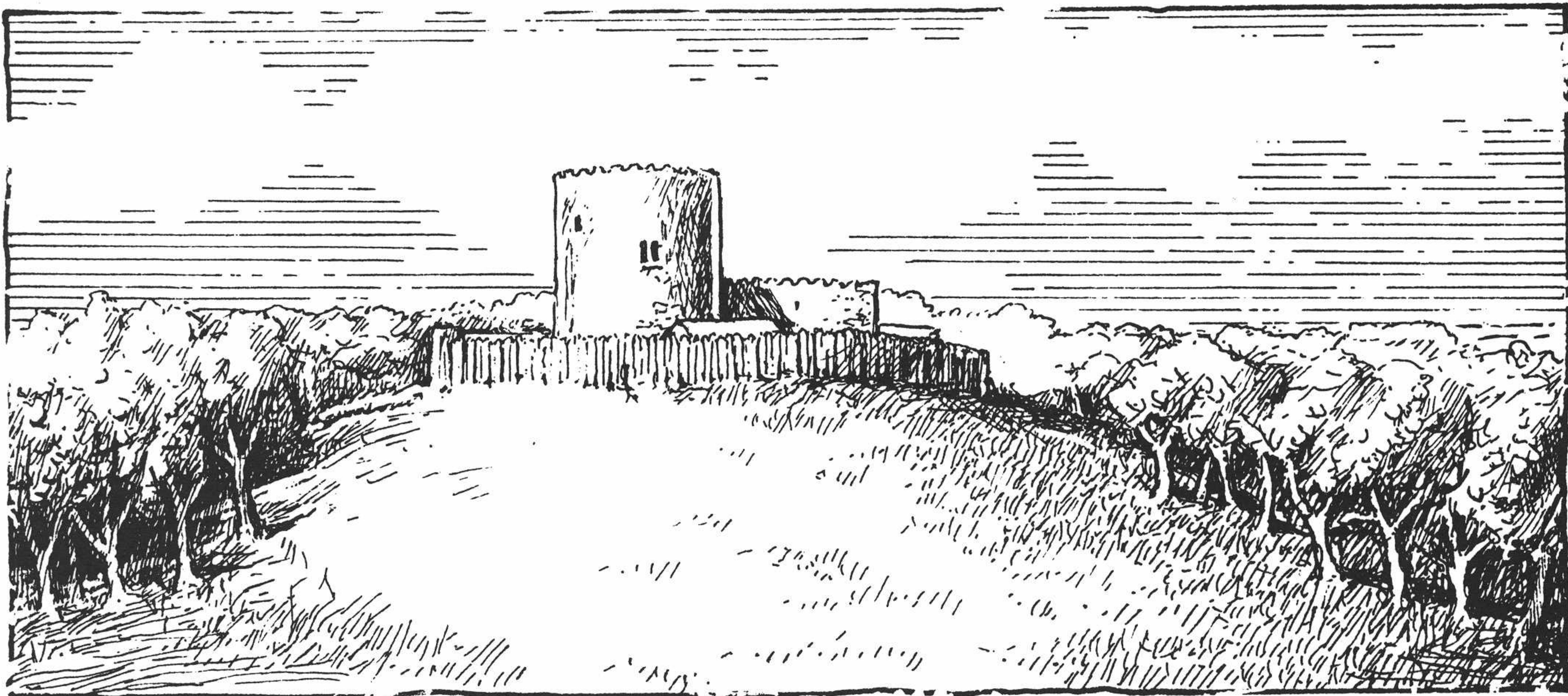
Prison

The viscount keeps his prisoners in a stone-walled dungeon beneath the stables. The common cell has a barred skylight allowing bypassers to look in. It currently contains no prisoners. Claire and Otto are in two of the five internal cells, which have no openings to the outside. To see them, the party must descend into the prison and get through the guardroom. Birot, the viscount's sworn executioner and surgeon, will not allow them to pass. He sees no desirable reason why mysterious visitors should want to speak with the accused murderess.

Birot does not brook any nonsense about the subject. He will only let the party past after a direct order from the viscount. Only the Storyguide can decide what would make Von Orstadt grant this permission, but as a general guideline, the party will have to be in his good graces and propose a specific question that clearly needs to be asked. The executioner does not humor inquisitive people either. He answers questions by saying, "I'm the one who does interrogations, and you're a bad apprentice."

The party may learn more from Birot if they come to him for healing or a haircut. He talks while he works and may be led into the subject of Claire. This requires a Communication + Subterfuge roll of 7+. All the castle luminaries have visited her in prison. Father Gaston came the morning after her arrest, and despite his usual suspicion of Claire, he listened to her laments with the greatest sympathy, "like a true man of Christ." Gaston promised her his help in "some sort of appeal for mercy." Birot says Jacques de Bray also came once, "while I was in the manor house shaving the viscount." If the party asks more about this, the executioner says that Lazare and Corin, his two turnkeys, did most of the talking with Jacques.

Lazare and Corin do not share Birot's incorrupti-



bility. They accept bribes freely and currently find Jacques their best source of money. Adventurers could buy their help for 10 silver deniers. These fellows assisted Jacques de Bray on the numerous nights in which he has come to see the prisoners. It amuses these turnkeys to sneak Jacques in while keeping Birot completely ignorant. The guards can do the same for adventurers too. It requires 1-6 nights for them to find an appropriate evening (roll a six-sided die). Lazare and Corin sometimes see Jacques torment Claire in her cell. However, these guards have seen enough brutality not to care, and they do not even think to mention this unless adventurers specifically ask about beatings.

Otto, the servant, confessed to helping Claire give the Baron a poisoned cup. Under Jacques' tutelage, he has produced a detailed story of the day in question, in which Claire prepared the herbs in the Storerooms while he followed the viscount around the castle, waiting for a chance. According to this story, the viscount spent the day in his chambers, "frustrating Mistress Claire to no end." He eventually emerged, "thirsty as a Saracen." This, of course, does not match the actual events in which Von Orstadt went hunting.

Otto cannot tell his own story the same way twice. He actually performed the crime under Jacques de Bray's entrancement. Jacques helped him invent the other tales, and the interrogators accepted his story so eagerly that he now hopes he can save himself by denouncing Claire. He continues this plan when questioned by the party but may change his tale again if they seem to favor some other story.

Claire sits in the other cell, shackled by the wrists and throat. Jacques' beatings have driven her past the urge to resist, and although Claire will not confess to false crimes, if the party mentions accusations against her, she will not deny them. She gives only vague explanations for inviting the party to this manor. The whole world seemed different then, and Claire fears that her original motive, which was to provide more opposition to Jacques and Gaston, will sound sinister after the other events.

The party's meeting with Claire is a test of role-playing. Claire fears everyone in the manor and must suspect that even such friendly-sounding visitors as the party have come to trap her with words or soften her for another beating. Conversely, once she believes that the adventurers intend to help her, she will not want to destroy them by spreading the suspicion that they are conspirators with her. Therefore, the party must establish itself as friendly—and capable of winning her vindication. As Storyguide, you must assess the party not only for problems

solved but for their intrinsic ability to win confidence.

Claire can provide the following background. She served the viscount for months, interpreting several of his most troubling dreams with lore she learned from a Hermetic wizard (of a different covenant than the PCs'). Jacques and Father Gaston always railed against her advice. However, by following it, Von Orstadt cured an old wound, obtained a new stallion and avoided a trip to Dover on the day when freak typhoons swept the Channel. The viscount thanked her, but he did not seem overly grateful. One week ago, Claire sent for the adventurers, hoping to learn more Hermetic lore, and to gain supporting voices for arguments against Jacques and Gaston. Somebody broke into Claire's apartment several times after that. He did the most damage the night before the poisoning. During the supposed murder attempt, Claire spent the day sewing with Margarete. Indeed, she might be able to offer more proofs of her innocence if she really did have a hand in the poisoning.

Birot

Description: Tall and pointy-headed, Birot's beard grows sparse with age. He knows a great deal about anatomy and prefers his work as a doctor to that of as executioner.

Role-playing Tips: Birot is a stubborn, sensible man, with little tolerance for foolery or scheming. He also likes to talk.

Cnf 3	Age 55	Enc 5
Characteristics		
Int +1	Str +1	Dex +2
Combat		
Attack/Broadsword: 1st +4—Atk +11—Dam +12		
Defense/Round Shield: +6		
Soak Total (Full Ring): +8		
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.		
Fatigue Total: -4		
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.		
Abilities		Personality Traits
Brawl—3		Brave +1
Broadsword—5		Earnest +1
Chirurg—2		Flexible -1
Shield Parry—4		Talkative +1

Lazare and Corin

Description: Young men-at-arms, these prison guards grow long mustaches under their helms.

Role-playing Tips: Lazare and Corin enjoy corruption for the sheer adventure of it. They practice worldly chuckles whenever possible.

Enc 5

Characteristics

Str +1

Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +3—Atk +8—Dam +11

Defense/Round Shield: +6

Soak Total (Full Ring): +8

Body Levels: OK/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Brawl—3

Broadsword—4

Shield Parry—4

Personality Traits

Brave +1

Callous +2

Honest -2

Otto

Description: Small in all dimensions, Otto looks much younger than his eighteen years. He has light hair and wide, frightened eyes.

Role-playing tips: Otto eagerly agrees with whatever people seem to want, hoping to save himself from hanging. He does not like to appear naive though and can be goaded into stating that he does know a little about poison. This does not improve his case.

Cnf 1

Age 18

Characteristics

Str -1

Noncombatant

Personality Traits

Brave -2

Impressionable +1

Claire

Description: Auburn hair hangs around Claire's head, although her bangs are short and her forehead high. Her face once had a constant smile but bears one no longer. She understands sorcery well and could probably become a magus. Previously, Claire kept too busy with social activities and court affairs to master wizardry, but after this experience, she

may join a covenant. If nothing else, Claire might become a savant who could give the party background information for future adventures. Claire has a small body but moves quickly and is not frail.

Role-playing Tips: Brood, speak with your eyes and answer questions with pointed stares or by gazing into space. Claire was once quite light-hearted, but now she must dig deep into her memory to recover even a bit of cheerfulness.

Cnf 1

Age 24

Characteristics

Int +3

Str 0

Prs +1

Qik +2

Per 0

Stm 0

Com +1

Dex +1

Noncombatant

Abilities

Alchemy—1

Courtly Grace—2

Empathy—1

Fantastic Beast Lore—1

Healer—2

Herb Lore—3

Hermes History—1

Hermes Lore—1

Magic Sensitivity—2

Weather Sense—2

Speak Latin—2

Speak German—3

Speak French—4

Speak Breton—5

Scribe Latin—2

Premonitions—1

Magic Theory—1

CONCLUSION

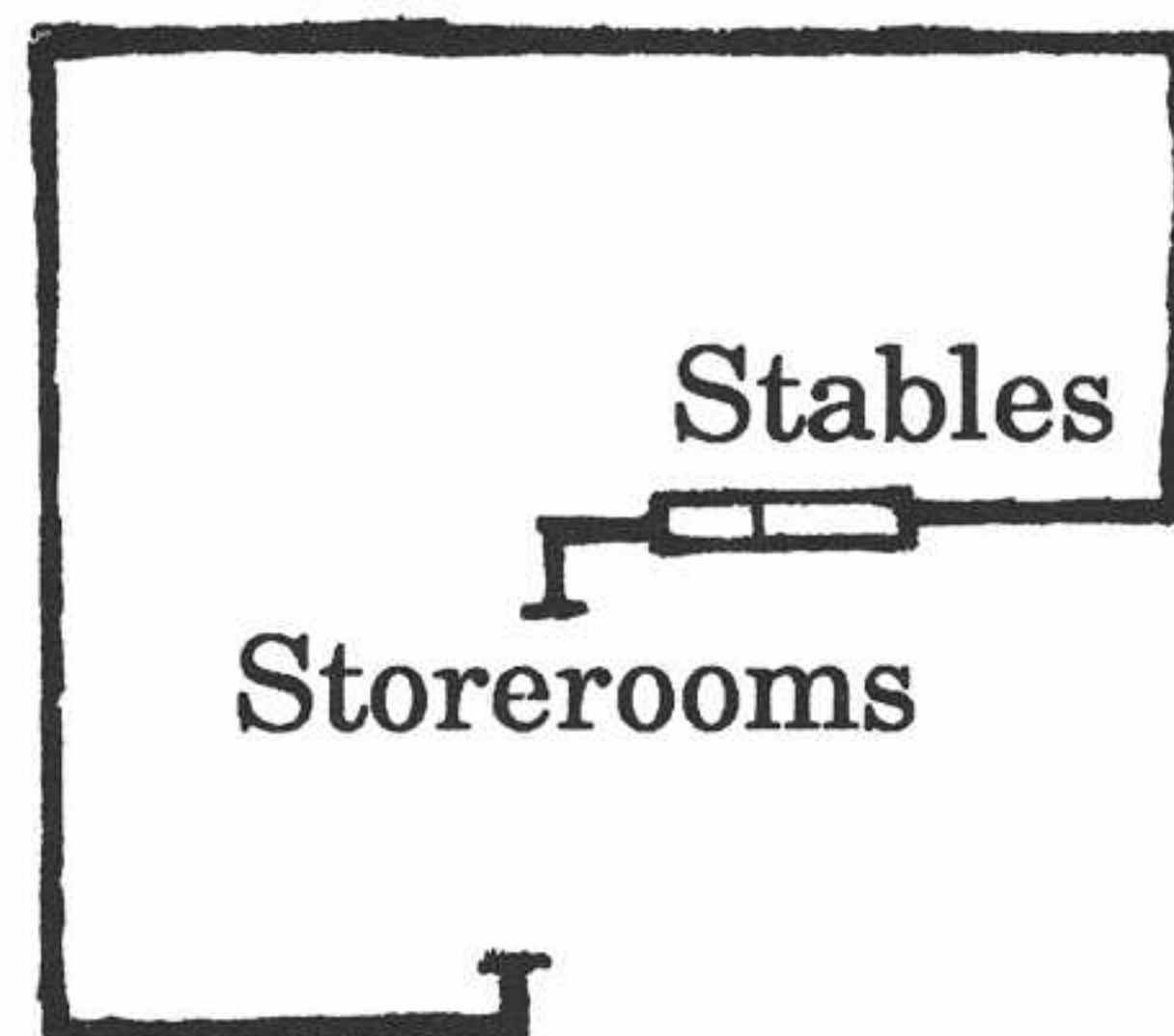
When the party finally accuses a poisoner, their success depends on evidence, persuasiveness and the viscount's mood. Judge role-playing and require Com + Social Skills rolls as you deem appropriate. Then consider how logical a case the party has managed to build. There is no conclusive proof of anyone's guilt, but a collection of witnesses, clues and probable explanations can be convincing.

Once convinced of the truth, Viscount von Orstadt frees Claire with a trumpet fanfare, which causes her to wince. Jacques attempts to flee but falls into an epileptic fit. Gaston can make a more efficient exit. The party may track him down as a finale, or he might get away—perhaps to wreak future havoc in the player-characters' lives. Even if caught, Gaston can be difficult to deal with since, as a priest, he can avoid trial by secular courts. In either event, Von Orstadt neglects the promised reward until reminded, but then he pays in full.

As Storyguide, you may wish to develop visions and spells for the viscount's diviners that lead to another adventure. Perhaps Jacques deals with the diabolic realms, and he has promised Claire as one first sacrifice in an ongoing infernal conspiracy.

Tongue of Vipers

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Barn

Map Key

Scale: 1 inch = 45 feet

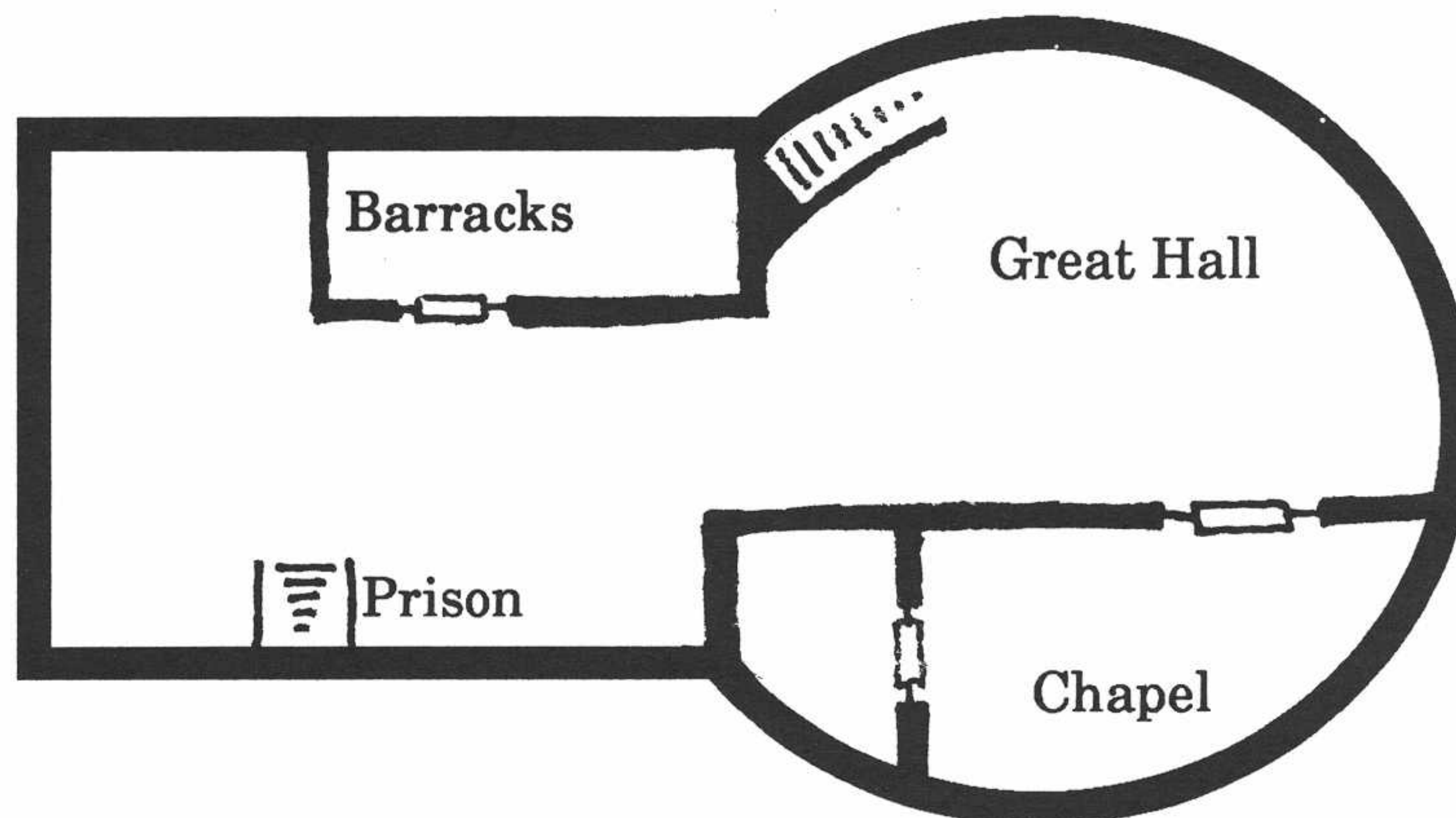
Stone Walls

Door

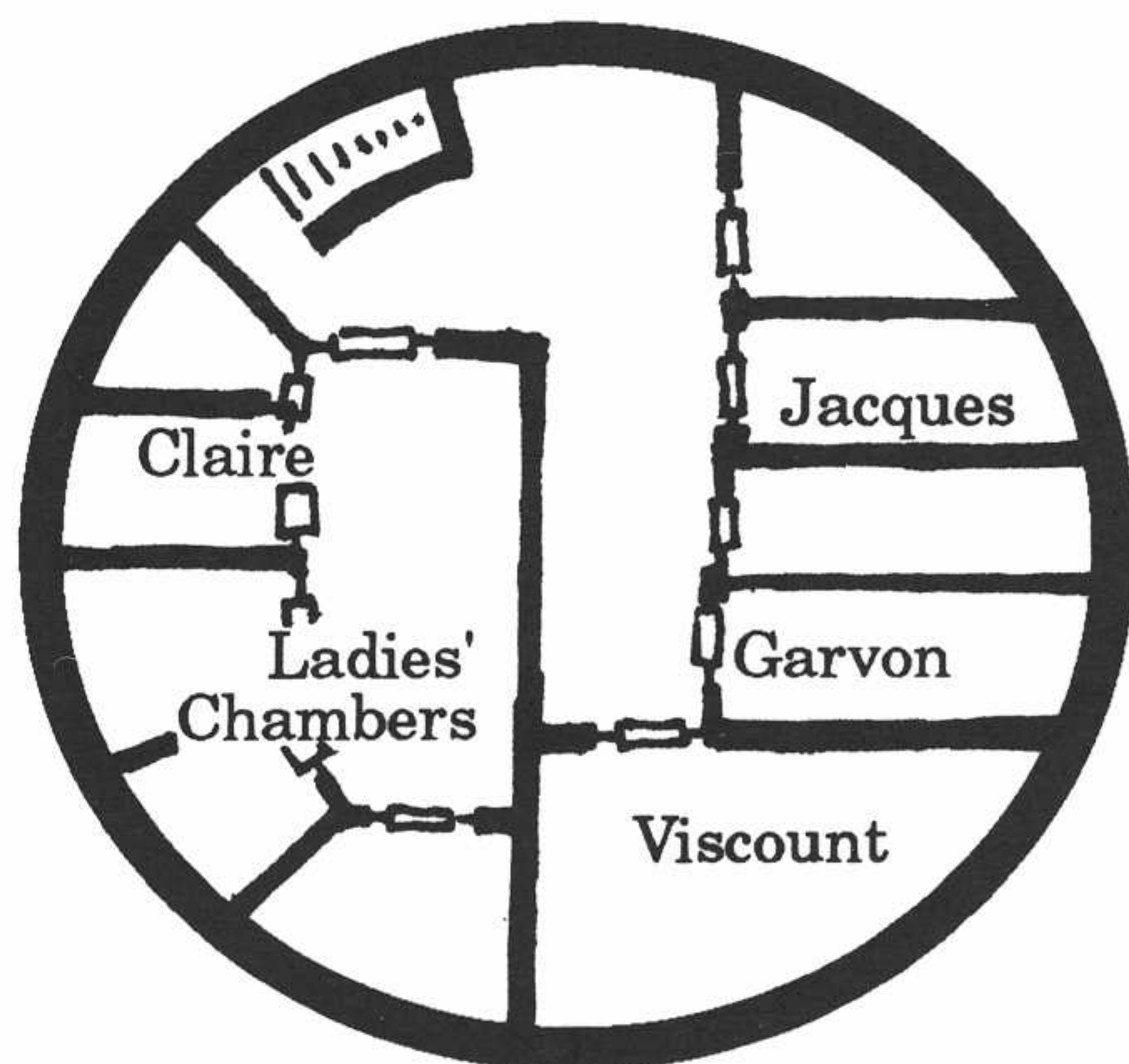
Gate

Stairs
(top to bottom)

Note: The keep is surrounded by a wooden stockade, not depicted on the map. The word "Gate" points at the gateway through the stockade.

