

The Stormrider



Ars Magica Jump Start Kit



Lion Rampant

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The Stormrider

Introduction

This kit was designed to give you a jump start on playing **Ars Magica**. Creating characters and designing an adventure can take a little time, but this kit does the work for you so your first adventure can be run quickly and smoothly. We provide eight pre-made characters and a detailed story specifically designed with those characters in mind. With this kit, even a group of **Ars Magica** novices can role-play a satisfying game with only half an hour of preparation time. We hope you will use it to jump start your saga and quickly begin to experience the magical, medieval world of **Ars Magica**.

In many ways, this kit is also a tutorial in the art of guiding a story. We have often found ourselves at a loss to describe how one "guides" a group of role-players through a story. It's not something you can really teach, for it is a talent rather than a skill, an art rather than a knowledge. In this kit we have provided detailed descriptions of how you should present scenes to the players and have them make rolls. We show you how we guide a story, since it's so hard to explain. Though your style will certainly vary from ours, we hope you will be able to gain a few new ideas and insights into storyguiding.

To properly storyguide (gamemaster) this story, you must have read a few chapters of **Ars Magica** and have skimmed the others. Read the Introduction to **Ars Magica** carefully; it gives an overview of the game system and background. Be sure to also have a firm grasp on the Combat and Magic chapters because those rules will frequently come into play. Finally, read the Saga chapter to understand the setting in which the story takes place.

You need to read this entire kit, from start to finish, before you attempt to storyguide it. Additionally, before you read the main text of the kit, you should skim the eight characters included in the kit, as well as the description of the Stormrider (included on its own separate sheet). Go read that now, and then come back here to finish reading the story itself.

How to Begin

To get your players familiar with the rules, first hand out their characters. Give each character out to whomever you think would best suit that persona or would like that particular character most. You may also let the players choose characters. Try to get the magi into the hands of players who can take charge of the group and

Plot Synopsis

The characters discover that the infamous Stormrider is again rampaging through Val du Bosque, and they set off to find and destroy him. Many of the characters have personal reasons for wanting to slay him and are seeking vengeance. They follow the burning hoofprints the Stormrider leaves behind and witness the destruction that he has caused wherever he's gone. As they journey through the valley, Tomas has recurrent visions of the Stormrider's life and origin that give clues as to the creature's nature. Finally all the characters "meet" Sante Fabía and they learn even more about the Stormrider. In the final confrontation, the characters as a group choose between attacking the Stormrider and killing him out of malice, or trying to reason and talk with him.

The story is made more complex by the interactions among the characters. The two apprentices, Lucienne and Caeron, are enemies, and each has friends in the party, so they form two distinct cliques. Though these rivals will not actually fight each other, their rivalry will provide for some interesting role-playing, and adds to the theme of the story.

Theme

The theme of the story, as you may have already guessed, is centered around the question of what rage is. It deals with the futility of anger, and the destruction a vengeful person can cause themselves, the ones they love, and the world as a whole. Throughout the story, try to play out this theme, which is already a dominant motif, and try to encourage the players to role-play this theme out in their characters. Decide what **you** think anger is and interpret the story in your own way, but then let your players decide for themselves what it is about.

You will find that the story will become larger than life when you make it more than simply a battle, but a moral lesson as well. Faerie tales, myths, and even *Star Trek*™ use this technique to make their stories more vivid and compelling. Stories almost always teach a lesson, however in **good** stories, the storyteller isn't exactly sure what the lesson is.

keep the story moving, as well as pick up game rules quickly. It's probably better that you choose who plays whom, so you can make sure that the characters get in the right hands, and so that you don't have to wait until all the players have arrived before you hand out some characters.

Hand out the briefings as well, and have the players read through them. When all the players are together, read the introduction written on one of the handouts, and then give it to the players to purview at their leisure. When the players feel comfortable with their characters as well as the rules briefings, begin the game. (Understanding the characters and setting is more important than understanding the details of the rules, so encourage the players to start play even if they are not sure about all the rules.) This process should take no more than half an hour. After that amount of time has passed, you should probably begin the story no matter what, so that no one has a chance to get lethargic.

Throughout the kit, any words in italics are meant to be read aloud to the players — these include both scene descriptions, and things a non-player character might say. If reading descriptions verbatim works for you, then fine. Some storyguides, however, find that reading text robs their scenes of spontaneity and excitement, making the plot seem static and deadening the role-playing. If you don't like descriptive paragraphs, simply take the descriptions in italics as examples of what you can say, and then put it in your own words, or ad-lib the characters' words and actions directly. This kit is meant to be a guide to better role-playing, not a guided-tour for gamers.

If you have fewer than eight players, distribute the characters as described below. You might have to alter the first scenes of the story if not all the characters are being used.

7 — All the characters. Have Jeremé played by a player with a companion (probably Tomas).

6 — All the characters. Have Jeremé and Lorine played by players with companions.

5 — All the characters. Have all three grogs played by the three players with companions. Tell the players that they should mostly role-play their companions.

4 — All the characters but Clobi and Jeremé. Torlen and Lorine should be played by the players with the remaining companions. You role-play the grog Jeremé in the watchtower, but he doesn't come along because he's too drunk.

3 — One player role-plays Lucienne, another plays Ramón & Torlen, and a third plays Tomas & Lorine. Ignore all the information about the two rival cliques, but emphasize the aggressive, vengeful aspects of the characters.

1 or 2 — Use the characters suggested for three players, but you'll have to help role-play them.

Note: We have made the visions of Tomas central to this story. If you read the Visions ability as described on p. 41 of *Ars Magica*, however, it may not suggest to you such a primary role. We have taken this virtue beyond its normal role for the purposes of the plot. In the stories which you create, you will find that certain virtues or flaws of your characters lend themselves to the steady progression of the plot. In your saga, do not hesitate to use a virtue or flaw in any sensible way that adds to the story, even in ways not described in the rules. Tomas has a lot of visions in this story, but

in the context it makes sense. In the next story his visions probably won't play as big a role — but someone else's virtue or flaw might.

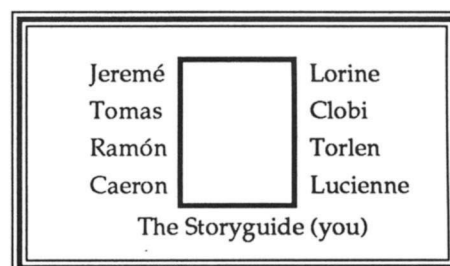
If you are using your own characters for this adventure, rather than the ones we have provided, you will have to find some way to give them the visions that Tomas would normally receive. (The same is true if you are using the provided characters but not Tomas.) The best way to do that is to let one of the characters somehow have a cross that once belonged to Sante Fabía (perhaps by giving it to them in a previous story). Whoever has the cross gets the visions that are intended for Tomas: the player must make a stress roll of 5+ (i.e. 5 or better) to receive a given vision and must make an Int roll of 6+ to interpret the vision. Other than these visions, the story will easily permit any set of characters; you need only ignore certain examples and phrases which talk specifically about the characters for which the story was designed.

Moving Things Right Along

Have the players quickly introduce their characters to the troupe, describing what the others might know about them. (They do know each other; all but Ramón live together at the covenant.) Suggest that they introduce themselves in character, such as "My name is Lucienne, and I don't take crap from anyone, especially not from Caeron." Don't let them go on and on about their characters, but do let them go into some detail. Encourage snide comments and banter among the players, especially if it relates to the characters — "Oh yeah, Tomas — the weakling bookworm who thinks he's something special." This is the time when the players should start getting into character.

The Two Cliques

There are two groups among the characters provided for this story. The groups are divided up by which apprentice they side with the most. Caeron and Lucienne have never really gotten along, but they have studied at the covenant so long that they have formed fast friendships with some of the other inhabitants of the covenant. These friendships have formed into two rival cliques, which tend to give each other whatever grief they can. Tell the players about the two cliques, seat them accordingly — one clique on each side of the room or table — and encourage them to role-play out their rivalry. Below is one possible seating arrangement. The magi are near you (status!), and the squabbling grogs are at the far end of the table where they will feel more free to make trouble.



At the Covenant

In this section, the characters realize that the Stormrider has returned and set out to find him. Since this part of the story takes place entirely at "home base" (the covenant), there is no danger to the characters, and the players can more easily get into role-

playing. In the safe environment of the covenant, the players can learn about who and what their characters are. The covenant plays a central role in any saga, and beginning the session at the covenant is a interesting and elegant way to start each story.

Encourage as much role-playing as you can; let the players be extravagant and test the limits of their characters. These first scenes are meant to get the players comfortable with their characters, begin some simple interaction, introduce them to the covenant itself, and give them a few practical lessons on the *Ars Magica* rules. Remember, however, that these scenes set the stage for the upcoming story, so you can't let things get too wild.

The Lookouts

The story starts with **Jeremé and Lorine**, who have been on watch at the top of the tower all night long.

Read them this description:

• *Jeremé and Lorine, you are on top of the tower standing watch — Torlen sent you up here as punishment for having a fight in the barracks. It is about four in the morning, and all about you in the darkness are the last vestiges of a mighty storm. At times the entire tower shook and the wind blew so hard that you could hardly hear each other speak. You are huddled on top of the trapdoor between the battlements and the strange wooden hut of the wizard Vulcris. Luckily she's gone tonight. It has been a miserable night, and now you are cold, soaked to the skin, and in foul moods.* •

First you should ask Jeremé if he was **drinking or not**. If the player doesn't seem ready to make a quick decision, you could suggest that he or she roll against Jeremé's Likes to Drink personality trait. If the player rolls a 6+ (6 or higher) on a simple roll (i.e., a normal ten-sided die) after adding Jeremé's Likes to Drink score of +3, then he has been drinking through much of the night. If he has been drinking, tell him that he will get -2 on all his rolls until he gets a 10+ on a Fatigue roll sometime during the story. (He'll be making fatigue rolls throughout the story.) The reason Lorine has not reported Jeremé's drinking is that she has been waiting until he gets really drunk so that it will be even worse for him when she does report him. (The player running Lorine can come up with another reason for not having reported him if he or she wishes.)

