

MYSTIC



A storytelling sourcebook for
ARS MAGICA™ 3rd Edition

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This supplement is designed for use with Ars Magica Third Edition, but can be used with the Second Edition with some adaptation.

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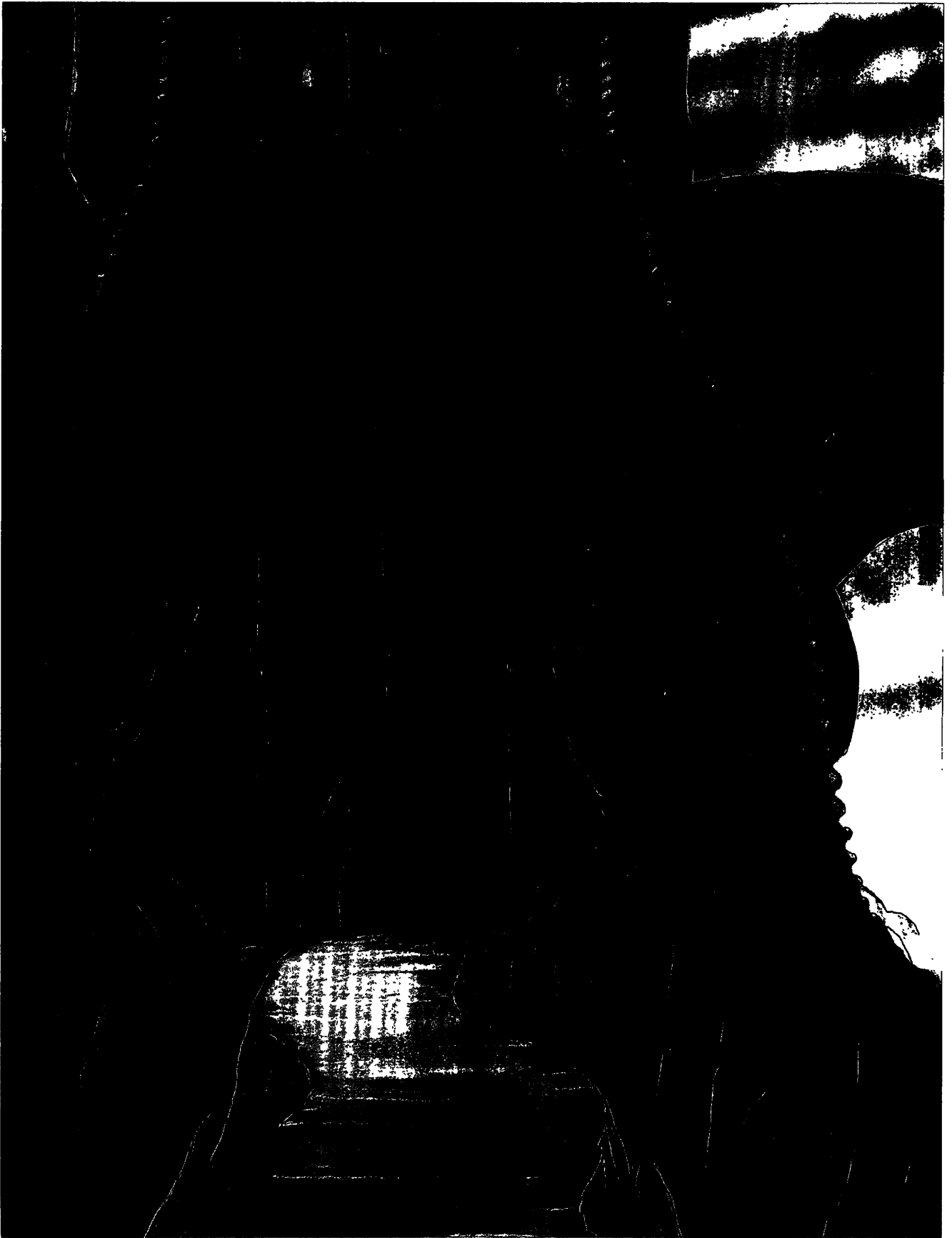
Dedicated to Elaine

Mistridge

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WASTELAND

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE



This book is created for use with *Ars Magica* Third Edition. *Ars Magica* is a fantasy roleplaying game designed to tell stories of a dark, mysterious, fantastic world. In a game session you (the Storyguide) and the players (all of you collectively called the Troupe), bring your creative energies together to tell tales of bravery, self-determination, intrigue, daring and passion. Your characters are not mere ciphers, shallow identities with personalities reduced to the two dimensions of the paper they're recorded on. Rather, your characters are dynamic, enigmatic, and complex people. The rules of the game help you create such characters, and indicate how your characters may grow and develop. Thus, your characters are not reduced by their adventures to mere monster slayers and treasure hunters, but instead blossom in humanity, all with the help of the game's storytelling systems.

One of the foundations of an exciting and compelling *Ars Magica* story, and *Saga* (campaign) for that matter, is the Covenant. The Covenant is the physical nexus of your *Saga*, and thus your stories. It's the place where the characters reside, work, study, train, live and die. It's the focus of a character's existence. In the Covenant Magi work together with their

peers, fostering the growth of their magical power and understanding of the world. Toward these ends, Magi require the services of assistants (Companions), henchmen and guards (Groggs), and servants. These aides serve their masters, acquiring needed information and tools, but also going abroad to investigate unusual magical phenomena, and to delve into the mysteries of the world. In return Companions and Groggs enjoy a way of life more comfortable and rewarding than that of their more mundane kin, and are freed of the restraints of conventional mortal society. Thus, all these folk live and work together in the Covenant, with common aims, goals, and needs that make them akin to family. Together these people, through the Covenant, weave the fabric of exhilarating stories.

As the Covenant is so important to *Ars Magica*, to the characters of the world, and to the stories, it's important to create a detailed, entertaining Covenant for use by the Troupe. After all, you may be playing this game for some time, so you want the very foundation of the game to be special and interesting. The *Ars Magica* Third Edition rules go some way toward instructing you on how to create a fascinating Covenant. The *Ars Magica* supplement *Covenants* also helps you

achieve this end. However, creating a Covenant is a time-consuming task, and assumes you have almost divinely inspired creativity. Let's face it, many people don't have the time or the immediate inspiration to create the Covenant they need and want.

Mistridge is an *Ars Magica* Third Edition supplement that meets your Covenant needs and wants. It details the renowned Covenant of Mistridge in lavish detail, and with all the care you would invest in your own Covenant. Mistridge introduces all the Magi and significant Companions and Groggs who reside at the Covenant. It also fully illustrates the Covenant itself, not only with particular textual information that adds charm and wonder to the tower, but with precise maps and diagrams that indicate where everything is for your easy reference. Mistridge also delves into the world surrounding Mistridge — Languedoc and the Val du Bosque of the Provençal region, in southwestern France — detailing all the fabulous, mundane, strange, and dangerous locales of the land, as well as many of the folk and creatures that inhabit them.

Mistridge is a supplement for player and Storyguide alike, intended to help you create dramatic and terrible tales of imagination.

Running a Saga

An *Ars Magica* Saga is an ongoing set of stories concentrating on a particular set of characters and the Covenant in which they reside. The Covenant is crucial to this Saga formula, for while characters can die, disappear or simply move on, but the Covenant itself is eternal (well, almost anyway). Though characters may come and go, the Saga continues because the Covenant remains the recurring "character" of the Saga's tales.

Mistridge may be used in many varied ways in relation to your Saga. It provides you with the very Covenant you can base your Saga on. The players of your Troupe may assume the identities of the Magi, Companions and Groggs described in these pages, assuming the interactions those people maintain. They may then interact, through those characters, with the people and lands described in this book, as folk both native and strange to those people and lands. With this option, players assume the identities of established characters in a Summer Covenant, the Season in which this supplement details Mistridge. Players therefore start with characters who have already survived the infancy of their careers, characters who already have considerable power and magic, as well as numerous social ties with the outside world.

If your Troupe prefers to play characters from the beginning of their careers, suffering the trials and tribulations of inexperience, you will probably pass on the above option. Instead, you can use Mistridge as the setting for your Covenant, but the players' characters are not the only Magi, Companions and Groggs who reside there. The other people detailed in this book might also reside at Mistridge. If this is the case, novice Magi and aides are of lower standing than those established at the Covenant, and those novices undoubtedly take orders from the likes of Grimgroth, Guy, and Torlen.

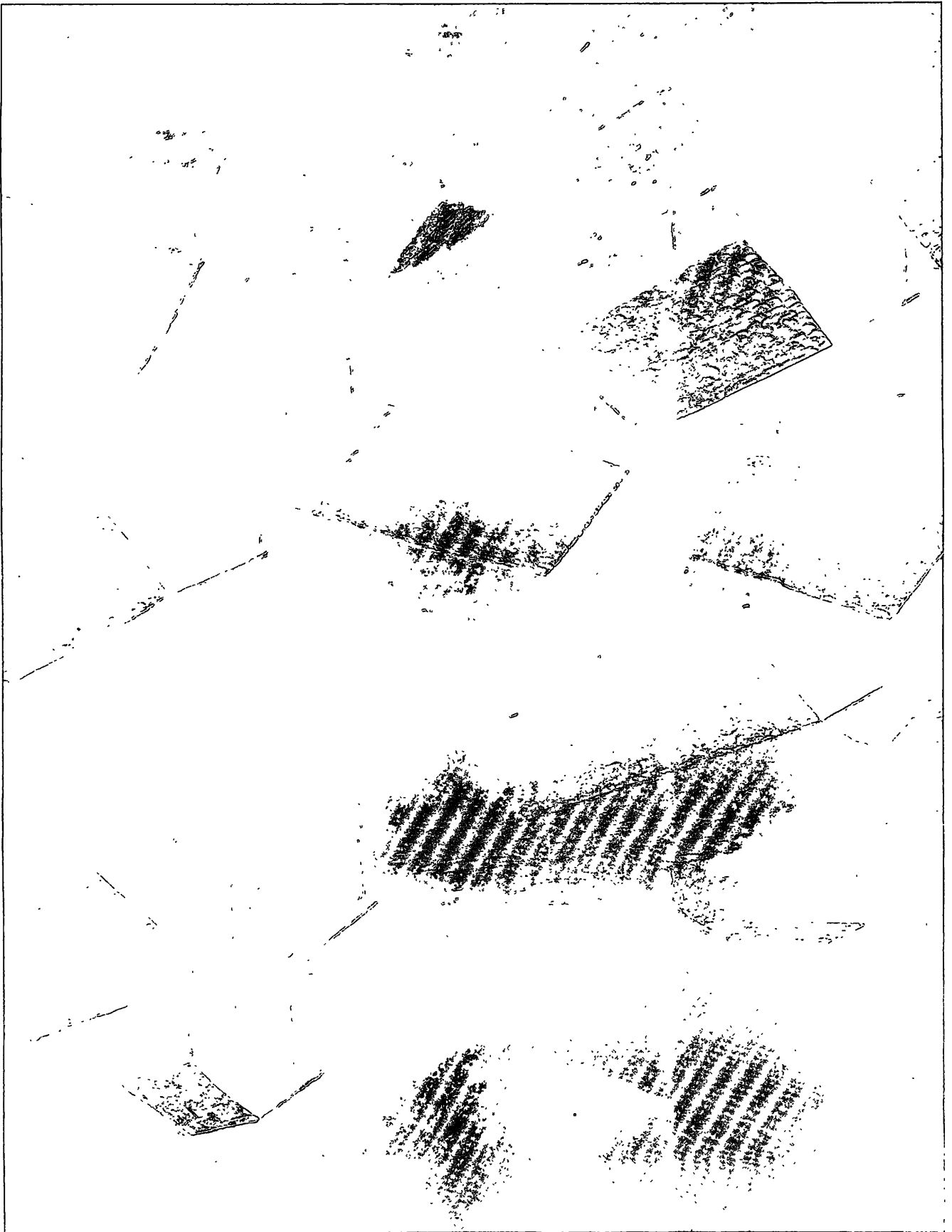
Introducing novice characters into an established Covenant has the virtue of allowing the players' characters considerable opportunity to see the world. Older, more established residents command the younger to investigate strange happenings beyond the Covenant walls. Thus, "low ranking" characters at Mistridge have the opportunity to adventure, but have little say in how the Covenant is operated and organized. Only time, and the passing of other covenfolk, either to death or Twilight, offers young characters the opportunity to seize the reins of control.

Another option in running a Mistridge Saga is to allow players to create the characters they like, and to put those characters in control of Mistridge, ignoring the characters provided in this book. This option is effective in balancing character responsibility with the freedom to adventure, and offers you an established setting in which to set characters' stories. You may even retain many people presented here that are "inoffensive" to the players' characters. For example, if none of the players want to enact a Grog Captain, Guy and Dolores may remain in your Covenant. However, if a player wants to assume that role, both Guy and Dolores may be omitted, or one of them may remain if you want to provide a rival and some intrigue for the Captain character.

In any of the above options, Mistridge is a book for both players and Storyguides, as everyone needs the information about the Covenant that this book provides.

Another possible use for Mistridge and this sourcebook is for Troupes that have created their own Covenants, and who have their own foundations for stories. As these groups have their own Covenants, they don't need to locate their characters at Mistridge, but may certainly set stories there. Mistridge and its surrounding lands and peoples are the setting for all kinds of unusual, frightening and enjoyable stories. Characters may interact with Mistridge on a friendly basis, possibly visiting the Covenant on a regular basis. Or, characters may interact with Mistridge as rivals or enemies. In the second circumstance, activities in the Mistridge area might be covert or overt, depending upon how heated the two Covenants' animosity is.

If Mistridge is used as a reference for telling only occasional stories at the Val du Bosque Covenant, this book becomes a tool of the Storyguide. You don't want players reading it just as you don't want them reading your story notes. How often you use this book as a setting for stories depends on what events you and the players wish to pursue. If players' characters intentionally seek Mistridge out on a regular basis, you may find this supplement invaluable. If the characters' Covenant is located near Mistridge, or even in the same Tribunal, you may again find the book invaluable as it provides what you need for stories involving the area and its populace. Magi from Mistridge could also be met at Tribunals, which again makes this book handy, as it describes the Covenant's Magi. Even if characters don't interact with Mistridge all that often, this supplement allows for great detail and imagination in those stories that do occur there.



Finally, this supplement can be used as a basis for Saga creations of your own. Mistridge is a prime example of a Hermetic Covenant and can be used as a model or inspiration when you design your own. Its surrounding locales and peoples can even be lifted directly from this book and located where you need them in your own Saga. Ultimately, this is your book. It has many varied uses. Use it as you will.

Running a Mistridge Saga

There are some basic ideas you should consider and share with your Troupe before starting a Saga at Mistridge. These ideas are applicable to Covenants anywhere, so are useful even if you use Mistridge as a model for your own Covenant, or if you cannibalize ideas here for your own use.

The way you organize your Mistridge Saga is based on the personal tastes of your Troupe. At one extreme, your Mistridge Saga may consist of a series of self-contained stories, without much consideration given for what happens in the years between tales. At the other extreme, you may wish to spend a lot of time on detailed, earthy events, such as diplomacy between your Covenant and the local nobility, and contacts between your Covenant and the peasantry. The latter style of storytelling involves a considerable amount of intrigue, detail and complexity, allowing characters much control over their relationships with the outside world. However, the latter style is not as exciting as the former, and creates the burden of innumerable details that need to be kept track of.

Once you have decided on the style of your Mistridge Saga, there are a number of other questions to consider. Do you want someone else in the Troupe to help you as Storyguide? You may want other people to run stories, so you can play characters every once in a while. If so, how much of this book do you let others read? A lot of material is for everyone's eyes, though some is for the Storyguide alone. Little is exactly as it seems in Val du Bosque, as you will find, so even if other Storyguides read this book, you can still change details as needed to surprise your fellows when they assume player status.

A very important question asks how significant you want outside political events to be in your Mistridge Saga. These events have the capacity to shape your Mistridge Saga. Mistridge is set in a time and place where mundane and Hermetic political events can mean the life or death of the Covenant. Only characters' standing and involvement in these political events determines their fate. A Crusade — called the Albigensian Crusade — ravages the County of Toulouse between the years 1209 and 1245. It's staged to eliminate the supposed heresy of a religious group called the Cathars, who have a different interpretation of God than the Church, and follow doctrines different from those of the Scriptures.

If you, as Storyguide, don't want Mistridge to fall foul of these external political forces, you can simply ignore the Crusade or play down its impact. After all, Mistridge owns no

land, so its conquest is not vital to the Crusaders. However, you may find it difficult to stop the characters from becoming deliberately involved in the struggle, and the tower of Mistridge — a two hundred foot spire with carved dragons slithering up its sides — certainly attracts attention, whether as an enemy to Christianity, or as a possible headquarters from which to stage further Crusader attacks. Alternatively, you may await the release of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, an upcoming *Ars Magica* Third Edition supplement, which addresses the story possibilities of the Albigensian Crusade in Provence.

Finally, before you start your Mistridge Saga, you have to decide how powerful you want its characters to be. This question applies mainly to new characters introduced to the Mistridge setting. Their power depends on the atmosphere you want to create (whether you want characters to be similar to or quite detached from the mundanes outside), how responsible your players are (do you trust them to play supposedly wise Magi of considerable power?), and what sort of stories you want to run. And, remember, the Magi of Mistridge presented in this book are fairly powerful. If you don't feel your players are up to handling such characters, you may weaken the characters given or require that players create weaker characters of their own.

THE SEASONS

As previously stated, this book is written under the assumption that Mistridge is currently in its Summer Season. Summer is when a Covenant achieves its mystical height. The years of frailty and vulnerability — the years of Spring — are passed. You are now a force to be reckoned with in the Order of Hermes, but you also have proportionately greater political and social responsibilities, as well as enemies. Summer is the time to appreciate the rewards of past efforts, but many more challenges lie ahead.

Depending on your needs for this book, you may not want to set Mistridge in its Summer Season. Altering the Covenant to suit your chosen Season is simple enough. The Covenants supplement outlines ways in which such locales grow and even falter in later Seasons, and indicates the ways in which such locales are weak in the Spring Season. The Covenants Chapter of *Ars Magica* Third Edition also indicates how Covenants may change in power depending on their age and experience. In the end, the way Mistridge, as presented in this book, changes according to the Seasons is up to you and your needs.

Mistridge Setting: An Overview

There can be as many settings for the Mistridge Saga as there can be settings in *Ars Magica*. However, the Val du Bosque has been selected for this Covenant because of its constantly changing political and social climate, which offers many varied story possibilities. Some of the physical and chronological aspects of the Mistridge Saga setting are de-

scribed above. More are described below. Refer to the map of France, and those of the Hermetic Tribunals, for graphic representation of the lands in which Mistridge is located.

A NOTE ABOUT HISTORY

As Storyguide it's largely up to you to determine whether your Mistridge Saga accurately follows the course of history. You may determine how much historical fact is ignored, altered, or exaggerated. This problem may be solved for you if your Troupe is keen on historical storytelling. Historical events may also pattern the events of your Saga, or simply provide inspiration for those events. Any historical changes you do make can be as profound as Mongols invading far into Europe, or as subtle as thematic trends which skew history, running throughout different story events. Regardless of your manipulation of it, the history of the medieval world provides a rich and involved background for tall tales.

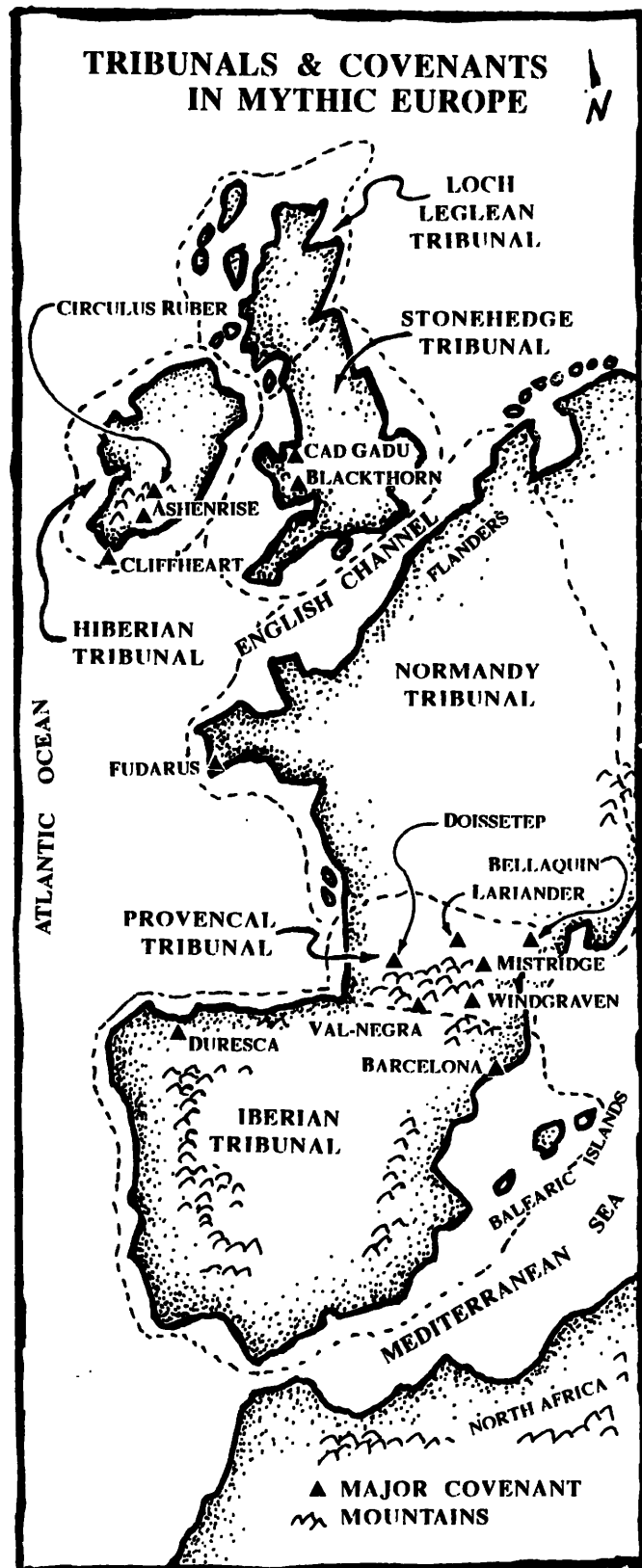
THE TIME

The Mistridge Saga is set in the Year of Our Lord 1197, in some places a time of peace, but in many others a time of famine, danger, and intrigue. It's also a time preceding catastrophic events in Provençal (i.e., preceding the Albigensian Crusade). It's important to have an understanding of what's led up to and what goes on at this time for such events offer insight into what's yet to come.