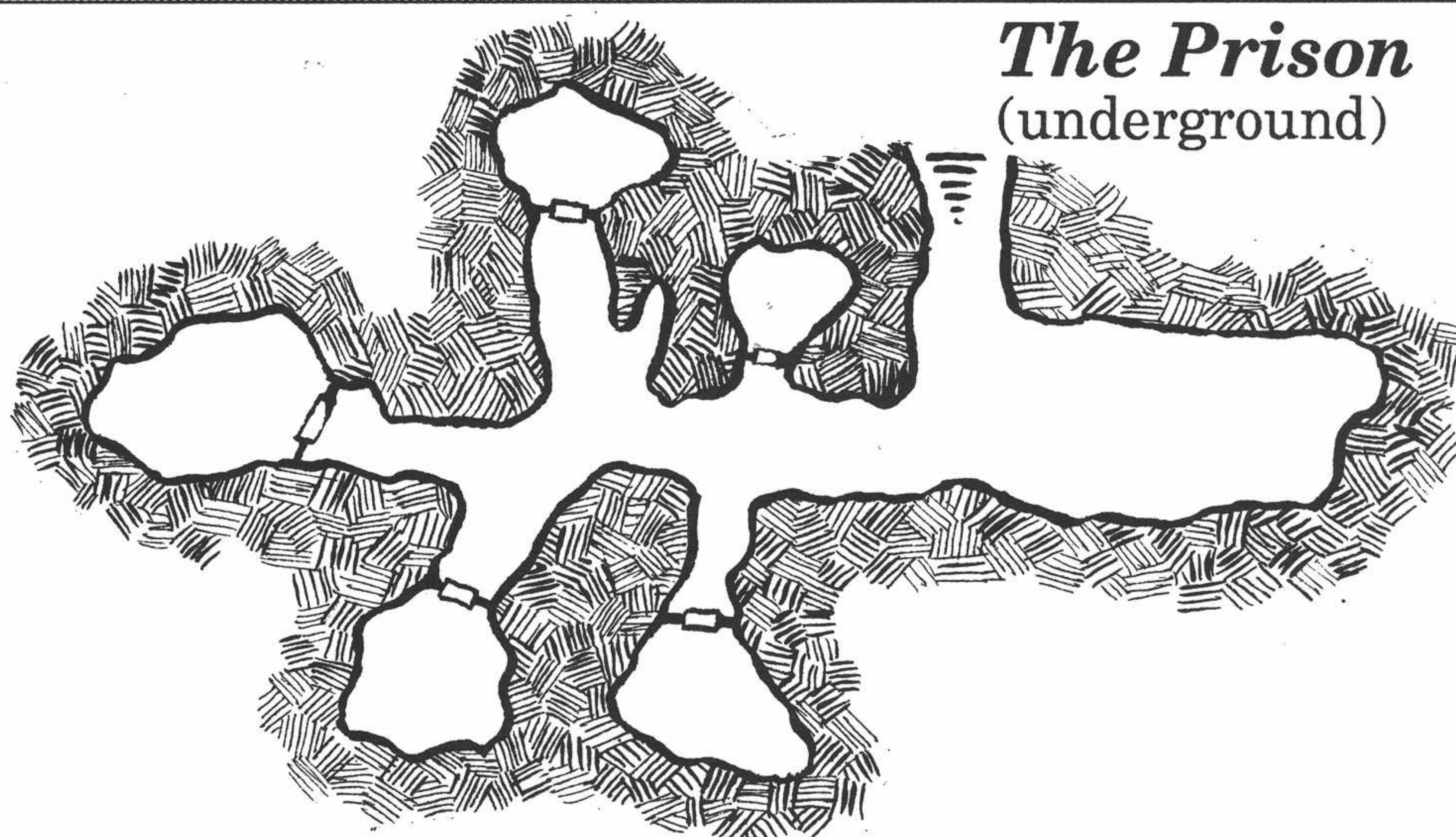


The Keep—Ground Level



The Keep—Second Storey

Note: The third storey of the keep is the rooftop level.



*The Prison
(underground)*

Von Orstadt's Manor

The Inheritance

by James P. Buchanan

The setting for this adventure should be lands once occupied by the Roman Empire, such as France, Italy, or Spain. Other logical areas in the medieval age would be in Asia Minor or along the Danube River, in present-day Hungary and Rumania. I recommend the French town of Toulouse, near the Pyrenees (and near the Mistridge Saga described in the *Ars Magica™* revised edition rulebook). The Roman name for this town was Tolosa. This adventure should start in late spring or early summer, in the late 12th or early 13th century.

This is not a hack and slash adventure! Rather, it is designed for role-playing and negotiating. Keep this in mind to get the most enjoyment from this scenario.

An important aspect of this adventure will be the player character the Storyguide selects to receive this inheritance. I suggest that the player character be an educated companion with a noble background. The companion could be a “black sheep,” or from a family which lost its ancestral lands due to warfare or political intrigue. Only companions in the *Ars Magica* game can have the education, social skills, and social rank to fulfill all the day to day feudal obligations that confronted medieval landowners.

Most Magi would have very little to gain in permanently leaving their covenant to administer a

parcel of land, along with the obligations that accompany it. The most a magus would be expected to do after claiming the land is to hire a well-educated regent as a caretaker, then return to his covenant. Very few player characters are powerful enough to set up a new covenant or build an outpost to study the raw vis in the aqueduct and stream water—although if it is workable, this adventure could be the starting point of the saga of a new Spring covenant.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

*Yielding and unyielding, soft
and hard, very bright and dark
as shadows, such is water.*

Chao-ting Chi

It is an overcast day with heavy fog mixed with light rain. The player characters are just getting up for breakfast when the companion player character hears a knock at his door. Opening the door he sees Trajan, one of the grogs who protect the covenant. He says, “Good morning, (Sir or Lady, and name of player character). This letter came for you today.” He hands the PC a one foot long wooden tube that is sealed with wax. Then Trajan asks, “Is there anything else you need me to do?” Presuming there isn’t, the PC should dismiss Trajan.

The wooden tube has a brass plug and is sealed with wax. All the player character must do is pull out the plug. Inside is a rolled up parchment. Written upon the parchment (in Latin) is the following:

To [full name of player character] of [covenant or other place name]; Lambert Pompilius, Royal Herald of Toulouse. I am writing to inform you that Charles Cato died three months ago, leaving no immediate heirs to his lands. The Royal family of France does not desire to get involved in such a small exchange of property, and has given title to the land over to the Church. In turn, the Church has put me in charge of turning over these lands and title of a landed knight to their rightful heir. You, [full name of player character], are the closest living relative to Charles Cato.

If you claim your inheritance, the lands along with the privileges and obligations accompanying your domain will be passed on to you. In return, the Church and the King of France expect that you and your freemen will swear loyalty to God and King and to defend Toulouse from invaders.

If you do not claim your inheritance, the lands and title will become the property of the Church, which will keep title to the land until a suitable heir is located. You have a year and a day to make your claim. Until that time, as executor I will assume responsibility for the estate and its upkeep.

The sale of all Charles Cato's personal possessions have cleared all outstanding debts.

To obtain the lands and the title, you must live on the land for 30 days. Please come to my office in Toulouse as soon as possible. You must also bring a letter from the local magistrate or Church showing proof for your identity. There you will sign Letters of Nobility (which will permit you to enter into knighthood) and Letters of Obligation to the Church. Then, you will receive a key to the front door.

Lambert Pompilius

The player character should make arrangements to leave the covenant and travel to his lands. The player characters' travel time should take no more than three weeks and they should have easy to hard travel conditions. The player characters should not be placed in life or death situations. However, the Storyguide should feel free to place in the PCs' path minor annoyances such as a washed out bridge. For example, "Do you remember that heavy rainstorm last night? Well, the bridge you were going to use was washed out and it will take you at least a day to find another way to cross the river." You might also

include an ambush by brigands, or heavy tolls on roads or river crossings.

AT THE HERALD'S OFFICE

The Herald's office is located in the walled town of Toulouse. This is a two-story, half-timber building. There is a large and well-cared-for garden in the back yard. The office of Lambert Pompilius is located on the first floor, with his apartment on the second floor.

Lambert Pompilius is a man who appears to be in his early forties, with short gray hair and clean-shaven face. As a Royal Herald, Lambert traces genealogies, issues coats of arms, and makes rulings upon rank or protocol.

After the central character shows Lambert any letter from a magistrate or Church attesting to his or her identity, he will invite the player characters inside. Once inside, Lambert will ask the central player character to read and then sign the Letters of Nobility and Obligation. Then, Lambert will ask the central player character to kneel. Lambert will tap both of the PC's shoulders with a sword, while saying, "In the name of the King of France and the Church that protects us, be thou a knight." He will hand the central player character a large brass key.

Then, Lambert will hand the player characters a map while saying to the central player character, "To find your estate, go to the west side of the city. There you will find the ruins of a Roman aqueduct. Follow the path beside the ruins until you reach your tower on Break Neck Hill." He may add, if the party is curious, that the Break Neck Hill was given that name after a horse jumped off a cliff and died of a broken neck.

"Your estate is five miles long by three and a half miles wide." Now give the player characters their map and give them some time to read it.

If the player characters ask Lambert how he found the central player character: Lambert will let the player character read a transcript of his or her family tree, the inscriptions from tombstones, and several personal letters. These documents prove that the player character is related to Charles Cato, as a first cousin once removed.

Lambert will not come to the PC's land, unless he is asked to show the party where the tower is or where the boundary markers are.

NOTES FOR THE STORYGUIDE

Lambert Pompilius is a descendant of a noble Roman family, a powerful magus, and considerably older than he appears. Lambert was taught the art

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of magic by his wizard father. He also was educated in architecture, engineering, hydraulics, and other areas of knowledge from his mother, who was an Alma Mater or "Soul Mother" In the pagan Roman Empire, these Soul Mothers sometimes were "teaching priestesses." Lambert's parents taught their students in secret to protect themselves from the Church and both died in obscurity.

The following is a sample of what Lambert knows:

During Roman settlement of the area an underground reservoir or castellum was used to store

surplus water. The reservoir still holds thousands of gallons of water, but the simple pumps the Romans used to get the water out had rotted away many years ago.

The Romans had no high pressure pipelines. Thus, all aqueducts were gravitational flows, running free and continuous in ducts almost never completely full. To get water to a higher level, pumps, water wheels, and low pressure pipelines were used. Low pressure for jet fountains or upper floors was obtained

Lambert Pompilius

Age 62

Cnf 4

Characteristics

Int +4	Str -1	Prs +1	Dex -1
Per +1	Stm -1	Com +2	Qik 0

Combat

Attack/Dagger: 1st +3—Atk +5—Dam +3

Defense/Dagger: +5

Soak Total (unarmored): -1

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -1

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities/Specialties

Toulouse Lore/Roman Times & Genealogy—3

Certámen—4

Charisma—2

Church Knowledge—3

Concentration—3

Craft (Architecture & Engineering)—3

Dagger—2

Dagger Parry—4

Diplomacy—4

Faerie Lore—4

Fantastic Beast Lore—2

Finesse—3

Folk Ken/Nobility—3

Heraldry—4

Hermes History—2

Hermes Lore—2

Humanities—3

Legend Lore—2

Magic Theory—6

Parma Magica—4

Scribe Latin/Formal Correspondence—4

Speak Latin/Legal Terms—6

Speak Provençal/Diplomacy—5

Magic Arts

Cr—7

An—5

Ig—5

In—12

Aq—8

Im—5

Mu—6

Au—5

Me—11

Pe—5

Co—6

Te—9

Re—10

He—5

Vi—8

Grimoire

The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch (CrCo 20), +17, Mastered

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 30), +22

Gather the Essence of the Beast (MuVi 15), +18

Incantation of Summoning the Dead (ReMe 25), +25

Peering Into the Mortal Mind (InMe 30), +27

Return of Mental Lucidity (CrMe 30), +22

Scent of Peaceful Slumber (ReMe 20), +25

Tracks of the Faerie Glow (InTe 25), +25

Trust of Childlike Faith (PeMe 10), +20, Mastered

Waiting Spell (ReVi 30), +22

Ward Against Faeries of the Air (ReAu 25), +19

Ward Against Faeries of the Mountains (ReTe 25), +23

Ward Against Faeries of the Waters (ReAq 30), +22

The Wound that Weeps (PeCo 15), +15, Mastered

(Note that with his high magic scores and intelligence, Lambert is able to spontaneously produce many lower-level spell effects.)

Personality Traits

Diplomatic +2

Open-minded +2

Patient +1



by nothing more elaborate than narrowing the pipe, hand pumps, or water wheels.

As the Romans had a fondness for massive construction, any aqueduct built on arches or in tunnels would be an impressive sight.

The water sources of most aqueducts were lakes, rivers, or natural springs. Large reservoirs were built to retain surplus water for dry periods.

He also owns several books on Roman structural design and construction that were written by Sextus Julius Frontinus and Vitruvius.

Lambert was a member of an old covenant that has entered the season of winter. Saddened by the decline of his covenant, Lambert moved to this town to get away from the covenant's weak and indifferent atmosphere. Through his studies, Lambert now thinks the Roman aqueduct has a gateway to Faerieland. In Faerieland, Lambert thinks he can find a way to renew his covenant.

Magical powers are not generally approved of, so Lambert's arcane talents are concealed from the people of Toulouse. If it is evident that some of the player characters consort with or even are magi, Lambert will carefully reveal his own magic abilities (while requesting, of course, that the party keep it secret—for the sake of the Order of Hermes, of course).

The following is information Lambert will not tell the player characters: Lambert has made a pact with what the Romans called a numina. Lambert has agreed to restore the Roman aqueduct, so that the numina's water runs through the city reservoir and into the now dry drinking and ornamental fountains.

Why does the water numina desire the aqueduct to be restored? The answer is that the city pipes leak 5 to 25 percent of their water into the ground. A few of the cracks are large enough to let the water numina become part of the city's ground water. Thus, the water numina will come into physical contact with a local earth numina that is under the city. Physical contact will give both the earth numina and the water numina more physical strength and provide them with greater magical awareness. Then, the water numina will become strong enough to open the gateway to Faerieland.

Lambert has only been near the underground reservoir at Rock Hill during the daytime. However, Lambert has just recently talked to the water numina. He was told how two Romans were cursed and became three-headed Dwarfs and how the curse can be broken. Lambert also knows that under the curse, the two Dwarfs can not leave the caverns. Don't forget that Lambert will not, if he can help it tell the

player characters that he is talking to the water numina.

EXPLORING THE FIEF

As the player characters walk or ride out of the city, they see a long construction of archways that come out of the city wall at a right angle. These archways are almost fifty feet high and have ten-foot spans between support columns. The structure is mostly intact, with a few places where some of the arches have fallen down. Closer inspection will show that the aqueduct is made of stone blocks and has been used as a cheap quarry by local builders. At these places the player character can see an enclosed area at the top of the archway.

A path runs east, paralleling to the aqueduct on the north side. Following the aqueduct, the player characters will walk through fields of dry grass and stunted wheat, and approach a low hill covered by evergreens. This is Break Neck Hill. The travel is light as the ground is level and firm. As they come closer they will see the construction ends halfway up the hill. The path crosses under the construction, between two columns, and continues east.

Once the player characters reach the base of Break Neck Hill, they must follow a winding trail up a steep slope to a large clearing that includes the site of the tower.

In front of the tower are two open gates and a stone palisade which extends to the steep slope. Player characters with knowledge of Roman history will see that the gateway is a Roman triumphal arch. Written in Latin is an inscription about a Roman victory over one of the local tribes in 27 B.C. There is also a low relief of barbarian prisoners in chains being watched by armed and armored Romans. The palisade has a built-in wall walk for defenders. For defenders to get to the wall walk, there are stairways leading up to the top of the palisade on both sides of the gate.

There are three buildings between the gate and the tower. The building on the left is a stable. One of the buildings on the right is a bath house and next to the slope is an outhouse. All three buildings are in good repair and are empty of people or furniture. If the player characters look carefully, they will find the foundations of other buildings.

As the player characters get closer to the archway, they will see a tower, thirty feet long, by thirty feet wide, by forty feet tall. The column supporting the tower is larger than all the other aqueduct columns. If Lambert is with them, he will say that one hundred years ago, the column was widened to build the tower.

The tower door has a built-in lock that can be opened by the key given to the player character by Lambert Pompilius. The first level of the tower has a large fireplace in the center of the room, a stairway leading up, and in the northwest corner is a large pile of stacked firewood. Under the firewood is a trapdoor in the floor. Each player character must roll (Perception with an Ease Factor of 9) to discover the trapdoor.

The only windows in the tower are arrow slits. This tower is dark and cold. The second and third levels are completely open areas. The fourth level is the tower roof, which also serves as a lookout for the tower. The roof has a stone parapet to protect the guards from missile fire and an enclosed spiral stairway leading down to the third and second levels.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

If the firewood is cleared away, the trapdoor on the first floor can be opened. The PCs will see a shaft leading down, with rusty iron rings attached to one side. The shaft leads into a vertical passage six feet wide and five feet high. If the PCs follow the passage west, the passage will continue for fifteen feet and end at the broken arch that overlooks the plains.

Another way for player characters to get into the dry aqueduct is by climbing down from the top of the archway on the rough and broken stones or using a rope.

If the player characters follow the passage east, the passage will enter the hillside. The transition point is marked by the end of cut stone blocks and the beginning of solid bedrock. This dry tunnel is half a mile long. The player characters will come upon the nests of small rodents in the tunnel, but nothing very dangerous. Every one hundred feet there is a four foot wide shaft to the surface. Handholds cut into the rock can be seen on one side of the shaft. Half of the shafts are covered with stone caps. The others are left open, their caps broken or rolled to one side.

Lambert could inform PCs that these ventilating shafts were used to expose the water to air, to provide water for crops, and to help workers clear obstructions. (If questioned as to how he knows such things, Lambert would say he read about Roman water works in an old book.)

After the tunnel ends, the PCs can exit through a shaft in the roof or continue into another area of cut stones. If they exit the tunnel they will see the area of cut stones is the inside of a smaller arched aqueduct. The second aqueduct is in much better condition than the first one and could still carry water. The aqueduct is a quarter of a mile long and fifty feet high. The

player characters can walk inside, or on top of the aqueduct. (The reason why this archway was left intact is that it is built of concrete faced with brick. Thus, there is very little material that anyone could easily salvage.)

From the top of the aqueduct, the player characters have a good view of a small valley that is between Break Neck Hill and Rock Hill. Looking south, the player characters can see irrigated farmland and a stream that flows west from Rock Hill, then turns south into the farmland. The player characters can also see small groups of tenant farmers tending crops and using water wheels to pump water onto the fields. Beyond the PC's property, small wooden huts built by the farmers can be seen on the hillsides.

The western side of the archway has a short section of a stone lined channel. If Lambert is with the party, he will point out that the channel is lined with cement the Romans called opus signinum. Again, if questioned about his comment, Lambert will say he read that fact in a book somewhere.

Then the channel disappears! Player characters can see that the channel walls have collapsed inward and the earth has now completely filled in this section of the Roman aqueduct. Trees and large bushes further hide any trace of the old water passage.

The player characters can walk down to the valley floor and ask the farmers questions.

The crops are very healthy looking and are slightly larger than normal. (This will be noted by a Perception roll of 8+; any plant knowledge-related skill should be added to this roll.)

If the player characters ask about the crops: The farmers will tell them that any plant watered with the stream water will mature twice as fast as normal plants and yield twice as much food per plant. They will add, "This water is so full of good magic that no one has ever become sick by drinking this water."

If the player characters ask about the history of the stream: The farmers will tell them a Christian myth. The story is of Demeter, an obscure, local female saint who appealed to God to bring an end to a three year long drought. After getting a message in a dream, Saint Demeter persuaded the Christians in Toulouse to tear down a temple dedicated to Jupiter and use the stones to build a church. After that had happened, God sent a bolt of lightning down from the heavens and it struck a rock cliff, which opened up a hole in the earth and killed a goat. From where the lightning struck, water flowed and is now the source of the stream water.

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It is true that in A.D. 575 the remains of a pagan temple were torn down and the its stones used to build a church. There was a thunderstorm two weeks after the Church was opened and a bolt of lightning did kill a goat. The rest of the story is false.

A magus can find out that this water has a Faerie Aura of two.

If asked why the farmers are working part of their land: The farmers will say they are freemen with an agreement with Charles Cato. The knight's estate would get half their crops in exchange for the right to farm the land. Charles signed this year's renewed agreement a few days before he died, and the legal paper is with Lambert Pompilius. The farmers promise the player characters that they will live up to the agreement they signed.

If the central player character or his party asks about his inherited lands: These farmers will tell the PCs that because of a long drought, only irrigated land will yield large crops. The farmers will add that with the exception the small area below the archway, most of the player character's land will not grow much food. A few will remember stories that the PC's land was always very fertile in Roman times. However, no one claims to remember why.