Once you know whether Jeremé has been drinking, ask both players to make a **Perception + Alertness** roll. Tell them to look on their character sheets for their Perception scores (a characteristic), and then look for their Alertness scores as well (an ability). See if Lorine's player notices that her specialty is "on watch," which means she gets an additional +1 bonus for this roll. (Point it out to her if she doesn't.) Now have them make a simple roll (that is, a die ten read normally), and then add both scores to the roll. Lorine will have +2 for Perception, +1 for Alertness, and another +1 for her specialty; Jeremé will have -2 for Perception and +2 for Alertness. If Jeremé has been drinking, have him subtract 2 from his roll. If either one of them gets a 6+, they notice something in the valley below. Read to them the description of what they see. Read the description aloud so all the players can hear — even though the other characters know nothing of it yet. It's more fun because it lets everyone be involved in the story. If neither of them saw anything, have them get into another little tiff — this time over who gets the blanket when it starts to rain again — and then let them both make another Perception + Alertness roll.

• *The sky suddenly clears, and you can peer down into the valley. You see a small, ferocious cloud hovering over the village of Javielle, with lightning shooting from the ground to the sky. You are taken aback by this sight, for it is one of the things you were told to look for by the grog sergeant Torlen. You realize that lightning shooting from the ground to the sky could only be caused by the infamous Stormrider. But what do you do?*

You can go down one flight of stairs to tell Clobi, the captain of the watch, about this, or perhaps you could sneak past him and go tell someone else this news. •

This is important news indeed, news in which many people might be interested.

If **Jeremé sees the lightning**, tell him that:

• *You know that Caeron would be very pleased if he were the first to learn about this. Torlen should be alerted, of course; that's your duty. But Caeron's study is on the way to the courtyard where Torlen is, and it wouldn't take long to let Caeron know about it. Caeron would probably be even more interested if Lucienne never found out about it at all.* •

If **Lorine sees the lightning**, tell her that:

• *Torlen is the one to whom you should report, but Clobi is a friend as well. Lucienne would probably be the most willing to go after the Stormrider, which would give you the best chance for revenge, but she is busy studying. Torlen would probably tell her anyhow if you brought the news to him.* •

If only one of the grogs saw the lightning, and that one wants to leave guard duty to tell someone else, the player will have to come up with an excuse to tell the other grog. Leaving guard duty is a serious breach of conduct if there's no good reason for it. Have them role-play it out. If both saw it and both want to leave, they might argue about who gets to go, because having both grogs leave the watch is an even more serious offense, especially with the Stormrider about.

• *Torlen considers it a serious offense to abandon your post. By all rights only one of you should go, unless it is something very important.* •

If the grogs leave, ask them what they intend to do about Clobi, who is in the guardroom below. They can tell him what is happening and thus try to get permission to leave and tell others, or they can try to sneak by him.

If they talk to him, let Clobi's player decide how to deal with it, but remind the player that someone should be on watch at all times. Clobi knows that it is his duty to see to it that Torlen is alerted about the Stormrider immediately. Lucienne would also like to know, most likely.

If a grog tries to sneak past Clobi, the player should make a **Dexterity + Sneak** roll, while Clobi makes a **Perception + Alertness** roll. If the grog beats Clobi's roll, he or she sneaks to the spiral staircase at the center of the tower and from there can get anywhere in the covenant (probably two flights down to Caeron's study, four flights down to the library where Lucienne is studying, or to the courtyard where Torlen can be found). If Clobi at least matches the grog's roll, he catches the other character. Let Clobi's player decide what to do with the little sneak. Tell Clobi:

• *You are very angry to see this grog deserting his/her post just because the storm was a little rough. It would be best if you hauled this pile of crap down to see Torlen.* •

Finding the Two Apprentices

If Lorine, or someone else, alerts Lucienne in the library, read this to her:

• *You are holed up in the library studying for the apprentice's gauntlet that you will soon have to undergo. It will be a rigorous series of exams covering Hermetic magic theory, Hermetic history, and magic*

ability; and you are quite worried about it. Not only has the storm hurt your concentration, but you've been repeatedly interrupted. One of the covenant scholars is still rustling around in the back of the library looking for some tome or another, and you're getting annoyed. Suddenly you are interrupted yet again, this time by a knock on the door. •

After Lucienne is told about the Stormrider, tell her:

•You are stunned by the news. It has been so long since the Stormrider rode the winds that you thought he was gone forever. You, of course, want to pursue him, but first you will have to get permission from a magus — and the only one left at the covenant is the demented Felix down in his caverns. •

Let the characters continue to role-play for a while. If Lucienne looks out of the library windows to see the valley for herself, she sees the lightning fork from the earth to the sky.

After Lucienne decides to leave the library, tell the character Tomas that he heard the whole thing:

•While you were looking for your book, you heard someone come into the library and tell the apprentice Lucienne that the Stormrider had been sighted. You've heard of that strange creature; it's a legend of some local notoriety — you've even had dreams about him lately. Hmmm, Caeron would be very intrigued by this information. You could probably find him in his room. •

This is, of course, how Caeron can learn about the Stormrider, if he doesn't know already. If he does know, then have Tomas bump into him in the hallway as he goes down to see Felix. Tomas might end up accompanying Caeron there.

If someone goes to Caeron's room, read to him::

•Caeron, you are in your tiny room working on a potion, as you are unable to sleep during this awful storm, when you hear footsteps on the stairway and then a knock on the door. •

Once Caeron is told the news, tell him that while he thinks chasing after the Stormrider might be an amusing lark before he is made a magus and leaves this covenant forever, he will have to go to his master, Felix, to get permission to go. Felix is the only magus left in the covenant, and only a magus can authorize a dangerous mission. You might also want to mention that he could achieve real fame for himself if he could prove that the Stormrider is not an elemental and disprove Grimgroth's famous treatise. In other words, this is an opportunity of a lifetime, and not something to be passed up.

Petitioning Felix

The only wizard who is left at the covenant is the infamous Felix Necromius, so if the apprentices want permission to seek the Stormrider, they will have to ask him. It will not be a pleasant task speaking with that strange, twisted man, but they have little choice.

In his laboratory buried deep beneath the covenant lives one of the strangest wizards at Mistridge. Felix Necromius is obsessed with death and seems to be unable to think of life in any other terms than in relation to death. He has a strange, quavering voice, and rarely does he speak an entire sentence without at least one reference (however oblique) to death.

If things work out right, Caeron and Lucienne will both rush to Felix seeking permission to go after the Stormrider. You should manipulate things so that somehow both of them find out about the news. One apprentice, however, may reach Felix's lab before

The Art of Narration

As the two grogs go to tell their particular friends of what they have seen, you will have to employ narration and overt manipulation to get everything to work out the way you want it to. In later stories, after you have the hang of intro's, you can let the players tell you where they are in the covenant and what they decide to do. For this story, however, you will have to tell them where they are, what they are doing, and suggest actions for them to take. Try to give the players as much freedom of choice as you can, even if it screws things up a little bit. But to make things work out, you'll have to take charge of things. If someone gets miffed about the lack of freedom in the first few scenes, tell them it only lasts until the moment they step out of the covenant (or that the authors were jerks).

If events turn out that only one of the two cliques has been alerted to the Stormrider so half of the characters are going to be left out, there are several methods to use to ensure that both apprentices find out about it.

- A charwoman can overhear what's happening and spread the news so that everyone in the covenant knows of it. This creates such excitement that even Felix learns of it.
- A character from the clique that is being left out observes the earth-to-sky lightning on their own.
- Felix can refuse to let either apprentice brave a confrontation with the Stormrider alone.

the other one even hears about the Stormrider. If it is at all possible, get as many characters, even companions and grogs, to go to Felix at once, so that the rich detail of the laboratory will not be "wasted" on only one or two characters. Some of them may be driven by a morbid curiosity, a curiosity they will most likely regret. Because of Caeron's bad experiences with Felix, it may be very difficult for him to ask a favor of his master. Remember his curse; he hears the moans of the dead, so he will be very uncomfortable in his master's laboratory. (That's why he no longer lives with his master.)

When a character descends the spiral staircase to the lowest level of the covenant and arrives at Felix' lab, they find the large door to his lab closed and locked.

•You make your way down the spiral staircase into the rock of the hill, and then walk down a short tunnel towards Felix's lab. Beads of water run down the walls all about you. Eventually you find yourself in front of a huge oak door reinforced with heavy bands of bronze, set deep into the granite walls. Strange inscriptions cover every inch of the metal, and there is a huge bronze knocker in the shape of a person's hand. •

At first there is no response if they knock. Only after a second knock will they hear a thin, wavering voice say:

- "Be you living or be you dead?" •

If the character says, "Living," Felix says, "Go away!" The character will have to ask to be let in and plead a bit before the door will open. If the character says, "Dead," Felix will pause a bit and then say, "Begone, petty liar, or you'll be dead soon enough."

If the character persists in asking to come in, the door will soon open (under control of a spell), and Felix's voice will say:

- "Come in young one. Welcome to my little tomb." •

As the characters walk in to his laboratory, they will likely be

taken aback by what they see.

- *Felix's laboratory is a large, rough-hewn cavern scattered with tables piled high with assorted equipment and books. There are glass bowls, brass pipes, small braziers, and hundreds of little pots and vials filled with all manner of herbs and magical ingredients. Much of his research takes place in a large vat of mud at the center of the room. Dried animal bodies line the walls, hanging by chains. Next to a reading stand is Felix, still and pale as a corpse, in loose white robes.* •

If Caeron is here, tell him:

- *There must be at least a dozen corpses in this room, and scores more in the catacombs beyond. First, you hear a whisper almost too soft to detect. Then it grows, and you realize it is the moans of many dead. The different moans mix, swell, and fall like wind in the trees. You know it will only get worse until you leave. The dead have found a sympathetic ear, and they will tear you apart with their cries if you do not leave soon. What's worse, you suspect Felix hears them too, only he enjoys it.* •

If the characters do not ask about the experiment Felix asks them by way of greeting:

- *"Still alive I see, your body looks well. Well, what do you want?"* •

If the characters tell Felix that they want to pursue the Stormrider, he will first try to discourage them, telling them that they are valuable to the covenant and should not be risked on such a dangerous mission. Naturally, the characters will persist. At this point, if appropriate, the apprentice other than the one already in the lab should show up, just to slow down the process of getting permission. To Necromius, the safety of these two is not really important enough for him to waste his time over, so he soon concedes:

- *"Very well, you may give chase to this fellow, but you must promise me something first. You must record the last words of all those who die on your little expedition. I keep a journal of such things."* •

The characters must agree to this stipulation or Felix, who really cares nothing for the Stormrider, will not let them go. And that is that.