Over the last century the Moors have been driven out of the northern half of Spain, and Jerusalem has been won and lost again by the Christians. The Norman rulers of England have conquered Wales and parts of Ireland, and the Holy Roman Empire has expanded east across the Elbe, bringing the truth of the Gospels to the heathen Wends.

A new Pope, Innocent III, sits in Rome. He is perhaps the most able and aggressive politician in Europe. He has already assembled a Crusade to recapture Jerusalem, has excommunicated Philip II of France, and has become embroiled in Germany's growing inner conflicts. Furthermore, a new Order of Christian knights, the Teutonic Knights, has just been founded in Germany. And, the French and English are at war in Normandy.

Inner conflict in the Holy Roman Empire ("Germany") soon grows into full civil war, which rages for fifteen years with the Pope acting as a power-broker. The war in Normandy ends in 1199, when King Richard of England is killed. Philip II of France makes peace with the Pope, who soon finds a new quarrel with King Richard's brother and successor, John. England, too, begins a period of persistent civil wars, during which King John is excommunicated and the whole of England is placed under a Papal Interdict (cut off from the Church), which allows Philip of France to expand his country northwards to the Channel in 1204.



Innocent III's Crusade never reaches Jerusalem, but instead besieges and sacks the Christian capital of the east, Constantinople, also in 1204. The Teutonic Knights begin to conquer the pagan kingdoms on the Baltic coast, though they never defeat the vast, powerful pagan kingdom of Lithuania.

And, most important to a Mistridge Saga, a Crusade is called to eradicate the heresy found in the Languedoc, including the County of Toulouse, in which the Covenant of Mistridge is situated.

THE PLACE

Europe — "Christendom" — in the Middle Ages is made up of numerous feudal kingdoms, bound together by their common Christian faith. While the earthly kingdoms are separate, ruled by constantly warring monarchs, all are aware that their realms fall under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. The boundary between earthly and spiritual authority, however, is not so clear as it was in the Twentieth Century. The Pope rules much of central Italy as any other earthly king rules his lands, and the Pope increasingly claims authority over all other Christian monarchs.

The main Kingdoms of Christendom are France, England and the Holy Roman Empire (Germany). Just beyond their borders, many smaller, poorer, and less powerful states cluster. These include the huge but backwards kingdoms of Hungary and Poland to the east of the Holy Roman Empire, and the disunited Kingdom of Scotland, plus other independent Christian states which cover Scandinavia, Switzerland, Ireland, northern Spain, and even Iceland and Greenland.

On the eastern Mediterranean, the Catholic "Kingdom of Jerusalem" holds lands along the coasts of Syria and Palestine, which are ruled by Frankish (French) nobles supported by the fighting Orders of Templars and Hospitalers. However, the Christian lands around modern-day Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey are all ruled by the Emperor of Constantinople. Those lands are the remains of the original Roman Empire, and proclaim the Patriarch of Constantinople, ruler of the Orthodox Church, as their spiritual leader. Egypt, northern Africa and the Holy Land are held by the "heathen Moors" (Moslem Arabs), who live in blasphemy and ignorance without the truth of Christ.

Iberia and France

In the Middle Ages the King of France has little control over much of the land he rules, and France is, in any case, smaller than in modern times. Much of eastern, modern France

is part of the Holy Roman Empire, including the mundane County of Provence on the Mediterranean coast. The King of England also holds the titles to Normandy, Aquitaine, Anjou, Touraine, Maine and Poitou, further reducing the French King's influence, and the Barons of these areas, including the Duke of Gascony, are loyal to England. Furthermore, the Count of Flanders and the Countess of Brittany are fiercely independent, denying France so much as allegiance. Even the greatest lands available to the King of France are denied him. The richest and most artistically advanced area of France is the effectively independent County of Toulouse.

South of the Pyrenees, the dynamic Kingdom of Aragon controls the northeastern Iberian peninsula, and is expanding southward along the coast. The smaller Kingdom of Navarre holds lands along the southwest of the mountains, while the Kingdoms of Leon and Castile hold the northwest and central portions of Iberia. Along the Atlantic coast, the Kingdom of Portugal is well established. The southern portion of Iberia is still held by the Moors, but the Christian kingdoms are steadily pushing them back, aided by three Orders of Christian knights (the knights of Calatrava, Alcantra and Santiago) and a handful of trouble-seeking Flambeau Magi.

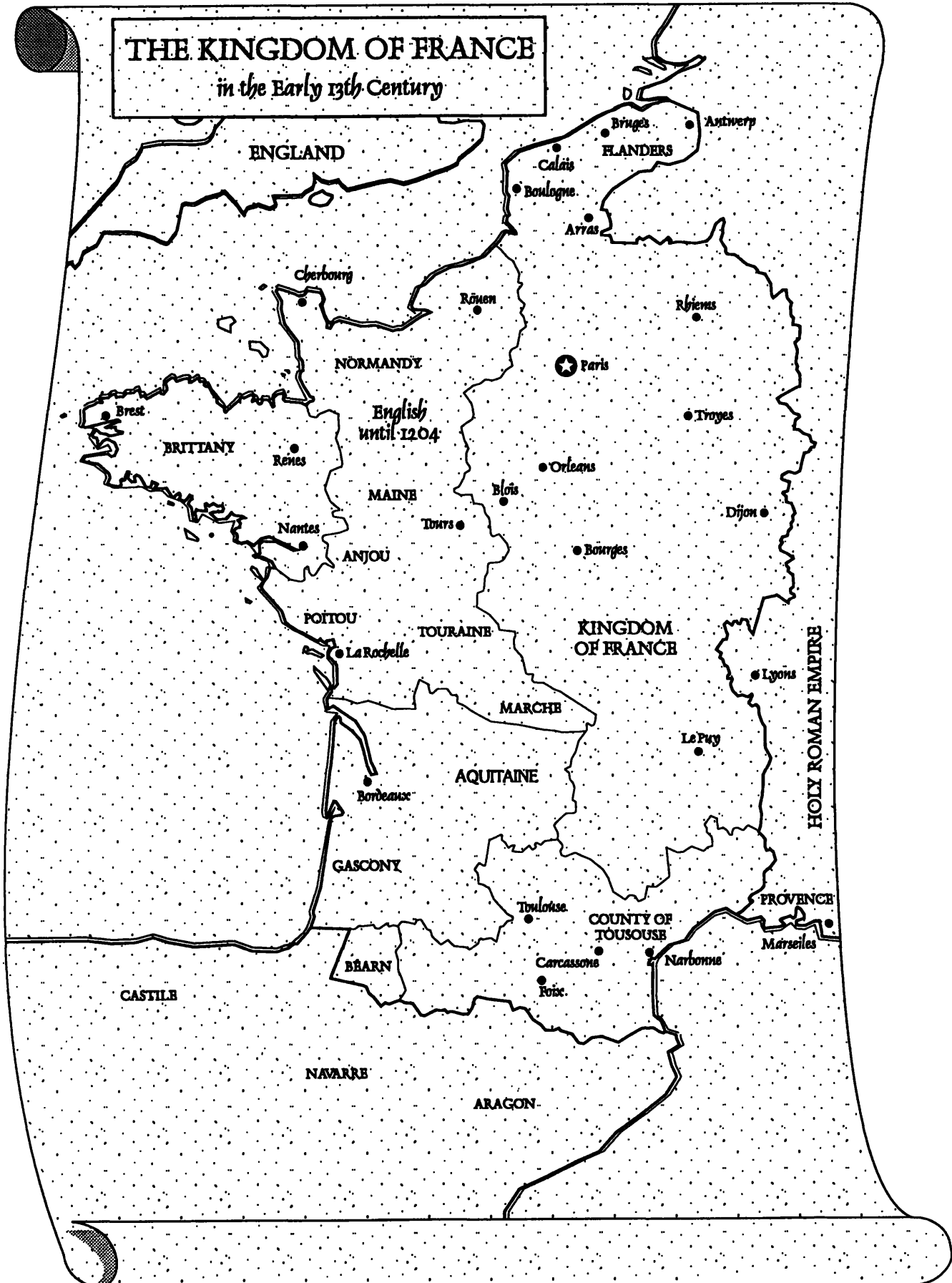
LANGUAGES

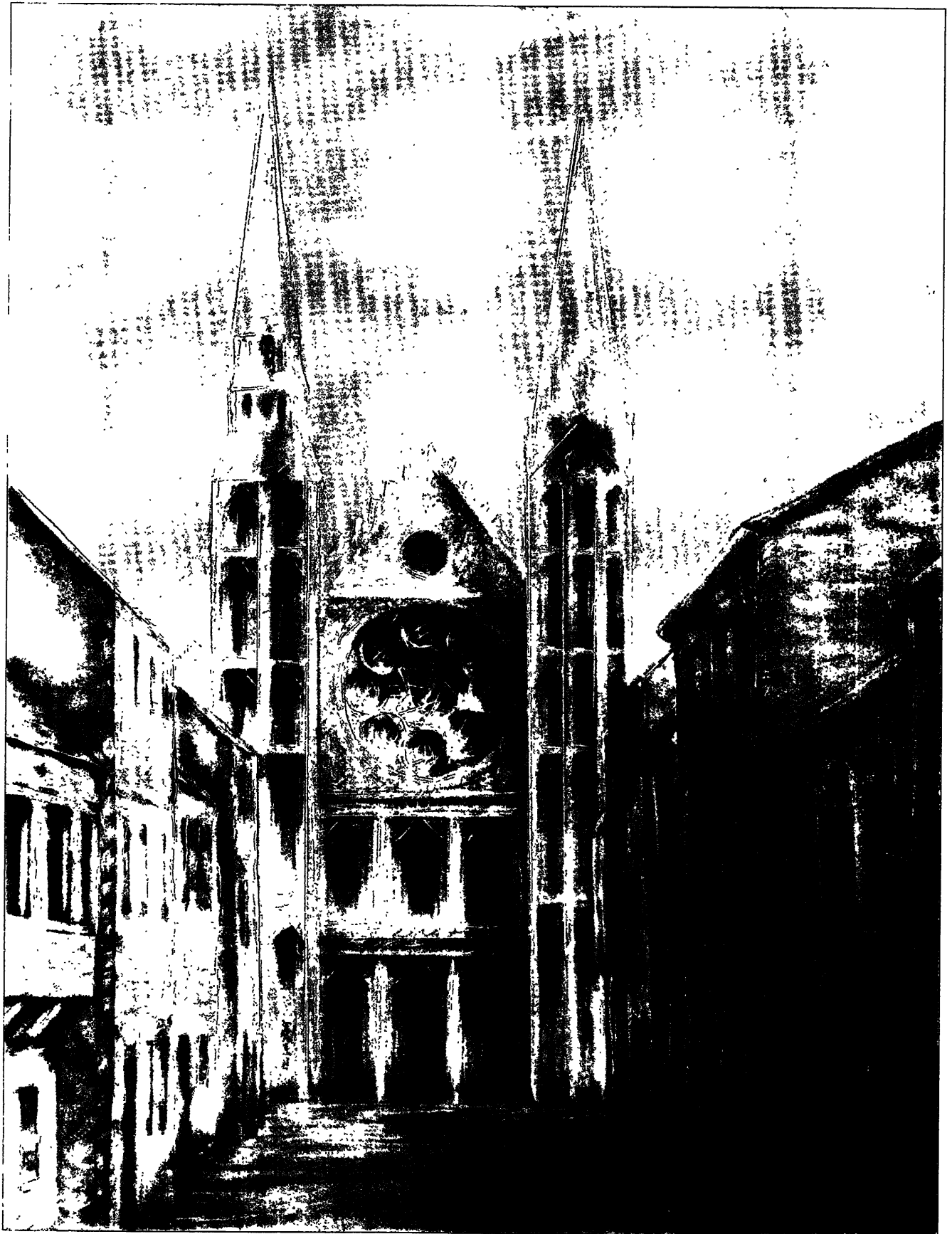
Medieval languages vary widely from area to area — sometimes even from village to village — and also vary according to social class. They can best be understood as families of languages. So, while speakers from different areas can roughly understand one another, both use many words and phrases which the other does not understand, and there is a clear difference in accent.

The main families of languages which are likely to occur in your Saga are the French and Spanish. The "Provençal" language spoken around Mistridge is a mixture of these two, though rather more French than Spanish. Languages of the German and Italian families may also occur, as may Gaelic (e.g., in Brittany), Portuguese, English, and Romansh (similar to Latin and spoken by many Swiss). Just as Hebrew is a single, unchanging language among the Jewish communities throughout Mythic Europe, Arabic is the single language of the Moors, and varies very little throughout the Arab world, from Jerusalem to Spain.

French is the most widely used language in Christendom. Norman French is used by the aristocracy of England and southern Italy, and a version called High French is the language of commerce and diplomacy. Similarly, two versions of Latin are spoken throughout Christendom: one in the Church, the other in the Order of Hermes.

THE KINGDOM OF FRANCE in the Early 13th Century





VAL DU BOSQUE

CHAPTER TWO



efore delving directly into Mistridge and its inhabitants, it's important to be familiar with and understand the lands and peoples that surround the Covenant. Such familiarity and understanding puts the peculiarities and strangeness of Mistridge into perspective, and offers greater insight into the Covenant itself.

Characters in the Valley

Characters in the Valley

The Val du Bosque provides everything that you, as Storyguide, need to organize stories in the valley, and offers much more to motivate the players and their characters to pursue those stories. The towns and villages of the Val du Bosque are excellent sources of food and materials for the Covenant — commodities the characters need. For you those towns and villages are excellent sources of drama. Political, religious and economic rivalries in the Val du Bosque can lead to any number of tales, particularly if the characters are interested in becoming a force in local mundane politics. However, if your Troupe is unconcerned with mundane affairs, the Val du Bosque is still an atmospheric background in which to set your stories, with much more to offer than simple mortal triflings.

The nature of your Saga in the Val du Bosque determines the characters' familiarity with the valley. If the players adopt the roles of the characters presented in this book, in a Summer Covenant, then the characters know the valley, and the valley's occupants probably know the characters. You, as Storyguide, must therefore describe the valley to the Troupe, so the players have the same knowledge their characters have. You must outline what the characters know, and must introduce who they know.

There are several factors to consider with reference to established characters' relationship with the valley. It's probably fair to give the Covenant a reasonably good local reputation. Unless the Troupe demands otherwise, the Magi probably keep a low profile. While it is commonly known that they have various arcane knowledges, the Magi undoubtedly play down the extent of their powers, making themselves known as astrologers and scholars, rather than workers of miracles. By being careful not to display their powers before the mundanes, the Magi of Mistridge might be able to avert unwanted suspicion from the outside world.

Should the characters make it clear to the mundanes that they possess considerable powers, complications may arise. If you wish, the locals could simply be intimidated and leave the Magi alone. More likely, the local nobles would see Mistridge as a potential rival, treating the Covenant warily and possibly with hostility.

As previously mentioned, characters may already be established in the Val du Bosque, but the players may not feel equally at home. To integrate the players into the setting, and to help them understand their characters, you need to introduce the players to the Saga setting. You can simply narrate the characters' position and activities in the valley, but that doesn't really make the players feel like part of the world.

A better alternative is to let players roleplay scenes from their characters' past. You simply set the scene, based on what events you or the Troupe have created for the characters' past. The players enact their characters through the scene until the important point of the scene is resolved. For example, if in your Saga it's decided that the characters are enemies of Baron d'Uverre, you may set the scene for a flashback in which that enmity originates. Roleplaying through the scene, the players understand where the hatred comes from and may better express it in the future. Several such episodes give the players a solid feel for their established characters and the positions those characters hold in the valley. Your first few game sessions of the new Saga may consist entirely of these episodes, allowing the players to understand their characters and their world, and allowing for more dramatic tales in the future.

If players start the Saga with novice characters, or characters who are new to the Val du Bosque, both players and characters are probably unfamiliar with the valley. Newly arrived characters are either new to Mistridge or another local Covenant, or are residents of a foreign Covenant and on expedition in the Val du Bosque. The characters' relationship with the valley and its inhabitants probably isn't established yet, but will instead be based on characters' actions during play.

Alternatively, characters may be new to the Val du Bosque and Mistridge, but older Magi already reside at the Covenant. The way in which these older Magi interact with the residents of the valley is probably applied to the characters by association. That is, the reputations and relationships of the older Magi are transferred by the locals to the characters. Thus, newly introduced characters are basically treated as established characters in the game setting. If this is the case, scenes of the Covenant's past need not be roleplayed with the newly arrived characters, but narrated to them, since the characters were not present when those scenes actually occurred. One of the Covenant's older Magi can narrate the Covenant's past to the characters, thus allowing for roleplaying between the characters and the founding Magus.

With newly arrived characters, players are as ignorant of the valley as their creations are. Players discover what the valley is like just as their characters do, and the reputations characters gain there are based on what actions the players announce.

Background to the Valley

The society of the Val du Bosque is divided into the three great classes, as society is throughout Mythic Europe. How-

ever, there are some social institutions of the valley that make it unique.

SERFS

Most people in the Val du Bosque are serfs. They are owned by a knight who makes certain customary demands of them. Nowhere is it written what a noble can demand from his serfs, but each manor has its own customary law, by which a lord demands from his serfs the same services and payments which his forbears took from theirs. Typically, serfs must work one or two days a week on their lord's fields, must give a portion of their produce to him, and must pay for such "privileges" as grazing pigs in the lord's woods, marriage, and claiming an inheritance. Thus, it is remarkable that serfs in the Val du Bosque tend to remain so loyal to their lords.

The valley's serfs also pay tithes (one-tenth of their produce) and other dues to the Church.

Despised by their superiors as petty, narrow-minded, and barely superior to animals, serfs are not such fools as many think. Though they have no education and a narrow range of experience, they are good at their jobs and are capable of living lives as full and happy as their social betters.

A smaller number of common folk in the Val du Bosque are freemen. They pay rent for their lands and tithes for their souls, but can move around freely, cannot be bought and sold, and do not have to pay to be married. Some freemen are as poor as serfs, while others are quite wealthy. Typically, like the valley's serfs, the lives of freemen are short and uncomfortable, spent in squalid, drafty huts of a single room shared with family and animals.

Whether owned or free, low folk in the Val du Bosque frequently suffer from disease, and almost all endure the same labor. Without any medicine except for the charms of village wise men or women, peasants often die of common diseases, infant mortality is high, and women often die in childbirth. And, whether owned or free, common folk in the valley often share the same labor. Although there is little work to do in summer and winter, spring and autumn are periods of intensive labor, and the harvest (of wheat, oats, rye, olives, and grapes for wine making) only yields a minimum of food for the family. Such limited food in turn only perpetuates victimization by disease.

THE NOBILITY

The nobility in the Val du Bosque are the military aristocracy, who live slightly longer and more comfortable lives than local commoners. Lesser nobles owe allegiance, and military service, to greater nobles, so that in the Val du Bosque, the Baron d'Uverre can call upon the service of fourteen knights, but is himself a vassal of Count Ramon St. Gilles.

The feudal system in the Val du Bosque is actually less rigid than in most of Mythic Europe. Noble status in the valley is not

dependent solely on the possession of land. Rather, all nobles have their unique rights and responsibilities set out in treaties called *convenientiae*. These treaties, replacing the act of homage, establish the relationship between noble and overlord, and are nominally treaties of mutual help, though in practice are usually biased toward the interests of the overlord.

In other ways, the nobles of the Val du Bosque have powers and responsibilities like any other lord in Mythic Europe. The nobility of the valley are responsible for administering "justice" as they see fit, collecting taxes, and maintaining bridges. Their wealth is generated by the land they own, and the labor of the peasants who work it. Although lords may exploit and abuse their serfs, they cannot afford to unnecessarily endanger the people on whom their livelihood depends.

THE CLERGY

The Church in the Val du Bosque is also largely involved in the feudal system of land and authority. Local clergy preach that nobility should be obeyed as God's appointed rulers, and the Church owns numerous estates of its own, actually assuming some lordly power. The area's Bishops are also members of the nobility, and thus have an interest in supporting the status quo. Indeed, many see their positions as means to amass personal fortunes or to lead luxurious lifestyles. The clergy are supposed to be celibate, but many have mistresses, and some rarely visit their diocese (the areas they administer). In these acts they are not distant from lords at all.

While a minority of the senior clergy in the Val du Bosque have been educated at the three distant Universities of Christendom (Paris, Oxford and Salamanca), most seniors have little education. The local, lower priests are often the sons of the country's wealthy freemen and middle-class townsfolk. Some lower clergy have been taught to read and write in a school or nearby town, but most learn all they know from a local parish priest. Many lower clergy are extremely ignorant of the Christian faith, and their situation is not helped by the poverty of their village churches, most of which cannot even afford to buy a Bible. In truth, there are not even enough priests in the Languedoc, and there are churches in which no Mass has been held for over thirty years. The Albigensian heresy, Catharism, is strong partially because of the local Church's weakness.

Though religious differences abound throughout the Val du Bosque, the Divine realm still persists. The Dominion is located in areas of concentrated human habitation. In villages and castles the Divine Aura is rated 2. In cities, monasteries and convents, the rating is higher, as indicated in the text that follows.

Though the Cathars are not true Christians, their religious faith still empowers them with Divine might. Indeed, the devout convictions of Cathars often create Divine Auras stronger than those generated by more orthodox Christians.

In regions where human habitation is limited, the Mundane realm persists, and in some places, more dubious realms are active, including that of Magic, the Infernal, Faerie, and Reason.

THE HIERARCHY OF POWER

The capital of the Languedoc is Toulouse. The city contains a cathedral, the Archbishop's palace, and the fortified palace of Count Ramon (Raymond) St. Gilles, who rules the County more in name than in practice. The most important nobles of the Val du Bosque maintain houses in Toulouse, but most are rarely seen at court.

A more frequent, influential visitor to the city is the Papal envoy, Father Raynard de Certre, Abbot of a Cistercian Abbey in Italy, and a distant relation of the Duke of Gascony. De Certre is a short, pig-like man, who has more interest in hunting deer than defeating heresy, but hopes to one day become Pope, and sees his negotiations with lay folk as a means to gain a good reputation. He therefore panders to the Pope's needs and decrees.