The truth is that the farmers know that it was irrigation from the aqueduct that made the land fertile. The farmers fear that if the aqueduct is rebuilt, all the water in the stream will go into the town, and leave the farmers with unproductive, dry fields.

If asked about the land east of the second archway: The locals will tell the PCs that it is a wild forest where no sane, God-fearing person walks. The farmers will say, "It is an evil land known as the Rock Hill." If asked about the stream's headwaters, the farmers will say that the source of the stream is cursed by little, three-headed monsters. The monsters appear at night and "have done everything from causing heavy rainstorms to eating the farmers' chickens." (The monsters do appear at night. The second statement is not true, but the farmers believe it! The farmers tend to blame all their problems on the "Evil Dwarfs." For the record, a family of talking foxes is eating their chickens—see below.)

If the player characters ask another group of farmers about the source of the stream or where the dry channel leads to: Some of the farmers say the headwaters are an area of consecrated ground. Others think it is an entrance to a pagan temple or the grave of a saint. Still others think the waters are made from Faerie magic. All agree that where the stream comes from is a dangerous, magical place. But, the

farmers will say that, "No one living has been near Rock Hill, the home of the Evil Dwarfs."

Before the player characters leave, the farmers will ask the PCs not to go near Rock Hill or do anything to make the Dwarfs angry.

Talking Foxes

Size: -3

Characteristics

Per +5 Stm +1 Cun +4

Combat

Attack/Bite: 1st +5—Atk +2—Dam +0

Defense: +8

Soak Total: -1

Body Levels: OK/-3/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/-3/Unc.

Abilities

Speak Provençal—3

A mated pair of talking foxes live in a small cave that is under the aqueduct between Break Neck Hill and Rock Hill. They know a great deal about the wildlife in the local area. Because they are somewhat magical (being gifted with speech), they do not shy away from magi as do normal animals—in fact, they may even seek out wizards' conversation. They will be happy to show the player characters around in exchange for a free meal. Have fun with these!

Furthermore, these foxes have been to the headwaters of the stream and have trotted into the caverns at least once a year. However, these foxes are frightened of the magic inside the caverns. If asked about the caverns, the foxes will reply with, "These are very large sleeping dens in the rock. There are large pools that hold the same good tasting water as the stream. The dens have a strange scent and we don't like to go into them."

They have seen the three-headed Dwarves, "In the caverns when the sun is sleeping and it is time to hunt."

INTO THE WOODS WE GO

The player characters have two ways to proceed. They can follow the dry channel through the woods or follow the stream.

If the player characters attempt to follow the dry channel: This is hard traveling as nature has com-

pletely erased the channel. The person attempting to track this must make three rolls (Perception + Tracking with an Ease Factor of 9+) to follow the remains of an occasional cut stone that once lined the channel or a narrow, level area that marks the former channel. If the player characters become lost, there is a fifty percent chance that they will end up at the stream.

South of the dry channel, there is a eight foot wide and three foot deep stream. The slow moving stream flows west, then south. The stream water has a Faerie Aura of 2. A lush, green carpet of plants seems to grow on both stream banks for as far as the eye can see. These are very healthy plants, slightly larger then normal. The player characters will also find wild berries that have matured several weeks before they normally do. Lambert will say that this is remarkably early in the season for ripe berries to be seen. PCs with tracking skills can see that many types of animals drink from the streams flowing waters. This would be a good place for grogs to express an interest in big game hunting.

If the player characters follow downstream, they will find more prosperous farmland. The stream itself continues for another twenty miles, then merges with a larger river. After entering the river, most of the Faerie Aura in the water is diluted.

If the player characters follow upstream, they will see that it takes a zigzagging course. This is hard traveling as there are many obstacles on the stream banks. Careful examination will show faint traces of a Roman cart road running beside the south bank of the stream. This road is now overgrown and washed out in places.

After about two miles of traveling, the stream turns north and flows out from a break in the earth wall of the old channel. The channel west of the break in the earth wall is filled in with clay and rocks. The player characters can see that east of the opening, the stream flows in the channel that is lined with cut stones. On both sides of the channel is an old, mature forest. This forest has a wild, rugged beauty, as some trees seem to grow right out of cracks in the bedrock.

This water filled channel continues for seven hundred feet from the break in the wall, to the base of a granite cliff. The water flows out of a man-made opening in the cliff face, with a smaller entrance beside the larger one. Both openings are cut into the cliff face and are very dark. The PCs may follow either passage.

However, any player character attempting to follow the aqueduct must make three Dexterity stress rolls of 3+ to avoid falling down in a very wet dark area. (Carrying any light to illuminate the obstacles



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will reduce the ease factor to 2+.) A botch means the player character knocks his head, a double botch means the PC knocks his head and gets a lung full of water, and a triple botch means the player character is knocked unconscious, floating face down. The water here is only three foot deep and only on a double or triple botch has a character a chance to drown.

The other tunnel is three foot higher than the water in the channel. This opening is eight feet high and eight feet wide, with a smooth surface of crushed rock. These twin tunnels parallel each other for a hundred yards.

After exiting the tunnels, the PCs will find themselves inside an ancient subterranean stone quarry. These caves are divided into several separate chambers. As a whole, this reservoir is extremely picturesque, very quiet, and would make a nice meditation area for a tired magus.

If the player characters explore the caves by daylight, sunlight will pass through a number of small wells and illuminate most of the caverns. The center of the quarry is filled by a large pool or reservoir of fresh water. However, there is enough room between the quarry walls and the water for the PCs to walk completely around the reservoir.

This reservoir is almost entirely fed by natural springs. However, some water does trickle down from the openings that also let sunlight into the caves. The water falls down from the rock above and rises up somewhere near the center of the reservoir. The water in the reservoir feels extremely cold, is naturally carbonated, and has great purity. The water brought out of the reservoir has a Faerie Aura of 2. There is a section of the rock wall that is covered with a faint mosaic picture of a double gate. This picture has a Faerie Aura of 5, and is a potential gateway to Faerieland itself.

If a player character rolls successfully for his Alertness talent (Perception + Alertness of 6+), tell him he sees or hears water dripping through the rock roof above. With another successful roll, a player character finds bones, a shattered human skull, and a badly rusted battle axe head among the rocks. Additional searches will turn up two more sets of human bones. One set of bones will have five rusted spear points and the other will have a rusted long sword.

A player character with animal handling or a similar skill will notice that no trace of any normal wildlife such as bats, rabbits, or mice can be found in the caverns. All normal animals are frightened when inside the caverns, and will even fight the PCs to run

outside. In addition, magical creatures like talking horses or unicorns will feel uneasy and if they can speak, they will say, "I feel something strange in the air."

If the spell, "Voice of the Lake" (InAq 25), is successfully cast onto the water, tell the casting magus' player the following. "When the great fire in the sky hides itself and the small fires awaken, the two creatures appear in the center of the pool, swim to shore, and leave the water. When the great fire returns, the dwarfs swim back to the center and disappear."

The Little Gray Men

Faerie Might 15

Size -2

Characteristics

Int +4

Prs -9

Stm +4

Combat

Attack/Sword: 1st +4—Atk +6—Dmg +10

Defense/Sword: +6

Soak Total (normal form): +6

Soak Total (in ice form): +12

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: n/a

The player characters will see the following if they are in the caverns at sunset. In the center of the largest chamber, the player characters will see two small, green clouds appear and hover over the center of the reservoir. These clouds will enter the reservoir and create solid bodies from the water. After sixty seconds, the two figures will start swimming toward the edge of the reservoir.

These two creatures both look like three-headed Dwarfs. They wear no clothing, but are almost completely covered with long, tangled hair over all of their bodies. They are so ugly that the first time a player character sees them, he must make a Stm roll of 3+ or disgorge his last meal.

They attack anyone who is inside the subterranean reservoir and who do not wear the clothing of a Roman citizen or a uniform of the Roman army. The dwarfs will not leave the caverns for any reason.

Both Dwarfs can cast spontaneous Aquam spells up to level 15 at a cost of one point of Faerie Might per spell.

Both of them attack with Roman short swords and yell in archaic Latin, "Barbarians, leave this area or die!" If the player characters ask them questions, their only reply will be, "Repair what you

savages have broken! This water must return to the garrison on the Break Neck Hill!" If the player characters attempt to pass themselves as Roman citizens, they will be told to repair the aqueduct, then ignored.

If Lambert hears or is told these statements, he will say that these two creatures are under a curse that will only be broken by restoring the aqueduct to the player character's tower.

If these creatures are "Incapacitated," their bodies and weapons will dissolve into water, which trickles back to the reservoir. For a second or two the player characters will see two green clouds of steam. (These clouds of steam are the cursed spirits of Vergil and Nora, two Roman citizens.)

If the water is frozen by magic, the dwarfs will appear to be made of solid ice. If the ice dwarfs are "Incapacitated", the ice will shatter, and green clouds of steam will return to the reservoir.

When the sun comes up, their physical bodies and weapons dissolve into water, while the cursed spirits return to merge with the reservoir.

The real story of the dwarfs started in 10 BC. A young centurion named Vergil Sextus and his wife, Nora, lived on a small outpost where the PC's tower now stands. Vergil commanded an eighty man garrison as well as being in charge of the lands the player character have inherited. The couple both took vows to the water numina and Emperor Augustus to protect and maintain the aqueduct to supply water to the farms and nearby Roman town. (The Romans had a pact with the local nature spirits to protect the fertility of the land.) Toulouse was also important as the town was the headquarters for the Tenth Roman Legion.

During an uprising of a local tribe of Gauls, the small garrison was besieged. To deprive the small fortress of water, the channel wall was broken and the water diverted into the present stream. In the final battle, the young couple were captured. Both Vergil and Nora were tied up and thrown into the reservoir as a sacrifice to the barbarians' gods.

However, the water numina was enraged over the couple's failure to fulfill their vows and cursed them. The barbarians watched in awe as the two were transformed into three headed dwarfs and attacked them. After losing three men to the enraged dwarfs, the frightened barbarians fled the reservoir, never to return. Because of this battle, the entire area was believed to be inhabited by evil spirits.

hus, the aqueduct was never rebuilt and the two dwarfs" remained as guardians of the reservoir.

Water Numina

Faerie Might 50

Size +6

Characteristics

Int: +6

Per: +6

Combat

Attack/Claw: 1st +4—Atk +8—Dam +25

Attack/Bite: 1st +6—Atk +8—Dam +25

See also breath attack (described below)

Soak Total (normal form): +30

Soak Total (ice form): +35

Body Levels: OK/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +12

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/Unc.

The water here is blessed by what the Romans called a numina or "impersonal spirit," something akin to both faeries and elementals. This spirit has been called by many names and in pagan times was worshiped as a minor divinity. During Roman occupation, the numina was called "Demeter," after the Greek goddess of plants and farming. The aspects attributed to this numina have been fertility, healing, and the underworld. This numina is good natured to anyone who has taken vows to protect the caverns and the aqueduct. The numina desires to help as many living things as it can.

However, if enraged the numina will use the water in the reservoir to transform itself into the physical shape of a dragon. The dragon will look a very large, scaly reptile that has two arms, legs, huge wings, and a long tail. The dragon's hands have thumbs, and can hold objects like a human. The numina will become a dragon if the caverns are in danger or if it finds out that the water is being used to help infernal powers. This dragon will look like solidified water. The dragon will be transparent, but have the mass of dry concrete. While in the caverns, the dragon will regenerate three body levels every combat round. If outside the caverns, but in contact with the spring water, the dragon will regenerate one body level every combat round. If out of contact with any body of water, the dragon will loose a body level every hour.

The numina has a unique breath weapon, which is a powerful bolt of water. As long as it stays in contact with a large body of water, the numina can use this breath weapon once each combat round. The water numina will absorb water or eat ice, then breathe on its foes. Each character so attacked must make a roll of Str + Dex. A roll of 9+ means the character has not been hit. Anything struck by this

bolt (+15 damage) must make a further Dex + Str stress roll 10+ to avoid being flung backwards for an additional +10 damage.

If the reservoir is frozen, the dragon will become a living ice statue. When in this form, the dragon's breath weapon will become shooting chunks of ice. Thus, the breath weapon's damage will increase to +30.

In combat, the numina will prefer to use its unique breath. If it loses more than half its body levels, it will use its claw/claw/bite attack. It cannot use its breath weapon and attack physically in the same combat round.

If the numina must get out of contact with water, it will take to the air and drop handfuls of rocks upon its enemies.

The numina is so strong in the reservoir that no mortal magic can pollute the water within the caverns. Moreover, the water numina can leave the reservoir for short periods of time.

For this adventure, the water numina's only desire is to come into contact with an earth numina that lives under the city of Toulouse. Thus, the water numina will be very grateful to anyone that helps restore the aqueduct.

TIME TO START DIGGING

In order to free the two Romans from their curse, the channel on Rock Hill must be restored as the aqueduct's water must flow under the player character's tower. This will require that the player characters dig out the dry channel. The player characters are free to hire peasants to dig out the channel. Magic can also help speed up the excavations. (This option must be use as few times as possible and very discreetly with the farmers or workers around, lest the player characters wish a conflict with the local Church authorities.)

It will take 1,000 man hours to dig out a large enough channel to get a stream of water into the second archway and beyond to the PCs tower. The soil that had filled in the channel is soft and easy to dig out.

The hole in the channel way must be filled in to direct the water into the old aqueduct. However, when the hole is filled in, the stream will dry up. This will deprive the farmland downstream of most of their water. As workers start digging up the dry channel, Lambert or the farmers will ask the player characters to build a small gate so their fields, along with the central player character's, can be watered.

When the channel is cleared out and the moment water flows under the player character's tower, the curse will be broken. The couple will appear human

again, standing hip deep in the reservoir. Vergil will be dressed in Hauberk scale armor over a white uniform and hold a Roman short sword; while Nora will be wearing a flowing, blue dress with a green hem. Nora will also have a short sword, but she does not know how to fight with it. The passing of centuries has not aged them. Furthermore, Vergil and Nora have no memory of being three-headed dwarfs, and they have no idea of what the outside world is like now.

If no one is in the caverns: Vergil and Nora will walk back to the player character's tower, expecting to see the small Roman fortress. They will desire to enter the "new" tower and talk to the player characters.

Vergil and Nora will tell the player characters that they want to go into town to report the barbarian attack to the Roman army commanders in Tolosa, which is the Roman name for Toulouse. Vergil will say that Tolosa is a Pagus Lemonius or "fortified village." Equally important, the couple also wish to pray at the temple of Jupiter, their favorite god. (The space where the temple stood is now the office and home of Lambert Pompilius.)

As upper class Romans, Vergil and Nora are proud and obnoxious towards the player characters. The player characters will have a hard time trying to convince them that the Roman Empire they knew is long finished. After all, until Vergil and Nora see that the Roman Empire they knew is history, they will think that the PCs are only crazy barbarians with wild stories about hundred of years passing in hours. However, Vergil and Nora are educated Roman citizens and are literate in Greek and Latin. They could tell the player characters many things that have been forgotten about the ancient world. How the player characters use this information is up to them.

WHEN VERGIL COMES MARCHING HOME AGAIN

The Storyguide should hint that the player characters should guide Vergil and Nora through this new, strange, Post-Roman world.

Sooner or later, Vergil and Nora will go to the player character's tower, expecting to find their small fortress. They will be very confused when they see so many changes that have happened over the centuries. However, they will dismiss what they are seeing by telling themselves the passing of time is "the work of the barbarians and their wild magic."

While at the player character's tower, Vergil will spend his time sharpening his sword, while Nora will start writing an epic poem about their adventures.

Vergil will spend a day digging through the old trash pits. Just before sunset, he will find several tarnished, bronze statuettes representing the couple's household gods and a small bronze dragon, representing the water numina. Vergil will polish the dragon statuette and keep it with him at all times, but will not tell the player characters why. (The dragon statuette is used to call the water numina.)

The couple will ask the player characters to restore the public baths to working order. If asked why, the two Romans will say they don't want to stink like uneducated barbarians. If the baths are rebuilt, Vergil and Nora will be extremely grateful. If not, the couple will wash in the stream.

After the passing of a few days, Vergil and Nora will insist that the PCs take them into Toulouse so they can report the loss of the garrison and pray at the temple of Jupiter. Vergil will be wearing his uniform and will refuse to don anything else. On the other hand, if Nora is offered suitable outer clothing, she will wear it over her dress.

These two will look confused as they get within sight of Toulouse, and look even more surprised as they enter it. Both will enter a state of shock, as they see the temple of Jupiter and more than 90% of the Roman buildings have been replaced. However, just as the PCs are about to take them back to their tower, Lambert Pompilius will come out of his office and invite the PCs in for a visit.

Lambert will not look surprised, he will just smile. The herald will walk over to the group and ask Vergil, Nora, and the player characters to sit down, while his servants bring wine and cheese. Lambert will then give his servants the rest of the day off. After they are gone, Lambert will look at the PCs and say in Latin, "Would anyone mind telling me why you have come here with two people dressed in clothing and uniforms not worn since the fall of Rome?" The player characters now have a chance to tell their side of the story. If a player character is speaking in a "modern" language, Lambert will translate for Vergil and Nora.

After everybody has had a turn to tell their side of the story, Lambert will sit up and say, "Well, it looks like we have a problem." Pointing his thumb at Vergil and Nora, he continues with, "I don't think these two could find their place in our world anymore. They belong to an age long since past."

Lambert will take a sip of wine, then say to the party leader, "As you helped break their curse, I believe it is up to your group to bring these two into a realm where they can live out their lives in peace. In our world, they would be in danger from people who would burn them at the stake as sorcerers."

Lambert will look around at everybody, then say, "Somewhere in the woods or along the aqueduct, I think there is a gateway to such a realm. It may be in the reservoir itself—I don't know. But, the sooner these two leave, the safer all of us will be. These two need your help to find their way to the Land of Faerie. I suggest that Vergil and Nora stay with you at your tower. It will be safer for them there."

"However, the blessed water from the sacred springs needs to run through the entire aqueduct before the gate can be opened. The aqueduct ends at another underground reservoir that is under the old temple gardens. This, I believe, will open the gate to Faerieland."

Lambert will add, "From the city wall, the aqueduct water was carried down a cascade pipe and under the streets to the temple reservoir. I have been inside the cascade pipe, and the underground system to the reservoir is intact. From this temple reservoir, the water was distributed through lead pipes to the now dry fountains that dot the city."

"All you must do to restore the Roman aqueduct is get Merchant Confraternity, the guild, to repair this archway for you. The men who make up the Confraternity's leadership are not ignorant laborers; they can be persuaded by intellectual arguments. You must use as much sound reasoning as your group can muster to convince the Confraternity to rebuild the city's aqueduct. I will arrange a meeting with the guild ten days from now, if this is acceptable to you. I think my office is the ideal place to talk to the guild officers."

"The workers you will need will come from the farms, as the peasants have finished planting their fields and have the time to work on rebuilding the aqueduct. They will work in exchange for having their fields watered by the aqueduct."

"The missing arches and stonework can be replaced by a wooden trough. This will cut the money and time to rebuild the aqueduct in half."

"You will need a good general contractor when the rebuilding of the aqueduct starts. With my limited skills, I can make sure that the repairs are done correctly, for a fee, of course!"

With that said, Lambert will tell the PCs he needs to rest and study his books for a clue to where the gateway is. Lambert will then show the entire party out.

OPENING THE GATE

If the characters go along with Lambert's plan, they will have to persuade the leadership of the Merchant Confraternity to rebuild the aqueduct into the city—or produce the cash to hire them to do so. Do not forget that the land is in a long drought!

There are several ways to run the negotiations. For instance, each player character negotiating with the guild could make a simple Intelligence + Communication roll of 12+ to succeed; each intelligent argument (this is subjective, of course; the Storyguide must use her most careful judgement here) your players come up with would decrease the Ease Factor by one. At the Storyguide's option, a very imaginative argument can decrease the Ease Factor by 2 or even 3. Alternatively, you could use a single characteristic (probably Communication), plus a social ability relevant to the character's approach—for instance, Charisma, Subterfuge, Diplomacy, Intrigue or Leadership.

If the player characters fail on their first attempt, they can try to negotiate with the guild every thirty days. Persistence should ultimately win, if the characters are willing to persevere. Once the guild agrees to rebuild the aqueduct, its restoration will take four months.

The players may of course decide to flout Lambert's advice. This means poor Lambert must try to get the aqueduct rebuilt through his own means, probably attracting undue attention to himself in the process. Even so, he would require the permission of the newly land-owning PC to meddle with that character's property. If pressed, Lambert will reveal his ultimate goal, of reviving his Winter covenant to spring, through the numina's assistance. Lambert would not object to player characters attending his entrance to Faerieland.

Once the aqueduct is restored, Lambert will ask that the player characters, with Vergil and Nora to assemble in the caverns, next to the mosaic picture at noon. Once everyone is in the caverns, Lambert will throw Vergil's statuette of a small bronze dragon into the water. Then, the water numina will rise out of the reservoir in the form of a large dragon.

The dragon will look at Lambert and say in Latin, "Lambert, you have fulfilled your part of our agreement. As we agreed to, I will open the gate for you and your two companions." The dragon breathes upon the mosaic picture with a spray of water. As the water flows over the gate, it become three dimensional and opens into a beautiful forested land.

Vergil, Nora, and Lambert will walk through the gate and into Faerieland. These three will fight anyone who attempts to stop them from entering Faerieland. Vergil and Nora will never be seen again in this world. Lambert will spend his time talking to powerful faeries. He to return in five to ten years to attempt to save his covenant. After the three characters have entered, the gateway will close and turn back into a mosaic picture.

The water numina will say to the central player character, "As the new owner of the aqueduct, will you take an oath to defend and maintain both reservoirs and the aqueduct, which keeps the land fertile?"