- *"So, are we agreed?"* •

Once it is decided that the characters are to go, he will warn them:

- *"You must ensure that the folk of the valley do not think that you are with the Stormrider. They've blamed us for things like that before, and it is decay, pure decay. The good name of Mistridge is in your hands; do not let it lose its fragrance. Do I make myself understood? Good, I will order that preparations be made; you will leave soon no doubt. Now get out of my laboratory... I have work to do."* •

If the two apprentices argue over which one gets to go, Felix will say:

- *"Enough of this bickering; you both shall go. Perhaps you will balance each others' faults."* •

Getting Underway

The characters must now make preparations to get underway. Read to them the following.

- *With the permission of Felix Necromius, preparations to get underway are being made. The grogs are putting on their armor, packing supplies (such as rope), and readying their weapons. But how are the rest of you going to prepare yourselves? Is there anything special any of you want to do before you depart?* •

Felix's Lab

There are many strange things the characters might see in Felix's laboratory, especially when they are not busy speaking with him. Ask the players who are not directly involved in this part of the story to add in whatever details to the laboratory they find appropriate to enhance the mood and feeling of this scene. Below are listed a few ideas of some strange things that characters can notice as they look around.

A dead cat hanging upside down by strings over a table. It's been shaved, its legs are bound in bronze wire, and its eyes are sewn shut. One of Felix's less successful experiments.

On Felix's reading stand is an open book; in it one can see a diagram that seems to describe how to remove the ligaments from a person's leg without tearing them.

A very human-looking hand rises from the vat of mud in the center of the lab. Felix notices what the character is looking at and quickly casts a spell that pushes whatever it was back down in the mud.

Do not encourage them to do anything special or delay departure, but if they think of something they want to do, help them along.

Information About the Stormrider

The characters know certain things about the Stormrider. Before the characters leave Mistridge, call their attention to the description of the Stormrider: on one of their handouts, perhaps even reading it aloud.

Characters who are able to make **Intelligence + Legend Lore** rolls of 7+ will also know the following:

- *The Stormrider is said to be a demon whose presence heralds the beginning of a plague, famine, or war. Some say he is one of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Whatever he is, he is a mighty warrior who nevertheless can be felled with the blows of mortal blades. He is able to control the winds, hurl lightning from his lance, and summon trolls from running water. His steed can breathe fire, but cannot fly at will.* •

If the characters think of it, allow them look for information on the Stormrider in the library. They don't have much time before the grogs have gotten their equipment and are ready to leave, half an hour at the most. They will need to make an **Intelligence + Scribe Latin** roll of 8+ to learn anything at all.

The main item they will discover is Grimgroth's treatise on the Stormrider, which has some very interesting information in it. According to Grimgroth, the Stormrider is an air elemental, the essence of the rage of the storm itself. When the storm is at its most ferocious, the most magical part of it takes the form of a black steed and its rider, and it touches the earth in that form to cause yet more destruction and sorrow. This treatise has been the basis of much thought on the nature of elementals, and many wizards have used his ideas in their own theories. The magus Vancasitum states in his own widely known tome on magic theory that Grimgroth's treatise

tise has become the centerpiece of the Order's current understanding of elementals.

If the characters can make a **Perception + Scan** roll of 10+, they will discover an old, yellowed letter tucked between two pages. It is addressed to Mierina at Lariander covenant and signed by Grimgroth, but obviously never sent. Grimgroth mentions that after looking into some old legends about a young knight in Val du Bosque, he became suspicious that he might be wrong about the Stormrider. He suggests the possibility that the rider might actually be a human who was exhibiting some deep inner rage and was gaining magical powers from that rage. Near the end of the letter he states that at the first available opportunity he was going to check into it.

(Grimgroth did in fact investigate the Stormrider further and found him to be human, though his mount did appear to be an elemental. It would have been so embarrassing to have his famous treatise shown even partially incorrect, that Grimgroth quickly "lost" his letter, and buried the whole matter of the Stormrider in his past. He hopes only that no one else will ever investigate the rider and that it will remain his secret. About this whole matter he is not proud, but it is simply something he did.)

Tomas's Visions

At this time, while the characters are still at the covenant, have Tomas roll to see whether he has a **vision**. First describe where in the covenant he is; it should be some time while he is preparing to leave, perhaps while he is looking out the window in his quarters down into the valley. (This helps set up the mood; these visions

should be special things). Have him add his Visions score + 3 (for the covenant's magical aura). His total bonus is +8. If he rolls a 12+ he has the "Beautiful Maiden" vision; give him the slip of paper with the vision on it. (The visions are found on one of the center two pages of the booklet. Remove these pages and cut the visions out so you can hand them one at a time to Tomas during the story.) Tell the player **not to flip the paper over**, at least not yet. (The interpretation of the vision is written on the other side, and the player should not see it yet.)

Encourage the player of Tomas to role-play out what Tomas says as he has his vision. Tomas has gotten into the habit of speaking out loud during his visions so that he won't forget them. "I see a woman, a beautiful young maiden. And she is eating berries...." If the player role-plays it out, it can add a lot of depth to the story; plus it allows all the players to be informed as to the nature of the visions.

Even if he doesn't roll high enough to get a full vision, you should tell him part of the vision. For this, simply read the first three lines of the description to the player. In this case, however, do not give the player the slip of paper.

If Tomas receives the full vision, have the player roll for an interpretation next: **a stress die + Intelligence + Visions**. If the roll is 9+, allow the player to flip the slip of paper over and read the interpretation printed there. If you let the players keep these slips of paper, they will have an easier time remembering them and picking up clues from them, but if you want to make it harder on the players, tell them to give the slips of paper back once the vision is over. At least take back the visions for which Tomas fails to get the interpretation so that they are not accidentally flipped over and read during the game.

On the Fiery Trail

Setting Off

Though the storm has mostly passed, it is still drizzling, and whenever the characters get near the Stormrider, the rain will pour a little faster, the winds will rise, and they will enter the storm again. It is not a nice day, and the characters are likely to be miserable because of it.

When the characters are preparing to leave Mistridge, tell Ramón that he thinks crossing the river directly between Mistridge and Javielle is the only way to reach the village in a reasonable amount of time. If the characters choose to go by way of the ford (an extra three hours of walking), they can cross the river more safely (though still with some effort), but they will be much farther behind the Stormrider than normal.

To guide them to a good place to cross the river, Ramón must make a **Val du Bosque Lore + Perception** stress roll of 8+. Since his specialty is "lay of the land," he gets an extra +1 bonus, so his total bonus is +6. This means he is so good that he will miss only on a roll of 0 (since you cannot roll a 1 on a stress die). If he does in fact miss, he takes the group to a bend in the river where the water runs faster and all the ease factors for anyone in the water (swimming, for example) will be 2 points higher than what is described below.

Crossing the River

After finally leaving the covenant, the characters must cross the river, which is now flooded. They must use either their spells or wits or both to cross. This scene is a thinking exercise for the players. Can they invent an efficient, fast, and safe way to get across the river? The best way is for Caeron to use a spell of his, but other ways work as well. Keep the action moving; don't let the players contemplate forever. If they get bogged down, give them some help. Don't allow them to waste hours trying to get across.

Read to them this description:

• *You climb over the trunk of a fallen tree and come out of the woods onto the bank of the river. Before you rushes a torrent of muddy water ten yards across. It is awash with branches that have been torn from trees, and as you look, a large elm comes racing down the center of the channel. Its ragged branches spread out before it like grasping hands. Quickly it moves past you and goes out of sight downstream, turning around and around all the while.* •

Now the characters have to manage a way across. If they ever are about to try something really stupid, you can give a hint to Torlen; this help represents his long years of experience (and his Common Sense virtue). Listed below are a couple of their options

and what is likely to happen in each case. Don't be surprised if your players think of something else entirely.

Caeron can use his **spell Twist the Living Tree** to bend a tree on this side toward the opposite bank and a tree on the far bank toward this one, so that they meet and intertwine their branches in the middle. Ask Caeron for his **Perception + Finesse** scores and roll this secretly to represent how well he shaped the branches. If he botches, there is a flaw and the first person who tries to cross will fall. If he rolls a 12+, he's done such a good job that everyone gets +2 on their **Climb** rolls when crossing. At least one character might have to climb across unaided (requires a **Dexterity + Climb** roll of 6+ or slip and fall), but if that character brings a rope across, the other characters shouldn't have any problems.

Caeron could attach a length of rope to a branch and use his **spell Piercing Shaft of Wood** to make the branch stick into a tree on the far shore (requires a **Targeting** roll of 8+). Crossing by rope requires a **Strength + Climb** roll of 6+ if the rope is high enough that the character is out of the water, or a roll of 9+ if the character is in the water. Any character who fails the roll falls into the river and must swim (see below). Another danger is that trees are still coming down the river, and if one comes by while a rope is strung across, it will catch the rope and no doubt break it or pull it free. (Good luck to anyone on the rope at that time.)

The characters could construct a raft out of fallen trees, perhaps using spontaneous Muto Herbam spells. (Caeron's spell, **Twist the Living Tree**, doesn't work on an uprooted tree.) Spontaneous Rego Herbam spells could also propel the raft across the torrent.