A notable feature of Toulouse is its fledgling University. The institution has not yet been formally recognized as a University, but a number of knowledgeable men teach theology, law and philosophy there, to a growing number of wealthy students. This education is arranged under the direction of a mildly heretical priest named Theodore of Calais. Producing educated people, the University is a source for the Languedoc's politically motivated. Some even suggest that new forms of thought are practiced at the University, thought in which God may not be wholly embraced as according to the Scriptures. Muslim texts and the Classics have had their effect at the University, fostering a movement toward reason.

Gazetteer to the Val du Bosque

There are many places and folk in the valley that warrant mention and detailed description. Some are important figures in local politics and intrigue, while others are significant in the Church's efforts to save the locals' souls. Still others have direct bearing on Mistrudge, and may help or hinder the characters.

For the locations of places described below, refer to the two-page color map of the Val du Bosque. Individual locales are mapped in detail under their textual description of each place.

FOIX

Foix ("fwah") is quite a large city by medieval standards, with some ten thousand inhabitants, though there are several larger cities in the Languedoc, such as Toulouse and Beziers. Like most cities of the Middle Ages, Foix is a cramped, squalid place. Because space is limited by the city walls, houses are tall, narrow buildings, densely packed together with upper floors hanging over the streets. Household waste and excrement are

thrown from upstairs windows into the street, turning the muddy roads into open sewers. To avoid wading through or being splattered by this muck, most people walk beneath the overhangs of buildings, stepping over the beggars who frequently sit against houses.

Traders and craftsmen sometimes sell their goods from the ground floor rooms of their houses, which are also their workshops. More often, however, they set up covered stalls in the streets in front of their homes.

Fires and diseases occasionally sweep through Foix, and are the greatest fear of the common townsfolk, especially in poorer areas where wooden houses are the smallest and most closely packed.

The Lord of Foix

The city is nominally ruled by the Count of Foix, Sebastia, whose impressive castle stands on a rocky hill overlooking the city. He is a member of the influential St. Gilles family, and is one of the most powerful men in the Languedoc. A lover of the arts, and poetry in particular, the Count has been known to give poetry recitals for audiences made up of his friends and family. It is said that he has considerable talent, though most often by those who have something to gain through flattery.

The Count's larger castle, and much of his lands, can be found to the north of the city, nearer Toulouse, where he spends most of his time. It is thus that the Count has little real

power over Foix. In the Count's absence, the city is largely run by Bishop Merdici, an Italian noble, and his canons.

The Clergy of Foix

Bishop Merdici is a moody, irritable man, with a high forehead and dark, deep-set eyes. He is outraged by the widespread heresy in the Languedoc, and is determined to reestablish orthodox Catholicism here. Since he was appointed Bishop in 1192 — at the age of only 24 — he has encouraged the enthusiasm of the Languedoc's Catholic preachers, and has staged several public debates between the Cathars and Catholic monks, hoping to reveal the inherent flaws and dangers of Catharism. However, the heretics have repeatedly humiliated the monks with their debating skill.

The Bishop's efforts to reaffirm Catholicism in the Languedoc are ultimately hampered by his lack of funds. Foix's half-built cathedral — a hulking, spidery building, covered with gargoyles and spires — looms over the city. (It's number 3 on the map of Foix.) Although enough work has been done to make the structure's hollow shell serviceable, completion of the project soaks up the bulk of the diocese's spare income, and will continue to do so for the next seventy years. The Bishop never seriously considers diminishing the opulence of his own lifestyle, or the artifice of the church, to allow for more money spent fighting heresy.

Since Bishop Merdici is often absent from Foix, overseeing his personal estates (and mistresses) in Italy, much of the diocese's administration is conducted by his canons. Most valued amongst these clergy is the swarthy Dietrich Von Braden, a young priest from a minor German noble family. Having studied theology at the University of Paris, Von Braden met the Bishop in Rome several years ago. An unswervingly orthodox man with an excellent understanding of theology, Von Braden alone has been able to match the Cathars' arguments in recent debates, and has preached many powerful sermons in the cathedral since his arrival. He can often be found standing at the lectern of the cathedral's chapel, poring over the Bible like a general examining his maps before a battle.

Another important canon of Foix is Ramon d'Uverre, the Baron's nephew. Bishop Merdici knows Ramon is an honest and devout man, and although Ramon has obvious sympathies with the Cathars, the Bishop trusts him to investigate matters for him and to carry messages to the nobles and churches of the Val du Bosque. Ramon is much pained by the growing conflict between the Church and the Cathars, since he finds much that is saintly and laudable in the lifestyles of the Perfecti, the preachers of the Cathars. He is loyal to both factions, and if forced to take sides it is with a heavy heart that he opposes the heretics. Ramon does not have Von Braden's knowledge of theology, but has a good knowledge of philosophy, having

Bishop Merdici

Characteristics: Intelligence (astute) +1, Perception (preoccupied) -1, Strength (powerful stride) +1, Stamina 0, Presence (despairing expression) -3, Communication (abrupt) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (slothful) -1

Age: 29

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Church Knowledge (Scriptures) 3, Church Lore (Papal intrigue) 4, Intrigue (local nobility) 3, Speak Provençal 5, Speak Latin 5, Scribe Latin 5, Pretend (interest) 3, Dagger Attack (sneak attacks) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Extravagant (minor clergy) 2

Personality Traits: Irritable +3, Gruff +3, Patient -2, Devout +2, Self-Indulgent +2

Weapons and Armor:

Dagger Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +6, Damage +5, Parry Defense +1 (7 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak 0 (6 Action), Fatigue 0

spent a year in Toulouse, and two years studying as Clavius's guest at Mistridge. He still maintains correspondences with Theodore of Calais and Clavius.

Canons of a different sort also live in Foix: twenty Augustinian (or "Austin") canons, monks who engage in "pastoral" work, tending Christ's flock. Situated immediately behind the cathedral (number 5 on the map of Foix), the Augustinians' buildings include living quarters, a school, and an infirmary. They have no servants, but perform menial work themselves, including cleaning, washing, and cooking.

When the monastic community was established in 1180 it tried to provide education for children and care for the sick, without discrimination. Unfortunately, the monks soon found they did not have the time or money to help everyone, and began to give preference to the wealthy in exchange for coin. Today, all thirty pupils in the school (who are learning to read, write, and perform basic mathematics) are the sons of the wealthy. And, although several of the canons travel about the streets praying with the sick and needy, perhaps even administering herbs, the few beds in the infirmary are reserved for paying customers. Other canons are found preaching inexpertly throughout the area, and performing similar charitable acts.

The leader of the community, Brother Simon de Casse, has recently begun lending money — free of charge and only to "pious" people — in return for a small donation. He insists this is not the same as usury, the charging of interest, which the church forbids. The Bishop does not feel it expedient to argue

Dietrich Von Braden

Characteristics: Intelligence (bookworm) +2, Perception (oversights) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (nagging cough) -1, Presence 0, Communication (debating) +2, Dexterity (graceless) -2, Quickness 0

Age: 26

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Debate (religious theory) 4, Church Knowledge (heresy) 4, Diplomacy (clergy) 1, Scribe Latin (religious essays), Speak Provençal (quickly) 5, Speak Latin (precisely) 5, Church Lore (heresies) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Devout (clergy of Foix) 1

Personality Traits: Devoted +2, Merciful -1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense 0 (6 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Ramon d'Uverre

Characteristics: Intelligence (creative) +2, Perception (intuitive) +1, Strength (scrawny arms) -1, Stamina 0, Presence (unassuming) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (gangly) -2, Quickness (ungainly) -1

Age: 20

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (expansive vocabulary) 5, Speak Latin (scholarly terms) 4, Scribe Latin (fast writing) 4, Humanities (philosophy) 4, Church Knowledge (theology) 1, Church Lore (corruption) 1, Ride (journeys) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Sympathetic to Cathars (clergy of Foix) 1

Personality Traits: Brave -2, Devoted +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

with de Casse. Through such income, the community of monks has become quite wealthy, and its members enjoy a comfortable standard of living. Every Christmas, the poor of the city wait in a queue outside the cathedral to receive a farthing or two from the Austins.

Foix has several intensities of Divine Aura throughout it. The city as a whole has a Divine Aura of 3. That of the Austin settlement is 4, and that of the unfinished cathedral is 5. When the cathedral is completed its Aura rating will undoubtedly increase.

Noteworthy People and Places

There are several people that characters may meet and deal with in Foix. These people come from all walks of life, and may only associate with others of their own social status (i.e., Magi, Companions or Grog).

Dominic and the Town Guard

A group of French mercenaries has recently arrived in Foix, under the leadership of a devout Catholic named Dominic. Dominic is a charming, but quite ruthless, merchant's son from Paris. He is a short, stocky man with short black hair and a heavy, angular face which frequently bears a grin that's almost convincingly friendly. Blooded in the war in Normandy, the mercenaries have moved south to enjoy their booty, and to escape from the French King (their previous employer, from whom they stole their newly-gained wealth).



Some of the mercenaries have left Dominic's company to marry and settle down in Foix, and may accept work with Mistridge if it sounds safer than a return to Normandy. However, the bulk of Dominic's soldiers remain in his service.

Using the largest part of his band's loot, Dominic has bought himself a pleasant town house (number 6 on the map of Foix) and has hired two servants. With his influence he has made arrangements with the Count and Bishop of Foix for his men to work as the city watch. They patrol the streets and walls, and guard the gates, basing their operations in the towers which flank the main (north) gate (number 7 on the map of Foix). The town's original guard has either been absorbed into Dominic's force, or discharged. Dominic does not actually work any more, but takes a sizeable fee as the "owner" of the mercenary company, which is now nearly fifty strong. He insures that his men show little mercy to the heretics he's ordered to subdue, and largely obeys the Bishop's orders. Thus, Bishop Merdici is satisfied by his arrangement with Dominic and overlooks the mercenaries' often excessive brutality. If the fight against heresy becomes a full-fledged, armed struggle, Dominic hopes to make a good deal of money.

The Gutter King

A less obvious power in Foix is Harcourt. Having had one eye put out for theft, he turned to begging for a living. With a group of other equally unscrupulous beggars he has begun to bully money out of the city's other unfortunates. When

Dominic

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength (strong grip) +1, Stamina (stocky) +2, Presence (smiling) +1, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 34

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Parisian French (business affairs) 5, Speak Provençal (slang) 4, Speak High French (with nobles) 4, Leadership (mercenaries) 4, Folk Ken (mercenaries) 4, Charm (politeness) 2, Brawl (improvised weapons) 2, Ride (mounted combat) 4, Diplomacy (with superiors) 3, Intimidate (employees) 3, Hand Axe Attack (retreating) 3, Greatsword Attack (wild melees) 4, Greatsword Parry (wild melees) 4, Shield Attack (smashing) 4, Shield Parry (charges) 4, Dodge (missiles) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Merciless (criminals) 2

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cynical +1, Humane -2

Weapons and Armor:

Chain Mail Hauberk

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +5/-1*,
Attack +4, Damage +11

Greatsword Totals: First Strike +8/+3,
Attack +7, Damage +16, Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Round Shield Totals: First Strike +5/+0, Attack +6,
Damage +4, Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 1/6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +2/-3 (8/3 Action),
Soak +2/+14 (8/20 Action), Fatigue +1/-4

*unarmored/armored

Harcourt's victims — mainly beggars — complained to the guards, their complaints were either ignored or led to Harcourt's beating.

Dominic, however, decided that Harcourt could be useful. The guards no longer act against The Gutter King, as they mockingly call him, but instead expect him to provide them with information (e.g., the locations of Perfecti in the city, the identities of those responsible for specific thefts, and the movements of certain suspicious strangers). In return, Harcourt is allowed to continue harassing Foix's unfortunates, and when his people commit crimes, Dominic covers the crimes up.

Harcourt and his cronies can often be found in the notorious Golden Fleece (number 8 on the map of Foix). This tavern, flanked by brothels and frequented by the city's least respectable folk, is located near the river, on the east edge of the city, between the Jewish quarter and the poorest servants' houses. This part of the city is the most rundown, impoverished, and filthy of all Foix's districts.

Guards on watch rarely trouble themselves to come to this area. If the inhabitants occasionally murder one another, it's a shame, but hardly considered important. Guards infrequently arrive in force at the Golden Fleece to apprehend the culprit of

Harcourt, the Gutter King

Characteristics: Intelligence (wily) +1, Perception 0, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness (quick reflexes) +2

Age: 23

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Missing Eye -1 (-2 to missile Attacks and -1 to other Attacks)

Abilities: Speak Provençal (slang) 4, Leadership (beggars) 2, Intimidate (beggars) 2, Pretend (disabilities) 2, Subterfuge (bluff) 3, Dagger Attack (surprise attacks) 2, Dagger Parry (close fighting) 2, Dodge (retreating) 3

Confidence: 2

Reputation: "King of the Underworld" (underworld) 2

Personality Traits: Merciful -3, Greedy +1, Lazy +2

Weapons and Armor:

Dagger Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +6, Damage +4, Parry Defense +3 (9 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0



some crime against rich folk — or at least, to grab a likely scapegoat. Harcourt holds court in one corner of the tavern, and has made his home in the cellar, where he sleeps on a straw mattress. The proprietor of the Golden Fleece, Paulo, is quite loyal to his customers, especially Harcourt, partially out of solidarity, but mainly out of fear. Paulo doesn't want his wife and daughter murdered in acts of revenge against him.

The tavern was once marked by a brown cloth hung above the door, but someone stole it.

The Guilds

The guildsmen and merchants of Foix are attempting to gain a charter for their city, which would free the city from its obligations to the Count. However, the Count profits from his ownership of the city, and is unimpressed by the guildsmen's attempts to convince or bribe him to acquiesce.

The spokesman of the powerless city council is the stout Balingier, a minor merchant and leader of the metalworkers' guild, the largest guild in the city. (The area has many iron mines, and a thriving industry has grown up around the metal.)

A devout Cathar, Balingier obeys most of the restrictions required by the Perfecti (the preachers of the Cathars), though he is secretly amassing a personal fortune. To present a

Godard of Calais

A "typical" mercenary guard. A poor freeman in Calais, Godard was envious of the power of the nobility and clergy. Now that he has similar power he gains great satisfaction from abusing it.

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength (broad shoulders) +1, Stamina (enduring) +1, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 19

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Norman French (obscenities) 4, Speak Provençal (insults) 3, Drinking (competitions) 4, Intimidate (townsfolk) 3, Dodge (thrusts) 2, Mace Attacks (formation fighting) 3, Mace Parry (formation fighting) 4, Shield Attack (charges) 3, Shield Parry (charges) 4

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Brave +1, Corrupt +2, Devoted (to Dominic) +2

Weapons and Armor:

Ring Mail Hauberk

Mace (1h): First Strike +3, Attack +6, Damage +9, Parry Defense +5 (11 Action)

Round Shield: First Strike +3, Attack +5, Damage +3, Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 2

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -1

Fayme

A poor beggar-woman, often seen sitting near the Blue Barrel Inn, holding a begging bowl and baby (actually, it's her sister's baby, but it's a profitable ploy). She is one of Harcourt's most often used spies.

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (nervously vigilant) +1, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity (lithe) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 26

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (pleas) 4, Subterfuge (whine) 3, Stealth (follow) 4

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Nervous +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

respectable image to the Bishop, Balingier has given generous donations toward the completion of the cathedral, and is not worried by Von Braden's eloquent speeches against his faith. Balingier firmly believes, perhaps naively, that the "truth" of his religion will prevail.

Balingier's home is number 9 on the map of Foix.

The Blue Barrel Inn

When travelers from Mistridge stay in Foix they usually spend the night at the Blue Barrel Inn (number 10 on the map of Foix), situated in one of the plazas near the cathedral. Advertising itself with a battered old barrel, painted a streaky grey, the tavern is run by the friendly, but slothful, Etienne and his wife Raissa (who does almost all the work). Largely because Etienne's sister is married to a Grog at Mistridge, an agreement has been reached whereby such travelers receive a room, plus breakfast and dinner for four, for just seven deniers instead of nine. Covenant travelers who cannot be kept in the private room may sleep on the common room floor without paying the usual half penny.

The inn's meals are adequate, and the room contains a large bed, which could accommodate up to eight people at a squeeze. It's wise to keep all valuables in the private room, never in the common room. Grogs desiring a more raucous evening sometimes walk to the nearby Eagle's Egg Tavern (number 11 on the map of Foix), where brawls are fought between the servants of rival families, and the Grogs may enjoy cheap wine and alluring companionship.

The Blue Barrel attracts a broad range of customers, including a group of young rakes who tour the city's taverns, wenching and wining. Led by Berenguer St. Gilles (a distant relation of the Count), these bored and frustrated young "gentlemen" extravagantly flaunt their wealth and status. Quick

to find a duel, but loathe to risk an even fight, these men are simply sophisticated bullies. Their pride prevents them from admitting they're disconcerted by the gang of filthy, taunting street urchins who often follow them around, hurling insults and the occasional clod of manure from a safe distance.

Entertainments

The plaza outside the Blue Barrel provides various entertainments for travelers.

Jevier is an egocentric minstrel who entertains appreciative audiences with sarcastic and cynical ballads of courtly love and chivalry. Highlights of his recitals include, *"As the greatest tilter of all the fields of France, she slid her wreath of rose petals along his sturdy lance."* Jevier's poems are typical of local fashion, though his are more eloquent than most.

Less talented, but more professional, are a group of jongleurs led by Balnadio, who perform near the Blue Barrel. Including acrobats and tumblers, the troupe mainly performs light-hearted plays full of slapstick, in which they frequently mock the guards for their cruelty. (Balnadio's wagon, which had served as a stage, was recently burnt by the guards, and some of the troupe have been beaten.) Occasionally the actors attempt more serious plays, hoping that with practice the Count may one day ask them to perform for him. Every Easter the performers act out Biblical stories in front of the cathedral.

Without any hint of the humor displayed by the other performers, a Perfecti named Regnauld occasionally draws a crowd near the Blue Barrel. He climbs atop a pile of crates and delivers apocalyptic sermons. His face is usually bruised and cut, and though he never volunteers the information, if asked he says he was beaten by the guards — again. His message is simple: It is clear that the world is an evil place, full of greed, misery and brutality. To be saved one must turn from the material world, ruled by Satan, to the spiritual world of God, for the day of judgement is coming.

Regnauld

Characteristics: Intelligence (clever) +1, Perception (unobservant) -2, Strength (indolent) -1, Stamina 0, Presence (slouching posture) -1, Communication (captivating speaker) +2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (languid stride) -2

Age: 31

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent +2

Abilities: Visions (doom) 1, Church Lore (corruption) 4, Dodge (missiles) 4

Confidence: 1

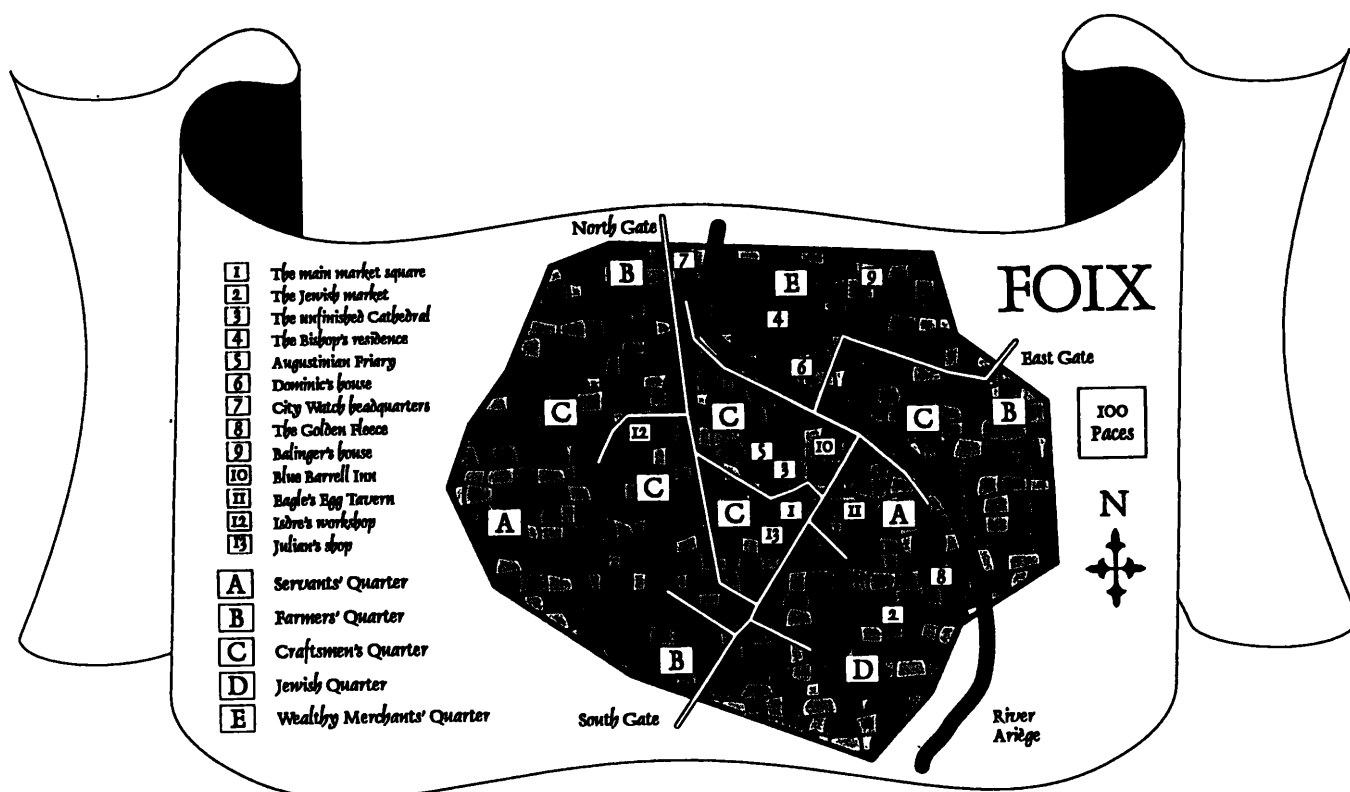
Reputation: Crazy (townsfolk) 1

Personality Traits: Devout +2, Distracted +2, Sensible -1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +2 (8 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0



Regnauld lives at the Blue Barrel without paying, in part because he has no money and in part because Raissa is his sister. Regarded as a saint by some, others curse him as a freeloader, including Etienne who fears the preacher will get him in trouble one day.