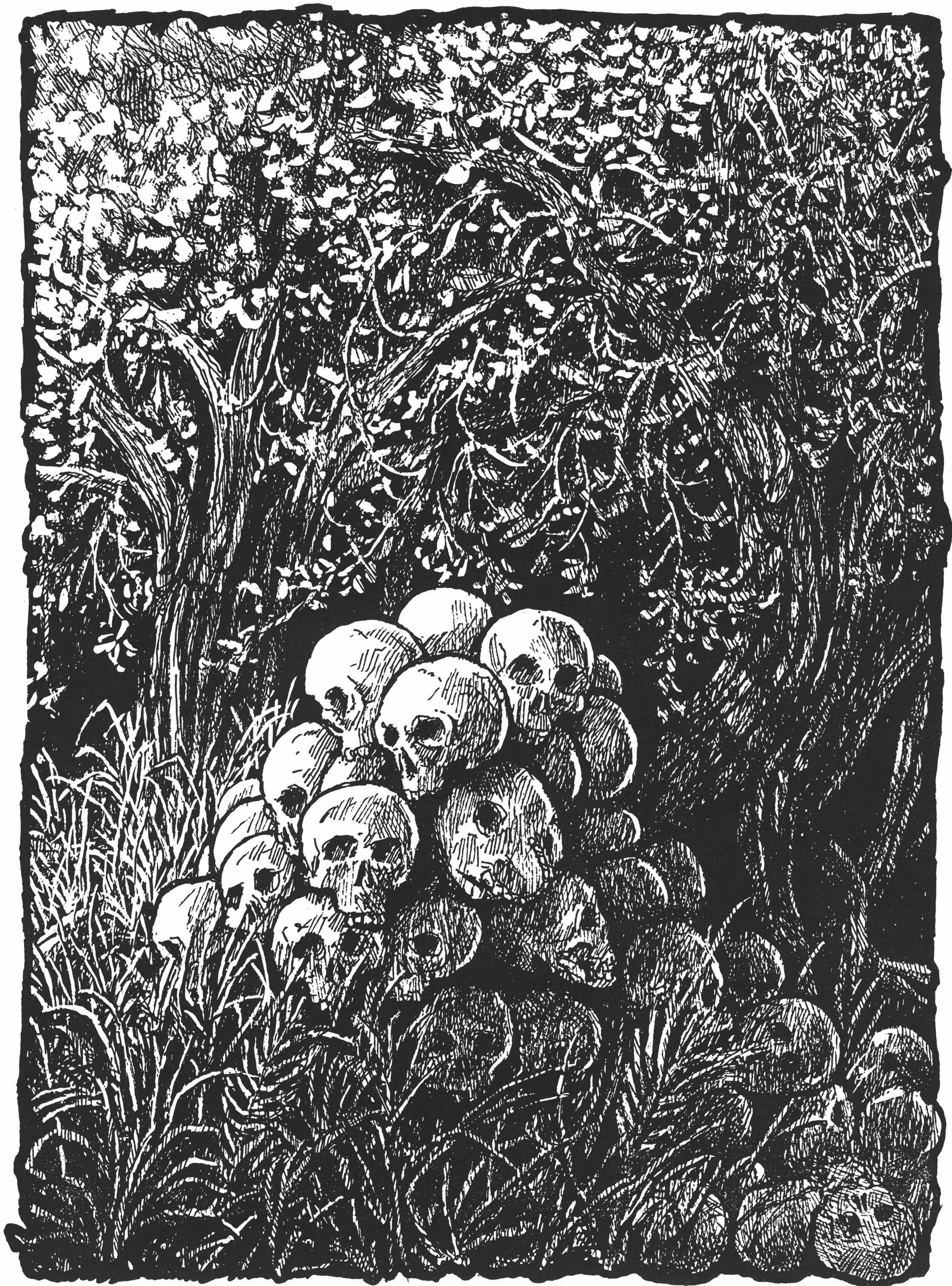
If the central player character agrees, the he will receive two bags, each bag having five small, bronze statuettes of a dragon. The water numina will say, "With these statuettes you have the ability to call upon me every six months for advice or for protection of both reservoirs and aqueduct. You also have my permission to collect Aquam vis. Do you have any questions?" The magical water will yield twelve pawns of Aquam vis per season.

The water numina will answer any questions the player characters might have about their lands. Then the water numina will smile and dissolve into the reservoir.

If the player character does not agree, the water numina will disappear into the reservoir. The water numina will not take a physical form again until the central player character changes his or her mind, or another person gets ownership of the property.

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Copse of Skulls

by Thomas M. Kane

TIME AND LOCATION

This adventure occurs in the Lorraine region of France during the thirteenth century. All speaking creatures talk French and usually know at least some German. If your campaign takes place in another time and place, you can easily change the location and language. Simply put the Cope of Skulls in a wooded region distant enough from major garrisons for a bandit den to survive.

SUMMARY OF PLOT

For the past several months, a novice sorcerer named Joyeuse has lived in the party's covenant, sleeping in the grogs quarters and trying to become an apprentice. He owned several arcane books and could talk at length (incredible length) about Hermetic principles. However, Joyeuse could grasp only the most superficial aspects of what he discussed. "A fine lad, but no wizard," as the head of the covenant concluded. Therefore, everyone felt relieved when Joyeuse volunteered to temporarily serve as a messenger. The magi sent him with seven grogs to carry a gift and some written questions to Moonfield. Moonfield is a nearby covenant which possesses an enviable library.

Five days later a magus from Moonfield arrives. He coldly informs the Magi that their messenger aroused something better not disturbed. Huntsmen of the local Baron recently found the remains of a wizards' delegation discarded by the trail, including a broken dagger with symbols of the party's covenant carved into the hilt. The evening thereafter, a "black terror" terrorized several peasants and desecrated a church in the village of Linz.

Moonfield expects the party's covenant to learn what their messenger released and take any steps required to contain it. The magi agree, both to smooth relations with their neighbor Covenant and out of a sense of obligation toward Joyeuse. According to the magus from Moonfield, the novice wizard may well be alive. Nobody has found any corpses, of men or horses. Therefore, the party sets out for the forest where Joyeuse vanished, which woodcutters call the Cope Of Skulls.

FOR THE STORYGUIDE ONLY

The Copse contains an old hill-fort called the Redoubt. A band of monstrosities lives there. Originally, most had human parents, but due to crimes, poverty, neuroses or deformities, they could not show themselves among Men. Deep within their hideout, these people found a leader. This fortress belongs to a drake, whom the Celts named Cuwain more than one thousand years ago. Over the years, Cuwain bred his outcasts like horses, until he developed a new race of Men. He created the norke, an ugly people, perhaps, but clever, cruel and strong.

Joyeuse knew what he would meet in the Copse. He lived among the norke once, and since the magi did not seem to value him, he decided to return. He knew that little as the wizards taught him, Cuwain would still find it all fascinating, since the drake aspires to augment his powers with sorcery. Therefore, he slipped away from his grogs and went to the Copse. The next day, Cuwain's raiders destroyed the remainder of his troop, hoping to obscure evidence of his disappearance.

The drake fully appreciates the novice wizard's magic. Joyeuse managed to accumulate several books and a vast stock of theoretical knowledge from the wizards. Cuwain has the raw talent to use that theory. He intends to redouble his banditry with the new knowledge, and has already used it to plunder a church. Joyeuse finds himself half an honored sage and half a prisoner in the Redoubt.

THEME

This story addresses the lot of the outcast. Every magus must sympathize with outsiders, since wizards in general find little love from ordinary society. Nevertheless, Joyeuse simply cannot help but disrupt covenants. Furthermore, he fits all too well into the Drake's brigandage. The party must decide whether to respond with violence or understanding, but fighting may not succeed, and the soft-hearted soon learn that these people do not appreciate kindness. The norke savor cruelty and betrayal with a fervor that completely defies normal theories of morality. As for Joyeuse, he wants no more of pity now that he has tasted power.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure follows a fairly simple course. The adventurers explore the region and eventually find their way to Cuwain's Redoubt. There, after ascertaining the nature of the place, they can launch a raid. The maps and area keys allow you to deter-

mine what the party learns, in which locations, and how well the norke have prepared for the adventurers' attack.

The party may initially expect Joyeuse to help them, and even once they learn of his divided sympathies, adventurers might still hope to persuade him not to stay with Cuwain. As Storyguide, you must role-play the novice wizard's reaction. Unless offered an apprenticeship, he refuses to give up his new importance. He does not have the heart of a norke though. If the adventurers perform some noble deed, such as risking their own lives to save one of Cuwain's prisoners, Joyeuse may yield to them.

When describing things the party sees, remember that the adventurers undoubtedly find this adventure terrifying. Something bizarre obviously happened in the Copse, and that thing has uncanny connections to the distant past. Adventurers will surely remember that inexperienced wizards can summon dreadful things if they grow too bold. Furthermore, the truth should not seem reassuring at all. Only an army would feel comfortable assaulting Cuwain's fort, but the party must keep the uninitiated world of Barons and authorities as ignorant of the incident as possible.

INTRODUCTION

Read the players the first section of the Plot Summary to begin this adventure. The Covenant does not necessarily expect the adventurers to fight and defeat whatever lives in the Copse of Skulls, but they must learn what it is, and do their best to neutralize it. If possible, they must recover two items which Joyeuse carried. He owned an English book titled "Contemplations On The Daemonic Chymistry," which could prove disastrous in the wrong hands. The novice wizard also had a magic ring as a gift to the wizards of Moonfield. It is a weapon, which can shoot five Pilums of Fire, as the spell, per day.

MAP KEYS

1. Peasants' Huts

Tree-shadows hang over these low buildings. Three families of peasants live on the edge of the Copse, cutting wood and growing vegetables for the Baron of Linz. These people turn their faces away as strangers approach. The serfs do not dare deny the party anything, but adventurers must pointedly introduce themselves to get a greeting, and directly ask for anything they want.

These peasants admit that someone robbed their homes several nights ago but repeatedly claim not to

have seen the burglars. As the story continues, one bearded man explains how he scuffled with “the brutes” but failed to rescue his two nephews from kidnapping. In fact, the peasants viewed their assailants clearly, and saw that the attackers had fangs and red eyes of fiends. None of them dare recount that chilling fact.

The robbers took two of the peasants’ children in the raid, boys named Franz and Mical. One evening afterward, they found a notice instructing them to leave ten cows tethered by the forest stream if they ever wanted to see the children, alive or dead. The peasants weep, but have no way to pay. They tell themselves that the creatures have already devoured their sons. If the party offers to rescue the children, most peasants respond with skepticism, although the parents beg them to try, and melt with thanks if the adventurers succeed. Naturally, the adventurers can then expect a warm welcome whenever they visit Linz.

If asked about the Copse of Skulls, the peasants know the following lore. Its name comes from a pyramid of mummified heads which people found buried there. The priests said that the skulls came from a pagan ritual which the ancient Celts used to pacify “the wise among serpentkind.” They had the skulls burned. This story seems plausible to the older peasants, because legend holds that deep within the copse, one can find a fortress which has stood unweathered since the days of Caesar’s wars with Gaul. Nobody but robbers and witches go there now. Ordinary folk do not cross the Copse Stream, because its waters carry a “foul humor, which changes those who drink it.”

These peasants can fight, but do not carry weapons and have no noteworthy special abilities.

2. Copse

Within the trees, the terrain becomes rough, folded into rocky ridges and slopes covered with dark pine. Travellers must pass a Fatigue roll with a target number of seven every fifteen minutes. These are stress rolls. Anyone who rolls a Botch twists an ankle and plunges head-first into a ravine, suffering damage for a 15 foot drop.

As adventurers labor through the Copse, they glimpse things among the trees, flashes of gray fur, or yellow, feral eyes. Anyone who passes a Per + Scan roll with a target number of 10 sees a plump wolf and notices that the beast conceals itself with practiced stealth, but no signs of fear. Eight wolves live in these woods, where norke feed them the carcasses of Men. They know not to attack armed, moving bands.

However, if the adventurers pause to rest, these beasts close in for a kill.

If anyone scans the ground, he finds crags in the stone containing human bones, the remains of previous victims. Deep tooth-marks cover every inch of these artifacts. In addition, some bones still have twine wrapped about them. The norke bound stronger prisoners before giving them to the wolves.

Wolves (8)

Size -1

Characteristics

Cun +3 Per +4 Stm +4

Combat

Bite: 1st +3—Atk +5—Dam +6

Tackle: 1st +3—Atk +4—Tackle +5

Defense +5

Soak Total: +5

Body Levels: OK/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +4

Fatigue Levels: OK/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Personality Traits

Brave +5

Cowardly +4

3. Remains

A revolting odor drifts in the air here, issuing from the thick green weeds. Anyone who searches for the source finds a patch where dark stains streak the leaves. On the ground lie rancid heaps of viscera, from eight disembowled animals. An Int + Animal Handling roll with a Target Number of five reveals that they come from horses.

These are the remains of the horses which belonged to Joyeuse and his grogs. The norke led them this far, but could not get them to cross the stream. Therefore, they killed and dressed the beasts, since their kind considers horse-flesh a delicacy.

4. Copse Stream

A brook washes through this region, its edges forming, not a specific bank, but a sprawl of fens. Rocks and fallen logs provide numerous fords. The water smells raunchy, due to the waste norkes throw into its source. Anyone who drinks from this stream, or crosses with a wound on the legs or feet may suffer an infection. The victim must pass a Stm roll with a target number of 12 or lose four Fatigue levels due to

nausea (or, in the case of a wound, festering). These effects last 1-10 (roll a die) days.

5. Familiar Faces

At this outcrop, the party hears a distinctly human whisper. The next sound depends on the adventurers' appearance. If the party carries any visible tokens of their Covenant, a deep voice calls to them from a hollow. Otherwise, a branch snaps, and then the party hears only running footsteps.

Two of Joyeuse's grogs built a camp against a boulder here. Both men run if the adventurers look threatening. Their time in this Copse has given them the panicky reflexes and roving eyes of hunted animals. However, they gladly join a party from their old employers. The grogs call themselves William and Jean.

These grogs can describe the last days of Joyeuse's expedition. Their troubles began after the first night they spent in this Copse. Joyeuse took the third watch along with one grog. However, when the turn for that watch came, nobody woke his companion, and all the grogs slumbered until many hours later, when howling wolves roused everyone. They found Joyeuse gone. His equipment had vanished with him. The warriors hastily donned their armor, preparing for a search but as they prepared to depart, the Things arrived.

A band of over two dozen armed beings charged out of the night, weapons drawn, and fell upon the grogs with murderous blows. Jean insists that these enemies were not human. One had brilliant red eyes, another sported inch-long fangs and paused twice in battle to lick blood from his sword. Of the seven grogs, only William and Jean escaped. They have hidden here ever since.

6. Trail

After the shade of the forest, the sun seems blinding on this open track. The winding path leads through the Bluffs, making sharp turns around stones. A norke sentry watches the path from a treetop at the spot marked "X." If the adventurers pass there, allow them to attempt Per + Alertness rolls with a target number of 8 to detect his camouflaged post.

Unless someone stops him, the sentry waits for the party to pass, and then rushes through the woods to report their arrival. He has a concealed trail to the Redoubt, which allows him to arrive much faster than anyone using the normal path. After he delivers his warning, a troop of 30 norke warriors hurries down the main trail to destroy the intruders. They dare not let anyone escape to tell the story. See "The Redoubt" for statistics on the norke.

William and Jean

These men have become wary and may bolt if startled. They still stand bravely in battle though and make trustworthy companions for the party.

Characteristics

Str +1

Enc 5

Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +2—Atk +7—Dam +10

Defense/Round Shield: +5

Soak Total (Full Ring): +8

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Brawl—3

Broadsword—3

Shield Parry—3

Personality Traits

Brave -1

Cowardly +1

THE REDOUBT

The norke maintain an efficient, brotherly band in the old fortress. Fifty of them dwell in its compounds, sharing all things in common. Although the Redoubt has the rough speech and petty bickering of all garrisons, these creatures seem much more educated than most grogs, let alone common bandits. Most norke can read, and although they seldom get books, everyone knows a little of Homer and Ovid. Cuwain enforces discipline and guard duty with minimal coercion, since all the norke can guess what awaits them if authorities discover and attack this lair. Indeed, the Redoubt seems like an ideal community.

Cuwain's norke support this Redoubt by plunder. Furthermore, they harbor a well-founded hatred for all trappings of conventional society and reject not only the Church and rulers, but all forms of morality and compassion. They enjoy inflicting death and pain, not out of gleeful sadism, but simply because cruelty seems like the natural order of things.

In battle, the norke strive not to let a single witness escape. They like to take prisoners though, as hostages and sources of information about future targets. Cuwain's creatures seldom brutalize prisoners for sport, but they feel no qualms about maiming or killing. They seldom return hostages alive. Normally, they keep captives as long as they

have a use for them and then feed the prisoners to Cuwain or the wolves. Joyeuse may intervene to keep members of his covenant alive, at least temporarily.

Joyeuse would willingly participate in any defense of the Redoubt, but Cuwain does not trust him to fight against wizards of Hermes. If the party has done anything to warn the norke of its magical abilities, the drake has Joyeuse locked in the Weirding Room. Otherwise, this wizard uses spontaneous

magic to assist the norke. He gets the most effect by casting minor Intellego spells to help them prepare their strategy.

Norke Sentry

Description: a stunted man with red eyes, an elongated neck and sharp teeth. Sunlight wearies him both physically and mentally, causing him a -3 penalty on Str, Per and Stm. The light also makes him irritable and unable to concentrate.

Role-playing tips: This sentry speaks with the party only if captured. He snarls and tries to bite, but answers questions in broken German. The norke sentry happily betrays the Redoubt if threatened. He explains that Joyeuse went there and claims that the novice wizard always served Cuwain as a spy. In the sentry's words, "That's why he gets royal treatment, while the rest of us norke sit up in trees in the sun."

Daytime statistics appear after a slash.

Age 20

Enc 3

Characteristics

Str +1/-2

Stm 0/-3

Per 0/-3

Combat

Broadsword: 1st +2—Atk +7—Dam +10/+8

Defense: +6

Soak Total (Full Leather): +4/+1

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Broadsword—4

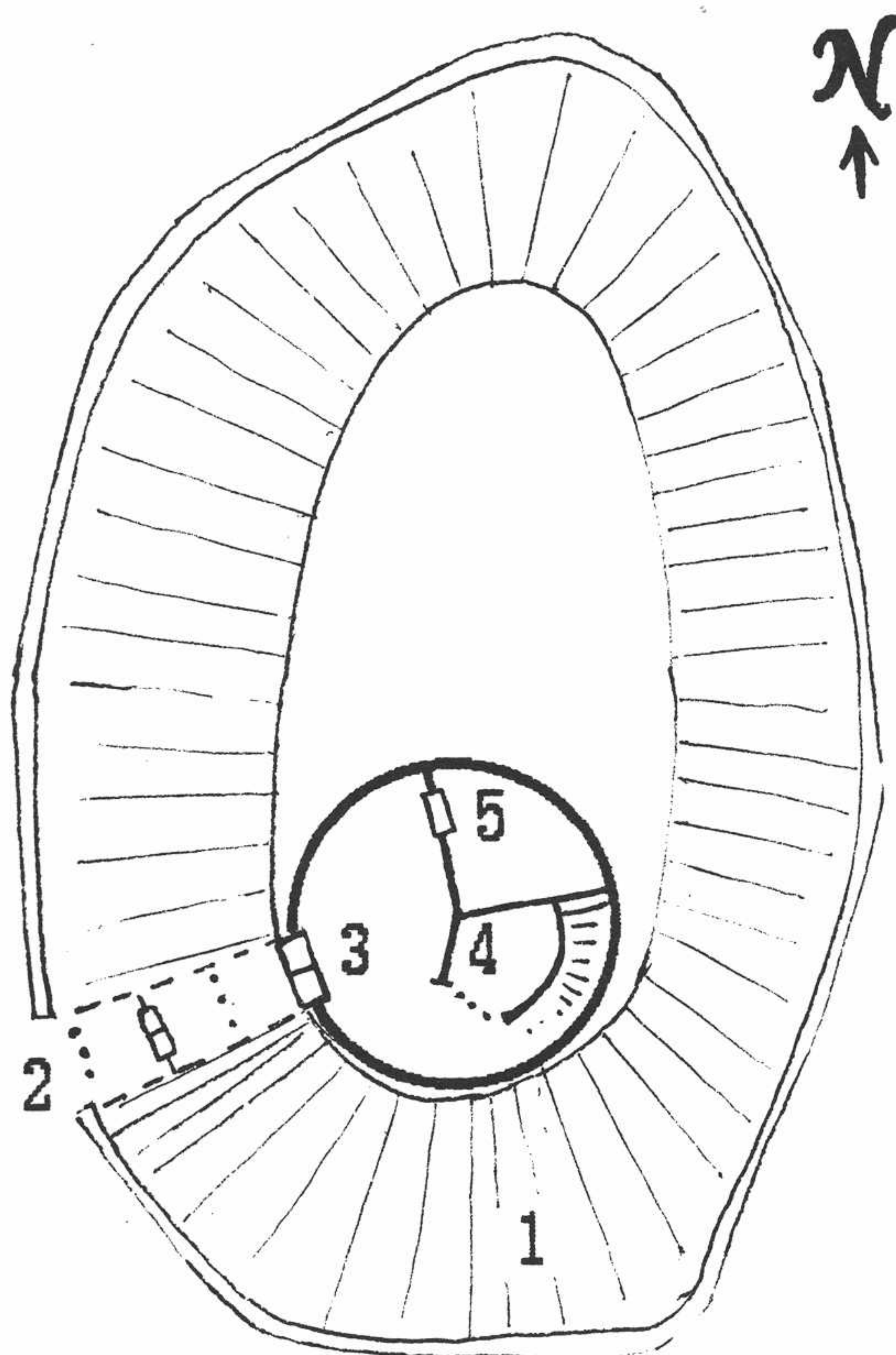
Sword Parry—3

Personality Traits

Brave -2

Cowardly +3

The Redoubt



Map Key

Rampart //

Portcullis/Bars ...