The water is over twenty feet deep at this portion of the river, so it is not possible to ford it. A **swimming** character must attempt **Strength + Swim** rolls of 9+ (with double the character's Load counting as a penalty). An unsuccessful roll means the character loses one fatigue level for each point of Enc carried and is swept ten paces downstream. Any character who falls unconscious drowns. (A heavily encumbered character, therefore, is likely to drown quickly.) Each character must continue to make rolls until two are successful, at which point the character has reached the opposite shore.

At some time during this scene, possibly at an exciting point, Tomas might have a **vision**. If he is able to roll a 12+ on **Visions**, give him the "Grove of Pines" vision. Otherwise just read him the first few lines from the description. As always, he must make an **Intelligence + Visions** roll of 9+ to read the interpretation on the other side.

Other Side of the River

When they finally get to the opposite bank of the river, tell them that they have to scramble up a small, muddy slope to get to level ground, whereupon they will be in the grove of trees that runs along the river. As the characters get across, have each make a fatigue roll, due to accumulated exhaustion, or once they are all over, tell them:

• The excitement of departure has left you, and now your weariness finally begins to hit you. All of you were up for much of the night, catching only scattered snatches of sleep because of the ferocity of the storm. Everyone make a fatigue roll. •

Have them look on their character sheets for their fatigue totals. If they roll a 12+, they do not lose any fatigue and feel fresh and ready to go. If they roll a 3 to 11, they feel a bit tired from a lack

of rest and nervousness and lose one long-term fatigue level. If they get a 2 or under, they lose two long-term fatigue levels. Long-term fatigue cannot be recovered without sleep.

Then skip the Ford section below and go to the Burning Tree.

The Ford

If the characters cross the river at the ford, they can cross safely, though they will get soaked. For the remainder of the story, however, this group will be about two hours behind the schedule they otherwise would have had they crossed the river where Ramón told them to. You will have to adjust the story accordingly: the tree will have mostly burned down, the villagers will have left the church, and though the Stormrider will still be at the castle, it will be in partial ruin and its inhabitants will be half mad from rage caused by the encircling Stormrider. If the characters save the day, the castle inhabitants will not really notice, and the Baron will not emerge to speak with them.

Once they are across the ford, tell them they hike through light forest, and then through farmland. They won't see the burning tree unless someone makes a **Perception + Alertness** roll of 10+, in which case they will see a strange red glow off in the distance towards the river.

The Burning Tree

Once the characters have made it across the river, they see a burning tree in the distance. Under the tree they find the body of a squire who has been mortally wounded by the Stormrider. The squire's dogs are still near his body, and they put up a fight if the characters approach. Here the characters discover where the Stormrider began his rampage, and gain their first clues. It is a test of how the characters will deal with an unusual and possibly dangerous situation. From here they can follow the Stormrider's tracks into Javielle. Since such powerful and elemental magic was at work near the tree, the Dominion no longer holds sway and it temporarily has a +2 magical aura. The wizards get +2 to all their magic rolls.

• Just as you climb up the river bank, you notice in the distance a tree enveloped in flames. Through the mist, it looks like a giant candle. Everyone make a Perception + Scan roll. •

After everyone has made a **Perception + Scan** roll, tell them what they see. The higher they roll, the more details they see. Each detail is listed with the minimum number required to see it. The other details will become apparent only as the characters approach.

Automatic: A burning tree in the distance.

5+: A ring of foot-high flames encircles the tree.

8+: Dark, shadowy dog-like creatures are leaping about in the ring.

11+: A human body lies at the foot of the tree, not moving.

14+: The grass and other plants on the ground around the tree for fifty paces have been flattened, blown down to the ground in the direction away from the tree.

Botch: They might perceive the black shadows of demon dogs dancing under the flickering light of the burning tree and tearing the flesh from a still living maiden.

The ring of flames is made up of scores of flaming hoofprints.

The Stormrider must have ridden around the tree again and again, and finally ridden off towards the village of Javielle (where one set of hoofprints leads). There are no hoofprints leading to the flaming tree. They seem to have simply appeared.

Ramón, the tracker, can find out a variety of things if he looks closely. If he makes a Track + Perception roll of 4+ after just looking briefly at the tracks he can tell they are a horse's. If he carefully looks at the entire ring and makes a Track + Perception roll of 8+, he can find where they started, and that they are much deeper than the other tracks, indicating that the horse came down from a jump when it began making the flaming hoofprints.

These **flaming hoofprints** cannot be stamped out, and if dirt is piled on top of them they still flame on top of the earth. They will continue to flame until the Stormrider's horse leaves the earth, goes back to the sky, and loses its corporeal form.

Inside the ring of flames are **five dogs**, each wearing a collar (though the characters won't notice that at first). As the characters approach the tree, you might want to portray the dogs as demonic and horrific. Actually the dogs belong to the dying squire and are frantic with terror. They cannot leave the circle of flame, out of fear, yet the circle intensifies their every emotion. (See the pull-out description of the Stormrider for its effects. Generally speaking, it doubles the passions of a person or animal within it.) If anyone enters the circle, the dogs will attack them in an effort to protect their master.

A fairly simple **combat** should ensue involving the dogs — a good introduction to the combat system. Since the dogs won't cross the circle of flames, the characters can always retreat from the melee to rest or to make better plans. They can also simply kill the dogs with missiles. However, since these dogs are half mad, they will ferociously attack anyone within the circle. See the pull-out from the middle of this booklet for the combat stats of the five dogs. Remember to have the characters roll for fatigue after they change from one strenuous activity to another, and at the end of the battle. If anyone is fatigued, this will be short-term fatigue that can be recovered much quicker than the long-term fatigue they rolled for earlier.

Remind Ramón that he cannot bear to see animals suffering, so if these dogs are to be killed, he will want them killed as quickly and painlessly as possible.

Under this ancient oak, known as the Loving Oak by the locals, the characters will find the **half-dead body** of a young man leaning against the trunk. He suffers from several sword wounds and from a horrible burn on his face and chest; at first the characters might assume he is dead. He wears the blue and gold tunic of Baron d'Uverre and has a broadsword lying at his side, but he is not wearing any armor. In his right hand he clutches a scrap of black cloth. His name is Brien, and he is the son of a minor local lord, Sir Guifré, and is being trained as a knight at the Baron's castle. In the grass, fifty paces from the tree, his horse lies dead, killed by a severe burn.

After some person comes up to him and tries to speak with him, the squire will whisper the name of his beloved:

• *"Marie, my poor Marie."* •

Then he groans and falls into unconsciousness. Unless either Torlen or Jeremé can quickly heal him by making a **Chirurgy + Quickness** roll of 14+, the squire will die. (Torlen gets a +1 on his

roll because of his specialty.)

As soon as the squire dies, Caeron, because of his curse, will hear the corpse groaning in mortal agony and will not be comfortable within a dozen feet of it. If Lucienne uses her spell **Whispers Through the Black Gate**, they can talk with this dead man, but even so he is still in great torment and not very coherent. Mumble and garble what he says so the players have trouble understanding you. If he lives, he will say the same things to the characters, also garbled.

The squire says:

• *"He said to me from his black charger -- 'If I cannot have her, then no one can. She is one thing you cannot have brother.' -- I was confused, I am not his brother! I moved to protect my Marie, to defend her honor. But lightning flew from his lance, and I was thrown to the ground. Then from his horse, the cowardly knave cut me down every time I attempted to stand up. As I lay helpless, he grabbed up my poor, Marie and took her away. I can hear her screams still. Oh please find her for me. And if he has harmed one hair on her head, I beg you please, find that horrible creature and make him suffer!"* •

The scrap of cloth that Brien holds tightly in his right hand was torn from the Stormrider's cape. Be sure to point it out because it is very important to the story. The characters will have to pry it from Brien's clenched fist if he is dead, but if Tomas touches it, he will feel a surge of rage. If Tomas has the cloth, he will receive a +5 bonus on visions related to the Stormrider for the remainder of the story. You may have to manipulate Tomas into touching the cloth, such as suggesting to his player that he is the one most capable of figuring out what it is. Do whatever it takes to get this cloth into Tomas's hands.

If Caeron uses **Speak with Plants and Trees** to talk to the burning tree, it will only "scream" in pain as it slowly dies. With a Perception + Scan roll of 5+, he may hear it mutter:

• *"Why does he torture me so, one who has seen so much love. This is not true to my nature! I am the one who creates love!"* •

This tree is important to the Stormrider for it was here that he originally saw the fair Fabía, the maiden whom he loved above any other. On this night, the Stormrider happened to see a squire wooing his lover under this tree. The sight brought back tormenting memories and he flew into a rage. He began to think that the squire was his brother and the woman was Fabía. So he came down from the clouds, slew the squire, and carried off the woman to Javielle (where the characters will later find her).

Tomas may have a vision at this spot, but only if he moves to investigate matters further. He must either touch the squire, or go inside the circle of flame. If he does something special, like look into the squire's eyes, you might want to give him a bonus to his roll. If he has the scrap of cloth, he receives a +5 bonus as well. If he does roll a 12+ (remember to give him a +2 because of the magic aura), give him the "Rage" vision.

At some point characters will probably decide to follow the flaming tracks to the village. No tracking rolls are necessary because the flaming trail is so easy to follow.

If at this point, or at any time, the characters get far off the suggested course of the adventure, you might want to ad lib some encounters for the rest of the session and then continue the story described here the next time you play.

Javielle

The characters see the damage the Stormrider has done to Javielle and help the squire's lover, who has been wounded by the Stormrider.