The plaza is also regularly visited by a mountebank named Marcelli. He claims to have an excellent source of relics, including saints' bones (more likely dogs' bones) and pieces of "Christ's Cross, on my mother's honor!" In the evenings he sells "love potions," which are guaranteed to work so long as one has a "pure heart."

Less welcome to Foix are anonymous visitors, such as thieves and cutpurses, who seek to relieve the wealthy of their silver. The most flamboyant, though not the most proficient, is Roland, who possesses a number of magical seeds. He gathered them on the advice of a disguised demon who has recently taken an interest in his soul. After swallowing one of the seeds, Roland becomes exceedingly difficult to notice for as long as he holds his breath. He's not quite invisible, but nearly so.

Journeys to Foix

One reason covenfolk travel to Foix is to buy laboratory equipment. The city is a center for iron working, and most other commodities can be procured by local merchants.

The city also boasts a number of other skilled craftsmen, of which the most highly praised seems to be Isdre, a glass

Key to the map of Foix

- 1: The main market square. Itinerant traders and many local craftsmen attend daily, except Sundays.
- 2: The Jewish market. Daily, except Saturdays.
- 3: The unfinished Cathedral.
- 4: The Bishop's residence.
- 5: Augustinian Priory.
- 6: Dominic's house and headquarters.
- 7: Headquarters of the City Watch (Dominic's mercenaries), in the gatehouse of the north gate.
- 8: The Golden Fleece, and Harcourt's den.
- 9: Baling's house.
- 10: Blue Barrel Inn.
- 11: Eagle's Egg Tavern.
- 12: Isdre's workshop.
- 13: Julian's shop.

blower. In fact, Isdre's most fabulous glassware is not his own creation, but that of his outstandingly talented apprentice, Miquel. The city's other glass blowers jokingly talk of the success of "Miquel's Workshop," as if the apprentice were the master craftsman. Miquel's jealous master makes the apprentice's life quite miserable, and Isdre has no intention of telling satisfied customers — like folk from Mistrige — that he himself does not make his wares.

Julian the Herbalist

Julian is a shortish, pale man in his mid-twenties. Originally from Normandy, he settled in Foix after accused of witchcraft by a rival for the hand of a girl. There was no truth in the accusation, but Julian fled rather than face the local Bishop's dubious justice. He enjoys a better living and greater respect in Foix than he had ever dreamed possible in the south.

Julian's herb shop is located down a side street from Foix's main plaza. It is a simple building, composed of a single large room surmounted by an attic. The main room is Julian's shop by day, and his living room by evening. It contains numerous tubs of crushed herbs and bottles of brownish liquids. A ladder leads to the attic, where Julian sleeps and stores his stocks of herbs. The shop is closed two or three days a week as Julian collects most of his herbs from the woods and fields around Foix. Several rare herbs grow in a small fenced yard behind the shop, while others have to be bought from pedlars and merchants.

Julian takes great pride in his considerable knowledge of herbs, which he sees as a study far above the simple herbalism of village wise men and women. He refuses to accept the commonly-held opinion that prayers and charms are necessary for herbal treatments to be effective, and has no time for petty love potions and the like. (Such serious dedication may endear him to equally serious Magi.) Unfortunately, Julian is a little gullible. For instance, he has what he believes a Mandrake root hidden in his hut, when in fact it is a strangely shaped parsnip, stained brown by the pedlar who sold it to him.

Julian's manner has led to his ridicule by some folk. Though quite bright, his mind is extremely methodical, which makes him seem slow and even dim-witted. But, his considerable knowledge, intelligence and confidence win the respect of more discerning folk.

Characters can meet Julian or seek him out, for his skill with plants and their rare elements is widely known in Foix. Indeed, characters may have known Julian for some time, having conducted business with him in the past. Julian can also be met at some of the local Val du Bosque fairs and markets, including the fair at Javielle (see below), at which he sells his wares—cures for coughs and fevers, rat poisons, tonics to ease the pains of childbirth, and ointments to heal burns.

Characteristics: Intelligence (methodical) +2, Perception (precise) +1, Strength (small frame) -2, Stamina (delicate constitution) -1, Presence 0, Communication (slow speaker) -2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (nervous) +1

The Jewish quarter of Foix is also of some interest to travelers. Many of the Jews have become quite wealthy through trade, and particularly through moneylending, which the Church condemns. The foremost moneylender is Aaron, who, like most other Jews, is taxed heavily by the Count. The Jews have almost no legal rights, and are hated by most Christians. As a persecuted minority the Jews in Foix have developed a great sense of solidarity, centered upon their common religion. One of the Jews' more notable number is Hiram, who studies the Kabbalah, an arcane version of the Torah, designed to reveal the "deeper truths" of creation.

Age: 25

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent +1

Abilities: Survival (finding herbs) 3, Herbalism (medicines) 5, Folk Ken (townsfolk) 1, Track (woods) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Healer (townsfolk) 2

Personality Traits: Methodical +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Roleplaying Tips

Don't rush anything. Move slowly and tentatively, but deliberately. Always pause before answering a question. Speak with a measured confidence, but never seem totally certain about anything—you acknowledge your own limits. Don't let anyone irritate you, and never speak harshly to anyone.

Story Ideas for Julian

The characters may respect Julian as a source of potions which they cannot make, or they may hire him as an agent to sell their wares, to raise extra cash for the Covenant. They may also wish to send one of their covenfolk or apprentices to Julian for a Season or two, to learn something about herbs.

Perhaps some Groggs become extremely ill after taking one of Julian's remedies. One or two of the turb may even die. Do the Magi demand reparations? Might some of the Groggs want to lynch Julian for killing their friends? Is the poisoning just a mistake? Is something sinister striking out at the Covenant, intending Julian to take the blame?

Julian could also stumble upon a particularly strange plant in the woods and take it to the Magi. What is it? Perhaps it belongs to someone or something (a faerie?) who may try to take it back or may take offense that it was "stolen."

If a Crusade is called in the Val du Bosque, and Foix falls, perhaps Julian's past catches up with him. He may be put on trial for witchcraft. The characters may feel an obligation or interest in helping him.

Story Ideas for Foix

The city may be important to characters as a source of much needed iron, glassware, and parchment. Whenever characters travel northwards, out of the Val du Bosque, they probably pass through Foix. The town is therefore an ideal place to stop for the night, allowing characters to visit all its locales and meet all the people described in these pages.

Even a few brief encounters, roleplayed as characters pass through Foix, can evoke its atmosphere. Such encounters may even intrigue characters to return at another time, when they are not so preoccupied. Brief encounters could be with guards, beggars, rakes, or churchmen. Over successive visits, the characters should get a feel for the city and may keep abreast of major political developments there.

Complete stories could easily be set in Foix. For example, although the apprentice Miquel will be able to leave his master in a few years (perhaps to live at Mistrudge if paid enough), he could be driven to kill his cruel master now. Facing execution for his crime, Miquel may be rescued by the characters (intent on securing his services for their Covenant), either by force or negotiation. However, the Bishop might want more than just money in return for absolving the apprentice, and Windgraven (see below) might seek Miquel's services as well.

Alternatively, a valuable or arcane object might be stolen from a character by a pickpocket in Foix. Harcourt and his beggars are willing to tell the characters who has the object, for a price, but they might also tip off the corrupt guards, who could retrieve the object first, possibly to keep or sell it.

CASTLE D'UVERRE

Castle d'Uverre lies north of the River Vreis, on the road toward Foix. The castle is heavily fortified and could resist the

assault of marauding forces for years. Its walls are very high, and are extremely thick. Even in the event of the outer wall's breach, those in the castle may take shelter within the keep itself, and feel assured of their safety.

Yes, the castle of Baron Luc d'Uverre is among the strongest points in all the Val du Bosque. Indeed, should it be necessary, Baron d'Uverre can call upon the services of fourteen knights and their men-at-arms (over 150 of them) to aid him in times of need. These knights have sworn fealty to the Baron, and he may claim up to sixty days military service from them each year. In addition to this, he permanently maintains twenty men-at-arms and seven bachelor knights at his castle. No military force in the Val du Bosque, short of a crusading army, can threaten the castle.

The map provided gives an overview of the castle's layout. Those who enter without the Baron's confidence are provided with a constant escort, and are denied the opportunity to explore all the fortress's corners. In fact, not even those who lay claim to the Baron's friendship can honestly say they've been allowed to look in every fortified room. The Baron is a man of many secrets and great discretion.

Baron d'Uverre

The lands in possession of Baron d'Uverre were acquired years ago during his days of conquest and adventure. Though



Typical Bachelor Knight

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength +1, Stamina +1, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 21

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal 5, Ride (journeys) 4, Drinking (guzzle) 1, Broadsword Attack (mounted) 3, Shield Parry (mounted) 3, Dodge (dismounted) 2, Lance Attack (charges) 3

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Weapons and Armor:

Full Ring Mail

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +7, Damage +10

Lance Totals: First Strike +6, Attack +5, Damage +12

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +9 (15 Action), Fatigue -3

years have passed since then, the power of those lands has not waned, for the power of the man who holds them has not waned.

Baron d'Uverre has gained considerable weight since his younger days, but is still strong and vigorous. His mane of brown hair has turned almost white now, and his youthful plans of conquest—now largely fulfilled—have been replaced by a ruthless determination to maintain power. Having seized his brothers' inheritances from them, and some lands from his cousins too, the Baron now controls most of the lands from Sir Guifre's manor to Foix. These lands are occupied by vassal knights (including the Baron's surviving brother, Sir Harbin), who swear allegiance and pay homage to d'Uverre.

The Baron is little interested in art or learning, though he is not without taste. His clothes are usually white or deep red, and are often embroidered with gold. In the great hall meals are served from silver dishes, and fine tapestries hang on the walls, attesting to the Baron's tact. And, although he has to wear an eyepatch (since one eye was lost in a skirmish against Sir Harbin's men years ago), d'Uverre has turned even that into an opportunity for ornamentation. He sports a richly embroidered patch, or an ornately jeweled one for special occasions.

Some have suggested that all this frivolity has made the Baron soft. Voices whisper that his white stallion was chosen for its appearance rather than its strength. However, the Baron's powerful, unassuming, brown warhorse is also well cared for, and his armor and weapons are in good repair.

Although no fool, the Baron's strategies are rarely cunning or complex. It may be that forthright action has rewarded him with what he possesses today. Murder, blackmail and battle have always been his tools, and he uses them well. On one

occasion, however, he was forced to pay heavily to avert excommunication by the Church, performing a demeaning public penance before the Bishop, after his men "misunderstood" his orders and butchered a local priest. Although this action has reduced d'Uverre's moral reputation, such incidents underline the Baron's ruthlessness and serve to intimidate his enemies.

D'Uverre tolerates the Cathars, but only continues to do so until they threaten his power or wealth. The onus of his tolerance arises from his wife's sympathies for the Believers. Both the Bishop and the Pope's envoy have been in contact with the Baron, warning of "dire measures" taken by the Church against the heretics and their supporters. In public d'Uverre claims not to let "*that nosey Italian*" (Merdici) tell him how to run his affairs. Privately, he understands he has earned enemies among the clergy, and is willing to change his policy in order to safeguard his power, regardless of his wife's devotions.

Perhaps hypocritically, the Baron considers himself a devout Catholic, although he has no intention of letting the Church foil his worldly ambitions. He attends Mass regularly, for the health of his soul, and prays earnestly for his dead parents and brother on All Souls Day. He regularly makes a confession of his many sins, and thus clears his conscience, striving to save his soul, whether in earnest or for appearance's sake.

D'Uverre's Chaplain is Father Ruffe, who has served the Baron for over a decade. Initially he tried to counsel the Baron to be less aggressive and greedy, but is now resigned to the Baron's indifference to his advice.

Typical Man-at-Arms

Characteristics: Intelligence -1, Perception 0, Strength +1, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 18

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal 4, Brawl (wrestle) 2, Drinking (vulgarity) 2, Broadsword Attack (formation fighting) 3, Shield Parry (formation fighting) 3, Dodge (mounted opponents) 4

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Weapons and Armor:

Ring Mail Hauberk

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +7, Damage +10

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action), Fatigue -3

Residents of Castle d'Uverre

Isabel is the Baron's wife, and cousin to the King of Aragon. A shy woman, she has learned not to speak her mind on any subject, for fear of the anger (and occasional violence) of her father and now her husband. She obediently takes Mass at her husband's side, though she feels intuitively drawn to the Cathars. She plays the gracious hostess to her husband's guests, though she may well despise them.

An inexperienced judge of character, the Baron often relies on his wife's appraisals of guests. She has thus increased d'Uverre's suspicion of the Bishop and the Pope's envoy. It could be that Isabel has done so for her own ends, to prolong local support for the Cathars. Not a natural politician, Isabel's judgements are not fully considered, but are based on personal, emotional reactions to others. Isabel's natural shyness barely conceals an aristocratic arrogance, and her veneer of formal modesty makes

Typical Landed Knight

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength +1, Stamina +1, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity +1, Quickness 0

Age: 21

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal 5, Ride (hunting) 4, Folk Ken (underlings) 2, Diplomacy (etiquette) 1, Broadsword Attack (mounted) 4, Lance Attack (charges) 4, Shield Parry (mounted) 3, Dodge (dismounted) 1

Confidence: 2

Reputation: None

Weapons and Armor:

Full Chain Mail

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +1, Attack +9, Damage +11

Lance Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +9, Damage +13

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -5 (1 Action), Soak +15 (21 Action), Fatigue -5

her quiet pride all the more obvious. Acutely aware of her superior breeding, Isabel is incapable of understanding or becoming interested in the concerns of the lower classes (like their poverty and hunger, for instance).

Isabel's sympathy for the Cathars stems from a Perfecti whom she once heard preaching on the natural superiority of chosen souls. Naturally, she feels she is one of those few, though the speaker might have disagreed.

The Baron's only surviving child is Francesca, who, like her mother, has grown into a haughty and sophisticated lady. Largely ignored by her preoccupied father, Francesca has gained all the arrogance of her mother and has developed considerable self-confidence as well. She has traveled to Foix



and Toulouse, and is impressed by the sophistication of the latter's Court, and by the beauty (and expense) of the art at both. She would love to return to Toulouse, but her father perceives her as a valuable political asset, and intends to keep her safely at his castle until he arranges a suitable marriage for her.

In the meantime, Francesca has begun a secret and potentially scandalous courtship with the uncourtly Sir Tarbil, son of Sir William (see below). Although their relationship is relatively innocent and superficial, the excitement of secret romance and the young knight's enigmatic, boyish charm captivate Francesca. Perhaps it's as well that marriage between them is impossible, since the pair are hopelessly mismatched. Whoever marries Francesca probably inherits all the Baron's lands when he dies.

In charge of Baron d'Uverre's knights is the battle-scarred Sir Pere, recognizable by the heavy scar which arcs from his left ear to his jaw. His chivalry and love of battle were bled out of him many years ago. Having served the Baron for nearly two decades, he has seen plenty of fighting, and is pleased that the Baron has become less aggressive with the passage of time. A gruff, humorless man, with neither manners nor malice left in him, Sir Pere is a trusted friend and advisor of the Baron. The two play chess together most nights, and would relish new and challenging competition. Occasionally they share an afternoon's falconry.

Sir Pere

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength 0, Stamina (rugged) +1, Presence (scarred) +2, Communication (disinterested) -2, Dexterity (deft hand) +2, Quickness 0

Age: 47

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (cutting comments) 5, Intimidation (soldiers) 2, Leadership (knights) 2, Ride (battle) 5, Animal Handling (falconry) 1, Alertness (sounds) 1, Folk Ken (knights) 1, Broadsword Attack (formation fighting) 4, Shield Parry (formation fighting) 3, Lance Attack (fleeing opponents) 3

Confidence: 2

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Serious +2

Weapons and Armor:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +6/+0*, Attack +10, Damage +10

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Lance Totals: First Strike +9/+2, Attack +7, Damage +11

Encumbrance: 1/7

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1/-7 (5/-2 Action), Soak +1/+15 (7/21 Action), Fatigue +0/-6

* unarmored/armored

Ot

Characteristics: Intelligence (cunningly brutal) +1, Perception 0, Strength (brutal) +3, Stamina (unrelenting) +2, Presence (warty) -2, Communication 0, Dexterity (nimble) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 33

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (with nobles) 4, Brawl (dirty tricks) 3, Ride (battle) 4, Broadsword Attack (smash) 4, Broadsword Parry (charges) 3, Shield Parry (standing ground) 3, Dodge (missiles) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Brutal (knights) 1

Personality Traits: Vindictive +2, Merciful -3, Devoted +3

Weapons and Armor:

Full Ring Mail

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +9, Damage +13, Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 2

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +10 (16 Action), Fatigue +0

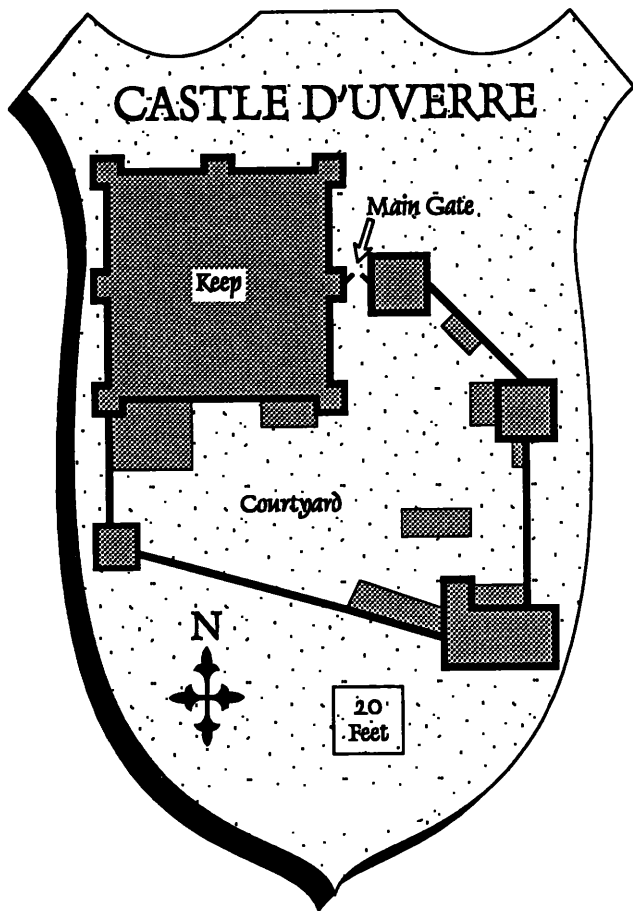
The only son of Sir Guifre, a vassal of d'Uverre, is Jaume, Sir Pere's squire. Jaume strives to become a knight at Castle d'Uverre. However, he's bored by the drudgery of that training, and shows more interest in eavesdropping, gossiping and larking about than studying heraldry or serving Sir Pere. Jaume also takes an interest in young chambermaids, and fancies their beds offer more comfort than his thin blanket at the foot of his master's door.

When he travels the Baron is accompanied by several knights, and a favorite knight-sergeant, a commoner named Ot. Ot has attained his rank due to his loyalty, courage, and cunning brutality (a trait which is apparent in the dirty tactics he uses, either on the battlefield or in tavern brawls).

Servants

Roano is the Baron d'Uverre's half-Spanish steward. He administers the running of the household and manages the Baron's finances. An officious but benevolent man, Roano has a great respect for his natural superiors (including the Church and nobility), and does not tolerate disrespect or heresy. Several of the servants have sympathies with the Cathars, and are terrified they may lose their jobs to Roano's fury. Such servants include Maryse, a young chambermaid.

Roano's most hated enemy in the household is Beatrice, the domineering and extremely competent woman who runs the kitchens. A devout admirer of the Perfecti — though she



regularly attends Father Ruffe's Masses as well — Beatrice defies Roano to try and take her job from her. Both adversaries know the Baron values Beatrice's services too highly to dismiss her.

Another notable servant is Elloi, the Baron's barber. Responsible for the Baron's hair and health, and for carrying out executions, Elloi advises the Baron to be bled regularly, in order to reduce his bile. The Baron commonly replies, "*my blood has served me well for forty years, and I'd rather keep as much of it as possible.*" This annoys Elloi, who is a spy for Mistrige, and would like to have more opportunity to speak with the Baron.

Essentially, Elloi can provide Mistrige Magi with news of local mundane affairs, and news of events abroad that d'Uverre is alerted to. What information Elloi is privy to is determined by his daring as a spy and the confidence invested in him by the Baron. In general, the Baron rarely entrusts Elloi with any useful information. Any information Elloi has for the Magi is carried by his half-witted son, Darwin.

The Baron's Relations

Of the two brothers whom the Baron overcame to gain power in his early years, one is Sir Harbin, who still holds a strong castle and several villages nearer Foix. The other

"vanished" on a pilgrimage to Rome ten years ago. Only Sir Pere and one other knight know where the other brother is buried. This sibling murder is the one sin which Baron d'Uverre has never had the courage to confess, and so it worries him greatly.

Sir Harbin's obnoxious young son, Christophe, is not yet a knight, but is precocious and strong. He reminds the Baron of himself during his younger days, which disturbs d'Uverre to no end. D'Uverre knows that if Sir Harbin dies, and Christophe inherits the knight's manor, Christophe might avenge his father's loss, refusing vassalage to d'Uverre. Perhaps Christophe might even challenge the right of Francesca and her husband to the inheritance of the Baron's lands, hoping to replace the Baron himself. Although d'Uverre would rather make a friend of his nephew, he wonders if he may some day have to risk another murder.

Story Ideas for Castle d'Uverre

In the event of a Crusade in the Val du Bosque, the Baron's castle is vitally important to the land's defense. However, the castle's importance can be undermined by a dispute over the barony, which divides the nobles of the valley, weakening its defences. Thus, if the characters become interested in the politics of the valley, or the Crusade itself, the castle becomes the setting for numerous plots and negotiations. Not only may the characters insure that rebellions against d'Uverre are quelled, but the planning of military expeditions, discovery of spies, and foiling of assassinations can occur here.

One interesting story possibility involves a minor demon infiltrating both the Crusaders and the castle. The creature alternately helps both sides, whichever is weakest at any given time, thus insuring that the increasingly protracted war causes as much misery as possible. The demon hopes locals become so dependent on its aid that they stain their souls to win or defeat the Crusade. Thus, characters may find the demon helps their cause, but at the expense of their immortal souls.