Slope /

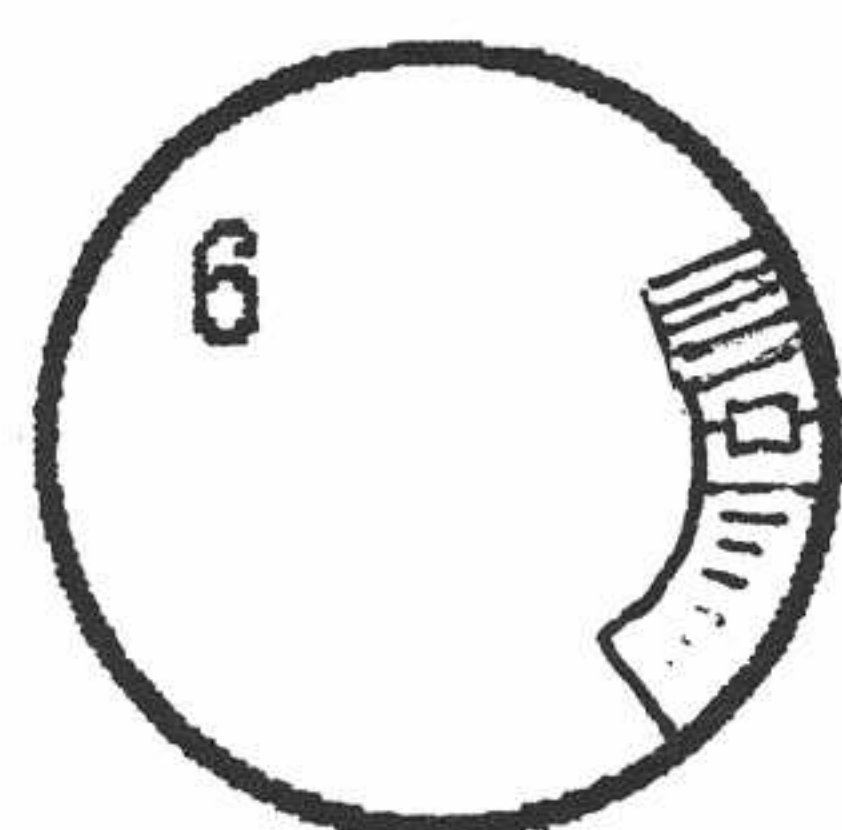
Stairs

Door —

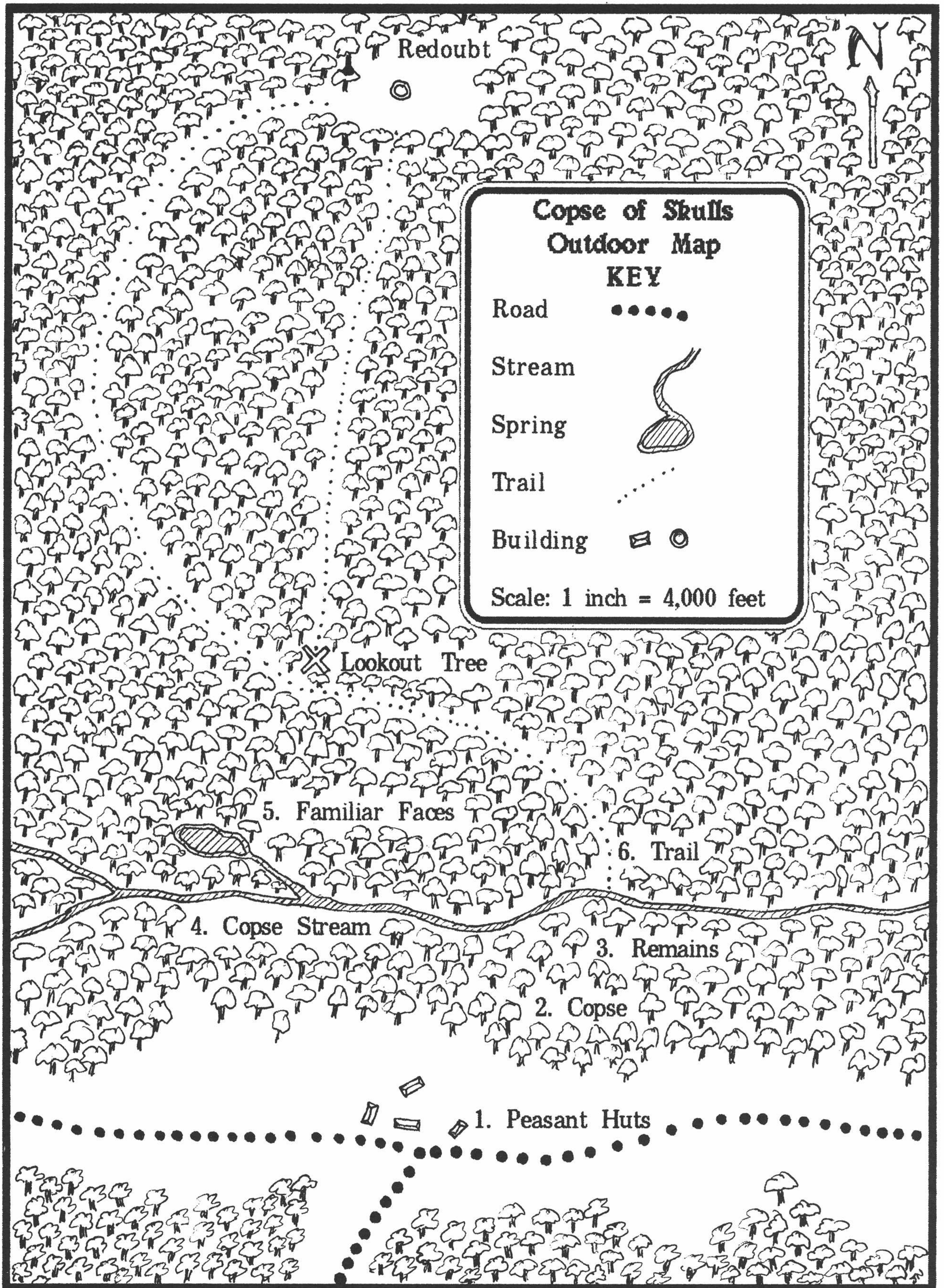
Platform

Scale: 1 inch = 40 feet

Upper Story of Tower



The party need not attack this Redoubt. If they ask for Joyeuse, the guards allow him to see the newcomers, and although the novice wizard greets his old acquaintances with trepidation, he does not condemn them as enemies. The wizard does warn the drake about his visitors though. Cuwain entertains offers of new magic lore, but does not try to see his guests. He also orders the norke not to allow the party out of the Redoubt unless they become bandits themselves. While in the fortress, the adventurers stay in the Weirding Room.



Tales of the Dark Ages

Outcasts, bandits and malformed people occasionally join the Redoubt. To gain admission, they must bring a "recommendation," by which the bandits mean a human head. Cuwain may waive this requirement for someone who offers him useful magic. Adventurers may admire Cuwain's harmonious society at first, but anyone who joins should soon learn to abhor it. The norke expect all members to participate in feasts of horseflesh, diabolic rituals and toying with prisoners. Cuwain sends human-looking recruits into nearby villages to trade stolen coins for food and weapons.

Unless otherwise mentioned, all the norke here have the following statistics. These creatures do not like the sun, and statistics after the slash show their capabilities outdoors in daylight.

Norke

Enc 3

Characteristics

Str +1/-2

Stm +1/-2

Per 0/-3

Combat

Spear: 1st +14—Atk +8—Dam +13/+10

Defense: +6

Soak Total (Full Hard Leather): +7/+4

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Ten norke have self bows, with the following statistics.

Self Bow (ability of 7): Rate +4—Atk +7—Dam +8—Range 120

Abilities

Spear—6

Spear Parry—3

Personality Traits

Brave 0

Cowardly 0

pass a Dex + Climb roll with a target number of 10 to climb them.

On the inside, these walls slope down to the tower at a gentle angle. One norke with a self bow patrols the inner lip of the rampart, just out of sight from the ground. He quietly warns the others when intruders arrive. Then 20 guards creep up to repel an attack, four of whom carry bows. The other 19 norke stay at the gate. If anyone attempts to scale the walls, the norke wait until they reach the top and then the guards with spears attempt to thrust them back off the wall. If they retreat, the bowmen pepper them with arrows as they flee. Then the norke in the gatehouse set off in pursuit.

2. Gate

A black tunnel four feet wide leads beneath the rampart. Here, fresh boot-prints finally make it clear that the fortress has inhabitants. All portcullises are up when the party arrives. Anyone who approaches the iron-bound oaken door confronts an enormous eye which squints through the bars of a window. One guard watches the door and 49 of his comrades circulate in the tower just behind him. Unless the intruders immediately offer a gift or mentions Joyeuse, he fights the party bitterly.

The gate-guard can lower the portcullises by releasing a catch adjacent to the door. He wears the ring intended for Moonfield Covenant, and can hurl up to five Pilums of Fire.

Norke Guard

Age 26

Enc 7

Characteristics

Str +1/-2

Stm +1/-2

Per 0/-3

Combat

Spear: 1st +16—Atk +10—Dam +15/+12

Defense: +9

Soak Total (Full Chain): +15/+12

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: -4

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Abilities

Spear—8

Spear Parry—6

Personality Traits

Brave +1

1. Ramparts

Walls of beaten earth surround the Redoubt. Weeds and saplings cover these ramparts, and the party sees no signs of life from the outside. Someone who passes a Per + Alert roll with a target number of 15 might catch a glimpse of a rounded object peeking up over the wall. The ramparts stand 35 feet high, and rise almost vertically on the outside. One must

3. Tower

The sandstone rooms of this tower contain sacks of meal, salted horsemeat and the assorted possessions of the 50 norke, who spend most of their time here. These bandits keep little money, since they seldom get to spend it. By searching the bedding, adventurers could find eighteen silver deniers. The norke do own fifteen books on topics ranging from epic poetry to cooking. These manuscripts have no value for assembling a library but are worth 200 deniers collectively.

4. Cell

A grid of wooden beams covers the portal of this cell. Through the cracks, one can see two prisoners inside, a prostrate boy of perhaps six and one of about twelve who crouches upright, spinning the tin plate he eats from. These prisoners are Mical and Franz, the sons of a farmer in Linz, and the norke hope to extort a ransom from their father. Meanwhile, they force the children to clean and make minor repairs on the fortifications.

Franz, the elder brother, protects his sibling vigilantly, even against potential friends. He certainly does not let Mical talk to magi, because his grandmother once said that sorcerers eat children. Mical has a childish curiosity about everyone though, and he might cooperate with the party while his elder brother sleeps. If asked about Joyeuse, the brothers report that he paces in front of their cell some evenings, usually after a long session reading aloud to "the Beast" underground. Other times, the norke lock him into his room.

The norke have not harmed these prisoners. However, they told the children (falsely) that their parents sold them to the Redoubt in return for a piglet. The norke also make continual, businesslike attempts to force the brothers to betray one another. Sometimes they promise to set one free if he agrees to leave his sibling while other times they accuse the boys of neglecting chores and threaten to beat them both unless one blames the other. The loyalty of the brothers only increases the norke's desire to make them yield.

Mical and Franz are noncombatants with no special abilities.

5. Weirding Room

A large padlock hangs from the outside of this chamber's door, allowing someone to lock the occupants inside. Joyeuse lives here, and spends most of his time studying his texts, looking for ideas which

Joyeuse

Description: overweight and clumsy, Joyeuse has a clean-shaven face and lanky black hair.

Joyeuse grew up the son of a village wise-woman, depending on magic as his niche in life. He could not bear the menial tasks of other serfs, and indeed, did not have the physique for them. Joyeuse first fled to the Redoubt to avoid service in his lord's fields. He won admission by displaying some scrolls of sorcery his mother gave him and later left to study at the covenant.

Joyeuse promised himself never to return to the norke. Although lazy and pedantic, he is not malicious, and does not care for the atrocities of Cuwain's folk. However, his disappointments at the party's covenant wore down his determination, and Cuwain's eager reception made him eager to please the drake. Now, Joyeuse can almost resign himself to bandit life. The arrival of the party gives him an unwanted moral dilemma—but one he cannot ignore.

Role-playing tips: Joyeuse always strives to sound like an expert. Ramble on about any topic you can make people listen to. This novice wizard breaks almost everything he touches, and apologizes with irritating grins.

Age 19

Cnf 1

Characteristics

Int +1	Str -3	Prs -1	Dex -1
Per 0	Stm 0	Com -4	Qik -1

Noncombatant

Abilities

Finesse—-1	Hermes Lore—2
Magic Theory—3	Parma Magica—2
Scribe Latin—2	Speak English—2
Speak German—3	Speak Latin—1

Magic Arts

Creo—4	Herbam—4
Intellego—5	Ignem—3
Muto—4	Imagonem—2
Rego—5	Mentem—3
	Vim—2

Joyeuse is as yet unable to use magic of any arts not listed above.

Grimoire

Dance Of The Staves (MuHe 10) +9
Heat Of The Searing Forge (CrIg 10) +8
Sight of the Transparent Motive (InMe 10) +9

Personality Traits

Brave -1 Pedantic +2 Lazy +1

will interest Cuwain. The room contains a bookshelf, a real mattress and several mystic symbols drawn in chalk. A tin holder suspends three dripping candles from one wall.

Joyeuse keeps "Contemplations On The Daemonic Chymistry" here, along with other tomes. They have a Hermes Lore value of +2, a Hermes Theory value of +1 and a Diabolic Lore value of +3.

6. Drake's Lair

The drake spends his time on a wooden platform just above the lair's door. If enemies charge in, he reaches down and scoops them up in his claws. The lair itself contains no bed of treasure, but it does have some valuable artifacts. Shields, standards and decorated swords adorn the walls of this room, some bearing the braided tracteries of Celts and others displaying eagles of Rome. Few of the blades would still hold an edge, but the collection is worth 500 golden sous.

One Celtic blade appears relatively unrusted. It has the beak of a huge hawk set into its pommel, and shrieks like a bird of prey each time the blade strikes a foe. This call doubles the wielder's Str in the next round of combat (or adds +1 to an Str of zero or below). Unfortunately, this blade is made of an inferior alloy, and in addition to any other normal disasters, it bends like foil on any roll of Botch. The wielder may repair the blade by spending one round bending it back into shape.

Cuwain remembers the Gallic Wars. He lived in this Copse even then, and organized a clan of Gauls who refused to surrender before the Romans. They built this Redoubt, and were the first of many bands he has organized and seen die out. This Wyrms considers himself a natural leader for humans. He comes from an elder race, physically much stronger than the two-legged creatures, and only his ignorance of magical formulas prevents him from being a great sorcerer as well. Unfortunately for him, he can neither read nor hold a book, and therefore depends especially heavily on human teachers. This creature particularly wants information on the Infernal realms. Wyrms have sought bargains with the Fiends since the serpent tempted Eve.

Therefore, the Drake greets wizards in ingratiating tones and tries to convince them of his friendliness. He pretends to enjoy conundrums and riddles, despite an intense impatience to learn useful arts. Other sorts of people find him less accommodating. Cuwain expresses his contempt for ordinary humans and their society quite freely, to the norkes' delight.

Cuwain looks like a broad-breasted lizard with a body the size of a horse. His arms grow almost as long

as his torso, creating a comical appearance that gives the more deformed members of his gang an instant bond with him

Cuwain

Magic Might 20

Size +3

Characteristics

Int +3

Per +2

Stm +5

Combat

Breath: 1st +10*—Atk +10**—Dam +20 ***

Bite: 1st +6*—Atk +8—Dam +18

Claw: 1st +6*—Atk +6—Dam +15

Defense: 0

Soak Total: +24

Body Levels: 0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +6

Fatigue Levels: 0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/Unc.

*Can use both a claw and either a bite or a breath in each round.

** Can only be dodged, not parried.

*** Fire damage.

Abilities

Magic Theory—3

Hermes Lore—2

Parma Magica—4

Finesse—2

Magic Arts

Creo—4

Herbam—8

Intellego—10

Ignem—6

Muto—2

Imagonem—6

Rego—10

Mentem—4

Vim—20

Cuwain is as yet unable to use magic of any arts not listed above.

Personality Traits

Ingratiating (to wizards) +2

Paternal +1

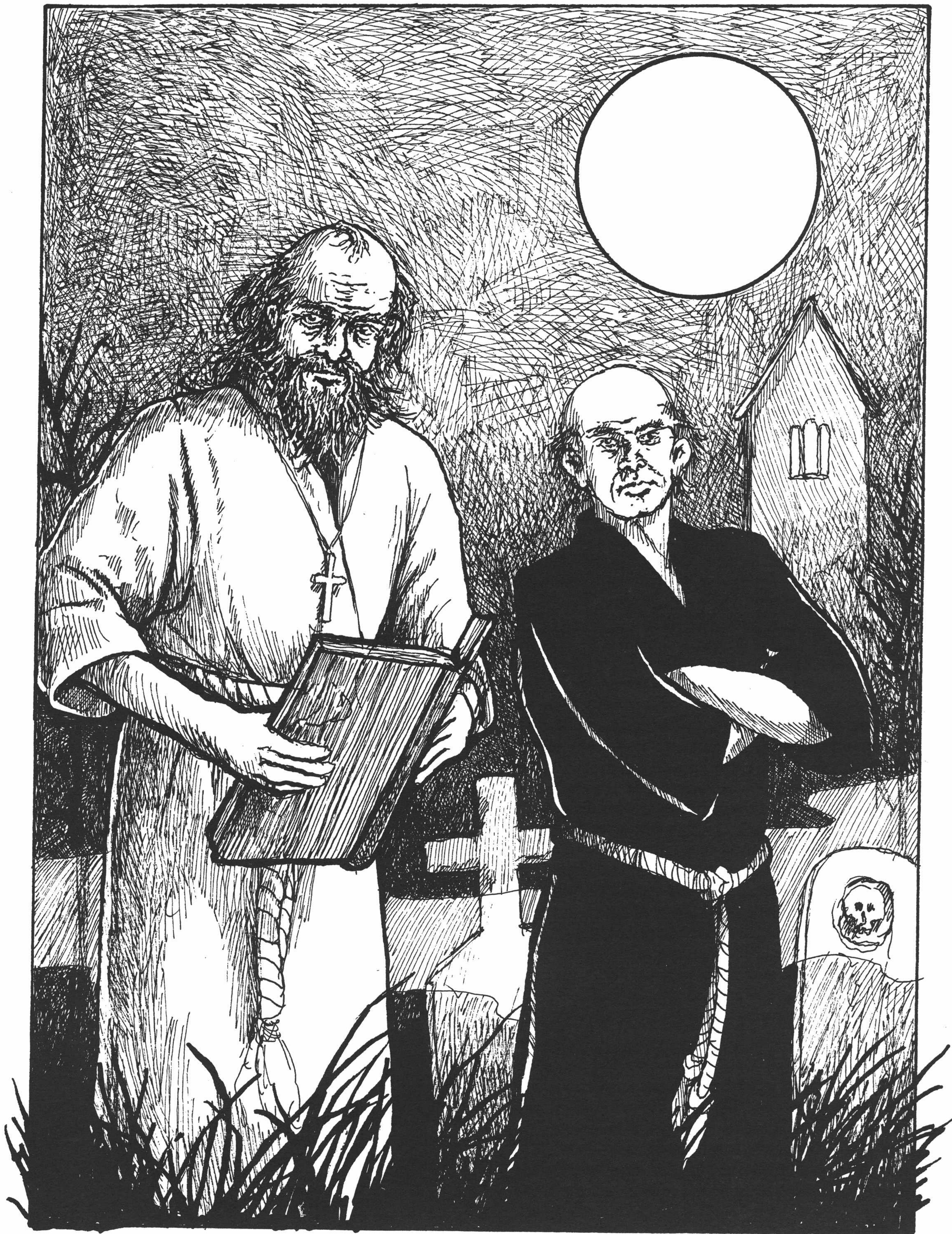
Contemptuous (of human society) +1

Powers

Fiery Breath (CrIg 20), 2 Magic Points. See combat stats.

Immune to fire.

Can use Spontaneous magic, but desperately needs more data on his art.



The Ghoul of Saint Lazare

by John Nephew

This adventure is designed for a smaller or weaker party of **Ars Magica™** characters — a beginning magus, perhaps, young companions, and of course grogs. If other sorts of characters are to be used, and the Storyguide thinks the party's power and abilities warrant it, the monster who appears in this adventure should be "beefed up," statistically, to give the party a greater challenge. In any case, a magus with a good score in *Córporem* would be particularly suitable for unraveling this adventure's mysteries.

Although designed for the **Ars Magica** game, you should find that this adventure is easily adaptable for other fantasy role-playing game systems, and even games of other sorts. Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game, for example, would suit this adventure well.

PLAYERS' BACKGROUND

The beginning of this adventure takes place at the troupe's covenant. The adventure background presupposes that there is, near the covenant, a river. If this is not the case, the Storyguide will need to engineer things so that the characters who will participate in this adventure *will* be near a

river somewhere — perhaps a covenant, town or village they are visiting — so that they can be called upon to investigate the strange event.

The strange event is, simply enough, a human corpse that is washed up on the banks of the river in question. The curious thing that will be discovered about this corpse, however, is that the it seems to have been exhumed — evidence of the activity of grave robbers or, worse yet, a cult of evil diabolists.

The situation clearly demands action. If there is a active coven of diabolists upriver, it will surely lead to trouble. Who knows but that the covenant's own graveyard will be visited by prowling ghouls! (It will be known that the corpse is not from the local churchyard, although it will be buried there, with appropriate ceremony, as soon as possible.) For magi no less than respectable townsfolk, it is imperative that the matter be investigated.

The next graveyard up the river is at a village named Vézay. The priest there, Father Tanchus, is eccentric (and, some whisper, sympathetic to the local heresy), but he may serve as a starting-point for the inquiry.

STORYGUIDE BACKGROUND

Father Tanchus is not merely the starting point — he is in fact the destination of the investigators. For the Storyguide's reference, we will here present his lamentable history.