Dominion: In this town, since it is a holy day (the feast day of Sante Fabía), the Dominion is 3. Magi must **subtract 3** from all magic rolls, and make three extra botch rolls every time they zero out on such a roll. (See *Ars Magica*, p. 72)

•*The sun has come up, but the storm clouds obscure it, so it is a grim morning. Up ahead of you is the village of Javielle, dark and forsaken in the rain and drizzle. As you walk through its outskirts, you notice that the storm has hit these people hard. Three cottages are collapsed, their timber walls lying crushed on the ground, and two others no longer have their thatch roofs. The tracks of the Stormrider continue straight down the road. Do you continue to follow them?*•

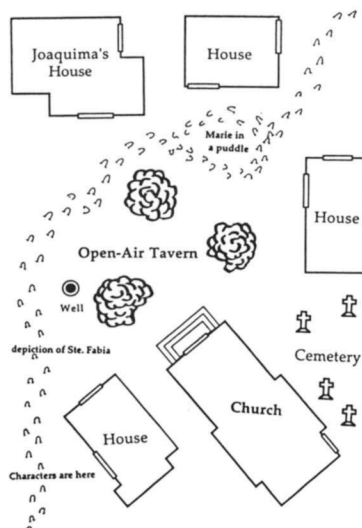
Do not encourage characters to search the houses; there is nothing here of interest. If they do look around, however, tell them that the houses are normal serf's dwellings, made of timber and wattle with only simple belongings inside. (Most cottages have benches or stools; chairs are a luxury.) The characters will find no signs of life, though there are dead bodies inside one of the cottages. There are no people or animals to be seen. The storm and then the Stormrider frightened them off.

•*In the middle of the village there are three oak trees, under which are a number of overturned tressel tables and benches — this is where many of the older people of the village spend their evenings; it's the village tavern. Plates, tablecloths, and mugs scattered about indicate that the tavern had been in full use the previous evening. To the right of the trees is the small stone church, with its double doors shut. You can hear the sound of chanting coming from inside.*•

When the characters get closer tell them:

•*All kinds of decorations and flowers lie about the compound. The villagers were obviously celebrating some sort of festival. Lying in the mud are a number of white banners with red roses sewn on each one, as well as a number of wreaths of flowers. There is also a large wooden board with a crudely carved and painted picture of a woman on it. Hoofprints burn on the surface of the board.*•

If they look closely at the wooden board, they will notice some details:



•*The woman is in white robes, has a halo, and carries three roses in her right hand.*•

Anyone who looks at it can make a **Perception + Val du Bosque Lore** roll. To those who roll 5+, read this:

•*You recognize this woman as Sante Fabía, the patron saint of the valley.*•

There is no one in the center of the village. Most of tables have been flipped over, while there is still a warm mug of ale on one of the two tables that still stands. The oaks shed many branches during the storm, and green boughs lie everywhere.

The church is a small, white-washed building with a small steeple. The doors are firmly barred from within, and the windows have barred shutters. About fifty villagers are crowded inside, chanting; they will not come out. Any player who listens to the chanting can make a **Perception + Scan** roll. Those who get a 6+ can hear a young boy's voice chanting in Latin, and then a man's voice preaching about fire, the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and the coming end of the earth. He seems to be preparing the villagers for imminent Armageddon. The tracks of the Stormrider never go near the church. They always remain more than ten feet from it. The Dominion is +4 within this small area. (Remember that Ramón is afraid of large buildings.)

If anyone moves so as to be able to see what is on the far side of the three oaks, read them this description:

•*A maiden lies wounded in a puddle on the far side of the three oaks near the church. A ring of burning hoof marks appear in the dirt all about the puddle. She is weeping, and is covered with mud.*•

The characters will have to decide how to deal with the wounded maiden. She is Marie, the lover of the squire, and she has been through a great ordeal. Her face has been burned and needs to be treated, but the characters will have to calm her before they can treat the burns. If a man tries to comfort her, she will become hysterical and scream, though she doesn't really have the power to fight anyone off. Only if someone can make a **Presence + Folk Ken** roll of 10+ will she calm down. (Lucienne and Lorine get +4 on this roll because they are women and therefore seem less threatening to Marie.) If someone rolls a 3 or less while trying to comfort her, she will scream in terror — remember she has been sitting in a circle of flaming hoofprints for hours. If Ramón tries to come near her, she will recognize him as "the wild man" and become even more terrified (-2 on all future rolls that attempt to calm her down).

Remember that characters who step into the **burning ring** to help the woman will have their passions doubled. They simply double whatever personality trait rolls they get. People tend to get extremely angry/frightened/sad when they are within a circle of flaming hoofprints.

Whoever tries to treat her burns will realize that they take the shape of a palm and fingers, as if someone had slapped her with a burning hand. Her wounds will never fully heal naturally, which is a shame, for one can tell that she was once very beautiful. Any characters who makes a **Perception + Val du Bosque Lore** roll of 8+ will know she is Marie, the young daughter of the carpenter and last year's Mayday Queen.

If questioned, she will slowly and tearfully tell her story to a character she trusts.

•*"He attacked my amour. I fear he is dead. My poor Brien. Have you seen him?"*•

If the characters ask her more questions, she will be persuaded to tell more if the person speaking with her makes a **Communica-**

tion roll of 7+. (Clobi may add his +1 Gentle score and Lucienne may add her +3 Moved by Suffering score if they make this attempt.) If more than one person tries to talk with her at once, you may wish to have them all make a roll, and not have any of them succeed unless everyone succeeds.

• *"I was secretly meeting with good Brien Guifré, a squire at the castle. We were meeting under the Loving Tree, but we had been there only a short time when suddenly a storm arose. Then a black rider flew down from the clouds astride a black steed spouting flame and fear.*

"He struck Brien down, and I fear him dead. He then carried me off.

"I remember no more, until he threw me down in this puddle, shouting, 'You are not her!' He began to ride around me again and again, coming closer and closer meaning to kill me. He seemed to enjoy my fear. He trampled on all the decorations for the feast, and even desecrated the image of Sante Fabía." •

If she is asked how she survived, when it seemed he meant to kill her, have her say:

• *"I feared myself doomed, but then I picked up some flowers from the mud for I meant to pray to Fabía. He looked down at me, gave a growl that was both like a laugh and a cry, and then rode away."* •

In the church are all the inhabitants of the village who have not fled into the countryside. If the characters make Marie scream, three brave young men will unbar the double doors at the front of the church and look out to see what is happening. They will most likely assume that the wizards had something to do with the attack on the village, and one turns to tell the others in the church what they see. While they will certainly yell at the characters and tell them to leave the young woman alone and get out of the village, but under no circumstances will they leave the church.

However, **Father Llorenç** (see *Ars Magica* p. 136) will eventually emerge from the church and say to the characters:

• *"Begone demons, and leave that poor girl alone. The Kingdom of God is at hand, and soon your kind will no longer be welcome amidst my humble flock."* •

He will ignore all that they say, and if they do not leave at once, he will again tell them to leave. If they still do not go, he will bravely walk forward to bring the girl into the church. If the characters make any move to threaten him, he will scurry back into the church like a mouse back into its hole.

The best thing for the characters to do is probably simply to leave without getting angry at the villagers. Unless they are very persuasive speakers (such as making Communication + Charisma rolls of 12+), they will just make things worse by trying to talk to them. The villagers will connect the characters with the storm and the Stormrider, and this will harm the reputation of Mistrudge. Warn the apprentices that the older wizards will be very angry if this severely damages relations with the common folk.

If the characters continue to follow the tracks, they will find that the tracks weave erratically through the village and then head north towards **Castle d'Uverre**. Eventually the characters will follow these hoofprints and leave in search of the Stormrider. When they do so, tell them:

• *"You have been affected in some way by what you have seen and heard in the village. Some of you may have been profoundly moved and angered; others of you may want simply to get on with the job. Make a personality roll by rolling a stress die and adding it to the first personality trait on your list."* •

Look at the insert called Rolling for Personality to see how emotional the characters get. When they tell you what they roll,

read to them the result indicated on the chart. Now you must watch the players carefully to see how they role-play out their emotional state. Later on, you will have to judge how their characters feel, so you will need to watch their role-playing closely.

The Old Hag

The characters follow the Stormrider's hoofprints as they twist and turn down the road until they arrive at a shrine to Sante Fabía. In front of a nearby hut sits an old woman who is wise despite her crazed babbling, and has much of value to say to the characters. She has devoted her life to Sante Fabía. The shrine is a holy place: **Dominion 3** in the immediate environs.

As they approach the shrine, read them this description:

• *As you follow the flaming tracks to the north towards Castle d'Uverre, you see a small stone shrine built beside the road. It is a large stone cross atop a huge stone slab. Hundreds of flowers lie scattered in front of it. Sitting cross-legged in front of the hut is an old hag crooning to herself and rocking back and forth. The flaming hoofprints of the Stormrider encircle the shrine many times, and the eerie light of their flames casts an evil shadow on the face of the hag.* •

The old hag who sits in front of her hut seems unaffected by the power of the flaming hoofprints. She seems neither influenced nor led by her passions; she is as calm as ice. While she is a holy woman, it is in fact the effects of the Dominion around the cross itself that have nullified the emotional effects of the circle of flames. No characters who go inside the flames to see the shrine closer will be affected by their strange magic.

Any character who can make a **Legend Lore + Int** roll of 6+ knows that this is a shrine to the patron saint of the valley, Sante Fabía, who performed her first miracle here. Anyone who gets a 9+ on that roll knows that a knight was killed here by his jealous brother, and then was restored to life by Fabía while she held three red roses.

Anyone who looks closely notices that the woman is very old, dressed in rags, and is missing her right leg from the knee down. Anyone who looks closely at the shrine itself notices that there is a bunch of red roses laid on a small stone altar in front of the cross. (These were brought by the old crone herself.)