If the characters remain uninterested in local mundane politics, the Baron may arise as an opponent to them, trying to make them his vassals or to at least reduce the size of their turb.

THE MANOR OF SIR GUIFRE

Three miles from the village of Javielle stands the stone manor house of Sir Guifre. The house is encircled by a wooden palisade, with servants' quarters and other structures both within and outside the walls. (See the map of the manor for its layout.) It's from here that Sir Guifre's family has controlled the surrounding villages for generations, and Guifre is proud of his legacy. The family's *convenientiae* states that Sir Guifre is nominally a vassal of Baron d'Uverre, but he has no obligations apart from military service. Furthermore, the Baron has little power to interfere with the Guifre estate, making Sir Guifre virtually independent.



The Guifre manor is a two-story building, with the only entrance leading to the great hall on the upper story, approached by a narrow staircase. Sir Guifre's room takes up the end of the upper story. The dark ground floor (which, for defensive reasons, has no windows or even arrow slits) contains the kitchen and storerooms. Three of the manor servants sleep in the kitchen, and many more take refuge there in the depths of winter, but most of the manor's inhabitants live in huts in the courtyard. Also included among those living in outbuildings are a dozen men-at-arms, a few horses, and a noisy pack of hunting dogs.

The manor is not representative of all the folk in Sir Guifre's service. Employed by the estate are some local villagers, occasionally hired to perform specific chores (such as replacing parts of the wall). Seven yeomen under Sir Guifre also live in nearby villages, paying for their land in military service instead of money. The yeomen are mainly old friends of Sir Guifre, who spend much of their time out hunting with him.

Outside the gates of the manor, an unremarkable collection of huts houses a Cathar hospice. The hospice is funded by Sir Guifre, a devout Cathar supporter, and is run by a Perfecti — an old widow named Elissa. (The hospice has a Divine Aura of 3.) Two other Perfecti also live here, both young women, as does a young man named Mathieu, who is living the ascetic life for a year before deciding whether or not to become a Perfecti. This remarkable young man is discovering that he sometimes receives prophetic visions. Several unfortunate locals have fallen victim to his more dangerous talent of hexing, though he is quite ignorant of that strange power. If trained to master of his powers, Mathieu might forego the religious life in favor of Covenant life, or even life as an apprentice.

Sir Guifre

Sir Guifre's blissfully happy marriage ended five years ago, when his wife died in childbirth. His only surviving child, Jaume, is now living at Castle d'Uverre.

To occupy his mind and ignore his anguish, Guifre now keeps himself occupied with hunting and religious devotions. He is an uncomplicated man and a staunch Cathar, proud to be associated with those whose faiths are strong enough to overcome their human frailties. Guifre would become a Perfecti, he says, except that the required restrictions would prevent him from fulfilling his responsibilities as a Knight and Lord. Of course, religious restriction would also prevent him from hunting. . .

Story Ideas for Sir Guifre's Manor

The characters may visit the manor to negotiate with or spy on Sir Guifre, or to speak with Mathieu or Elissa. During the Albigensian Crusade, characters may come here to defend (or attack) the Manor, or come to act as assassins or negotiators. Characters may even be on friendly terms with Guifre, becoming his guests on a hunt, chasing deer and wild boar. The

Sir Guifre

Characteristics: Intelligence (uncomplicated) -2, Perception (introspective)-1, Strength (hardened muscles)+2, Stamina (fit)+1, Presence (commanding) +1, Communication (regal speech) +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 39

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Ride (hunting) 6, Speak Provençal 5, Leadership (locals) 3, Animal Handling (hounds) 4, Lance Attack (charges) 2, Bastard Sword Attack (great blow) 3, Shield Parry (losing) 4, Dodge (animals) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Fair (peasants) 2

Personality Traits: Devout +2, Distracted +3, Sorrowful +2

Weapons and Armor:

Full Chain Mail

Lance Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +4, Damage +12

Bastard Sword Totals (1h): First Strike +1, Attack +6, Damage +13

Kite Shield Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), Soak +15 (21 Action), Fatigue -5

hunters may encounter a more unusual and challenging quarry, such as an elk, or they may become embroiled in a grander tale, involving faeries or a centaur.

JAVIELLE

A few miles from Sir Guifre's manor is the large village of Javielle, home to nearly three hundred people. The tower of Mistridge is clearly visible from the village, and the Magi are a source of constant gossip and speculation amongst the nervous villagers.

To travel to or from the village to the Covenant, it's necessary to trek three miles up the River Vreis to reach a ford. Few make the four-hour round trip except to attend the monthly fair at Javielle. Essentially there's enough contact between villagers and Magi that the commoners see the Magi as neither strangers nor constant threats.

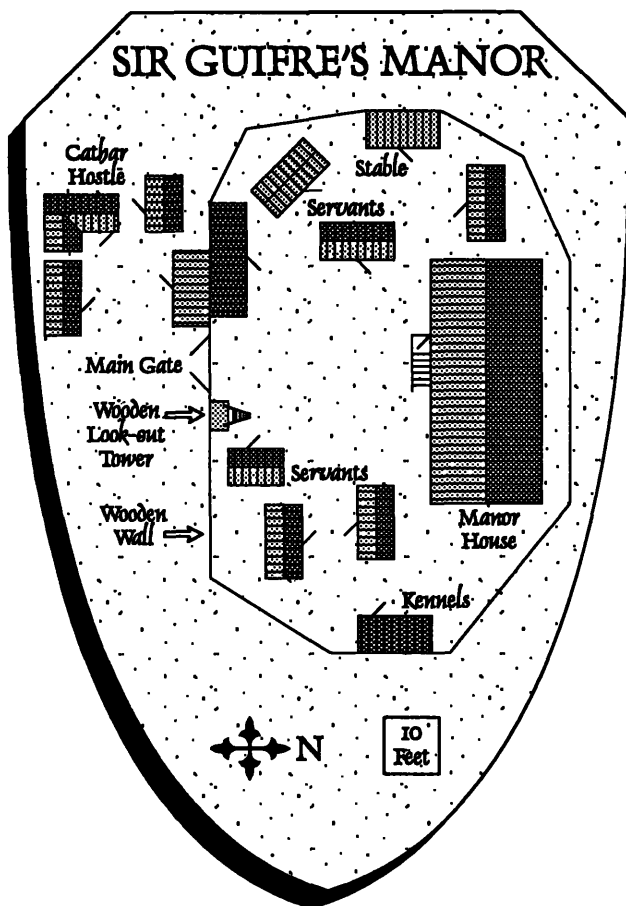
Javielle is administered by a reeve, a woman (unusual in the Middle Ages) named Joaquim. She is responsible for seeing that the villagers fulfill their obligations to their lord, and that the fair runs smoothly. Rather hawk-like in appearance, she is proud of her status and authority, and can wield her power cruelly against those she dislikes or who oppose her.

The Church of Javielle

The small stone church in the center of the village is currently being renovated, after a decade of neglect inspired by Sir Guifre's hostility toward the Church. He has provided only a minimum of money and labor for the church. This has changed with the arrival of an Augustinian Canon of small stature but great energy, Brother Laurent, who has taken up residence in the village. He has begun organizing a group of pious peasants to help with the renovations, and spends much time instructing the villagers in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. (The church has a Divine Aura of 4.)

Brother Laurent's devotion knows no bounds or bias. At noon on every Sunday and feast day the Brother conducts Mass in the leaky church. As the weeks pass a growing number of locals attend his fervent sermons. And, after every Mass, whatever the weather, Laurent trudges wearily to Sir Guifre's manor to plead with the knight to repent his sins. He has had no success with Sir Guifre, and expects none, but always sorrowfully remembers the lost soul in his prayers. Laurent plans to soon venture up to the tower called Mistridge, intending to hear confessions and say Mass for the "astrologers" who live there.

Brother Laurent's efforts may ultimately be for naught, though. A fierce argument is developing between the Bishop and Austins of the Val du Bosque. This dispute is over who should collect local peasant tithes. If the issue cannot be settled, the Bishop may order Brother Laurent to leave Javielle, and its



Brother Laurent

Characteristics: Intelligence (discerning) +1, Perception (attentive) +1, Strength 0, Stamina (tremulous) -1, Presence 0, Communication (passionate) +1, Dexterity (all-thumbs) -2, Quickness 0

Age: 25

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Provençal (expansive vocabulary) 4, Speak Latin (liturgy) 3, Scribe Latin (reading) 2, Charisma (religion) 1, Leadership (peasants) 2, Church Lore (saints) 3, Church Knowledge (exegesis) 1.

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Honest (villagers) 1

Personality Traits: Pious +4, Hard-Working +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1



church will once more be left unattended. If the Bishop had the insight to realize that the Austin is leading the villagers away from the Cathar faith, he might allow Laurent to remain, regardless of tithes collected.

The Shrine to Fabía

Half a mile north of the village is a stone cross at the side of the road. It marks the site where Sante Fabía (see the *Convent of Sante Fabía*, below) miraculously healed Sir Guifre's grandfather of a mortal wound. Most people pause and offer a brief prayer to Fabía as they pass. The Divine Aura of the shrine is 3. Another shrine to Fabía stands in the foothills of Mount Tierné.

Story Ideas for Javielle

Javielle is an obvious setting for earthy, mundane stories. Several Grog and covenfolk may have families living in the village, and many certainly have friends there. Characters' relations with the village, either of blood or friendship, can involve them in disputes arising from the villagers' affairs. Such affairs might range from arguments over field boundaries to the murder of a character's brutal father, possibly by one of his own family.

The relationship between Magi and Brother Laurent can also be interesting. Laurent might receive the characters warmly, with the hope of saving their souls, but if the characters have a reputation for being a danger to his parishioners, Laurent receives them with anger and reminders of God's wrath for the unholy.

On a less mundane level, the village may be infiltrated by Mistridge's enemies, such as Magi from Windgraven, who hope to use Javielle's proximity to spy on the Magi or to turn the villagers against them.

The fair provides opportunities for characters to gather rumors, buy interesting trinkets, and chat with many diverse strangers. Such encounters can give characters information concerning the Saga as a whole, can lead to lengthy stories, or can simply offer entertainment.

The *Ars Magica* supplement, *The Stormrider* (Second Edition), introduces new players to the game and tells the horrific tale of a dark knight who haunts Javielle, and the people of Mistridge.

The Fair of Javielle

At the beginning of each month, a large fair is held at Javielle. For the most part it is an agricultural market, where peasants from the villages of Cuniarda and Cariel come to buy and sell produce and livestock, and to meet distant relations and friends. Less frequently, peasants attend from Sharneal or Alopoc. For most visitors, this is the longest journey they ever make, and the air is thick with mundane chatter about harvesting, cattle, and pressing grapes.



Mistridge usually sends a number of people to the fair to buy provisions, pick up local rumors, and peruse the more exotic stalls. Groggs are always keen to visit the fair, since it provides a chance to escape from the vigilant gaze of Magi. One of Mistridge's Magi (usually Grimgroth) may occasionally travel to the fair. Thankfully most peasants no longer pester the 'astrologers' to tell fortunes or explain the misbehavior of children.

Attendants

One of the regular visitors to the fair is Lyle. He works for a merchant in Foix and travels around the Val du Bosque with a pair of carts, buying the peasants' surplus grain, wine and olives. There are ten thousand hungry mouths in Foix, and Lyle makes a comfortable living satisfying their appetites.

Lyle is well-informed of rumors circulating around the valley and its cities, and passes interesting information on to Mistridge to earn a few extra silvers. Lyle's nephew, Emillehard, travels with him to drive one of the carts and to care for the horses. An impetuous youth, Emillehard is very fond of wrestling and playing the fool with the local youths (and Mistridge's younger Groggs), so is rarely out of trouble.

Anselme is a young merchant of much lower rank, a pedlar. He carries pouches of herbs, arrowheads, potions reputed to ward off werewolves, lengths of twine, "enchanted" seeds, ribbons, belt buckles and miniature crucifixes, among other things. Very occasionally Anselme may have something for sale that's of interest to covenfolk. He walks from village to village selling his wares and briefly working for farmers or vintners. Perpetually restless, Anselme is weary of his poverty and wandering, but is unable to settle down. A bitter romantic, he is constantly searching for something to fulfill him, but has no idea what that something is. He is, perhaps, simply too intelligent or imaginative for his situation.

Cugat is one of Sir Guifre's yeomen who lives in Javielle. He closely investigates every stall in the market. He is a freeman with a large farm, a happy marriage, and two fine young sons. He trades the surplus of his annual harvest with Mistridge, and is perhaps the wealthiest man in Javielle. His neighbors whisper that his good fortune is the result of diabolism. Such rumors are unfounded, inspired by jealousy and a resentment for Cugat's smugness and haughtiness.

Arette is the wife of a poor serf in Javielle. She has been making cheeses for several years, selling them at the fair to earn extra money. A young woman proud of her home and toils, she refuses to have others around when she works, and briskly

Pep, the Village Idiot

Several years ago, Pep was a happy, athletic youth, who expected to inherit a good farm from his father in Piquer. But, in a fit of bravado, he and two friends ventured into the Forest of Moaning Oaks, and when he emerged — alone — he was badly injured and delirious. Driven out of Piquer as a demoniac, Pep eventually found his way to Javielle. His mauled right ear has never healed, and he still limps heavily.

Feared and ridiculed even by the villagers of Javielle, Pep spends his days loping around the streets, rifling through peoples' belongings and stealing food as he pleases. When he first arrived at the village he was beaten for such behavior, but his persecutors soon learned not to molest him, especially when their barns were gutted and sheep killed. There was no proof that Pep was responsible for these tragedies, but the villagers are now too frightened of being "cursed" to oppose the idiot, so Pep does as he pleases.

Dressed in rags and caked in mud, Pep moves in erratic lurches. His big, staring eyes wander unpredictably from subject to subject, and his jaw hangs slightly open, revealing numerous gaps between his teeth. Normally miserable and bad-tempered, Pep can suddenly become overcome with childish joy if presented by a simple gift, such as a flower, excitedly screaming "Agi-agi-agiftum!", his favorite phrase.

In truth, with his journey into the Moaning Oaks, Pep became home to an Unseelie faerie named Drwgbrawd ("Drougbraod"). Drwgbrawd is a four foot tall creature with taut, leathery skin and enormous ears, who somehow lives concealed inside Pep's right ear. Emerging sometimes at night to stalk around the village or avenge insults to his "good-good-good friend Pep," Drwgbrawd is usually content to sit in Pep's ear and observe the world.

Pep

Characteristics: Intelligence (mad) -4, Perception (inattentive) -2, Strength (insane strength) +3, Stamina (resistant to pain) +3, Presence (disgusting) -3, Communication (incomprehensible) -6, Dexterity 0, Quickness (fast) +2

Age: 17

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Friend +2, Disfigured -1

Abilities: Stealth (village buildings) 4, Dodge (missiles) 2

Confidence: 0

Reputation: Bewitched (villagers) 1

Personality Traits: Unpredictable +4, Miserable +3, Happy +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +4 (10 Action), Soak +3 (9 Action), Fatigue +3

Drwgbrawd

Faerie Might 15

Vital Statistics: Size -2, Intelligence (creative) +1, Perception (preoccupied by fun) -1, Strength (small build) -2, Stamina (wiry) +2, Presence 0, Communication (constant giggles) -1, Dexterity (graceful) +3, Quickness (darting) +2

Personality Traits: Glee +4, Stubborn +2, Vengeful +1

Confidence: 4

Combat Totals:

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +4/+8 (10/14 Action)*, **Soak** +0/-4 (6/2 Action)**, **Fatigue** +2

* Size -2/-6, see *Change Size*, below

** Soak drops by 5 points when struck by iron weapons

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Stealth (around mortals) 4, Play — flute (light tunes) 2, Faerie Lore (Moaning Oaks) 4, Area Lore (Moaning Oaks) 4, Folk Ken (villagers) 1

Powers:

Change Size, MuCo 10, 0 points — Size can be changed at will from one of two forms: 4 feet tall (Size -2) or an inch tall (Size -6).

Curse, ReCo, ReAn, ReTe, ReHe, ReIg 15, 5 points — Considerable annoyances and hardship can be caused to mortals (e.g., death of cattle, burning of barns).

Elfshot, PeCo 5, 2 points — A dart fired that causes pain to mortals for two Rounds. The victim must make an Intelligence + Stamina roll of 12+ to perform any action during those Rounds.

Bound By Iron — If held by iron fetters (e.g., a cage or manacles made of iron), Drwgbrawd is forced to truthfully answer questions until released.

Roleplaying Tips

In playing Pep sit motionless, but when walking, limp. Always remain open-mouthed, groaning or shrieking occasionally. For Drwgbrawd, by contrast, sit upright and alert. Speak rapidly and repetitively, giggling a little: "Oh, so-so-so much fun! He-he! Oh yes-yes!"

Story Ideas for Pep

Pep is effectively used in short stories, or in episodes of more involved stories. He may search through a Companion's packs, for example, stealing whatever interests him. Someone may even take pity on him, giving him a small kitten, which delights him for a while. He plays with it lovingly until he gets bored and dashes its brains out. Attempts to "cure" Pep could be interesting.

ushers everyone out of her house — including the village idiot Pep. Recently, her cheeses have been a disaster, smelling vile and growing mold. Arette scours the stalls for some herb or a charm which may solve her problem, though she suspects, correctly, that Pep is responsible.

Simeon and Bordet are runaway serfs from the village of Marifel. They claim to be freemen who live by foraging and hunting in the wild forests to the south, and this is partially true. Armed with a bow and a quarterstaff, the two demand money from lone travelers and occasionally raid isolated farms. They attend the fair in order to decide who is worth holding up, though they are not foolish enough to incriminate themselves by robbing anyone during or immediately after the fair. The two have never killed anyone, and would be racked with guilt if they ever did (though perhaps it is inevitable that they will). Their dream is to live off the fruit of the forest while they amass enough ill-gotten wealth to buy a farm in distant Aragon.

Various traveling entertainers — minstrels, storytellers, and jongleurs — occasionally arrive at Javielle's fair. Several locals also try to earn a few coins by staging their own inexpert performances. More heartless entertainment is also had at the expense of Pep, the village idiot.

Sir William

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength (bulging biceps) +1, Stamina (broad shoulders) +2, Presence (gloomy) -1, Communication (solemn) -2, Dexterity (fast reflexes) +2, Quickness 0

Age: 28

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Norman French (courtly) 5, Speak English (decrees) 2, Speak Provençal (with inferiors) 3, Arabic (interrogations) 1, Ride (treacherous terrain) 4, Animal Handling (falconry) 3, Diplomacy (etiquette) +1, Lance Attack (rough terrain) 3, Broadsword Attack (ambushes) 4, Broadsword Parry (surprise attacks) 4, Shield Parry (receiving charges) 4, Dodge (missiles) 3

Confidence: 0

Reputation: Bawd (locals) 4

Personality Traits: Moody +3

Weapons and Armor:

Full Ring Mail

Lance Totals: First Strike +8/+4*, Attack +7, Damage +12

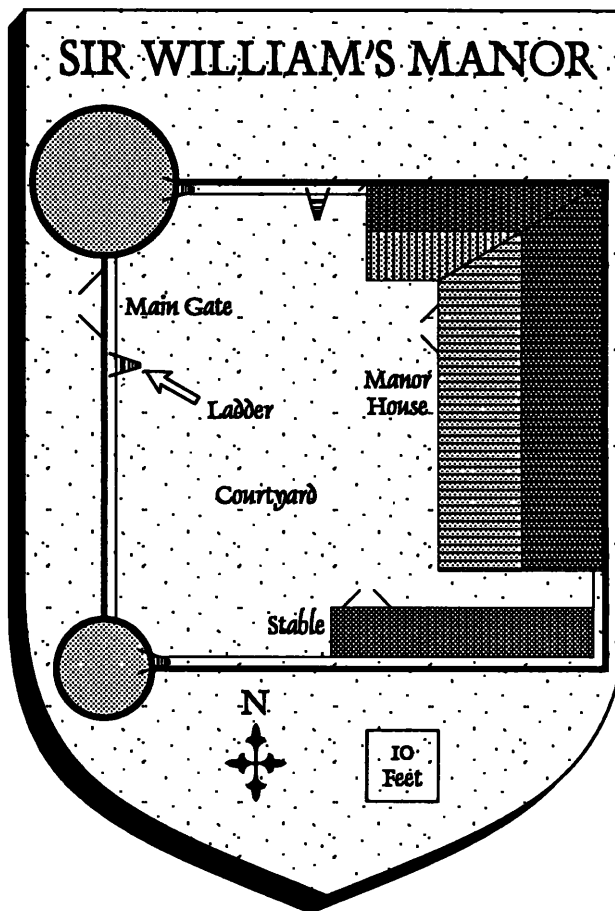
Broadsword Totals: First Strike +5/+1, Attack +10, Damage +11, Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Kite Shield Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 2/6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1/-3 (7/3 Action), Soak +10 (16 Action), Fatigue +0/-4

* unarmored/armored



Sir Guifre generally tries to insure that a Perfecti is present at Javielle to preach during the fair. The well-meaning, but unscholarly, Brother Laurent has yet to get used to being humiliated by this more fluent orator.

Other occasional visitors include Julian, the herbalist from Foix, and Guillemme the wise woman (see below).

SIR WILLIAM'S MANOR

A tall, grim man, with close-cropped hair and narrow eyes, Sir William presents a ghostly image, standing on the battlements at night wrapped in a pale, hooded Saracen's cloak. He paces the ramparts above the larger tower, in which his wife used to live until she took her own life two years ago. The locals whisper that Sir William is possessed, or bewitched.

When he returned from the Holy Land two decades ago, William's pious brother had met his maker while assaulting a heathen stronghold, and the greedy Sir William had found his fortune in the coffers of the fallen citadel. Hearing from a

Sir Tarbil

The only child of Sir William, with blue eyes and blond hair cascading to his broad shoulders, Sir Tarbil is a handsome, almost beautiful, young knight. With his strong faith and his powerful physique, his skill at arms and driving sense of honor, he is an almost perfect knight, save for his total lack of education and love of the wild mountains.