Tanchus used to be closer to the center of things, the respected pastor of an urban parish, and an avid reader of all ideas. He was of rather unstable personality, however, and wont to be persuaded by — shall we say, *unorthodox* views. He came to disagree with his episcopal superior over several theological issues.

This is not to say Tanchus was a heretic from the start, by any means — oh, no! — but the reaction of his bishop was not quite that of a good shepherd, eager to guide his sheep back to safety and truth. Instead the bishop simply removed Tanchus from his pleasant parish, and reassigned him to one far out in the wilderness (“wilderness” at least to the urban mind), the village of Vézay, a place altogether less pleasant, with a poor congregation whose Christianity is probably just a veneer over the same ancient beliefs of their pagan ancestors.

Being a man content with poverty, Tanchus was not *economically* discomforted by the new situation. What hurt him was the *intellectual* poverty of the locale — Tanchus' weakness was gluttony of the mind, not the body. Afforded little menu for study, Tanchus voraciously purchased and devoured anything that he could read. This consisted in the rare and random books that might be brought, every second month or so, when the Jewish merchant, Levi-Isaak, passed through the village.

Where Levi-Isaak acquired these books, who can say? The Jew quickly learned, though, that Tanchus would gladly exchange anything he had for a new book, and the shrewd merchant did all he could to sate the priest's appetite.

One such book, sold to Tanchus along with Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and and Moses Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, was written in Greek. Though Levi-Isaak could not so much as read the cover, the priest was familiar with that script and tongue. The book bore the title *Διαβολοψυχη* — “*Diabolopsuche*” (see the boxed insert at the end of the adventure for the book's description), and named one Tharene of Tyre as its author.

Reading this wicked book led Tanchus further down the path toward heresy and, yes, evil. It told him that Christianity is a great lie, an instrument in fact of the Evil One, who has managed to subvert truth and beauty by mockingly taking its

form. It contained detailed rituals for communion with “the true God” — for returning the Deity to His rightful rulership over the Earth. These were, of course, all lies; but to poor Tanchus' unstable, isolated mind, they seemed like a breath of Divine inspiration. So deluded was he, that he failed to perceive the obvious evil in the means the book prescribed. Convincing himself that it was for the love of God, and garnering the aid of his simple-minded assistant, Brother Noilis, Tanchus began the ritual that in fact would supplant the sanctified, Divine aura of Vézay's little Church of St. Lazare with one of Infernal nature.

They gathered a dozen toads, and — furtively, late at night — exhumed the remains of a village girl who had recently died of the pox. Tanchus spoke vile incantations, as the book directed, and from these ingredients stewed together a filthy potion with the power to instill an Infernal aura, if splattered about a place.

The night after this evil ritual was complete, there appeared an amazing thing — the corpse's grave was now miraculously covered with grass and flowers! Tanchus interpreted this as a sign of approval from the Deity, and the villagers remarked that the saints smiled on their poor Hélène (for that was the girl's name), and had perhaps accepted her among their number. However, this of course meant that Tanchus could not rebury the corpse in the same locale — the whole village would take note.

Instead, he directed Brother Noilis to dig another grave, out in the woods. On his surreptitious way out of the village, Noilis tripped — on a rock, it seemed, or was it a toad? — and dropped the corpse into the river. Noilis happily concluded that such was as good a burial as he might grant — and he felt little like digging anyhow — and so he returned, and spoke not of the matter to his superior.

Thus while Tanchus proceeded in his unholy task, the corpse he used and discarded made its way downriver, into the hands of the covenant — thereby providing means of deliverance from the scourge soon to be unleashed.

NOTES TO THE STORYGUIDE

The Ghoul of Saint Lazare is a story of mystery. An enigma — the corpse — has come the way of the magi, enticing (if not obliging) them to find from where it came and what it means.

The Storyguide should not *give* the players details, if she can help it — she should make them ask for them. A *Córporem* magus of the covenant, for instance, should be obliged to performed a sort

of “autopsy” on the body, to find what resulted in its death. Such an examination may reveal several details:

- The victim is female, about 15 years old, with brown hair, and skin covered with pock marks.
- The body is mutilated, but there are no marks of resistance or violence.
- The victim was already given a Christian burial, thwarting such divinatory magics as “Whispers through the Black Gate.” An *Intéllego Córpoem* spell can reveal (or confirm) this much: It is pox that killed the girl; the mutilations of the body came afterward.

Another bit of knowledge that may be relevant (and that, if not realized by the players, may be supplied via appropriate rolls of Folk Ken, etc.) is that such treatment of a corpse as this, even for medical reasons, is strictly prohibited by the orthodox Christian faith.

Other key tidbits of information are supplied throughout the adventure text. Here again it is best to let the players take the initiative in piecing together the mystery. When they are straying too far off track, use Perception (or even Intelligence) rolls to give them clues.

There are bound to be many details about which the characters inquire that are not described in the adventure text. What should you do? Make it up — immediately! It is important that players have to think to sort out what is relevant from what is not. You may even place some deliberate red herrings; already there is the whole issue of the smallpox, which has no particular relevance to the plot line. In the original playtesting it gained prominence, since the characters were inclined to investigate the disease in the village because of its connection to the corpse of Hélène. I played the scene off the cuff; but in the end it turned out valuable for the characters. By assisting the healing of Anna and Mathilde, they won themselves some trust in the village. This was of inestimable value, since they were after all strangers, eventually confronting the village priest.

You must be acutely aware of *timing* as you run this adventure. You do not want to wantonly obstruct the characters, just to keep to a “schedule” of revelations, but you must be ready to lengthen or shorten the adventure timetable according to the progress of the characters’ investigations. The text is written for three nights of stay in Vézay, for example, but in the playtesting I shortened it to two. The characters were on the verge of either figuring things out, or simply

departing from the village, after Noilis’ funeral; and the evening of gaming was getting late. By compressing the two nights of the revenant into one, I kept the pace from slowing, and I avoided the need to make up excuses to delay the party. (They had already gotten a glance at the first part of the *Diabolopsuche*, and were quite certain that Tanchus was a bona fide heretic — or worse.)

Finally there is the issue of atmosphere. This adventure is written for an atmosphere of suspense. Ideally the players will be on the edge of their seat — always fearful that some gruesome new clue will be uncovered. I encourage you to make use of detail and timing to evoke this atmosphere. Be warned, however, that some players, or the chemistry of some gaming groups, simply is not conducive to this atmosphere. Do not despair! If you think in advance that this is the temperament of your group, or if you find quickly enough that they atmosphere just isn’t being set, take a different tack. Make it a more intellectual puzzle of intrigue, or hasten to the climax for an action-packed finale.

THEME

This story deals with a number of issues, but the central theme is Faith. Father Tanchus is a figure of disillusion, whose religion has been stolen from him because of the faith he put in the written word. On the one hand, he saw Christianity so much in terms of its textual substance — the Gospels, for instance — that when the text was undermined (whether such an undermining is really possible, or merely seemed so in Tanchus’ unstable psyche, is not a matter for us to address; the latter is enough for the purposes of our tale), the whole edifice of “faith” came crashing down with it. This story is an allegory of the self-destruction that is inevitable for Tanchus; because the same critical doubt and methodology that he saw applied to the Bible by the imaginary *Διαβολοψυχη*, he would inevitably turn on the *Διαβολοψυχη* itself, with damning results. The revenant can be taken as a metaphor for the goblins of the mind, spawned by doubt, that can wreak destruction all too real.

Tanchus’ reaction is not the only one possible. Every day people see their faith challenged, even contradicted. What if there were a *Διαβολοψυχη*, and it contained some truth? Some Biblical criticism in our day has challenged the contents of the Bible, and their traditional interpretations. What if a great deal of *fiction* lay hidden in the heart of Christian writings? Should the institution then collapse? Does there remain something inher-

ently valuable in the Christian ethos — or, for that matter, how can one even *define* the “Christian ethos” — if the historical foundation is undermined? Is it possible for there to be faith when the object of faith has been brutally assaulted, even overthrown? Søren Kierkegaard might say that in fact only when the matter of faith seems utterly futile is true faith even *possible*. On the other hand, one might have such faith in the tenets of one’s beliefs, the practical side, that in some sense their historical “validity” is irrelevant. And many people will grow stronger as their beliefs are ridiculed and attacked, and even their very persons punished on their account; this was after all precisely how Christianity first grew strong.

As the Storyguide explores the issue of faith in running this adventure, she should not restrict herself to religious issues alone. What of faith in other persons? Noilis meets his end out of fear; he did not have enough faith in his friendship with Tanchus that he might confess to him his failure to bury Hélène’s corpse. Will similar situations arise between grogs and magi? Will the adventurers keep faith in each other, in the ideals of their covenant? Find ways that this adventure will test all those bonds. The very atmosphere of horror and suspense is meant as another trial of faith — a test of faith in the self, of confidence.

Finally, I would like to note that this adventure is not meant as an assault or critique of any organized religion. I like to see it as an allegory, a means of exploring many levels of issues, including religious ones. The *Διαβολοψυχη* and all characters and events herein (and Vézay) are imaginary. Descriptive details, especially in the climax, are provided for dramatic effect. The Storyguide should be sensitive, when she runs this adventure, to the tastes and sensibilities of her players, and may wish to alter the adventure’s content and presentation accordingly, so as not to offend. Offense has its time and place — but I don’t think it’s in the friendly intimacy of a gaming group. On the other hand, don’t be too squeamish about things; the adventure should have people on edge, as a matter of entertainment, and should further challenge them to think and discuss — preferably in character! A theological discussion between the roles of an agnostic magus and a religious companion could be the very highlight of this story in play.

VÉZAY

Vézay is not far upriver — no more than two or three days’ journey by foot. The travel is not difficult, as a fairly clear path trails along the

river’s side. Characters will approach Vézay from the north (since the river flows away from the mountains lying to south), passing first a couple of outlying cottages. The river trail goes right through the middle of the village (see the map), beside the iron-grill fence that rings the churchyard. South of the Church of St. Lazare there is a bridge across the river, and thence the path travels west through the forest to the next hamlet.

About 45 souls inhabit Vézay, although the community really includes a good many more people who live within half a day’s walk of the village, and come here for trade, news, and priestly ministrations. The folk are typical — simple and ignorant on the whole, but kind-hearted and wise in a natural sort of way.

The chief village elder and acknowledged spokesman is named **Rostagnus**. At age 74, Rostagnus is no longer the energetic, exciting man he used to be, capable of rallying the villagers in an instant to assist one of their neighbors who fell prey to misfortune. Decrepitude has taken its toll on his mind as well as his body, but while much of his memory, judgement and hearing may have been stolen, his big heart remains healthy and true. As Rostagnus’ faculties have deteriorated, the villagers have increasingly looked to **Father Tanchus** (see below), their pastor, as judge and spokesman.

Characters asking villagers to be taken to the leading elder will be led to Rostagnus’ cottage. Role-play out their interaction with him. Rostagnus borders on senility, and his poor hearing invariably leads to misunderstandings. He will undoubtedly mistake the characters for something they are not — tax collectors, merchants, pilgrims, wandering knights, etc. — and then misconstrue their words as having something to do with that identity: “Has anyone in your village died of the pox?” — “Eh? What’s that? Pax? Oh yes — pax, peace. Damn northern accents! Yeah, we have lots of pax here. Why, pax has reigned in these parts since old Charles Martel Le Mange kicked them paynims.” — “No, not *pax*, I said *pox*, you old fool.” — “Eh? You’d like a stool? Young knights like yerselves be needin’ stools? Seems to me you must be all set to go, to find some less peaceable place for your adventures. Nothing but peace here. But we’re friendly. Hey, Willa! Can you fetch the Good Knight a stool? I don’t quite know what you want here’bouts, but we’ll try to accommodate ye.” — &c. Willa is Rostagnus’ daughter. If Rostagnus doesn’t get around to sending the PCs to Tanchus, she’ll discreetly apologize for her father’s incomprehension, and

Tales of the Dark Ages

suggest that they may have better luck taking their queries to St. Lazare, the church. She does not say this front of Rostagnus' face, for fear of offending him or making him realize his failing state.

A couple of villagers may have important interaction with the player characters in the course of the adventure.

Anna and her daughter, **Mathilde**, both have the pox, and are quarantined in a building on the edge of town. They will probably both survive, although Anna is further down the road to recovery than her daughter. Father Tanchus visits them daily, bringing them food and praying with them. PCs may win goodwill by hastening the recovery of these unfortunates through healing magic. They must be careful in doing so, however. The villagers of Vézay, like many others on the edge of civilization, are not that far from the paganism of eight centuries earlier. They are illiterate and intellectually poor, and wouldn't recognize heresy if it looked them in the face — which in fact it has for some time, in the person of Father Tanchus. Nevertheless, anyone can recognize witchcraft (or believe they do!) and fear

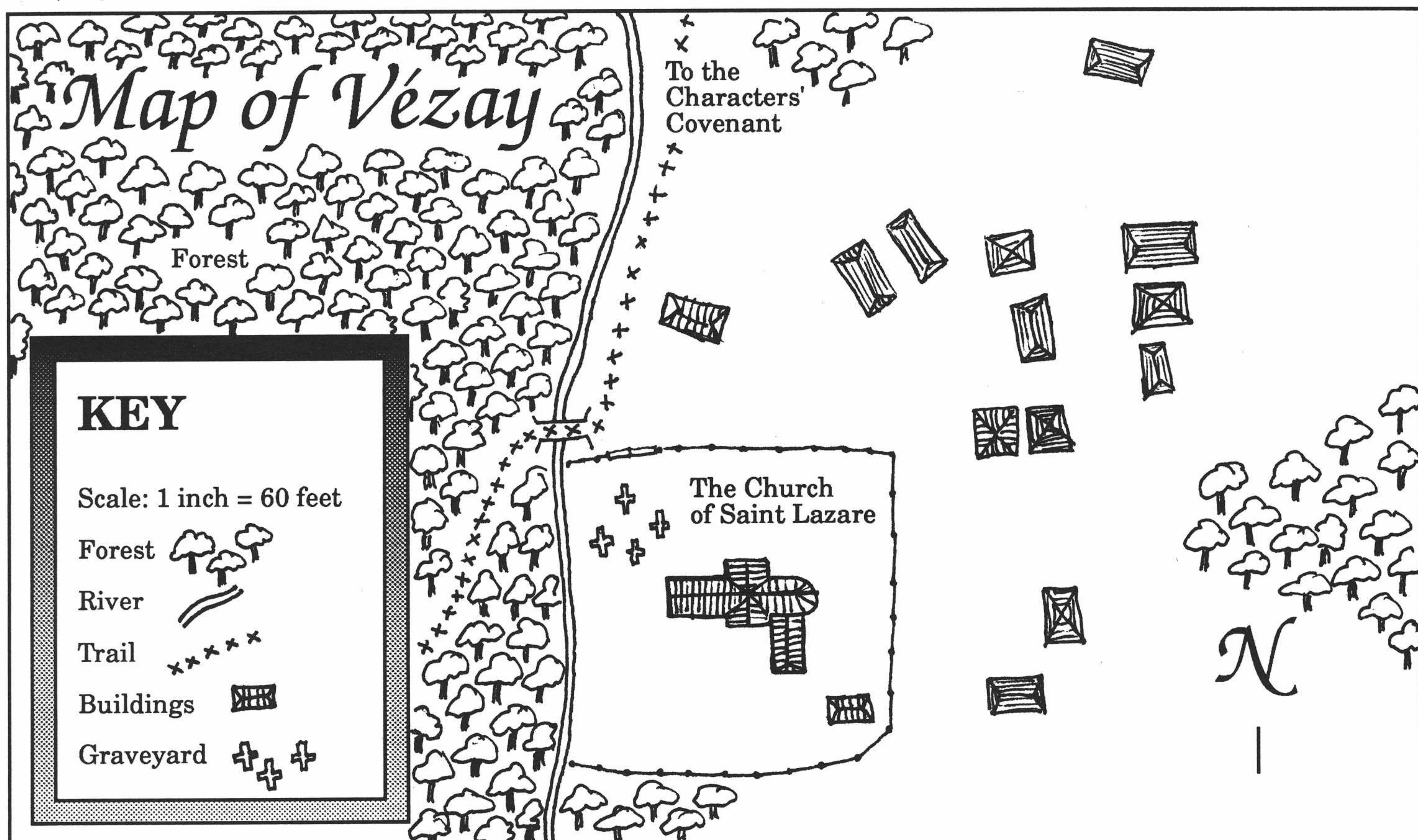
the Devil, so magi must be careful to appear inspired by something more like holiness than the Evil One.

Martína, the younger sister of the late Hélène, is another non-player character the Storyguide might use. Martína is a curious little girl, aged 8 or so, and not shy at all. She is likely to poke her nose into what they characters are doing, if they are in the village at all. Characters who closely examined Hélène's corpse may (on a Per roll of 9+) get the feeling the little girl's face looks familiar. Martína's resemblance to her sister may be used to clue characters into investigating Vézay with some care; her bubbling curiosity may also make for role-playing fun.

Other villagers may be made up as the Storyguide sees fit. Here are some sample names of Provençal flavor, for making up characters on the spot:

Male Names: Alban, Alphons, Berenger, Carlus, César, Gaucher, Isarn, Ricard, Roger, Tomas.

Female Names: Damiena, Eugenia, Gisela, Henriette, Marie, Véronique, Willa.



Villager of Vézay

Cnf 1

Characteristics

All characteristics assumed to be average (0).

Combat

Attack/Club (2h): 1st +4 — Atk +5 — Dam+5

Defense/Club (2h): +4

/Dodge: +2

Soak Total (Fur/Leather/Quilted Armor): +1

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Brawl — 2

Club/Attack — 2

Club/Defense — 2

Dodge — 2

Skill (farming, smithing, etc.) — 5

Speak Provençal (or other local language, if the Storyguide places Vézay in another region) — 5

Personality Traits

Submissive +1

Another personality trait should be made up by the Storyguide on the spot, to give each individual personality — e.g., Brave, Cautious, Defiant, Dreamy, Gossiping, Lazy, Sarcastic, Suspicious — and this trait should be played to an extreme, to help differentiate that villager from the others.

THE CHURCH OF ST. LAZARE

St. Lazare is the church of a humble parish. A simple iron fence surrounds the churchyard on all sides but the west, where there is the river. There are three buildings within: the church and rectory (which are joined), and a guest house. The southern side of the enclosure is the graveyard.

The church grounds formerly belonged to a knight by the name of Aymardo Lazare de Vézay. Good Sir Aymardo died a bachelor, thirty-five winters ago, with neither child nor clear heir. His will left provision for his meagre personal estate to be given over to the church. His own humble manor was to be torn down, and in its place a church erected and devoted to Lazarus, Aymardo's own personal patron. This was done, and paid for with funds left for the purpose by the deceased. On the foundations of the old, modest manor

house were built the church and rectory. Beneath them (and sealed off — Tanchus doesn't even know it's there) remains the crypt where Aymardo's ancestors — five generations of Sieurs de Vézay — rest in peace. Aymardo himself was the first to be buried in the new church graveyard.

Curiously, the guest house is the oldest building on church grounds; it was the house of the knight's gardener, refurbished to serve as a fairly comfortable hostel.

Characters arriving in the village may first have sought the leading elder, Rostagnus (above), but wherever they began, their questions will undoubtedly be referred to the pastor of St. Lazare's Parish, Father Tanchus.

Tanchus is happy to answer the characters' questions, and on the whole he does so with complete honesty. He can explain that there was a small outbreak of the pox in the locale, and it claimed the life of one person — poor young Hélène. The only cases that remain are a mother and daughter, Anna and Mathilde (see *Vézay*, above), who are now quarantined in a hut on the southern edge of the village. Tanchus is confident that they will recover good health soon.

When characters say what brings them here, or ask about robbery of graves from the churchyard, Father Tanchus confidently says no, there have been no bodies taken from the graves — see all the fresh grass everywhere in the graveyard, even over Hélène's fresh grave? An appropriate ability (e.g., Folk Ken) + Per roll of 9+ will reveal a bit of opaque smugness behind this remark.

While priest and party converse, Brother Noilis scurries about doing various little tasks — dusting, rearranging, and so forth — as he obviously eavesdrops. A similar Folk Ken + Per roll of 12+ (9+ if a player states specifically that his character is studying the assistant) will reveal that the monk becomes agitated when the corpse's discovery is described. Of course this is an ambiguous fact — the characters' tale would likely dismay many a listener. A related detail that might be noticed: At mention of the mutilated corpse, Noilis reflexively crosses himself — but Tanchus (as a heretic who denies the Trinity) does not.

Simple though he may be, Noilis realizes the truth — that the body he dropped has turned up elsewhere. He is desperately afraid of his mistake being found, so he will resolve to frighten away the party, hoping it will cease its investigation or at least leave St. Lazare.

Tanchus does not immediately suppose there is any correlation between his unholy ritual and

the corpse found by the party — although he means to have a discreet word with his assistant later in the evening (especially if the characters' description of the corpse is detailed enough that the priest sees a resemblance to his own handiwork). Tanchus assures the party warmly that it will need to go elsewhere along the river to find answers to their questions. In the meantime, since they must be tired from their travel and activities, the characters are invited to stay in the priest's guest house, on the edge of the churchyard. It's not the finest of accommodations, but free and much better than nothing.