The woman will ignore the characters unless they show some sort of **anger or emotion**. When they do she will look towards them and say:

• *"You have the same anger in you that he does. The same anger indeed. You are as tainted with the sin of malice as the fiend himself. The fiend who dared to lay a hand on a woman of God."* •

If they respond, she will say nothing. Only if they go **inside the circle of flames** will she will say:

• *"You undisciplined wretches, I know who you are. You are the dwellers in the mist. So does that make you the same as the rider of the mist? Answer me that."* •

If they treat her with any semblance of civility, she will begin to speak with them. You should ad-lib what she says. This old hag sees Sante Fabía as the ideal model for human behavior, and since the characters are far from this example, she sees no real difference between angry magi and an angry Stormrider. She is unimpressed by youthful bravado and self-satisfaction. If the conversation gets bogged down a bit, you might want her to say:

• *"Anger you have indeed, like the rider for whom you search. But you must dismount from your own steed of rage, before it consumes you. Until you do, you will never find what you search for — do not make the same mistake he did. The fires of damnation will burn in anticipation if you are not able to find peace."* •

If the characters specifically ask **who the Stormrider is**, she will say:

• *"She befriended him, but he was not a holy man, nor a gentle man, nor a virtuous man, and he was filled with much anger. He loved her, he loved her with a fiery passion, but he could not understand her dedication."* •

If she is asked **how to defeat the Stormrider** she will say:

• *"If you cannot control the storm, you cannot harm him. But do not look to the storm above, but to the storm within."* •

And if she is questioned about **the shrine**, she will say:

• *"This is a shrine to brotherly hate; this is where one brother killed another. Are you really all that different? You are of the same home, yet you squabble like enemies."* •

This should hit close to home, assuming, of course, that the characters have indeed been arguing (as they are "supposed to"). She will shake her head and, after letting them speak for a moment, will interrupt with:

• *"This is where Fabía performed her first miracle; she healed the brother of his wounds. She brought him back to life, for it was not yet time for him to die. I have built many shrines to my blessed virgin saint, always in places sacred to her. Always hoping that folk such as you will find peace."* •

This woman is a dedicated devotee of Sante Fabía. She has spent most of her life in service to the memory of this saint. Though she lives in the woods around this shrine and survives on the offerings of food by wayfarers, she has traveled over the valley, building small altars to Sante Fabía. Somehow she always is able to build them in a place important to Sante Fabía. She is so old and weak that she could be killed with a single blow, but she is not afraid of death.

If Tomas thinks to enter the circle of flame, automatically let him have the vision of "The Miracle" If he does not enter the circle, he will not have the vision. He still needs to roll to interpret the vision.

The Stormrider Attacks

As the characters follow the trail, the Stormrider suddenly speeds past them, striking one of the characters. This scene lets the characters confront the Stormrider and get a feel for his power without risking a full-scale battle. It also further develops their anger towards this evil marauder. Find ways to encourage active hostility toward the Stormrider, such as emphasizing his taunt or pointing out how badly the characters handled the attack (if they indeed handle it poorly). This is your chance to get the players angry, if their characters don't seem to be enraged already.

• *You are walking along when suddenly to your left you hear a great rush of wind and the approaching sound of falling rain. Through the mist, you see the dark shape of an armored warrior astride a black steed. He bursts out of the trees and gallops toward you. Quickly, what do you do?*

• Go to each player in turn and ask them what their characters are doing. Don't give them much time to think about it. Let each character take one quick action, for the Stormrider will soon be

Rolling for Personality

This story has much to do with the raging passion within an individual. Not only does the Stormrider exhibit great anger and rage, but some of the player-characters will as well. To help players role-play this out, the characters have personality traits. In certain circumstances, you should ask the players to roll for their reactions to important events, if they are not already role-playing their reactions out. Lucienne, Lorine, and other characters may have savage reactions to hearing some accounts of the Stormrider's deeds. Indeed, if by the climax, some characters are not angry, the story as a whole will not work as well. You will find that the more your players role-play the emotions of their characters, the better their role-playing becomes. Emotions may be in fact the basis of good role-playing, so encourage them to be emotional.

The chart below describes the intensity of feeling a character will have, depending on how high they roll. Use it to explain to a player how their character feels, but tell them it's a guideline, not the law.

Botch	You are filled with strong feeling opposed to the trait you were rolling for and find it hard to control your actions.
up to 4	You don't feel very emotional.
5 to 7	You are feeling emotional, but you are still in control of your actions. If you can find a good excuse, you will gladly follow your feelings.
8 to 14	You feel highly emotional, and you can only control yourself if there is something very strong holding you back, such as personal danger or a vital duty.
15 to 19	You are filled with intense emotion and can hold yourself back only if someone important to you confronts you and stops you from taking an action.
20+	You are completely consumed with passion and are out of control. Only severe measures or threats to your life will stop you.

You should find some way of rewarding players who forcefully role-play their passions out. There are many different ways you can do this, but we suggest that you give them an extra Whimsy Card as a reward for their role-playing. (Whimsy Cards are a role-playing aid available from Lion Rampant.) If you aren't using Whimsy Cards in this story, you can give them an extra Confidence point for the duration of this story. (Rationalization: following your emotions completely and purely gives you moral strength and a sense of purpose.) Otherwise just give them a quick smile and pay them extra attention.

upon them, and any characters who hesitate can do nothing at all.

The Stormrider rides by at great speed and swings his sword at one of the characters on the edge of the group. (If possible, have him strike Clobi, who is most likely to survive the attack.) The Stormrider gets a +2 bonus to Atk and Dam for his superior

position (mounted and racing by), and even if his blow is parried, its force will knock the target to the ground. Only the character attacked and those nearby can strike the Stormrider with melee weapons, and all attacks against him are -2 because he moves by so quickly. The Stormrider laughs maliciously the whole time he rides past the characters, and may even taunt them.

• *Give yourself to me, brother. I am too great for you.* •

Without pause, the Stormrider races into the woods to the right of the party and is gone. He holds no malice for the party, so he does not bother to destroy them. He is merely wandering around causing damage at random while he slowly approaches Castle d'Uverre. The characters have one round to fire arrows at the Stormrider as he flees, but it's a hard shot through trees and wind. Anyone aiming at the Stormrider must roll 15+ to hit. Anyone aiming at the horse must roll 13+ to hit. Anyone aiming at the two of them in general must roll 12+ (then roll a die: 1-6 hits the horse and 7-10 hits the Stormrider). For spells, the ease factor ranges from 6 to 12, depending on the spell. A Piercing Shaft of Wood is affected by wind and trees, so the ease factor would be 12 to hit the Stormrider, while the Earth's Carbuncle is not affected by trees or wind, and has a large target (the horse), so its ease factor is only 6.

Tomas might have a vision at the very moment that the Stormrider attacks. Tell him that he feels a vision coming, but that he knows he will be helplessly in a trance if he has it. He can try to fight it off, or he can accept it. If he fights it, he still must make the roll for having it, but can subtract 5 from his roll. If he wants to have it anyway, he gets a +3 to his roll because of the Stormrider's presence. If he gets a 12+ on his roll, then give him the slip of paper with the "Storm" vision on it. He gets the normal chance to interpret the vision.

If the characters (through some miracle) manage to put an end to the Stormrider here, have Sante Fabia appear and tell the Stormrider's story, followed by the ending described at the end of the story. You should probably fudge the dice to make sure that the Stormrider escapes and allows the rest of the story to continue as laid out here.

You might want to remind Torlen to treat the wounded character, if there is one. He can let the wounded character recover a body level by making a **Chirurgery + Int** roll of 9+ (subtract the wound penalty of the character). If the characters were disorganized, remind Torlen that he feels responsible for coordinating a strategy for facing the Stormrider and that a plan would be useful. (He has the virtue Common Sense, so hints to him are perfectly legitimate.) While characters have little choice but to continue to follow the hoofprints, there is much else they can talk about, if only to share their ideas on who and what the Stormrider is. Encourage them to have a council of war, to plan on what to do when they meet the Stormrider again.

Things happened too quickly during the encounter for the characters to be able to get angry. The Stormrider simply rushed by. But for this next encounter the anger of the characters will make a big difference in the outcome of the battle. One of the Stormrider's powers is having double his normal Soak against anyone who is angry. If a character is enraged by the Stormrider, they will do less damage. The characters will need to learn to control their own anger, if they are to hope to defeat him.

At this point, go from character to character and judge how emotional that character is according to how they have been role-played. The players should have been guided by their personality rolls earlier, and may have been influenced by this last meeting

with the legend. Don't judge the characters on the overt emotional state of the player; instead look at how they role-played and decide whether that suggests they are angry or not.

The Baron's Castle

Again the characters confront the Stormrider, this time as he is attacking Castle d'Uverre. He will flee from the characters across the river, calling up water elementals to attack the party as he does so.

Dominion: 2.

As the group finally reaches the castle, read them the following description:

• *You see the mighty castle of Baron d'Uverre looming over the river on a rocky outcropping. The roof of a building inside the walls is on fire, and you hear the frantic shouts of people in the castle. Riding around the castle is the Stormrider, a dark cloaked figure riding a black horse, dressed in armor of an outdated style, and carrying a lance which has lightning flickering up and down its length. His coal-black horse not only leaves flaming hoofprints but snorts flames as well, its spiral horns glisten in the light. The hoofprints already encircle the castle several times.* •

Anyone who watches the horse and makes a **Perception + Scan** roll of 8+ will notice that:

• *The horse handles beautifully for the Stormrider, moving gracefully with the slightest nudge, but it seems to have an evil, aggressive temperament.* •

As the characters sit at the top of the hill looking down at the castle, give Tomas a chance to roll for a vision. He suffers a -2 penalty on his stress roll + Visions because of the Dominion (but he may get other bonus for special actions, or for holding the scrap of cloth). If he succeeds, give him the "Oedipus" vision.

Fighting the Stormrider

The characters have a round or two to discuss the situation as they watch the castle burn from the top of the hill. If Tomas is having a vision, he stands completely still and stares into space. They have the chance to get down out of sight on the side of the hill opposite the castle. Then the Stormrider rides out from behind the fortress. If they have hidden themselves, the characters will have all the time they need to plan their actions, but if they are still standing atop the hill, the Stormrider sees them and charges at them headlong, his lance crackling with lightning. (If the characters have hidden, he will charge them once they show themselves.)

The characters will have a chance to use missile weapons as the Stormrider approaches, though high winds make accuracy difficult. If they have hidden and are firing at him by surprise, they get a free shot (and can take a round to aim, so they get +3 on the roll).

The Stormrider flees immediately if he is wounded in this battle, turning his steed and charging for the river.

The first round that he charges (or for the surprise shot), they must roll 18+ to hit. Reduce this and all following ease factors by 2 if a character aims at the horse and by 3 for characters aiming at the horse and rider together (in which case you must roll another die: 1-6 hits the horse and 7-10 hits the rider). For spells, the targeting ease factor is anywhere from 9 to 15, depending on the spell and the target (horse, rider, or both).