However, Sir Tarbil's chivalry does not stem from any noble ideal. Rather, it has grown from a deep revulsion—almost hatred—for his father. Although he has been brought up to honor and obey his father, which he dutifully does, Tarbil does not have to love the man. Indeed, Tarbil despises his father's cruelty, cynicism, and most of all his raucous lechery, which drove the young man's mother to commit the sin of suicide. Tarbil prays long and hard for his mother's soul, and is blinded by hatred for his father, unable to recognize Sir William's guilt and remorse.

Though motivated by hatred, that hatred does not dominate Tarbil's soul. In fact, he has two loves. First there is his secret courtship of Francesca d'Uverre, whom he woos with a honeyed tongue. He is as mesmerized by her beauty and sophistication as she is by his sincerity and charm. He also loves the freedom of riding through the dramatic beauty of the mountains. Last year, on one such romp, he met a strange old hermit who told him to find a holy sword which held the finger bone of Sante Fabia in the hilt. Although the quest nearly killed him, Tarbil now has the sword. Throughout his journeys Tarbil has stopped at most of the villages around Mistridge, and has visited the Covenant itself.

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (lacks foresight) -1, Strength (strong arms) +1, Stamina (broad) +2, Presence (pristine features) +2, Communication (poetic) +2, Dexterity (accurate) +2, Quickness 0

Age: 21

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: True Faith +3

Abilities: Charm (women) 4, Swim (turbulent waters) 3, Athletics (running) 2, Ride (in battle) 4, Etiquette (galas) 4, Legend Lore (mountain legends) 1, Broadsword Attack (mounted) 3, Lance Attack (rough terrain) 2, Shield Parry (rough terrain) 3, Dodge (rough terrain) 1

Faith Points: 2

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Reliable +3, Angry Toward Father +3

Weapons and Armor:

Full Chain Mail

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +0, Attack +9, Damage +10.

All these receive a +2 bonus if Sir Tarbil, or someone with True Faith, wields his sword.

Lance Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +6, Damage +11

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -5 (1 Action), Soak +16 (22 Action), Fatigue -4

Roleplaying Tips

Bepolite and courteous, even to obvious inferiors. Sit upright but be relaxed, and cross yourself solemnly if Satan or the devil is mentioned.

Story Ideas for Sir Tarbil

Great misery comes upon the characters if Sir Tarbil, out and abroad, disappears near the characters' Covenant. The Covenant becomes the focus of suspicion when local villagers, the last who saw Tarbil, say he rode off toward Mistridge.

Sir Tarbil could also become the comrade of Companions or Groggs at Mistridge. The young knight's adventurous enthusiasm might lead characters into an enjoyable or perilous quest.

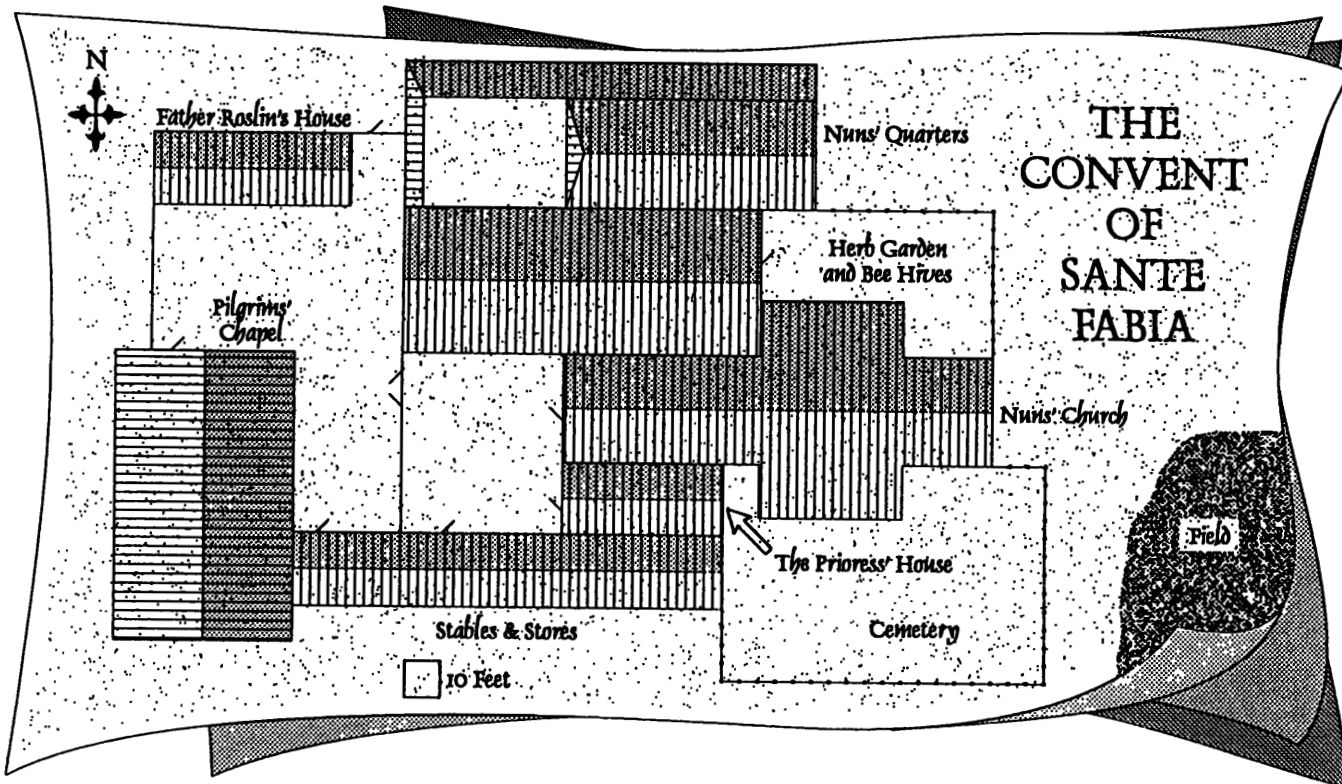
relative in Aquitaine that his English lands had been usurped, and hearing from a minstrel that wine and women are sweetest near Toulouse, the knight and his fellow warriors headed south, eventually buying a manor on politically questionable grounds. William even went so far as to marry the old landowner's daughter, Nuria. The Baron d'Uverre failed to storm William's castle, and after a three-month siege accepted Sir William's claims over the land, in return for his acceptance of a *convenientiae*. This arrangement requires William to pay sizeable taxes, to maintain the nearby bridge, and to acknowledge the Baron as his overlord.

Sir William's half dozen remaining comrades from the Crusades, fired with an energy that has not dwindled in twenty years, constantly throw raucous parties for themselves at the manor. Like-minded mercenaries and landless knights often work for Sir William as retainers without payment, satisfied for a while by the mindless exuberance of the manor's feasts.

Young women are always welcome to share the soldiers' table (and beds).

Sir William himself has ceased to be interested in this lechery and gluttony. He is occasionally persuaded to indulge himself, as in bygone years, but his participation is half-hearted. In truth, his wife's suicide has sparked a guilt not felt in two decades of cruelty. William knows his lechery and callousness drove his wife to commit suicide, and he recognizes that his son, Sir Tarbil, hates and avoids him because of his heinous deeds. Accordingly, William lets his son do as he pleases, since he knows no other way to make amends for his actions. William also hopes for forgiveness from beyond, and paces the battlements or stares across his hall, as if waiting for something. Through the day and evening he is haunted by waking dreams of his wife, and when he sleeps the nightmares only become worse.

A year ago, in an inexplicable act of piety and generosity, Sir William presented a copy of the Gospels to the church in



Piquer. Since then, much to the priest's embarrassment, someone has written inside the front cover: "*Quos Deus vult perdere, primus dementat*" (those whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes mad).

Sir William's small castle consists of a large stone hall facing into a walled courtyard, flanked by two imposing towers. (See the map for the layout of the manor.) Aside from the mercenary occupants, a few servants, guards, and hangers-on live here without any discipline. It is notable that all the female servants trek two miles to Piquer every night rather than sleep within the manor.

The manor is actually run by the oafish Hulburt, one of Sir William's old cronies. In order to fund the inhabitants' extravagant revels, Hulburt has taken to accepting bribes from the bandit Catlan (see below), whose men sometimes join in the feasting. These bandit relations cannot remain a secret from Baron d'Uverre for long, though Sir William has not realized them, and Hulburt has not told him of them.

Two old friends, William and Hulburt have drifted apart since Nuria's death, and Hulburt is becoming increasingly anxious for the knight.

Story Ideas for the Manor

The characters can become involved in Sir William's affairs if they are willing to deal with Catlan on the Baron's behalf, or

if Catlan hands Hulburt an artifact the Magi seek as part of a bribe. Alternatively, characters may be attracted to the manor by Nuria's ghost, or by the hope of an alliance against Crusaders. You may simply wish to have loutish characters stop by as guests at one of the feasts, while traveling from one place to another, just for the roleplaying.

THE CONVENT OF SAINTE FABIA

The convent of Sainte Fabia is dedicated to the name and memory of an innocent shepherd girl named Fabia, who was killed over a hundred years ago. She was loved by a dishonored knight who sought her hand. Fabia, however, had devoted herself to God. Her suitor went into a rage, pushing the girl into a rosebush, and became the maddened spirit of the Stormrider. The Stormrider struck his brother down, believing him the object of Fabia's devotion. It was then that Fabia performed her first miracle. With roses in hand, she revived the fallen knight. A stone cross was erected on the site, outside the village of Javielle.

A true daughter of God, Fabia continued to perform miracles, saving the lives of many common folk. Fatefully, she was struck down by the jealous Stormrider. After her death the

people of Javielle saw Fabía declared a saint. She was canonized and the convent of Sante Fabía was built in her honor.

Sante Fabía is traditionally depicted as a woman with a scarred left cheek, a result of her fall into the roses. She also carries three roses in her right hand.

The fourteen women who live at the convent dedicate themselves to a life of prayer and contemplation, governed by the Rule of Saint Benedict. They attend chapel services five times every day, and eat their meals in silence while their Rule or the gospels are read to them, all under the watchful eyes of the Prioress, Mother Bellanca. Between services and meals the nuns pray, study the Bible, work in the fields, and perform mundane tasks necessary to keep the convent running.

The convent still holds most of the remains of Sante Fabía, which are held as relics beneath the altar of the chapel. Thus, the convent has a Divine Aura of 5. (See the map for the convent's layout.) The convent has accordingly become a local center for pilgrimage, to which those in need journey with the hope that Sante Fabía will help them. Some are diseased, barren, or cursed, but a number are soldiers with wounds which cripple or pain them — the Saint's first and greatest miracle was to heal a terrible battle wound. These visitors are not allowed within the main part of the convent or into its church. They come and pray in the small chapel which houses Sante Fabía's remains, the most pious — and the most desperate — praying on their knees for days without rest.

The greatest number of the convent's pilgrims are present on October 23rd, the official Day of Sante Fabía. The day has developed into a minor festival. Pedlars, souvenir sellers, acrobats and minor merchants set up in front of the convent's gates, usually with a troupe of jongleurs amateurishly performing plays based on the life of the Saint. Mother Bellanca frowns on many of these activities, but the donations of the pilgrims are a valuable source of income for the convent, so she does little to discourage the buskers.

Indeed, since Mother Bellanca became Prioress, the Rule of Saint Benedict has been breached at the convent more often than ever before. The convent produces all of its own food, and the donations of pilgrims and passing travelers (moving between Foix and Aragon) provide a considerable income. This money has come to be spent on the luxuries of a small minority of the Sisters, three or four of noble birth who sit beside the Prioress at meals, eating from silver plates and drinking fine wine from jeweled goblets. Certainly, these few do little of the work in the fields. Sloth has crept into the convent. The Prioress has even been known to go hunting with nobles near Foix, and a silk dress protects her body from the coarseness of her woolen robes. Even less well-born nuns live better than suits their position, and they do not find it strange, maybe out of a desire for more luxuries, that higher-born Sisters should live better than they.

Mother Bellanca's appointment as Prioress was not, in any case, due to any exemplary piety. She is a sophisticated, courtly lady, not well-suited to the contemplative life. Her appointment was due largely to the fact that the Bishop of Foix is her cousin.

Because the Catholic Church does not allow women to become priests, the convent has to appoint a Chaplain. At present, this post is held by Father Roslin, whose natural lifespan is likely to end during the next decade, much to the relief of the Prioress. He is appalled by the nuns' impropriety, and is constantly amazed that Mother Bellanca has so little to say in the Confessional. When he does die, Roslin's successor will probably be a relation of one of the nuns — suitably lazy and corrupt.

Story Ideas for the Convent

A female fugitive from the Covenant, or a book in the convent's possession, might prove most difficult to extract from the nuns, especially if the characters are predominantly male.

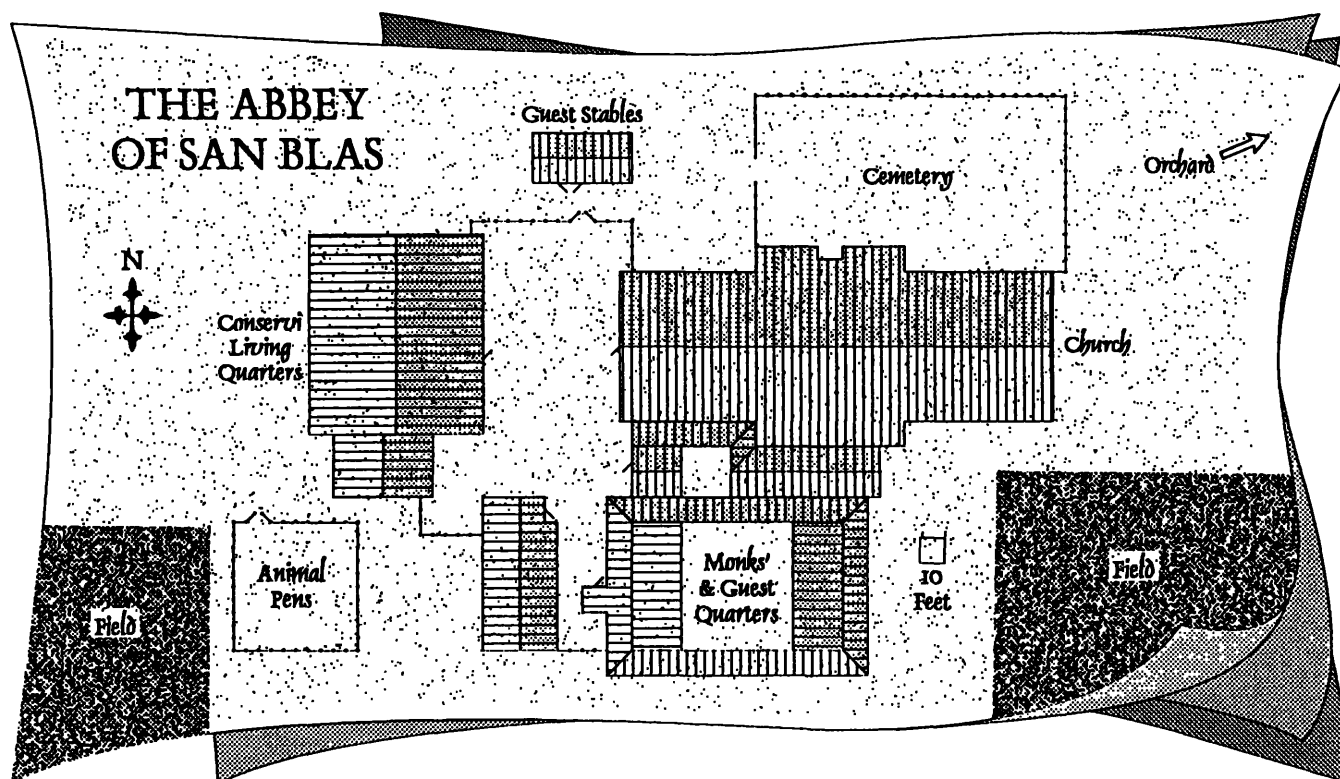
THE ABBEY OF SAN BLAS

The Abbey of San Blas is a community of pious Cistercian Monks. It was founded many years ago on a donation of land given to the Cistercian Order by one of Baron d'Uverre's predecessors. See the map for the layout of the abbey.

The Cistercian Order grew out of the decadence of the Benedictine Order, in the late eleventh century. Zealous reformers established an Order which was to return to the original ideals of Christian monasticism: separation from the world and its treasures, and devotion and obedience to God. Now, however, the Cistercians are becoming as corrupt and decadent as the Benedictines. Many of their abbeys are extremely rich, and wealthy men join the Order to gain power and to maintain opulent lifestyles.

As yet, the decadent decline of the Cistercians has not fully affected San Blas, though the monks are somewhat inclined toward a luxuriant lifestyle, and wish to further pursue one. Still, the Pope sees the local Order as vital toward combating heresy in the Languedoc, and the monks are eager to help Montsegur protect the faith. After all, their services will no doubt be rewarded, perhaps with further gifts of land (from Sir Guifre's estates). And the current, more devout Abbot, an aging man named Vincent, will probably be replaced by an outsider — maybe a rich, more lax French noble.

The abbey already owns two villages, Marifel and Pasaquine, both of which are remarkably free from heresy. These villages adequately support the fifteen monks and thirty "*conversi*" (lay brothers) who live at the abbey. The monks follow a rigorous



schedule of prayer and study, while the *conversi* perform menial tasks.

The monks have also gathered a remarkable collection of books in the last few decades. These tomes are kept in locked cupboards in the cloisters. A number have been donated by knights returning across the Pyrenees, seized from the Moors in Spain, in return for which the monks celebrate special masses for the souls of their benefactors. These books include excellent Arabic translations of Aristotle and some texts on mathematics and astrology. There are also books on the lives of the saints (hagiographies), the writings of great saints and Church Fathers, a few theological texts copied from the University of Paris, and of course a Bible. Though the abbey's Divine Aura, 5, overwhelms the rational potential in many of these foreign books of knowledge, the books could sponsor a realm of Reason if properly cultivated by a rational mind.

One of the abbey's most notable monks is the young Alfons, a gifted scholar who is trying to reconcile Aristotle's theology with Christianity. He has learned Arabic in order to study Aristotle (since many Latin versions are clumsy translations), and is keenly interested in the writings of other scholars, particularly those of a man named Clavius.

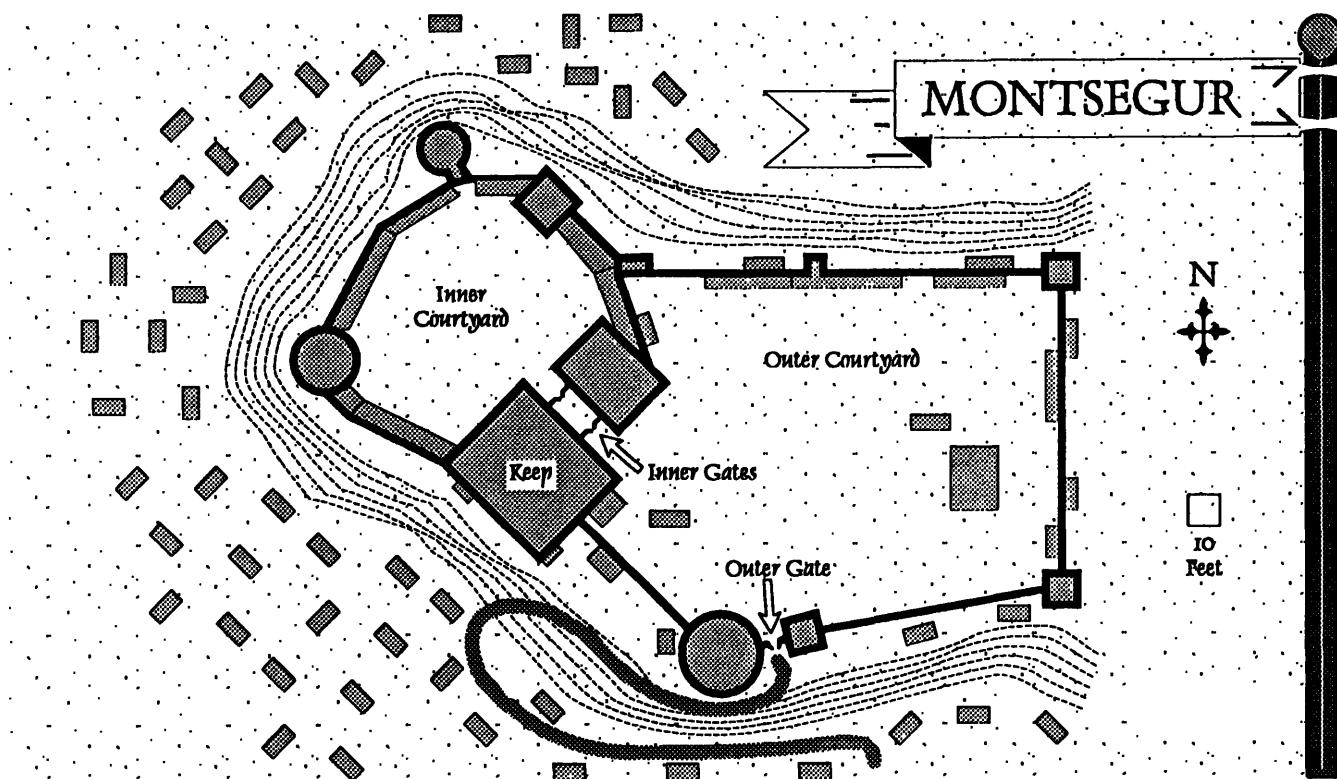
A less likeable character at the abbey is the buck-toothed Menard, who has managed to ingratiate himself with the Abbot

and now oversees all the mundane administration of the abbey. A smarmy cretin, constantly wringing his hands, Menard tries to please everyone all the time, the Abbot most of all. He is not above lying to achieve his goals, though Menard is largely too weak to commit any greater mischief. He dreams that good reports of his abilities will reach the Order's leaders so that he may one day become Abbot.

Story Ideas for the Abbey

Characters might visit the abbey, probably in hopes of gaining access to its library. A murder occurs, somehow tied to the characters' arrival. Menard asks the characters, as outsiders, to investigate. Perhaps he expects that, as outsiders, they can approach the matter dispassionately. More likely, he hopes to cover something up, or already knows much of the truth and hopes to appear innocent by seeking investigative help, all the while trying to hide any clues that might link him to the crime. In any case, Menard's main motive is self-advancement and self-preservation.

Adventure in the village of Pasaquine, and with the monks of San Blas, is made possible by the *Ars Magica* story supplement, *The Pact of Pasaquine*.