Father Tanchus

Age 52 Cnf 2 Decrepitude 2

Characteristics

Int +2	Str 0	Prs -1	Dex -3
Per -2	Stm +1	Com +1	Qik -2

Combat

Attack/Staff: 1st +6 — Atk +2 — Dam+7

Defense/Staff: +10

Soak Total: +1

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities/Specialties

Area Lore (Vézay)/heresy — 2

Charisma/preaching — 2

Chirurgy — 3

Church Knowledge/exegesis — 5

Church Lore/heresy — 3

Demon Lore/diabolical rituals — 2

Evaluate Books/Greek — 3

Intrigue — 2

Meditation — 3

Speak Greek/philosophical terms — 3

Speak Latin/Church rites — 4

Speak Provençal (or other local language)/
preaching — 5

Scribe Greek — 2

Scribe Latin — 3

Staff Attack — 3

Staff Parry — 4

Personality Traits

Brave -1

Eccentric +2

Compassionate +1

Skeptical -2

Reputation

Eccentric (Vézay) — 2

Insubordinate (Church) - 3

A Description of Father Tanchus

When Tanchus was but a child, his parents handed him over to a monastery for training and holy orders. As the boy had promising intelligence and eagerness, he was ordained as a priest when he became an adult. His early years in the ministry were spent as a chaplain of the King's army, serving the spiritual needs of dying fighters — and often their physical needs. From this experience he gained chirurgy skill, and fair proficiency defending himself with a quarterstaff.

Later Tanchus was assigned to an urban parish. Here he found himself caught up in the intellectual currents of the day. At first he interacted with just the regional intellectuals, almost all of them churchmen; he began to correspond with other thinkers from as far away as Ireland. Attracted to Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought through the works of St. Augustine and St. Anselm, he taught himself to read Greek, with hopes of garnering copies of the earliest philosophers' works in their original tongue. To this end he began to correspond with scholars of the Byzantine Empire, and even managed on one occasion to visit the great libraries of Constantinople (ostensibly on pilgrimage to the Holy Land).

When Tanchus, overflowing with new philosophical discoveries, returned from his library research and conversations with the cream of Byzantine intellectuals, he found that he had a new bishop. This man had no interest in debates and "original" thought; he also was wary of the pagan philosophers, and feared their work was dangerous and could contaminate Christianity. "Our duty," he told Tanchus, "is not to create, but to preserve. God inspired our forebears, and it is our holy task to attempt faithfully to pass on the sacred Word. We must not indulge in speculation, or presume in vanity to create something new. God has already given us all we need to know."

Against the bishop's command, Tanchus organized debates and discussions with other clerics, and began writing several works. The bishop censured him for disobedience, and brought him before an ecclesiastical court for his unorthodox writings. The court was reluctant to condemn him — after all, most of his work just parroted the prominent Parisian philosophers and theologians of the time — but, under pressure from the bishop, they condemned Tanchus' works, ordered all copies burned (while Tanchus looked on), and forbade the errant priest to write any more. Moreover, the bishop arranged that Tanchus be transferred to the isolated parish of St. Lazare. Among illiterate villagers, thought the bishop, the priest could cause little trouble.

For twenty years now Tanchus has been pastor of St. Lazare's. Isolated from the intellectual community, deprived of comment or counsel, his thoughts have taken increasingly bizarre turns. With so few books available, Tanchus devoured every document on which he could lay his hands, and tended to be easily convinced of whatever it was trying to argue. In this state, and with his knowledge of Greek, Tanchus was the ideal "victim" for the *Διαβολοψυχη*.

In spite of all this, Tanchus remains a compassionate, sensitive human; as a priest, he puts the spiritual (or psychological, as we would say today) well-being of his flock above all else. In conversation Tanchus is pleasant, but perhaps too eager to show off his book-learning if his listener has expressed knowledge of or interest in intellectual pursuits. The priest is fond of quoting precisely from the books of his personal library, all of which he has read many times over, and misquoting others of which he has heard but not personally read. He tends to dismiss others' ideas, unless they can cite a written source from which it was derived.

A Description of Brother Noilis

Noilis is the simple-minded assistant curé of the parish. His duties chiefly consist in the care of the buildings and grounds. An ugly, misshapen man, slightly hunch-backed, Noilis has no friend but Father Tanchus — the children of the village stare or tease him (except little *Martína*, who once struck up a conversation with the hunchback, until her older sister literally pulled her away), the good wives hide behind doors at his approach, and the men avert their gazes when they pass him. Understandably, Noilis prefers to stay in the confines of the churchyard, in the company of Tanchus, who does not shrink from the brother's deformities. Happiness in Noilis' world consists of a beautiful church and yard (though the poor, dimwitted monk be ugly, his loving hands have brought much beauty into the world, even for those who loathe him), an approving smile from Tanchus, and the occasional walk in the woods, alone or with the gentle animals, with whom he sometimes imagines himself able to converse.

THE DEATH OF NOILIS

It should come to pass, then, that the characters will be spending a night in Vézay, guests of the parish priest. Besides the convenience of hospitality, and the hours of rest approaching, the party should have good reason to want to investigate further in this village; numerous clues (such

as the pox having afflicted Vézay, the semblance of the girl *Martína* to the deceased, and so forth) should at least have piqued the characters' interest.

If people have been interviewed and questioned enough, and the party has learned as much from others' lips as they are likely to be told, what next? The graveyard is a most likely object of investigation, sooner or later, *especially* if there is a *Córporem* mage amidst the party. The Storyguide should arrange so that the party sets out to examine the graveyard after dark.

Brother Noilis

Age 37 Cnf 1

Characteristics

Int -3	Str +2	Prs -5	Dex 0
Per +1	Stm +3	Com -3	Qik -1

Combat

Attack/Hand Axe: 1st +4 Atk +5

Dam +12

/Dagger: 1st +1 Atk +5 Dam +5

Defense/Hand Axe: +3

/Dagger: +2

/Dodge: +2

Soak Total: +3

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +3

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Abilities

Church Lore — 1

Dagger Attack — 1

Dagger Parry — 1

Dodge — 2

Hand Axe/Attack — 3

Hand Axe/Defense — 2

Speak Latin — 2

Speak Provençal (or other local language) — 3

Stealth/move silently — 3

Personality Traits

Brave -1

Eccentric +2

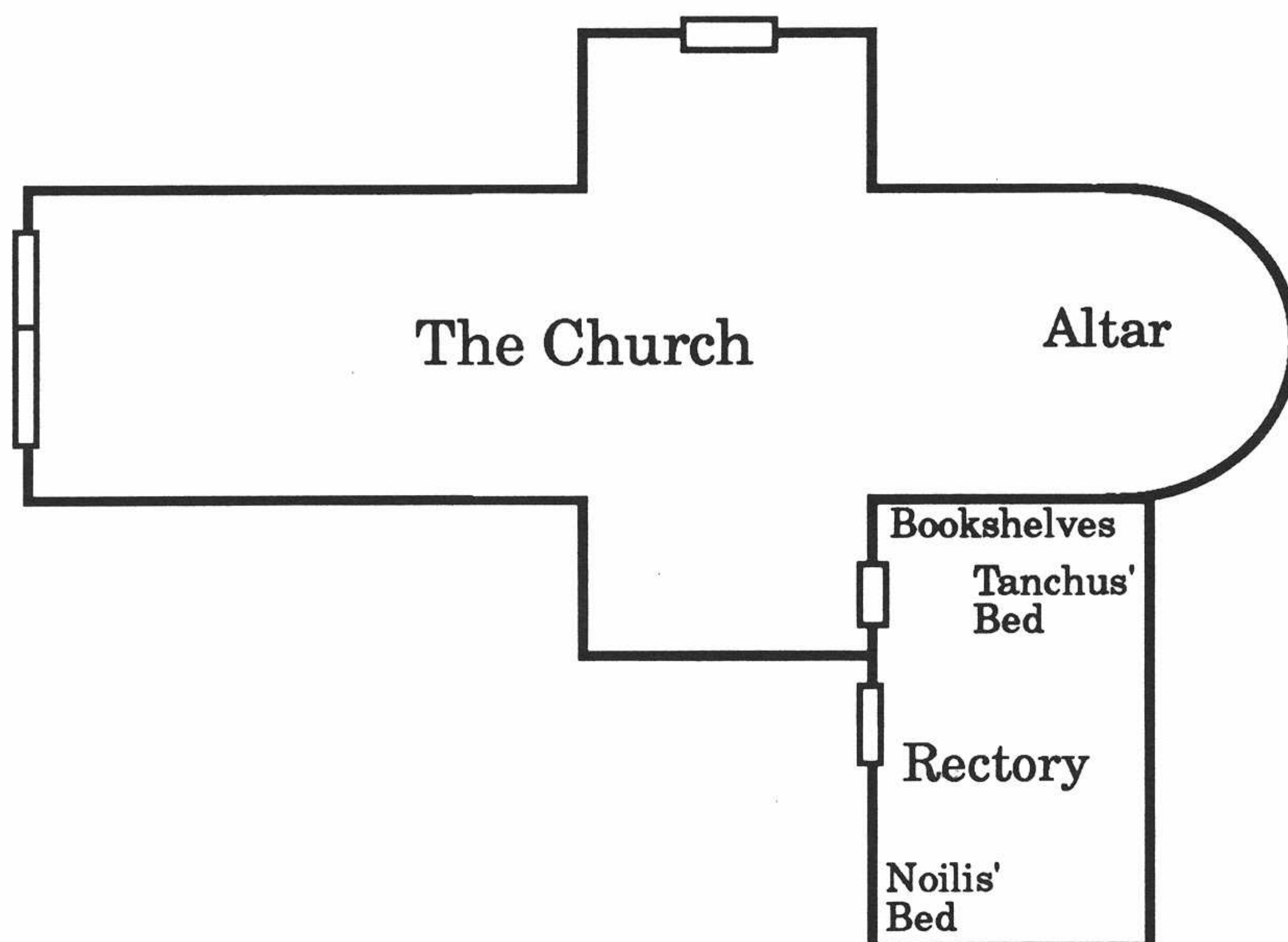
Shy +1

Reputation

Moronic — Vézay — 3

The Graveyard: There are scarcely more than a dozen graves on church grounds; like St. Lazare itself, the graveyard is relatively young.

Graveyard

**KEY**

Scale: 1 inch = 15 feet

Stone Walls ———

Door —□—

Guest
Building*The Church of Saint Lazare*

Prior to the donation of the land to the church, the knights of Vézay were buried in a crypt beneath their manor, and the peasants were given rude burials elsewhere.

The most striking grave is the sepulchre of St. Lazare's founding patron. The base of the tomb is like a great stone box (ten feet long, by six feet wide, by five feet high) carved with relief sculpture of crosses and the like. On a Church Lore or Church Knowledge roll of 9+, a character will recognize that many of the symbols are in styles associated with the Crusades; it is likely, therefore, that the tomb's occupant saw the Holy Land (as in fact he did). Narrow, steep steps lead up on either side of the tomb. Atop is a great, marble headstone. It reads, beneath a stylized cross, "Aymardo Lazare, Sieur de Vézay." The dates show that Aymardo passed away 35 years ago, after living to the ripe old age of 57.

Since Aymardo, only three graves (all more than a decade old) are marked by stone. The others have simpler wooden markers of those who lie beneath.

The party will probably be concerned with more recent graves. There have been four deaths from the pox — three men (the Storyguide may take names from the list of examples under Vézay, above, if they are needed) and the young

woman, Hélène. This last grave, placed at the head of Sir Aymardo's, is noteworthy because, despite its recent occupancy, it is covered by an extraordinarily beautiful and dense bed of wildflowers.

Digging up one or more graves would be foolhardy — but fortunately there are simpler magical means of gathering information! (Note: If it is after midnight, the Infernal aura of this region has grown so that it cancels the divine — it is as though there were no aura at all, which is not to be expected on Church grounds! See the insert, *Supernatural Auras*, below, for more information.) A simple spontaneous Intéllego Córpoem spell of level 5, for instance, can reveal that there is no body beneath the headstone of Hélène...

The same divination might realize — perhaps too late — that the party is not alone in the graveyard this night. Noilis has stealthily come out to observe the characters. When he sees them studying Hélène's grave, even a simpleton such as he can realize that they may find him out.

Panicked, Noilis tries to tip the headstone on someone standing below, at Hélène's grave; then he flees. The character below must make a dodge roll of 6+ to avoid being hit. The stone does +5 damage (no strength bonus) to the person on

whom it falls. Noilis scurries away, not bothering to see the effect of his action. He does not really want to hurt anyone — Noilis is not vicious — but he does want to scare the party off.

Surely the party will pursue their unknown assailant. The misshapen monk runs down by the river. Play the chase for suspense. If the party catches up to Noilis, down by the river, he will turn about and defend himself with his dagger and hand axe. If not — or if the party is determined to subdue the monk for questioning — he dies by mishap, slipping on one wet rock (or — *croak!* — was it perhaps a toad?) and dashing his brains out on another. In any case, Noilis must meet his end.

Politically (if not ethically) it is probably better if it is by mishap rather than a player-character's sword that Noilis dies. The death of the assistant curé is impossible to conceal; furthermore, the party will doubtless wish to question Tanchus about the monk's strange behavior.

Tanchus is puzzled — remember, he considers his own activities to be the right thing to do (though they must be done secretly, since not yet everyone recognizes the "truth" Tanchus has discovered), and is not the least bit worried by them; and he never knew about Noilis dropping Hélène's corpse into the river. Keep this in mind as you role-play interaction with characters after Noilis' demise.

Tanchus is truly saddened by his assistant's death, but retains calm and composure as befits a leader. The best reason Tanchus can imagine for Noilis' activity is that the poor monk must have thought the characters to be intruders. Perhaps he was made edgy by the characters' report of the corpse; his poor dim mind may have jumped to the conclusion that the PCs were grave robbers.

The priest asks that the characters assist him in wrapping the body in sheets and bringing it into the church. There he plans to keep vigil over his departed friend until dawn; later in the day they will bury him.

Characters might not have been in the church before. It is built in the Romanesque style, with rounded arches, thick walls and few windows. Intricate sculptures peer out from every doorway and corner, depicting biblical scenes and fantastical visions of heaven and hell. The polished oak woodwork, kept in glowing cleanliness by Noilis, is also adorned with religious relief sculpture.

The altar is simple: two blocks of stone holding up a sheet of marble, over which is draped a cloth embroidered with words of praise for the divine. Behind that, beneath the crucifix, is a

gold-plated tabernacle to hold the Host. The crucifix itself is of precious hardwood, with a porcelain figure actually attached thereto. The figure of Christ is delicate, almost transparent, glowing as though with perspiration from the candlelight. Details of hair, eyebrows, eyes and crimson stigmata are painted on the porcelain. The eyes are particularly expressive, bearing a sort of quiet, patient hope; they impart to the whole figure more contemplative wisdom than suffering.

While the visual presence of the church is stunning, there is an ominous undertone swelling, thanks to Tanchus' continuing ritual. A Per roll of 9+ will reveal a lingering scent of decay. The Storyguide may, at her discretion and with die rolls, pass on further foreshadowing tidbits to appropriate party members. For instance, one character with the exceptional talent of *Premonitions* might feel ill at ease; as might one who *senses holiness/unholiness*. There's not quite a negative aura, as such, but a growing sense of unease — of subtle *wrongness* in the church. A visionary might receive a vision — but it would be confusing, ambiguous, and not clearly interpretable, just disconcerting.

Tanchus encourages the characters to go to bed. He is pleased enough to keep vigil and pray for the soul of the departed — although any character who so insists may stay with him.

Once settled in for the vigil, Tanchus sprinkles holy water on the body. The "holy water" has in fact been fouled by the evil potion; a successful *sense unholiness* talent roll will reveal that something is indeed amiss in the water's nature. A Per roll of 12+ will also reveal that the water has an unpleasant odor and, if one examines a droplet, sickly color. If asked about the water, Tanchus explains that "it is blessed only on special days, and so tends to become materially unwholesome after a time." (A Int + Church Knowledge roll of 9+ will inform a character that this is untrue.)

At sunrise Tanchus returns to the rectory to rest until noon, when the funeral will be held.

Characters may at some point try to summon and interrogate Noilis' spirit. This is risky business — as the Storyguide should make sure the players understand. If they are caught, they would have difficulty explaining themselves; disturbing the souls of the dead — not even yet buried! — is a serious matter, and would surely make the party appear as evil magicians. It is quite possible that the villagers would try to run them out of town, and Tanchus would not be too

pleased with his guests. The whole process is also made more difficult because the corpse is in the church — with a Divine aura of 5 (see the “Supernatural Auras” insert).

But, as Noilis has not been given church burial, he is in fact susceptible to such spells as “Incantation of Summoning the Dead” (ReMe 25). Noilis’ ghost is of minimal assistance. Noilis died believing everything wrong is his fault for dropping the body in the river rather than burying it properly. He does not even imagine that Tanchus was doing anything *wrong* (how could he? being Noilis’ only friend in the world). The wretched ghost whines, babbles, pleads pity for having dropped the corpse — without explaining why he had the corpse in the first place — and begs that his summoner not tell Tanchus, for he fears he would suffer eternal shame and despair if that priest learned of his assistant’s failure. Noilis will say nothing more, even under coercion. If the summoner begins to threaten to tell Tanchus after all, Noilis’ ghost becomes more desperate in his whining — but the Storyguide should have some event intrude to prevent the party from garnering much more out of the ghost. Perhaps villagers come into church, expecting morning mass; or Father Tanchus comes through, having forgotten to do some thing or other. Characters may at this point have certain proof that the corpse is from Vézay, and that Noilis was somehow wrapped up in the matter, but the accusing finger should not yet lie on Father Tanchus.

A PARODY OF RESURRECTION

The next day, Noilis is buried. The service is unremarkable, save one respect: Tanchus’ mumbled liturgy omits any reference to Christ or the Trinity, in keeping with his heresy. It takes a Per roll of 6+ just to make out what the priest is saying, and an Int roll of 9+ to notice the change — and even then a character is more likely than not to suspect he or she misheard. Many villagers come to pay their respects; although, they will tell anyone who asks, Noilis really had no friend but Tanchus. If characters have not yet met little Martina, they will on this occasion. She boldly strides up and asks if the strangers killed poor Noilis. Her mother hastens after to scold her and pull her away, apologizing profusely for the child’s rudeness.

Apart from Martina’s query, blame is not immediately laid on the characters — at least, not *openly* — but there is general mystification, and

much talk of the event. No one especially liked Noilis, and his strange death only increases his bizarre reputation. Some people whisper that Noilis must have had something to do with the corpse found by the strangers — perhaps the misshapen monk was a secret diabolist! From there, rumors can go in many directions. Perhaps the “investigators” are themselves diabolists — the corpse was a communiqué, bidding them come to Vézay for some dire purpose. Did they quarrel with the monk, perhaps come to blows — and then the unfortunate end?

Player characters can’t help but hear some whispers of the villagers’ suspicions. Some of the speculation might jog their own imaginations as to what motivated the dead monk. If only to keep their reputations clear, let alone figure out what is going on, the characters should feel it best to stay another night.

After the funeral, Tanchus holds a simple wake in the churchyard, for which he produces a tankard of his finest wine to share with the villagers who were so kind as to come for Noilis’ remembrance. Talk is subdued — and rumors rife. Tanchus, for his part, may become visibly emotional when he speaks of his late assistant; tired from his vigil, the fact of his closest friend’s death at last strikes him with bitter finality. He especially mourns that “Noilis will not see the his diligent efforts come to fruition.” Everyone presumes that Tanchus is speaking of the monk’s work to repair and maintain the church and grounds; in particular, Noilis’ latest project was the renovation of stained glass behind the altar, a piece that showed Christ raising up Lazarus from the dead.

Tanchus is quite willing to discuss religious beliefs (the topic might be brought up by the curious omissions in his liturgy), if he believes his interlocutors to be open-minded, or if any of them profess heretical sympathies or knowledge of ancient heresies (e.g., Arianism, Gnosticism).

After people have drifted away and the wake has been cleaned up, Tanchus retires to the rectory, there to take care of administrative matters, such as recording Noilis’ death in the church records and writing the Bishop to request a new assistant or groundskeeper.

This second night, Infernal power takes control of the churchyard (see “Supernatural Auras”). Noilis’ unblessed corpse — for Tanchus’ ritual was indeed ineffectual, undermined by his heretical alterations — becomes animated at midnight by an unclean spirit; it arises as a revenant, an awful undead creature bent on destruction.

The Noilis Revenant

N.B.: This infernal creature gains a bonus *on all rolls* equal to the Infernal Aura of the place in which it stands (even personality rolls — Infernal auras make it more mindlessly violent!). An area with a Divine Aura of any strength is warded against the revenant; it can only function in areas of Infernal, Magical or (uncomfortably) Faerie power, or in locales with no aura at all.

In the chapel after the third midnight, therefore, the revenant gains +6 on all rolls; this has *not* been included in the combat statistics below.

Infernal Might 25

Size 0

Characteristics

Cun +3

Str +4

Stm +5

Dex -2

Qik +5

Combat

Attack/Claw: 1st +9 — Atk +9 — Dam +15

Defense/Dodge: +1

Soak Total: +12

Body Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue: n/a

Abilities

Brawl — 10

Concentration — 2

Dodge — 2

Personality Traits

Mindlessly Violent +3

Special Powers

Scorching Heat of Hell (CrIg 25), 3 Infernal points. This magical power will cause the floor of the church (or other stone) to heat up. While the revenant prefers physical attacks, this power gives it a chance against wizards whose spells require concentration (e.g., a Córpoem magus casting “Lifting the Dangling Puppet”). The power requires the revenant’s concentration to be maintained; if concentration is broken, the revenant may begin the power anew the next round of combat (at a cost of another 3 infernal points). The heat, the first round, inflicts a simple die of +0 damage (ignore metal armor in soaking this damage; treat boots as regular or hard leather, though); then +1 damage, +2, and so forth on subsequent rounds. If the revenant’s concentration is broken, and it is forced to recast the *Scorching Heat*, then the damage reverts to +0.

Description

The skin of Noilis has become tough and crusted, about as strong as hard leather armor. If wounded with edged weapons, the animated corpse spills black, stinking blood like that which defiles the altar (see “The Unholy Hour”).

The Noilis Revenant is subject to Córpoem magic in most cases; except that it cannot, like a simple zombie or skeleton, be put to rest by “Dust to Dust” (PeCo 15). It is, however, subject to “Demon’s Eternal Oblivion” (PeVi Gen.).