On the **second round**, they must roll 12+, or 6+ to 9+ for spells. Then the Stormrider looses a **bolt of lightning** at one of the characters, probably an archer. He needs a 9+ to hit at this distance (since wind does not affect the bolt's accuracy.)

On the **third round**, they must roll only 9+, or a 3+ to 6+ for spells.

At that point, he is nearly on top of the characters. If anyone has charged out to meet him, they can fight this one round. Then **Sante Fabía** appears behind the characters in sight of the Stormrider. Unable to face her, the Stormrider rears his horse, turns, and heads southeast for the river at top speed. The characters are unlikely to notice Sante Fabía at first because they are paying attention to the Stormrider, but each character can make an **Alertness + Per** roll of 6+ to notice light coming from behind them. Those who make the roll can turn in time to see Sante Fabía standing there, a woman of indeterminate age in white robes, sporting a halo and holding three roses in her right hand. Just as a few characters catch sight of her, she disappears.

The characters can fire on the Stormrider as he leaves, but he calls up a **swirling wind** (the characters will see a huge whirl of mist) behind him, so characters need to roll 18+ to hit him, or 12+ to 15+ with spells.

Then the Stormrider reaches the river.

The River, Once Again

The Stormrider will ride across the river, his horse galloping on top of the water. The horse's hooves leave a line of large steam clouds, from which a number of water elementals form. After they are defeated, a way must be found over the river.

• *The Stormrider seems to hesitate for a moment, but suddenly he lashes at his horse and moves towards the flooded river. Then he simply rides his horse to the bank and begins to cross over — on top of the water. As the Stormrider gallops across the river, large clouds of steam rise up from wherever his black steed steps, and slowly, from each steaming hoofprint, green misshapen arms rise up out of the water.* •

Give the character one more chance to do something — fire arrows (a 17+ to hit, the swirling winds are gone) or cast spells (11+ to 14+ to hit). They can attempt to shoot at the creatures in the water, difficulty of 19+, and -3 to damage because the water will probably slow down most shots, or 12+ to 16+ and -3 damage with spells.

• *The Stormrider disappears into the woods that cover the foothills of Mt. Tierné, and the arms in the river slowly sink back beneath the surface* •

Baron D'Uverre

As the characters cross the field toward the river where the Stormrider has fled, an enormous man in chain mail and a plumed helmet rides out of the castle gate with three well-armed knights and approaches the characters. He takes off his helmet, and they see the mane of white hair and the embroidered eyepatch that mark him as **Baron d'Uverre**. The Baron thanks them, and then asks them who they are and where they are from:

• *"Thank you for driving away that mad creature. 'Tis a shame, that he did flee. Together I think we could have slain him once and for all. But*

I do not understand why he came here again, and what he wants from me.

•

If questioned about what he knows about the Stormrider, the Baron will say:

• *"He is a creature of dark passion. He has come to the castle before, of course. My grandfather used to tell me of the day the Rider came down from the sky and slew his grandfather in front of the castle gates. He has come to the castle three times since, and each time he shouts challenges and screams threats.* •

If asked about what the Stormrider said, or if he is questioned further about what occurred, the Baron will say:

• *"He kept yelling up at the walls, 'Come down you cowardly knave! Come down and face me!' He also shouted other things, but I do not understand what he meant by them."* •

After the characters ask him to continue, he tells them:

• *"He said, 'It is your turn now brother, come and face me. You had no right to steal her from me; she was all I had. You took everything from me, everything.' He is, of course, mad. Such a creature could not be of the d'Uverre family"* •

If the characters ask for help crossing the river, the Baron will tell them that there are boats at a dock near the castle. The characters are welcome to use one. If they ask for help in tracking the Stormrider down, the Baron says that all his men are needed to fight the fires that the Stormrider started. Unless the characters have important things to say or ask, the Baron will soon thank them for their help and return to his castle to fight the fires and assess the damage.

As the characters approach the river to cross it, the river trolls will attack them.

The River Trolls

When more than three people get nearer than ten feet from the river, the river trolls (whose arms they saw earlier) will come out of the water to attack them. (This means that the characters cannot cross the river in the boat until they have dealt with the troll, because the trolls will attack them at the dock.)

• *You see the bulbous heads of many hideous troll-like creatures pop up from the water, scattered clumps of weeds serving as hair. They begin to crawl from the water towards you. You notice that they clutch large rocks in either hand. They aren't here for a party.* •

Though these creatures look loathsome enough, they should not be difficult for the characters to deal with, for when they are struck with edged weapons, they break open and turn back into water.

The characters will have one round to fire missiles or use spells before the first trolls close with them, but then the melee begins in earnest. On the first round, eight trolls will attack the characters, followed by another eight the next round. If the characters are doing exceptionally well in these first rounds, you can throw a third wave of trolls at them, but you don't want to do so much damage that the characters will not be up to a climactic battle against the Stormrider at the end of the story. The trolls pop when hit by edged weapons, but the water that results soon floods the battlefield. At an appropriate time in the fight, announce that the water from the dead trolls has made the bank so slick that everyone must roll an extra botch after rolling a 0. The trolls, at least initially, will have the advantage of numbers, and the characters

will have to fight quickly to reduce the trolls' numbers to a manageable size. If more than one troll attacks a single opponent, use these rules:

The defender must split up the Defense score among the attackers, with a separate roll for each. (E.g. Clobi could split his +5 Def into +2, +2, and +1 to protect himself against three opponents.) To make matters worse, the trolls get +1 to Attack and Damage for each troll attacking a single opponent (if there are at least two), so those three trolls attacking Clobi would each get +3 to Atk and Dam. As you can see, outnumbering an opponent is an excellent strategy.

The Last Push

To cross the river, the characters can use one of the boats docked near the castle (hopefully after the trolls have been dealt with). Also, there are two trees standing on opposite sides of the river 50 paces downstream that Caeron can form into a bridge with his Twist the Living Tree spell. Make crossing the river swift and easy (unless the trolls haven't been dealt with yet). The pace picks up at this point, and to slow things down with pointless details could dampen the excitement.

Once they get to the other side of the river, Tomas, of course, has a chance to have a vision. If he rolls a 12+, give him the "Young Boy" vision.

After the vision, ask the characters if they continue to follow the flaming hoofprints. If so, describe how they make their way up the foothills.

•You slowly and torturously follow the flaming hoofprints, till you reach a point where you can look back over the valley. The storm has abated somewhat, and you can even see Mistridge to the southwest. Above you, however, on the higher slopes of Mount Tierné the storm still rages. If fact, on a hill a little to your right it appears as if the storm is lashing out rather fiercely. •

Sante Fabía

As they walk up the foothills of Mount Tierné, following the flaming tracks of the Stormrider, they meet up with the Stormrider's would-be lover (the one in all of Tomas's visions), who turns out to be none other than Sante Fabía.

Dominion: 5

Describe to the troupe how they hike up the foothills of Mount Tierné, and then describe the small grove of pines they see off to their left:

•To your left, you see a grove of pine trees. This would not be unusual, except for the light that shines down on them through an opening in the storm clouds. The sunlight dances upon the tops of those green boughs in a dramatic contrast to the grayness of the morning around you. •

Have Tomas make a Perception roll; if he gets a 7+, tell him that this is definitely the grove he saw in his visions (assuming he had the Grove of Pines or the Rage vision).

If they walk to the grove, they find it a welcome respite from the fury of the winds and the rain.

•Inside the grove, it still rains, but it is a gentle, warm rain, and the pure evergreen smell of the pines fills the air. In the middle of the grove is a small open glade with a small stone altar in the center surrounded by

rose bushes. Roughly constructed of mountain rocks piled one on top of another, the altar has a simple and unaffected beauty. A wooden cross sticks up from it, and three roses lie at its base. •

Once the characters have had time to look around a little, tell them they see the ruins of a stone cottage at the far end of the glade.

If anyone puts three roses on top of the altar, Sante Fabía will appear before them.

•Before you stands a woman, where only an instant before there was no one. She is dressed in a long white dress, she carries three red roses, and there are scars on her left cheek. Over her head there hangs a halo. You are struck by her gentle but determined stare. She is looking directly at you. •

Tomas will immediately recognize her as the woman in his visions, she who befriended "him," and Clobi recognizes her as Sante Fabía, to whom he is devoted. She addresses all the people in the party equally, focusing no special attention on the magi, Tomas, or Clobi. She says to them:

•"This has gone on too long. The boy I once knew is gone, and in his place is a beast. He has much rage within him, and it has destroyed him. The horror and destruction which he spreads must stop; and though you have the anger as well, it must be you who stop him. Nothing can be done, but to end his struggle. Please go to him now, and send him to me. Send him to me. I will be waiting.

"When you see him, tell him this: it was not he who killed me, it was the storm. Though it was his anger that caused the storm, he did not do the deed." •

After saying this she disappears.

After the blessed saint leaves, everyone in the group gains back a level of fatigue, whether it is short or long term. Tell anyone who prayed at either her shrine in the valley or at this one, or who showed Sante Fabía any sort of special devotion, that they are completely healed of all wounds and that they are no longer weary (all body and fatigue levels restored).

If Tomas missed one or more visions during the story, let him experience one of them now, without having to roll for it. He will have to roll normally for the interpretation.

When the characters decide to continue with their climb say:

•The remainder of your climb is uneventful. After another half an hour of hiking, you reach the foot of the hill where the storm still lingers — the culmination of your journey. As you look up at the hill, you see lightning forking from the ground to the sky. You have found him; soon you will meet face to face. •

Stormrider's Last Stand

This is the climactic scene of the story, and it is here that the characters finally are able to confront the Stormrider. Depending on their mood and actions, they can slay the Stormrider in a vicious battle, dispatch him as a final act of mercy, or convince him to dismount and come with them to see Sante Fabía.

•As you reach the top of the hill, you see the Stormrider screaming up at the clouds above him, still astride his horse. Around him lie scores of trees, all of them either uprooted or snapped in half like twigs. Branches and leaves lie everywhere, creating a scene of such destruction that it is hard to imagine. •

There are three different possible outcomes for this scene, depending on how the characters decide to approach it.