MONTSEGUR

A large, well-fortified castle built on the end of a steep ridge in the Pyrenees, this is the stronghold of the Baron DuSegur. Originally built to guard against the Moors, the castle commands an important pass into Aragon, and has become extremely wealthy as a result of the tolls it levies on travelers. See the map for the layout of the castle.

The current Baron, Edouard, is a firm supporter of the Cathars, although he has not let their teachings interfere with his luxurious lifestyle. He is a connoisseur of expensive wines, and his deeply dyed clothes are richly embroidered. A striking figure, with his rich clothes, bald head and black beard, he is rarely seen outside his stronghold.

The Baron's heir is Sir Justin, who is already a man in his late twenties. He has inherited his father's expensive tastes, but his faith in the Cathars' teachings have led him to moderate his lifestyle.

A dignified man, made slightly self-conscious by his incurable lisp, Sir Justin is often found traveling between Toulouse and Montsegur, accompanied by numerous guards. He is often away from the castle, overseeing the administration of his father's few far-flung lands. When traveling Justin usually tries to visit Toulouse, where he spent five years studying law and philosophy at the University. During these visits he frequently commissions artists to create pictures,

tapestries and poems based on Catharist religious themes, and also maintains contacts with scholarly associates.

Montsegur is the home of several hundred Cathars, almost all of whom are full Perfecti. They live in shacks and caves on the slopes beneath the castle. Many weave or carve wood to make the money they need to survive. Others beg in nearby villages, while many survive solely on the generosity of travelers and, most importantly, the Baron.

Several Cathars leave or arrive every day, and the castle is becoming a meeting place for Perfecti, particularly their leaders. The foremost amongst these leaders is Guerau, the Cathar Bishop of the area. An extremely thin, but apparently healthy man, Guerau is of almost limitless courage and faith, and has become quite immune to the sufferings of the world. He lives at Montsegur much of the time, teaching and tending his spiritual flock.

Given the intensity of its inhabitants' religious devotion, Montsegur and its surrounding lands have a Divine Aura of 5.

Story Ideas for Montsegur

The inhabitants of Montsegur are certainly interested in establishing intellectual and artistic relations with Mistrige. In the event of a Crusade in the Val du Bosque, associations between the characters and Montsegur immediately incriminate the characters as heretics or sympathizers, to be put to death. Should characters of Mistrige side with the Cathars, the Baron DuSegur can certainly use the aid of the Magi, for his

castle becomes a victim of Crusader siege. If characters try to preserve themselves and their Covenant, they may turn against DuSegur, to ingratiate themselves with the Crusaders. Assuming this course of action, characters can act as spies and ambassadors, sharing what they know of Montsegur.

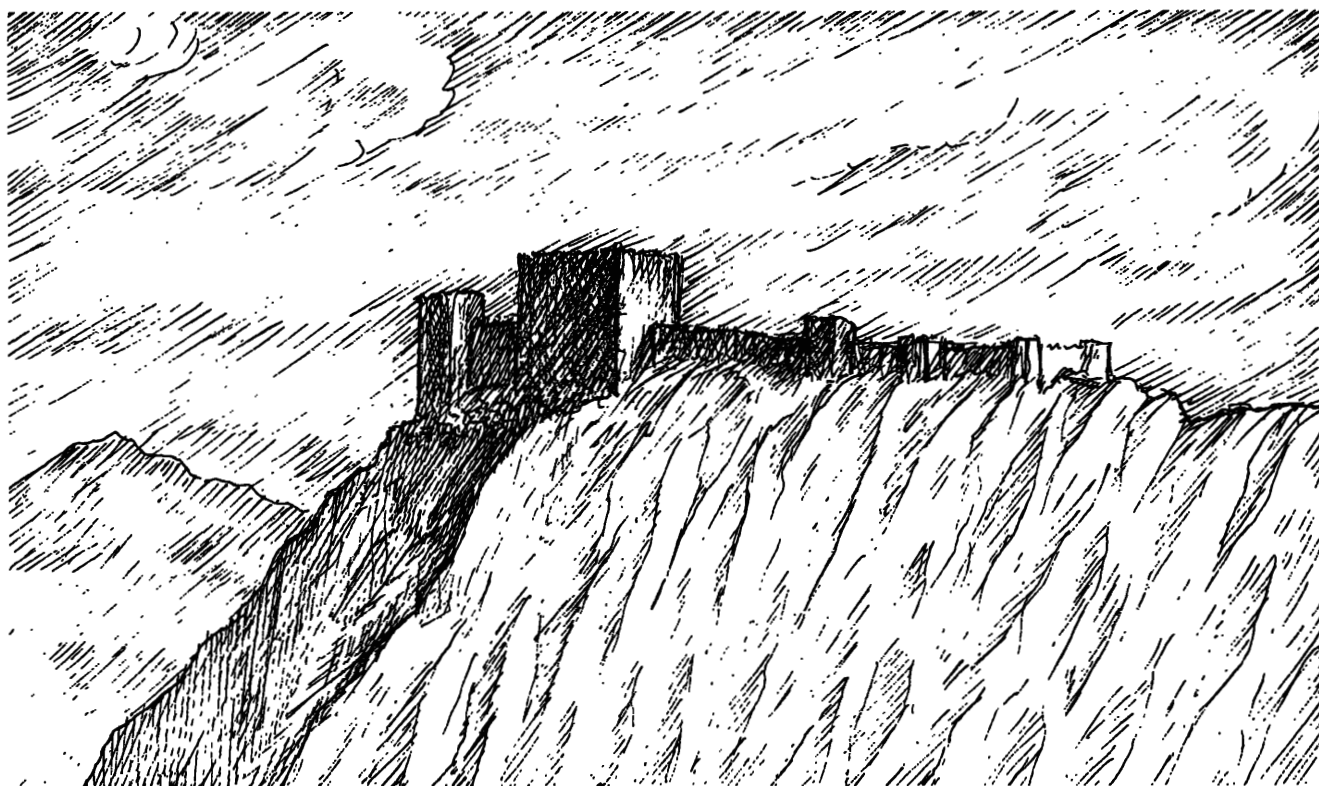
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY

The following are interesting people characters can meet on their journeys and errands in the Val du Bosque. A few are people characters might seek out for different reasons, maybe to gain information or services, or simply to dispatch. Most of these folk are somehow related to or involved with the locales and people of the Val du Bosque, described above.

GUILLEME

In the middle of the wood which lies between Javielle and Cariel, a ramshackle cottage with a shaggy, thatched roof huddles against a small cliff. Here the old widow and wise woman Guillemme lives with her granddaughter, tending her goats and vegetables. Guillemme's granddaughter, Jenine, is slowly learning the hedge craft, and acts as the old woman's eyes much of the time, given Guillemme's failing sight.

A thin, pale woman, with grey hair and a receding hairline, Guillemme acts as midwife for the peasants of Javielle and Cariel, and is often consulted on other matters, as well. Many serfs come to her if they or their animals are ill, if their crops are failing, or if they hope to be successful in some endeavor (e.g., giving birth to a son rather than a daughter, or seducing a neighbor).





Guilleme's remedies are traditional, and incorporate herbalism, ritual, and prayer. While many remedies have no effect of their own, they often demonstrate psychological benefits in their subjects. Should her remedies not work, Guilleme suggests to her customers that they must have improperly performed the required rituals, prayed too briefly, or took the remedy at the wrong time of day. Like most people, she assumes that illness is caused by sin (so a cure cannot be effective unless the subject is repentant), and that all things are ultimately within God's power (so a remedy is useless if God, in His infinite wisdom, wishes to maintain a person's suffering). Guilleme's remedies often seem to work, though, and most people accept hers as the best form of medicine available to them.

Respectful of all pious and wise people, but also mildly curious, Guilleme has grown confident after years of enjoying the status afforded by her age and occupation. Should she encounter a Magus she aggressively interrogates the Magus, without malice or arrogance, trying to ascertain exactly what powers and skills the Magus has.

An undemonstrative person, Guilleme is constantly amazed by the folly of her fellow humans as they, for example, waste such energy at squabbling about how to worship God. Guilleme often shows more tenderness to animals than to her fellow human beings.

Should Guilleme ever be insulted, she launches into a controlled but prolonged tirade against the arrogance and disrespectfulness of today's people, all the while waving her gnarled stick.

Roleplaying Tips

Huddle yourself up, chew distractedly on your cheek and furrow your eyebrows. Peer at people closely when they speak to you, and answer politely, but sharply, to the point.

Story Ideas for Guilleme

Guilleme is an ideal character for brief encounters as opposed to prolonged tales. Perhaps a magical creature, which the characters are hunting for its vis, takes shelter with Guilleme. She takes it in and cares for it in her hut, making it very difficult for characters to get at the creature, short of sneaking into the cottage and angering the old woman.

Characters may disregard the woman's integrity, treating her with disrespect, but they realize the folly of such action in continued relations with local mundanes. The locals hold Guilleme in high esteem and refuse to deal with the characters until they make peace with the old woman. There's no telling what that might involve.

XAVIER, "THE HOOD"

An occasional visitor to the villages of the Val du Bosque is an aged storyteller. No one knows where he spends his winters, but he is never seen between the end of October and the beginning of May. He claims the valley is too cold for him in winter, but that, too, is just another story. His hair is quite

Guilleme

Characteristics: Intelligence (shrewd) +2, Perception (prepared) +1, Strength (feeble) -2, Stamina (weary) -3, Presence (wrinkled) -1, Communication (brusk) -2, Dexterity (stiff fingered) -1, Quickness (tired legs) -2

Age: 53

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Poor Eyesight -1 (-3 to vision rolls), Exceptional Talents +1

Abilities: Folk Ken (peasants) 5, Healer (childbirth) 5, Animal Ken (farmstock) 5, Herbalism (female fertility) 2, Speak Provençal (biting terms) 4, Pretend (medicines) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Healer (villagers) 3

Personality Traits: Bitter +2, Friendly -3, Fond of Animals +2, Devout +2, Curious +1

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak -4 (2 Action), Fatigue -3

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Xavier, The Hood

Characteristics: Intelligence (witty) +2, Perception (alert) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (enduring) +1, Presence (captivating) +4, Communication (storytelling) +6, Dexterity 0, Quickness (languid stride) -1

Age: ?

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Blood +2 (+3 to Natural Resistance rolls), Well-Traveled +1, Jack-Of-All Trades +3 (no penalties to attempt unskilled actions), Exceptional Talents +1

Abilities: Storytelling (nonsenses) 12, Speak Provençal (legends) 7, Survival (finding shelter) 4, Track (woods) 2, Direction Sense (woods) 4, Animal Handling (domestic animals) 4, Empathy (children) 3, Faerie Lore (Seelie Court) 5, Legend Lore (Celtic legends) 4, Quarter Staff Parry (ambushes) 4, Quarter Staff Attack (standing ground) 4, Dodge (charges) 5

Confidence: 5

Reputation: Mysterious (imaginative folk) 5

Personality Traits: Sensitive +3, Curious +3

Weapons and Armor:

Quarter Staff Totals: First Strike +9, Attack +6, Damage +8, Parry Defense +10 (16 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +4 (10 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

grey, almost the same color as his piercing eyes, and from his pitted face one can guess he is nearing sixty years of age. His movements are those of a younger man, though, and no one can remember a time when his hair was less grey or his face less worn.

With the joyous smile of a child and the piteous frown of a saint, Xavier is a man of unmistakable presence. With a movement of his hand he can silence a room full of people, and with the first few enigmatic lines of an impossible tale his audience is enthralled — *"In a week without Wednesdays, in the days when the weeping willows sang to the wind in delight, every dark mountain of the east waited to bow to a shining face like morning. And one night in such times, a child stepped out under a black-blue sky. . ."* There is no compulsion to listen to Xavier's tales, but his stories have a natural magic, an innocent joy.

An astute listener of Xavier's tales may suspect his words are metaphorical. A priest may think the above lines, for example, refer to the coming of Christ. Another could interpret the lines to mean that, before Mercury was honored (*"sans Mercredi"*), the world was a place of beauty and innocence, without suffering, and that all the lands east of Ireland awaited the coming of the Celtic hero Lugh, The Shining One. Indeed, Magi receiving this tale might perceive the words to mean just this — a tale about a peaceful world, before the origins of the Order of Hermes. Xavier is a weaver of words, and he weaves them in whatever patterns please him, though never meaning any harm by it.

When he has spent a week or so in a village, Xavier walks away, clad in a brown woolen robe, leaning on his staff, and as likely as not to have some adopted, stray dog trotting at his heels. As Samhain draws close at the end of October, Xavier heads for the Faerie Mound (discussed below) near Mistridge, to return to Arcadia for the winter.

Xavier's inexplicable nickname, The Hood, was given to him by the Fay. *"Hud"* means enchantment, and was originally a faerie compliment applied to his storytelling. With a little faerie blood in his veins, Xavier wandered up to the Faerie Mound several decades ago, and delighted the inhabitants with his stories. Originally the Fay imprisoned him in Arcadia, but without his own world to inspire him, Xavier's talent began to wane. Now Xavier is bound to spend half of each year with the Fay and half with mortals. Xavier's stories have grown into marvellous nonsense as a result of his experiences in two realities, and his life in Arcadia seems to have halted his aging.

Roleplaying Tips

Sit at ease but be alert. Move your limbs rarely, but when you do make the movements expressive. Expect to be taken notice of, and you probably are.

Story Ideas for Xavier

Traveling the valley, Xavier picks up lots of information, and this, if nothing else, gives him occasion to visit Mistridge — which intrigues him, as indeed most things do. During visits





to Mistridge, Xavier tells tales to earn his keep, and information he has about the surrounding world is often embellished into the metaphors of his tales. Xavier does not admit to his faerie relations, but if they're discovered he can act as an ambassador between Magi and the Seelie Court of Arcadia.

CATLAN

Characterized by his almost triangular face and bloodshot left eye, Catlan is the leader of a gang of twenty outlaws who have taken to infrequently plundering traders' carts between Foix and Montsegur. They also raid the farms of less impoverished peasants. And, though the bandits don't openly admit it, they supplement their income by making handcrafts, sold to peddlars too poor to bother robbing.

In order to avoid the wrath of the local nobles, the bandits pay bribes to Sir William's lieutenant, Hulburt, who directs any searchers away from the band's woodland hideout. Hulburt also warns the bandits of possible dangers.

Originally Catlan was a Companion at Windgraven. The Magi at that foul Covenant made repeated attempts to control his will, leaving him in a fractured state of mind, a state in which rebellion comes to him in unnatural excess. His sole motivation in life is the refusal to bow down to any authority. He hates the rich, the nobles, the Church, and the Magi, though, as a result of his mental imbalance, he is quite unaware of his hatreds. Catlan is not stupid by any means, and doesn't endanger himself unnecessarily. However, he only avoids

Catlan

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (blinded by anger) -1, Strength 0, Stamina (angry) +2, Presence (bad eye) -1, Communication (angry) -3, Dexterity 0, Quickness (fleet-footed) +1

Age: 26

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Disfigured -1 (-3 to Presence rolls based on looks), Strong Personality +1

Abilities: Leadership (mentally unbalanced people) 4, Speak Provençal (ranting) 3, Intimidation (peasants) 4, Stealth (woods) 4, Survival (woods) 2, Broadsword Attack (wild melees) 3, Broadsword Parry (against authority figures) 3, Composite Bow Attack (targeting leaders) 4, Dodge (against mounted opponent) 4

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Rebellious +6

Weapons and Armor:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +7, Attack +7, Damage +9, Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Composite Bow Totals: Rate 1, Attack +5, Damage +9

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +2 (8 Action), Fatigue +2

death or capture because of his stubborn refusal to "let the bastards win."

Catlan's experience with the Magi of Windgraven also left him belligerent, unbelievably stubborn, and utterly incapable of thinking sensibly about himself. He cannot comprehend the finality of death or the importance of personal danger, and so has lost all sense of fear. Attempts to frighten him have absolutely no effect. Furthermore, he cannot even talk about himself, even to explain his motives or desires.

A few of Catlan's followers are just thieves and petty brigands, but most are hardened Groggs from Windgraven who followed Catlan when he left. Their minds are severely damaged as well — broken wills, split personalities, paranoid delusions, and neuroses — and most are disconcertingly uncommunicative.

Catlan wears loose green and brown woolen clothing, and carries a bow and a quiver of arrows across his back. Numerous large, empty pouches hang from his belt, along with a string of shrunken human heads — symbols of his most prized kills.

Roleplaying Tips

Allow your facial muscles to twitch occasionally, and stare at the floor. Only look someone in the eye if they've provided you with a chance to lash out at an authority figure.

Story Ideas for Catlan

As well as appearing in obvious plots, like characters' attempts to destroy the brigands on Baron d'Uverre's behalf, more interesting stories can arise with Catlan and his band. For example, a relative of one of the characters might be among a group of hostages taken by the brigands to blackmail a village. The characters have to pay the ransom or stage a fairly competent rescue attempt. Though the characters might not know it, Catlan has no qualms about killing a few peasants.

Although Catlan does not consider openly attacking Magi, he delights in annoying or frustrating them. He might capture one of the Covenant's messengers (though not a Redcap), and lays a trap for the characters when they come to collect the victim. The characters are allowed to follow the bandits' trail (too easily, perhaps) to a hut in the woods, where an ambush awaits. Only after a hard fight do the characters find the messenger already dead. This isn't a satisfying story for the characters, but it's a great way to introduce Catlan as an anti-hero.



THE CATHARS

CHAPTER THREE

Inherent to the society, politics and religion of the Val du Bosque are the Cathars. Theirs is a religious movement, divergent from Catholicism, that both creates harmony and dissent amongst the inhabitants of the valley region. The Cathar movement also determines the fate of the valley, given the Church's response to the "heresy" in the form of a bloody Crusade. Since the Cathars are so significant to the Val du Bosque, an understanding of the Cathar movement and its impact is imperative to understanding the nature of the valley, and makes possible a wider range of stories there.

Background to the Heresy

The heresy of Catharism, as present in the Val du Bosque, is derived from places and times foreign to the valley. The Cathar movement originates from the Bogomil heresy in the Balkans, and arrived in the Languedoc in the twelfth century. The movement first took hold in the town of Albi, and thus its enemies call it the Albigensian heresy. The heretics, however, called themselves Cathars, from the Greek *Katharoi*, meaning pure.

By the end of the twelfth century, the time at which the Mistridge Saga is set, the Cathars have established footholds in several parts of France and Germany, and, in particular, have

gained a considerable following in the Counties of Toulouse and Provence — the vicinity where Mistridge is located.

The Catholic Church's response to this "invasion" is fearful, and that reaction comes with some justification. After all, with the rapid spread of a "competing" religion, it's not unreasonable for priests and bishops of the Catholic Church to wonder if their religion, and means of luxurious living, might see an end.

BELIEFS

An understanding of how Catharism can spread so quickly in a corrupt world becomes evident with an understanding of the religion's precepts.

Why, the Cathars ask, has a good God created a world with so much suffering and evil? Why, instead of simply eradicating sin, they continue, did God send Christ to earth? Their answers are simple. The world, according to the Cathars, was not created by the Good God at all, but by an Evil Entity. Thus, they conclude that the world and all its material things are innately evil. And, since the Good God is said to be unable to control the evil creation of the world, it was necessary for Him to send His Son to lead humanity to salvation, through the soul.

The Cathars are divided on the question of who this Evil Creator is. Some claim He is a being equal to the Good God, while others claim He is a *demiurge*, a lesser deity created by, but

traitorous to, the Good God. It is this Entity which is sometimes, according to the Cathars, identified as Lucifer, the Devil.

The Cathar faith is made popular in Mythic Europe because it refutes many of the conventions of the Catholic Church, conventions that common people find both oppressive and unjust. In the first place, since (the Cathars say) the world is inherently evil, aside from the actions of man, man is not considered responsible for original sin. Rather, only his body is a product of Evil's creation, whereas his soul is inherently free of sin, and may join with the Good God upon death. This joining is accomplished by embracing the "perfect" state upheld by Cathar priests, a state in which the soul is preserved above the body. Thus, upon death, Cathars go to their reward by becoming one of the religion's priests, one of the Perfecti.

This simple transcendence assures common folk a place in Heaven, whereas the Catholic Church inherently denies people their final reward, given the common person's innately tainted soul. Catharism is therefore well-received, in part, for the liberation and hope it offers.

The Cathar faith also gains support over Catholicism given the Cathars' treatment of material wealth. Whereas Catholic priests profess to live in poverty, there is no doubt that the Church has fallen from that higher ideal. Indeed, the Church is rife with corruption, proof to be found in the extensive lands and riches it possesses.

The preachers of the Cathar religion, on the other hand, are said to own no lands or wealth, and are supposedly free from corruption. Indeed, Perfecti and devout Cathars divest themselves from material wealth for fear of its inherent evil. They, rather, take vows of poverty to preserve their perfect souls. This poverty of the Cathars, in contrast to the corrupt Catholic Church, acts as testament to the piety and honesty of the Cathars. The Cathar faith therefore attracts the devotion of the common folk, whose lives have always been oppressed by wealth, or their relative lack of it. A religion is far more appealing to folk if it frowns upon things those folk lack. It's from this appeal of faith that the Albigensian movement spreads so quickly.

The Cathars' abstinence from wealth is also appealing to the common person because it puts all people on the same social level. The barrier that divides peasant, noble and priest is partly derived from a measure of what each has. Peasants own and are entitled to the least of all the classes, and are therefore held in ill regard in Mythic Europe. However, by emphasizing poverty, the Cathars put all folk on the same social level. Without material possessions to divide them, people are made equals — another appealing aspect of Catharism to the common man.

Thus, it is largely because of the corruption and inequality of the Catholic Church and medieval society that the Cathar faith gains so much support in Mythic Europe. Indeed, the movement gains particular support in the County of Toulouse, where more liberal attitudes, even among the nobility, are common. In fact, many nobles of the Val du Bosque are

supporters of the Cathars, and are even prepared to defend their faith against the armies of the corrupt Pope.

The Church's Response

The Cathar movement might not gain so much support if the corruption of the Catholic Church did not hamper its own efforts to combat heresy. The Cathar faith finds its greatest support with the common folk and sympathetic nobility. The representatives of the Catholic Church who have most contact with such folk are lowly priests. These priests, however, are often so greedy or so disinterested in their duties that they rarely own a Bible, let alone understand the sermons they preach. It's thus that the more devout and educated Cathars often illuminate the weaknesses of the Catholic Church.