Play the chaos by ear. The revenant is mindlessly violent, and not intelligent as such — but cunning. It cannot enter the church proper, since that building remains in the sway of the Dominion. The guest building in which the characters reside is fair game, though! Tantalize the players with some combat and spellcasting, but don’t go all the way. The cunning demon that animates Noilis’ corpse was drawn here by Tanchus’ ritual, and it grasps that the ritual is not yet complete — for the St. Lazare’s church remains as a

beacon of the Divine. When the church’s Dominion aura has fallen, as the demon expects it will, then there will be so much the more infernal power on which the revenant can feed. Therefore, when combat begins to go against the revenant, it will flee. Because the night aura in Vézay is, at this point, infernal, the revenant is able to flee safely through the village. It will hide itself in the woods during the day (when the Dominion will cause it to go dormant), so that the living cannot destroy its corpse.

Supernatural Auras

Mystic auras imbue the village of Vézay and, specifically and importantly, the Church of St. Lazare; they also are of key importance to the events of the story. In the course of the adventure, as Tanchus proceeds with his evil ritual, and as night falls or day returns, the auras will change.

The basic aura of the village is, naturally, Dominion. This Power is, in most places, stronger during the day and weaker at night. Competing with Dominion is the Infernal aura being built by Tanchus. While there are two auras, only one at a time — whichever is stronger — can make its effects felt.

Following is a summary of the auras during the three days and nights that the party is supposed to be in Vézay. If you modify the timetable when running the adventure, take care to consider what the auras should be for certain events (especially the climax in *The Unholy Hour*, below). The “Basic Auras” are those before Tanchus began his unholy project. Subsequent dates carry the progression of the

auras. When there are two auras, the stronger completely overrides the weaker; if they are of equal strength, they neutralize each other. Those times and places where the Infernal aura is stronger are marked in **bold** type.

Take note of the effects of the auras on spellcasting magi! In general, the auras will result in substantial spellcasting penalties (see *Power Interaction Chart, Ars Magica*, p. 73). But in addition, those times when auras cancel each other — meaning that magic-users suffer no penalty! — may serve as an enigmatic clue for investigating magi.

Night Auras: The effects of Tanchus’ project are felt at midnight each night; the aura after dusk of each night, *before midnight*, is thus identical to the aura of the previous midnight. At midnight the new aura (if any) goes into effect. For example, before midnight on the first night, the aura is the same as “Basic Aura — Night”; at midnight, the aura changes — noticeably, because the Dominion and Infernal powers cancel each other in the Churchyard, possibly when the characters are investigating!

Table: Vézay Auras

Date	Location		
	Village	Churchyard	Church
Basic Aura — Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
Basic Aura — Night	No Aura	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
First Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 1	Infernal 2
First Midnight	No Aura	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 3
Second Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 2
Second Midnight	Infernal 1	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 3	Infernal 4
Third Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 3
Third Midnight	Infernal 1	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 4	Infernal 6
Fourth Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 4

The scores of the third midnight and fourth day will continue indefinitely, until someone (presumably the player characters) takes steps to increase the Dominion or remove the Infernal aura.

THE UNHOLY HOUR

Terrified by the appearance of the revenant, Tanchus is convinced that some evil power is hoping to thwart his completion of the “purification” ritual (which in fact *created* the revenant). To his mind, therefore, it is imperative that he continue his ritual, for protection against the monster.

The priest arises early on the characters’ third day in Vézay, and immediately proceeds with his ritual, sprinkling the foul potion all over the church and grounds, and chanting the words he has memorized from the *Diabolopsuche*. The words seem nonsense, but sound subtly ominous. They are a conglomeration of bastardized Greek, Phoenician, Philistine and Persian words and grammar.

Tanchus is completely overt in his activity; if the characters have not caught a glimpse of it before, they do now. He is feverish in his desire to ward off the beast, and does not bother to hide his formerly covert project from anyone’s eyes. If the characters have a comfortable rapport with the priest, he may even ask that they attend or assist in the ceremonies. This is sure to lead to a full-fledged discourse on what Tanchus is doing. Be sure to review Tanchus’ description if this occurs. Fill his speech with (mis)quotes of the great thinkers, and be fierce with his desire to refute, through “reason,” points of view other than his own. He is vehement in his condemnation of the Christian faith, and revels in deconstructing the New Testament. If listeners seem receptive, he can go on almost interminably, and may try to recruit them to his cause. He may go so far as to show them his most precious possession — the *Διαβολοψυχη* itself.

Characters might not at first have realized the nature of the revenant — it takes a good, close look to realize it is Noilis’ corpse walking around — and they could thus think it some sort of ghoul, the source of their corpse downriver.

Tanchus begs the party’s aid, to defend St. Lazare if his holy unguent should fail to provide protection. The “holy unguent,” of course, is nothing less than the evil potion made of the corpse — the potion that will at last bring St. Lazare into the grasp of Hell.

Whatever may happen in the course of the day (one would hope it involves the characters getting at least *some* idea of what’s really going on), night is when Infernal power regains the churchyard, and the revenant returns. The revenant will first stalk the village and graveyard, hoping to harass any lone persons, feinting attacks on the church

wherein Tanchus prays feverishly for deliverance. Not until midnight will the undead assault the church proper or engage any opponent (save one obviously weaker) in serious battle.

At the stroke of the third midnight, Infernal power reaches its climax and overcomes the Divine aura of St. Lazare. Father Tanchus is praying feverishly at the altar and, if they have yielded to his entreaties, the player characters attend him nearby. In the silent tension, a drip is heard — one drop, then another, drawing eyes to the altar. The porcelain figure of Christ has begun to bleed: red oozes from hands, feet and sides, and dribbles slowly from the mouth. A single sanguine tear traces its melancholy channel while the wooden cross, to which the figure is nailed, begins to smoke, then bursts into flame. The head of the figure cracks and falls to the floor, shattering, and deep red blood flows out — turning to a stinking black ooze. At last the remainder of the porcelain shatters, while the cross burns without ceasing.

Meanwhile, the Noilis Revenant waits at the door, until the Christ-figure has shattered, marking the sway of Infernal power, and allowing the revenant to burst in, strengthened more than ever by the new, intense diabolical aura.

The confrontation is a no-holds-barred, climactic struggle. Play it to the hilt, using every strength at the revenant’s disposal as it assaults the party and priest. After all the suspense leading up to it, the characters should finally be able to *act*, to destroy the evil which threatens them.

CONCLUSION

When (or if) the revenant has been destroyed, the carnage in the church is somewhat calmed — although the cross continues to burn until dawn, when the Dominion regains the desecrated church; it then crumbles into gray ashes. Villagers, roused from their restless sleep (nightmares being one common minor effect of an Infernal aura) by the ruckus, cluster outside the churchyard fence, anxiously waiting to see what has happened. Explaining the truth to them will be a delicate task. At dawn peace at last returns — villagers return to their homes to sleep, or must strike out into the fields to begin the day’s work. In the church the noxious atmosphere of Hell is reduced to a sour, lingering odor of decay. In the light of day and Dominion, the remains of Noilis return to the monk’s natural, pitiful appearance.

A monumental clean-up job is in order. At the least, poor Noilis is wanting for a proper burial,

and St. Lazare's needs a good scrubbing. Even so, all of that will not wipe away the invisible stain of Tanchus' unholy ceremony.

What will the magi do about this "Jekyll & Hyde" plot of land — Dominion in daylight, Infernal at night? They might approach the ecclesiastical powers — perhaps a bishop, or even the pope — to find the appropriate people and process to overcome the Infernal aura with a stronger Dominion. This would be no easy diplomatic task for anyone, let alone magi.

The church and grounds may be left — perhaps sealed off — a new enigma in the locale, and the potential site for future adventures. What if a coven of diabolists decide to use it as the site for unholy rituals, in the darkness of the new moon? If Vézay is left alone, it is likely to become something unwholesome — remember, even the town village itself falls under Infernal sway at night, and will until a stronger Dominion arises here.

If Tanchus survived the night, his future is uncertain. The old man realized in a flash, as the crucifix burst before him, that he had perpetrated a most terrible evil. At the same time, he cannot rest content with a return to Christianity; the treachery of the *Διαβολοψυχη* has not sent him running back to mother Church, but rather plunged him into deeper uncertainty than ever. Furthermore, Tanchus expects — probably rightly — that the Church would give him nothing much

more than a stake and pyre of faggots as just penance, to burn the sinful impurities (as well as his body) from his soul.

Wandering is the only avenue open to Tanchus, then: He will set out, in spite of his age (and perhaps the impossibility of the task), to find something certain, something indubitably true, somewhere in the wide world; he might find peace, or perhaps could be yet again encountered, even as a ghost, still searching... With but a handful of silver deniers, the clothing on his back, and sturdy staff, Tanchus takes his leave of the confused villagers and (if they will give him leave) the magi.

The characters are free to take what they will from amongst Tanchus' abandoned possessions. Of chief interest among them is the priest's modest mundane library, with the following attributes:

Church Knowledge: 3

Humanities: 5

Occult Lore: 2

There is also, of course, the tangible root of evil here — the *Διαβολοψυχη*. Magi may wish to take custody of this book, or perhaps to destroy it, to keep it out of the wrong hands; certainly if it arrives in the hands of the Church it will find certain destruction.



The Διαβολοψυχη

The *Diabolopsuche* (Διαβολοψυχη) is an ancient book, written in Greek, allegedly authored by one Tharene of Tyre. The name comes from two Greek words: διαβολοζ (*diabolos*), meaning “devil” or “slanderer;” and ψυχη (*psuche*), a word usually translated as “mind,” “ghost,” “spirit,” “soul,” etc. Besides the one featured in this adventure, which was sold to the Christian priest Tanchus by Levi-Isaak (who himself bought it from a Moorish merchant in Barcelona), it is not known how many copies of the dire text exist.

The book is divided into two parts — theory and practice, as it were, for the first part is a diatribe against Christianity, and the second a collection of evil rituals to “purify” the faith.

The diatribe is a brilliant piece of slander. It purports that Christianity had an evil inception, that is begotten of the Devil. Persuasive exegetical arguments from scripture are presented. These arguments thrive on people’s ability to interpret a text (the Bible) in multiple ways, and to draw conclusions as much from what is *not* said as from what is. The arguments’ ultimate conclusion is that the whole beginning of Christianity is a lie imagined and perpetrated by a coven of diabolists (the “apostles”) who made up supernatural stories about a common, crucified criminal, as though he were the Jewish Messiah. While most Jews were wise to this fiction, the cult flourished among many Gentiles who, corrupted and driven to desperation by Roman debauchery, were ready to believe anything that might promise to improve their spiritually impoverished lives.

The second portion of the book gives the reader (presumably convinced by the arguments) something to do “to clean up our cities and provinces.”

Instructions are given for how to “purify” a locale — especially shrines sacred to “the diabolical Christian fiends”. In fact, these instructions constitute an extended ritual for the establishment of an aura of Infernal power. The performer(s) of the ritual must gather twelve toads and a human corpse (as newly dead as possible). After speaking vile incantations over these things, the toads are to be killed, and stewed together with choice portions of the corpse. The result is a potion which, if administered over a period of time to a building or plot of land, will establish an Infernal aura. We need not present the game details of the process, as no player character should desire to commit the heinous crime of carrying out the project the book describes; these sparse details should be enough to perturb casual readers of the *Διαβολοψυχη*, however, and inform them of its malignant nature.

The book’s contents should not be of much direct value to magi — if not common sense, the Code of Hermes prohibits them from engaging in such activities as the book describes. Nonetheless, the work has value in the realm of learning *about* diabolism and the like. As a whole, the work can be treated as having a Demon Lore score of 4. This assumes that the reader understands the falsehoods of the text, and is studying the text not just for what it *says*, but for the *sub-text* — just as one might divine a certain sort of truth from propaganda when one understands it as such; to do so, the Storyguide might require an intelligence roll, or a teacher who would give the reader this “key” to the text. In a sense, this would be to abstract the text-analyzing methodology of the *Diabolopsuche*’s first part, and then turn it upon the book itself.

The Adventure in Play

The events as described in this adventure, especially toward the end, should be treated as *suggestions*. They present a relatively narrow range of action — not because we think players are too stupid to try different things, but because there’s no way to predict what players might do in an open-ended scenario! Therefore, this adventure tries to present information and ideas in a manner that will be enjoyable to read, and inspirational for the Storyguide who runs her own adventure based on this text. We presume that the Storyguide has the intelligence and creativity, and the good judgement, to bend things around for the sake of her own game.

How should she react when players set a watch on Aymardo’s tomb, for instance? Obviously, Noilis can’t then push the headstone on the investigators. Perhaps he’ll throw rocks instead — or try to sneak up behind the sentry and knock him out.

--- --- **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS** --- ---

James P. Buchanan

A 28 year old freelance writer, James enjoys writing fiction and collaborating with his father on outdoor travel books. He was born and raised in Duluth, and earned a communications degree at the University of Minnesota—Duluth.

James did not begin writing stories or game modules until his third year at the university. He wrote several stories based upon a home grown campaign world. With the encouraging response he received from people who had read his stories, James expanded into writing articles on the “Living City” for the Role-Playing Game Association.

Eric Hotz

Our Canadian illustrator lives in British Columbia—not, he warns, to be confused with British Guiana, in South America, where mail is sometimes sent by accident. He has done artwork for Columbia Games, TSR, ICE, Lion Rampant, 3W and—long ago—Metagaming (which since became Steve Jackson Games). Eric has already studied fine arts, and is now a student of graphic design and illustration at Capilana College in Vancouver. Fans of *Ars Magica* will recollect his memorable drawings and woodcuts from the 2nd edition of the game and its supplements. Eric’s talents include writing as well as illustration: He is coauthor of the science fiction role-playing game, *High Colonies*, from Waterford Publishing.

Thomas M. Kane

Tom Kane lives deep in the Maine woods, where between bears and moose, the wilderness of fantasy role-playing sometimes seems too realistic. (Perhaps there lies the inspiration for “Copse of Skulls.”) He is President of the University of Maine at Farmington Table Gaming Club. Recent accomplishments include publication of *The Brass Stair* and two volumes of *Tales of the Loremasters* with Iron Crown Enterprises. Readers may also recognize Tom’s name from the bylines of many articles in such magazines as *DRAGON* and *White Wolf*. If anyone can guess where Tom got the inspiration for “Tongue of Vipers,” he would like to know. (It wasn’t the bear.)

Tara Kinnunen

In spite of her claim that she is less interested in illustrating others’ ideas, more in making her own thoughts come alive as art, Tara took on the job of producing *Tales of the Dark Ages*’ cover. In the process she has perhaps succeeded in both, for though it is true to its subject, her work certainly contains the artist’s own indelible, unique mark.

Tara swears she has no idea of what she wants to do with her life, except to be rich, famous, and loved by everyone. In the meantime she amuses her friends and acquaintances with impressions of memorable characters from *The Wizard of Oz*. A more serious, recent dramatic endeavor of hers was to play Celia in a production of Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It* in Duluth, MN (near Tara’s hometown of Esko).

John Nephew

John’s main contribution to this volume, “The Ghoul of Saint Lazare,” was first played by the staff and friends of Lion Rampant in Northfield (the “Lion’s Pride,” as they called themselves). Although the setting in this published version is European, the unusual saga of *Ghoul*’s debut was set in 9th-century North America. Worldly contingencies brought the inevitable end of that saga, but John would like to dedicate this adventure to memories of good games past, and the friends who shared them.

Before launching Atlas Games, John worked for Lion Rampant as acquisitions director, editor, and (briefly) president; he has also done design work for TSR, Inc.—such as authoring the D&D® supplement *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*, and the modules *Arenas of Thyatis* and *Legions of Thyatis*, and co-authoring the *Complete Thief’s Handbook*. John is a senior at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. He is majoring in Philosophy, with a Medieval Studies concentration.

Glossary

The following terms words or phrases in general use within the Order of Hermes, some are Latin. Players can choose to use English equivalents for simplicity, but a little Latin thrown into a magus' vocabulary adds authenticity to the Saga.

Affinity- Refers to a natural talent which a magus has with a certain type of magic, be it a form or technique, or perhaps something more specific, such as with all canines.

Animál [ah-nee-MAHL]- The magical form dealing with animals.

Apprentice's Gauntlet- An ordeal that an apprentice must survive or a test that one must pass in order to be accepted as a magus. Various Houses and individual masters define their gauntlets as they wish. Sometimes it is loosely interpreted as the rivalry and conflict among apprentices at a covenant, and sometimes as the trials of apprenticeship in general.

Aquam [AH-kwahn]- The magical form dealing with water and other liquids.

Arch-Mage- A title of respect for powerful and renowned magi. You must defeat an Arch-Mage at the Arch-Mage's chosen contest to become an Arch-Mage yourself.

Autocrat- The one who governs the mundane concerns of a covenant; sometimes a magus, sometimes a mortal.

Auram [OW-rahm]- The magical form which affects the air, wind, and weather.

Certámen [care-TAH-men]- A magical, non-lethal duel between two magi.

Consors- A non-magus who works closely with a covenant and probably lives there; many companions are *consortis*, but not all. Plural: "consortis."

Córporem [CORE-pore-em]- The magical form that deals with human and human-like bodies.

Creo [CRAY-oh]- The magical technique of creation.

Dominion- the area under the holy influence of the Church; magic, infernal powers, and faeries all function at reduced ability within the Dominion.

Form- One of the ten magical arts in Hermetic magic which deal with what the magic affects. These correspond to the direct object in a sentence.

Formulaic Magic- Magic by use of standard gestures and words that will almost always bring about a specific effect, the same each time.

Gift- The ability that is born in a person which allows them to manipulate magic in some way.

Grog- A mercenary hired by magi to serve them as a bodyguard or warrior; "grog" is popular slang, the official term is "*custos*."

Herbam [HAIR-bahm]- The magical form which deals with plants and trees of all types.

Ignem [IG-nem]- The magical form which deals with fire, heat and light.

Imágonem [i-MAH-go-nem]- The magical form which deals with illusions and phantasms.

Intéllego [in-TAY-le-go]- The magical technique of perception.

Magus- "Wizard." Used almost exclusively to mean "Hermetic wizard." Non-Hermetic wizards fall under general terms such as "sorcerer," "magician," or even "wizard" (when spoken in a language other than Latin). Plural: "magi."

Mentem [MEN-tem]- The magical form which deals with minds, thoughts and spirits.

Muto [MOO-toe]- The magical technique of transformation and transmutation.

Parma Magica [PAR-mah MAH-gi-kah]- A spell-like ritual that protects someone from magic, usually used continuously by a magus. Plural: Parmae Magicae [PARM-eye MAH-gik-eye].

Perdo [PAIR-doe]- The magical technique of destruction.

Raw Vis- Vis in physical form, highly prized by magi.

Rego [RAY-go]- The magical technique of control.

Sanctum- The private area of a magus, marked with a circle inscribed within a square, with lines connecting the square's opposite corners. Anyone entering the sanctum without permission is considered to be threatening the owner. Plural: "Sancta."

Seasons- The four stages through which a covenant progresses over its lifetime.

Sigil- Definition 1: A noticeable, unique effect of a magus' magic; some detail that marks all or most of the spells that the magus creates. For instance, the spells of some magi have distinctive colors or sounds.

Definition 2: A wand or other symbol of one's magushood, given upon completion of apprenticeship; one who holds a magus' sigil at a Tribunal can vote as that magus' proxy.

Spontaneous Magic- Use of magical skills without a formulaic spell; the result is variable.

Technique- One of the five arts in Hermetic magic which deal with how the magic affects things. These correspond to the verb in a sentence.

Terram [TAIR-rahm]- The magical form which deals with earth and stone.

Tribunal- A meeting of magi from various covenants, designed to address issues of concern to the covenants in the area and to the Order of Hermes in general.

Vim [WEEM]- The magical form which deals with magic and demons.

Vis [WEES]- Magical force, directed by magi with their spells; the word from which the Form "Vim" is derived.

Wizards' March- The attempt by several magi to hunt down and kill a magus who has been Renounced from the Order.

Wizard's Twilight- A crisis in which a magus loses control over their own magic, possibly being devoured by it. Many magi pass from mortal existence because of Twilight.

Wizard's War- A legal, highly regulated, potentially lethal conflict between two magi.

Out of the haunted mists of the past come...

TALES OF THE DARK AGES

A collection of adventures for the **Ars Magica™** game, featuring:

The Ghoul of St. Lazare

by John Nephew

A horribly mutilated body floats downstream to the players' covenant. It is discovered that the pox killed the unfortunate girl—and afterwards someone did this to the corpse. What evil brews upstream? Diabolists, a necromancer, or worse? In the course of their investigations, the characters encounter a bizarre priest, twisted by lies and secrets of the dark past, who has lost much of his hold on reality. What evil fate awaits him and the investigating adventurers?

Tongue of Vipers

by Thomas M. Kane

Magi of the players' covenant are invited to the court of the Viscount Stutt von Orstadt, in the Lorraine region of France, at the behest of Lady Claire, a member of the court. When the PCs arrive, they find that their would-be hostess has been accused of attempting to poison the count! Can they find if she's really guilty—or who is responsible—while avoiding suspicion themselves, and winning access to the viscount's treasured, magical Seir Waters?

Copse of Skulls

by Thomas M. Kane

When a novice sorcerer of the covenant, dispatched as a messenger, disappears, word returns that he unleashed a nameless horror from the wood known as the Cope of Skulls. Now the player characters are dispatched to rectify the situation, and free the sorcerer—if he yet lives. To do so they must face bandits who are not quite human, and the forest's monstrous master—to whom the ancient pagan Celts sacrificed human skulls; as well as challenges of a more subtle character.

The Inheritance

by James P. Buchanan

A companion of aristocratic lineage has been bequeathed a holding of land. When he and his friends journey to it, they find it holds an ancient Roman aqueduct. If they could restore this aqueduct to working condition, drought in their tenants' lands may be alleviated. But there are ancient forces which oppose such meddling...

This collection has a story for everyone. With helpful explanatory notes in the introduction, even role-players unfamiliar with the **Ars Magica™** fantasy role-playing game will find this a valuable gaming aid.

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