1) If the characters are angry and attack the knight, he will become the Stormrider in 2 rounds and begin to attack them. The characters will have quite a battle on their hands. The Stormrider will use every trick in the book to slay them, and will probably encircle them with the flaming hoofprints in order to make sure they stay angry and not completely rational. If a character is angry, do not give them any time to think or make decisions — force them to act as soon as you ask what they are doing. Allow characters who are not angry, to make plans and speak with other non-emotional characters. Though the Stormrider will not leave the top of the hill, if the characters are dead or have run away, he will fly up to the clouds on his evil steed — to return another day. If they kill him, his horse will leap into the air and fly up to the storm clouds above. An immense storm will ensue a minute later — the characters only have a short time to get off the top of the hill before the lightning really begins to crash.

2) If the characters attack the Stormrider, but do so in cold blood without feelings of revenge and rage in their hearts, they have an easier time of it. They will not actually battle the Stormrider, but will combat his mortal self instead — Fallemon. Though he has special powers over the elements to employ against them, his heart will not be in it, and of course he will not have the strength and stamina of the Stormrider to sustain him. As the characters prepare to give their final blow to the Stormrider, he will take off his helmet and say,

• *"It is time; do the deed."* •

And with that he will die. If they do not strike him, he will attempt to fall on their sword or will grab a dagger and stab himself. As he dies, his steed will immediately leap into the air and fly towards the storm clouds. A huge storm will begin soon afterwards.

3) If they try to speak with him, they can persuade him to get off his horse. He can be persuaded to listen if they say or do a number of different things. First, if they do not behave aggressively towards him he will remain in his human form — this is essential if they wish to convince him to set aside his anger. Second, if they tell him he did not kill Fabia, it will help him resolve some of his feelings about himself, and he will calm down. Third, they must somehow persuade him that it is time to let go, that he has no reason to be angry anymore. Let them try almost anything, and as long as they are forthright and direct, whatever they try will likely succeed. If they are too obvious about trying to get him to do as they want, he will probably become angry.

If the Stormrider does begin to listen to what they have to say, his horse will begin to paw the ground and snort flame. If he actually does get off of the horse, it pushes him aside (after all when he's not the Stormrider, he's an old man) and attacks the characters. A battle will then ensue with the Storm elemental — which is in the form of a horse.

When the characters kill the evil steed, its shadow will dance off, accompanied by the crack of thunder. The characters can see this strange shadow rise to join the storm clouds above. But it will leave behind its spiral horns — worth 10 Auram *vis* each. (This is the reward for figuring out the story, and battling the true enemy, and not simply a pitiful victim of his own anger.)

The characters should take the Stormrider to the mountain shrine to see Sante Fabia. See the Denouement section below. If they do not take him to the shrine he will soon die, if not of his wounds then of his decrepitude, for until now it was his anger that has kept him alive.

In conducting the battle, you are mostly on your own. You have had most of this story laid out for you, but now you must think about how you are going to conduct this battle. Use some of the ideas we used earlier in the kit, and come up with some of your own. It is up to you to make it interesting. Carefully read the description of the Stormrider, especially the powers he has when he is no longer the Stormrider. Then figure out a way to give the battle a little flavor. Some things which we suggest you use are:

- Extra botch rolls because of the terrain (felled trees everywhere) and the weather.
- If the characters make Fallemon angry in any way, he will, over the course of two rounds, again take the form of the Stormrider. Only if they come to him in the most unpassionate of ways will he fight them as his normal self.
- If your players really don't want a battle, but want to resolve this problem entirely peaceably, make it easier for them to persuade Fallemon to dismount and see Sante Fabia. When he does so, the mount attacks, but Fallemon fights it as well. It will be a quick battle with Fallemon and the characters victorious.
- If Lorine uses her father's broadsword to battle the Stormrider, and she is still full of vengeance, she gets +1 to her attack and +2 to her damage. This is due to the mystical significance of poetic justice. (This is an inherently magical world, remember?) When the Stormrider dies however, the sword will crack, and will thereafter be unusable.

Denouement

If the characters take Fallemon down to the mountain shrine, Sante Fabia will appear, even if they only bring his corpse. She will thank the characters and then bend to comfort the man. But as she tends to him, she will explain to them who the Stormrider is, her relationship with him, and will answer any questions that she can.

From her point of view, the Stormrider was a confused boy who had powers that he was neither wise nor strong enough to use without harming himself. His anger got the better of him, he lost control, and from his anger his magic flowed. It was his magical rage that destroyed him, and for her part in it she is sorry. She did not mean to confuse him, or to let him think that she ever looked upon him in but the most chaste of ways. She thinks that the wizards have the same problem as Fallemon did; they are not wise enough to control their magical powers. She pities them as she pities the decrepit Stormrider lying in her arms.

If Fallemon is still alive, he dies of old age or of his wounds here at the shrine — here at the place where he first went into a rage over Fabia. If you want to be very poetic, you can describe what happens as he dies.

• *The old man opens his eyes, smiles up at Fabia, and whispers, "I am not angry anymore." His face goes slack and you hear a low rattle from his throat, he is dead. Slowly from his supine body you see his shade rise up and touch the hand of Fabia. Hand and hand with Fabia, he begins to climb up in the air, never giving a backward glance. They climb higher and higher, buoyed up by a light coming down from the sky. Finally, they disappear through a sunlit crack in the clouds, an brilliant opening in the grayness of the sky that suggests the gateway to Heaven itself. After they are gone, it begins to drizzle again, but you see that where the two of them walked in the air, a rainbow slowly forms.* •

The characters then return to Mistridge and celebrate their victory (or lick their wounds, if they have failed). Speed through

the description of this return and simply describe the grogs on the covenant walls hailing them heartily as they walk the path up to the gate, meeting them in the courtyard, and helping them take off their packs and armor.

But when they get back to the covenant they have to decide what they will do about Grimgroth. Grimgroth's famous treatise calls the Stormrider an elemental, but he was actually a magical human. Do they embarrass him, or do they keep the identity of the Stormrider a secret? If Caeron keeps his mouth shut, he will make himself a friend of Grimgroth for life — and perhaps of Lucienne as well.

If you plan to use the characters in your saga, or if you simply want to demonstrate more rules for the characters, take some time to discuss reputations. Have the players talk about what their characters are likely to remember about the other characters. Will they remember Caeron as "haughty" or Lorine as "fiery?" If they can come to a consensus, give the characters appropriate reputations. Reputation locales could be "among the magi," "among the grogs," or "Mistrbridge," and so on. Then think back to important non-player characters and give the player-characters any other reputations they may have picked up. The apprentice who did the most talking to Baron d'Uverre, for example, might get a reputation at his castle. (See p. 28 in *Ars Magica*.)

Then explain and hand out experience: 3 points for the apprentices, 2 for companions, and 1 for grogs. Tell the players they only put experience on abilities which they used at some point during the story (but not necessarily made a roll using it). Remind the ones playing the apprentices that they cannot use experience points to increase their arts, but they can increase their affinities (See *Ars Magica* p.32)

The Never-Ending Story

The characters used in this Jump Start Kit can actually be used by the players when you begin the saga, if you are going to use Mis-

tridge. Lucienne and Caeron will both become full magi before the next adventure, and, if used by someone in the troupe, they will have joined Mistrbridge covenant. If you want to use Mistrbridge with your own characters, Lucienne and Caeron will go elsewhere and become non-player characters, perhaps taking the others with them.

If the characters remain in the covenant, be careful that the competition created in this story does not endanger or seriously divide the covenant as the saga progresses. Encourage the players to bury their differences and develop their characters towards some semblance of friendship. After all, they did survive the Stormrider together. If a serious schism remains after two more stories, have the older magi at Mistrbridge intervene; it is not in their interests to have the younger magi as well as the covenfolk at each others' throats. If push comes to shove, they will go as far as banishing the two trouble makers.

In this story, a great deal has occurred and the characters have met a number of figures of great importance in the valley — the Baron d'Uverre, Sante Fabía, and the Stormrider himself. One temptation you may have is to make the stories you run after this one just as grandiose. This is the first story in a saga, and so it starts the players out with a bang. All at once they are introduced to some of the leading individuals and myths of Val du Bosque. For your next story, you should tone down the intensity level as much as you dare, and make the whole setting much more mundane. You can slowly build up from there, creating a saga with as much mythical resonance and magical might as suits you and the troupe. But if you let the saga get out of control from the start, you'll never be in control again. Remember, mundanity gives scope to the magnificent.

We hope you enjoyed reading this story, as much as we enjoyed writing it — for us it was a completely different kind of adventure. It is our hope that you find it a source of ideas as well as, perhaps, inspiration. But don't just read this story, tell it. Adventures can be more than we ever imagined. Feel free to write us with any comments or criticism; we'd love to hear from you. PAX!

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The Legend

Loose upon the winds of the tempest, astride his fierce steed, is a rider, a creature of rage, a creature of the storm. It is said you can see him dancing over the gray clouds, urging the winds onward to greater ferocity. When his anger is especially fierce, he descends to the earth to wreak havoc upon the good folk, leaving only his flaming hoofprints behind. Some say he was a man whose passion overcame him, and who now looses his rage upon the winds of the storm. The magus Grimgroth insists he is an elemental, a magical incarnation of the air. Others say he is a foul demon, a Horseman of the Apocalypse, sent to earth to torment the good folk of the valley. However, all of them know him as. . .

The Stormrider

This Kit Includes:

- Eight pre-generated characters, complete with personal backgrounds and detailed personalities.
- Briefing sheets which explain the rules simply and succinctly. Your players do not have to read the game to play in this story; these one-page briefings are all they need.
- An adventure designed to guide you (the Storyguide) through your first *Ars Magica* story.
- Begin play in half an hour or less. All you need to do is to read this kit beforehand, and review selected chapters from *Ars Magica* itself.
- No mere dungeon crawl, this story explores the full mystery and scope of myths and legends. A story in all senses of the word.

With this kit you can begin your first game of **Ars Magica** in half an hour or less -- using the rules briefings and characters provided.