In an effort to set the common man back on the path to God, the Catholic Church stages frequent debates between the clergy and the Cathars' Perfecti. The Pope hopes the Cathar religion can be proven false by such debates, and that strayed flocks will return to their true shepherds. However, by losing these debates to the more educated Perfecti, the priests of the Catholic Church only illustrate the weaknesses of the Church, thus alienating more and more souls.

Only recently has the Catholic Church developed some defensible arguments to counter Cathar doctrine. Catholic theologians now claim that all evil is the result of human sin. That is, humanity is said to choose to commit sin, particularly the sin of pride, and so turns away from God, creating evil. This argument is aimed directly against the Cathars, stating that those who follow the Cathar faith are actually doing evil, and that their only means for salvation is through the Catholic Church. This argument also provides a simple counter argument to the Cathars' explanation for the origins of evil. However, it doesn't obviously explain why bad things happen to good people, as Cathar doctrine does (evil things happen because the material world is evil). Also, the Church's argument is unlikely to convert devout Cathars, for it is merely an attempt to frighten Cathars back into the Church. Devout Cathars are beyond such fears and "threats."

THE CATHAR "ORDERS"

The Cathars are split into two ranks. The majority of them are *credentes* ("Believers"). The Believers are ordinary people committed to Cathar values to varying degrees, perhaps only honoring some teachings, such as abstinence from sex or the eating of meat. On their deathbeds, if possible, these people accept the *consolamentum* (see below), their spirits joining the Good God.

A few Cathars undergo the *consolamentum* earlier in life. They endure a lengthy period of training, up to several years long, and then accept the *consolamentum* to become full members of the Cathar sect. Such people are called "Perfecti."

The Perfecti (literally "the Perfect ones") swear to live in poverty, to avoid eating meat or eggs (the fruits of sexual union), to avoid all physical contact with members of the

Variations on Cathar Belief

There are many doctrines held by many Cathars, but not all doctrine is widely accepted. Some believe that there are two universes, one created by the Good and one by the Evil God. The Evil God is said to have captured some good souls, imprisoning them in the evil universe, where those souls are doomed to be reborn interminably. Some also believe that the cycle of a tortured soul's rebirth can only be broken by the soul's acceptance of the initiation rite, the *consolamentum*, of the Good Universe.

Some also believe that warm-blooded animals (e.g., cows, sheep, and birds) have souls, just as humans do, and to kill them is murder. Devout Cathars therefore restrict themselves to diets of fish and vegetables, abstaining from meat, milk and eggs.

Many Cathars claim that since flesh, being of the material world, is evil, Christ cannot have had a material body. The claim that Christ was purely spirit means He cannot have died on the cross. Of course, such ideals are considered a terrible heresy by Catholics, who refer to the Letters of John to defend Christ's physical existence.

A number of Cathars also expect the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world, based on the Book of Revelation. Furthermore, they believe the Pope is the Anti-Christ.

opposite sex, to remain unmarried, and to avoid pregnant women. Some also travel around preaching, and some engage in charitable acts (usually for the benefit of the Believers rather than the whole of society), like the operating of a hospice. Other Perfecti simply live in small communities, working as weavers to earn the bare minimum they require to stay alive.

The Cathars are well organized. Like the Catholics they have dioceses, each of which is overseen by a Bishop. Each of the Bishops is aided, and often accompanied by, his Elder Son and Younger Son. When a Bishop dies, he is replaced by his Elder Son. The Younger Son in turn becomes the Elder Son, and a new Younger Son is chosen by the new Bishop from the Perfecti of the area. In theory, there is no reason why these positions can't be held by women, since people of either sex may become Perfecti, but in practice the Cathars' leaders are usually male.

The Cathar hierarchy is not, however, as dictatorial as that of the Catholic Church. A Cathar Bishop does not control or command the Perfecti of his area. Also, the only important rite of the Cathar faith, *consolamentum*, can be performed by any of the Perfecti.

Consolamentum

When a Believer approaches death or wishes to become a Perfecti, the rite of *consolamentum* is performed. After several prayers are said, a Perfecti lays a copy of the Gospels on the Believer's head and says: "Holy Father, receive thy servant/handmaiden in thy righteousness and send thy grace and thy Holy Spirit upon him/her." The recipient of the service is supposed to be assured salvation, and to be freed from sin and power of evil.

It's possible, though, that people may fall from grace if they ever again dabble in the affairs of the material world. A Perfecti, for example, tarnishes his perfect soul if he collects money, eats meat, or partakes of physical relations. Likewise, a Believer who receives *consolamentum*, but survives "imminent" death, has his perfect soul stained by reverting to a physical existence. It is not unknown for Perfecti who have performed *consolamentum* on a person who survives death to suggest starvation, before the evils of the world tempt the subject's cleansed soul.

THE CATHARS AND SOCIETY

In contrast to the corrupt and hypocritical Catholic hierarchy, the people of the Languedoc are able to recognize the piety and self-sacrifice of the Cathars. Even if the heretics do little to directly benefit the people, at least they do not demand tithes, and can be respected.

The piety, self-sacrifice and fairness of the Cathars partially explains why the local nobility tolerates them, but there are other reasons. Simply enough, the nobility have come to see the heretics as a normal part of society. For decades the Cathars have not only been holding councils and debates in public, but have repeatedly confounded the local Catholic clergy who have endeavored to argue against them. When seen so regularly, and perceived to be in the "right," the Cathars establish themselves a respectable place in society.

The nobility also accept the Cathars for the practical reason that, unlike the Catholic Church, the Cathars show no interest in money, power or land. Thus, the Cathars are not a threat to noble privileges.

Furthermore, the Cathars find widespread acceptance in society because people throughout the Languedoc have friends or family who are Perfecti, or at least Believers. So, to support the persecution of the Cathars endangers the loved ones of the Languedoc's inhabitants. It comes as no surprise, then, that the persecution of the Cathars comes from regions beyond Languedoc, regions inhabited by greedy knights and landmongers.

The Albigensian Crusade

As with the other historical details presented in these pages, you do not have to religiously follow the historical events of the Crusade. You may wish to change details to fit your Saga, or even decide that a Crusade does not occur (although this and future *Ars Magica* Third Edition supplements presume it does occur, roughly according to the historical pattern). Even if you do intend to follow history and stage the Albigensian Crusade, the unexpected actions of characters may radically alter the course of history as we know it, redirecting the course of events in your Saga.

In the year 1208, Pope Innocent III becomes convinced that a military solution is necessary to eradicate heresy in the Languedoc. When, in this year, his legate is murdered in Provence, he has an excuse to call a Crusade.

In 1209, a horde of thirty thousand soldiers—knights and men-at-arms—descend upon Provence, particularly the County of Toulouse. Most are uneducated, illiterate and bigoted, and destroy the learning and art of Provençal culture along with many towns and villages. Crops are burned, towns and cities are razed, and populations are slaughtered. In the city of Beziers, for instance, fifteen thousand men, women and children are killed indiscriminately, many in the sanctuary of the Church. The order for the destruction is given by a Papal legate: "Kill them all. God will recognize his own."

The Crusaders fight for the protection of the true Christian faith, for the safety of Christendom. But more than that, they fight because, whatever atrocities they commit, participation in a Crusade insures forgiveness of all sins, promising a place in Paradise. And, most of all, the Crusaders fight for wealth. Common soldiers and minor nobles receive a share in the plunder of some of the richest cities in Christendom, and army commanders, led by the experienced English Crusader Simon de Montfort, can hope to receive the lands of heretical nobles.

The Albigensian conflict is effectively decided at the battle of Muret in 1213, wherein the defenders of the south suffer a terrible defeat. In testament to the brutal carnage and injustice caused by the Crusaders, many orthodox Catholics fight the invaders, hoping to protect their possessions. The Crusaders' further victories are demonstrated when, in 1215, the Pope awards Simon de Montfort most of the County of Toulouse, though de Montfort is killed besieging that very territory, in 1218.

The death of de Montfort may mark the eventual decline of the Crusade. In 1218 the Crusaders sign a truce with the Count of Toulouse. And, by around 1220 the initial flurry of violence is ended.

The Crusaders are now less likely to destroy towns, which they find serve the interests of their commanders. The Crusaders' army is also diminished, undermining its potency. Having ravaged the lands for so long, the Crusaders cannot expect as much loot anymore, either. Accordingly, they tend to fight only for the minimum forty days necessary to save their souls.

The next three decades of the Crusade are full of intrigue and assassination, with long sieges and only occasional battles. The local nobility largely resents the imposition of new overlords, and those formally stripped of their lands must be forcibly evicted from their castles.

The real death of the Albigensian Crusade is evident when the de Montfort family proves unable to subdue the lands—those of Toulouse—deeded to it. Those lands are passed on to Alphonse of Poitiers. When Alphonse dies, childless, the County finally passes to the King of France.

The fighting that remains is essentially political, the real combating of heresy left to the Church. The Dominican Order is active in the area, expertly preaching against the heretics. To

affirm Catholic teachings, the University of Toulouse is formally founded in 1229, with dogmatically orthodox priests as teachers. And, in 1233 the Inquisition, staffed by Dominican monks, is formed to root out heresy in the Languedoc.

Ultimately, in 1244, the great Cathar stronghold of Montsegur falls. The Crusaders regard the castle's fall as a significant political victory. They offer the four hundred defenders (knights, men-at-arms, and Perfecti) safe passage and full pardon if they repent and simply leave. Many of the knights and soldiers take advantage of the offer and are allowed to depart, unmolested, with all their possessions. The two hundred who remain are dragged down the hill and burnt. The Church claims to regain the souls of the heretics, and the northern mercenaries have their lands.

THE CRUSADE AND THE VAL DU BOSQUE

The events of the Albigensian Crusade clearly transform the order of the Val du Bosque, particularly its politics. Depending on how the events of the Crusade unfold in your Saga, different fates for the valley may arise. Provided here is one fate you may apply, and may take Saga development and story inspiration from.

The aging Baron d'Uverre is killed at Muret, or in a battle from the same period. His lands are disputed by his daughter and her husband on the one side, and his nephew Christophe on the other, both sides petitioning MistrIDGE for aid in the squabble. Ultimately, however, the disputed lands fall to a French noble, around the time of the siege of Montsegur.

The Abbey of San Blas profits from the Crusade, gaining several of Sir Guifre's villages. By the end of the Crusade the abbey's "pious" occupants are scheming, wealthy, and powerful.

Covenants that are not remotely situated in the valley, or are heavily involved in mundane affairs, are almost certainly attacked if not destroyed by the Crusaders. Such an assault takes place no later than 1215, earlier if a Covenant seems worth looting. Covenants in less accessible areas, like MistrIDGE, can hold out until as late as 1245, and may reasonably hope to be overlooked by the Crusaders. Covenants located deep in the mountains need not be affected by the Crusade at all. If you want the Crusade to devastate the Covenant of your Saga, the Crusade may even launch a formerly powerful Covenant into Winter and beyond.

THE CRUSADE AND MISTRIDGE

The involvement of MistrIDGE in the Albigensian Crusade depends first upon the characters' (and players') attitudes. They may wish to become involved in the mundanes' squabbles, on one side or the other, in violation of the Code of Hermes.

They may even maneuver within the Provençal Tribunal to get other Covenants deliberately involved in the war.

Second, the Crusaders may brand the characters as diabolists or heretics, especially if the characters have gained a bad reputation or are supportive of the Cathars. Characters' mere involvement with "blasphemous" studies, such as Arabic philosophy, is enough to prejudice the Crusaders against Mistridge. Clavius's scholarly letters may also attract unwanted attention.

Ultimately, the characters within Mistridge may feel compelled to get involved in the Crusade, to help their friends and relations in the Val du Bosque, and their allies further afield. Characters should understand, though, that their compassion and loyalty may bring about their Covenant's downfall.

THE CRUSADE AND THE ORDER OF HERMES

The Order of Hermes may also suffer as a result of the Crusade. The oldest and wisest of its Magi may be able to avert total conflict between the Order and the Dominion, but many Magi die fighting the Crusaders. By a sad irony, it may even be that, to prevent an escalation of the conflict, the Quaesitoris and Hoplites ally against those opposing the Crusaders. In such a case, Magus might fight Magus, both to defend themselves, but both with different survival motives. Such infighting amongst Magi may even lead to civil war within the Order, harkening back the terrible days of the Schism War.

In any case, several Covenants are destroyed by the Crusaders, the power of the Provençal Tribunal is severely reduced, and the entire Order of Hermes is brought dangerously close to wholesale conflict with mundane powers. The Albigensian Crusade changes the face of the Order of Hermes, just as it changes the face of Mythic Europe.

AFTER THE CRUSADE

The Albigensian Crusade completely overturns the status quo in the Languedoc. New noble families replace the old, with most newcomers loyal to the King of France, leaving only a few independent enclaves. The Cathars are destroyed as an organized alternative to Catholicism, though individual Cathar communities and wandering preachers continue to exist, many taking sanctuary in northern Italy or even within the ranks of the Templars. And sadly, the wealth and culture of the Languedoc is forever lost.

Cathar Encounters

Below are two people characters may meet in their relations with the Cathars and Crusaders. Feel free to adopt them into any story where their identities or motives are true to plot themes.



FERRANT OF AGEN

Ferrant is a courageous and devout man, as well as a learned scholar. He was attracted to Catharism while a young man, studying at the fledgling University in Toulouse. Now in his late thirties, he is the Elder Son of Guerau, the Cathar Bishop of the Val du Bosque.

Ferrant often tours villages alone, offering spiritual and emotional support to those Believers whose faith is weak. A familiar sight on the roads around the valley, with his unkempt, balding hair and whiskers, and black robes and staff, he is as popular among the *credentes* for his sensitivity and common sense as he is among the Perfecti for his knowledge and wisdom.

Ferrant's beliefs are, however, unorthodox, even for a Cathar, so he has to be extremely tactful when speaking in public. Ferrant is convinced that certain persons are incapable of rejecting the Lord of Creation, which leads him to believe that many human beings are the creations of Lucifer, probably without souls (so that in theory there would be no sin in killing them).

Based on these beliefs, Ferrant accepts the theory that there are a minority of angelic souls imprisoned in Lucifer's Universe, and that through faith, self-sacrifice and *consolamentum*, an angelic soul can return to the universe of the Good God. Since the Universes are believed joined, Ferrant ponders the question of whether they are actually joined physically, beyond the

Ferrant

Characteristics: Intelligence (learned) +2, Perception (astute) +1, Strength (weak arms) -1, Stamina (intent) +2, Presence (unassuming) -1, Communication (annoyingly inquisitive) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (energetic) +1

Age: 37

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: True Faith +3, Exceptional Talent +1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (descriptive) 4, Speak High French (debating) 3, Speak Latin (religion) 3, Scribe Latin (religion) 3, Empathy (Cathars) 5, Folk Ken (peasants) 3, Humanities (Cathar theology) 6, Diplomacy (religion) 1

Faith Points: 3

Reputations: Sensitive (local *credentes*) +2, Wise (Cathars and some eastern Bogomils) +5

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Inquisitive +3, Shy -2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +2 (8+ Action), Fatigue +2

Lunar Sphere. If that's the case, he wonders if there are more or less fortuitous times to die, based on the revolutions of the spheres. And, could those with angelic souls be more likely to be born on specific dates?

Ferrant greatly values the opinions of astrologers on these matters. He's heard that a number of astrologers live at Mistridge.

Other obscure questions also perplex Ferrant. Would numerology (such as Kabbalism) reveal a link between the Pope's name and Lucifer? And, could the stars of Mercury and Venus be angelic manifestations?

In his attempts to unravel these mysteries Ferrant has debated with the leading Cathar thinkers in the Languedoc, and has even managed to correspond with several heretical churches in the Greek eastern Mediterranean. Thus, Ferrant's fame (or infamy) has spread wider than he suspects, particularly among the scholarly.

Roleplaying Tips

Be understanding and relaxed. When you gesture with your hands, tend to keep your palms turned outward (implying honesty and openness).

Story Ideas for Ferrant

Ferrant might approach Magi in an attempt to solve his theological conundrums. Some at Mistridge (like Clavius) may find him a fascinating fellow.

Ferrant could also approach Mistridge as an envoy from Guerau, or the Baron DuSegur. Once he has established a

rapprochement with the characters Ferrant may try to enlist their support on behalf of the Cathars. At first Ferrant simply asks the characters to allow traveling Perfecti to stop and rest at the Covenant. If that request is granted, Ferrant seeks to establish further relations between the characters and the Cathars. When the Albigensian Crusade begins, Ferrant may ask the characters to protect traveling Perfecti from assassination, to rescue some who have been captured and face execution, to act as envoys for the Cathars, or even to help defend Montsegur.

TALEBOT

A burly man in his late twenties, Talebot is a grizzled and emotional Perfecti. With a shaggy beard and matted hair, his furrowed brow and smouldering eyes suggest that his calm exterior hides a tormented soul. He sleeps in barns and under bushes, avoiding humanity as much as possible. When Talebot does speak with anyone, the conversation usually turns into a religious monologue as he warns against the powers of Lucifer and the dangers of sin.

Talebot is not an intellectual or scholarly man by any means. His faith is simple, and derives from his rather pessimistic view of life. To him life is pain, sorrow, and suffering, people are corrupt, and their constant sins perpetuate the horrors of existence. Talebot has no deep understanding of Cathar theology, but it seems self-evident to him that the world is an evil place. Otherwise, he is really quite orthodox in his faith.



Talebot

Characteristics: Intelligence (simple) -1, Perception 0, Strength (large) +1, Stamina (burly) +2, Presence (unkempt) -1, Communication (passionate) +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (lumbering) -1

Age: 28

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent +1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (expansive vocabulary) 4, Empathy (careers) 6, Folk Ken (peasants) 3

Faith Points: 5

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Pained +4, Sorrowed +4, Generous +4

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +2 (8 Action), Fatigue +2

Above all, Talebot is an extremely emotional man. When he sees suffering, cruelty and corruption, he feels intense anger and sorrow. In the face of such suffering he is capable of acts of selfless generosity. If another person faces some great calamity, Talebot will walk a hundred miles or risk starvation or execution to help that person. Talebot feels no hatred, but

truly understands what it is to feel pity. It is to escape from these painful feelings that he distances himself from humanity. And, it is the strength of his emotions that fuel his faith, as he desperately prays that things need not always be thus, that there is salvation. If he did not believe that a Good God existed to offer a better future, Talebot could not go on. His faith keeps him sane. It keeps him alive.

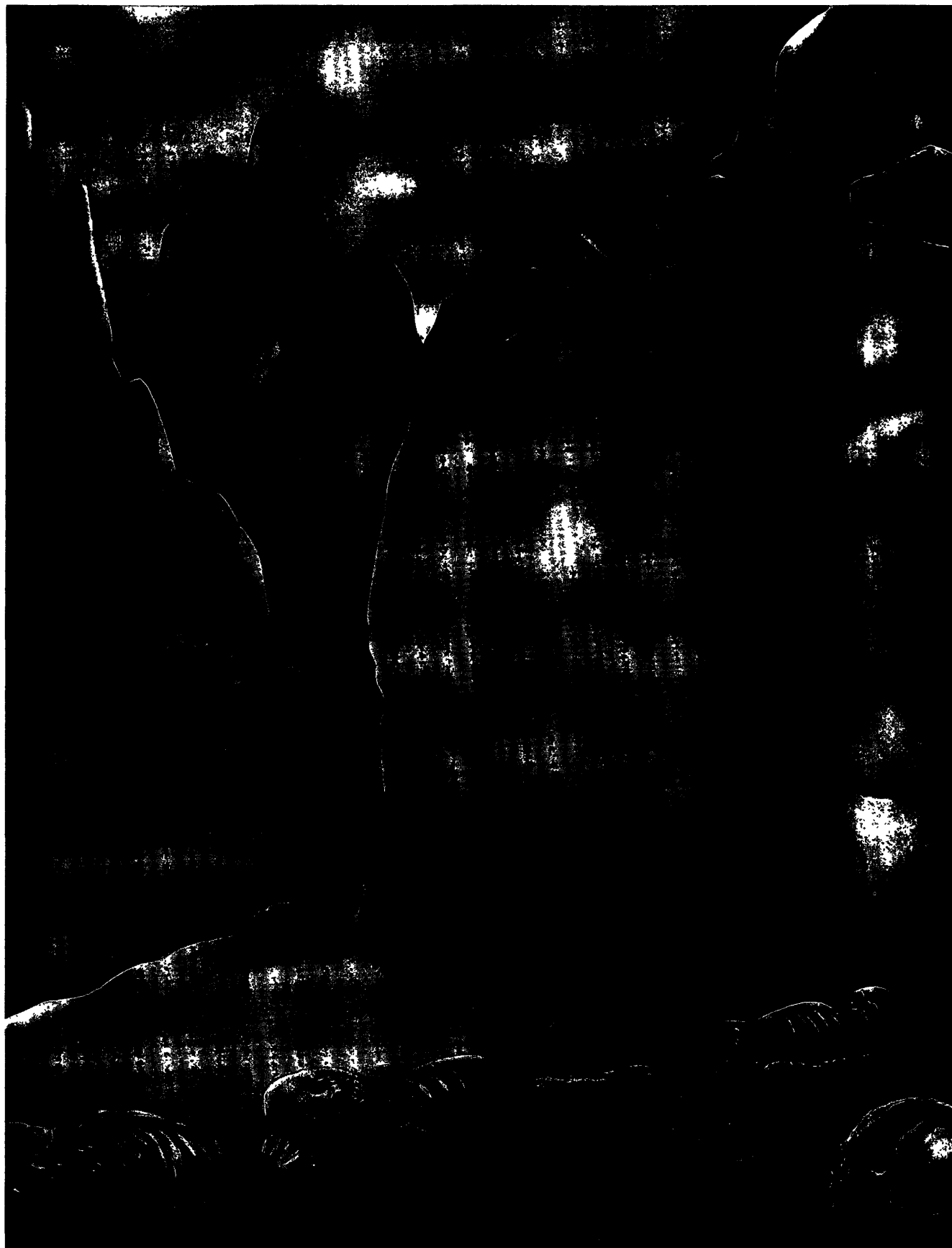
Roleplaying Tips

Furrow your brow and clench your fists when talking with people, and become visibly upset if faced by suffering or corruption.

Story Ideas for Talebot

Talebot might save a character's life, maybe giving food and comfort to a wounded character who is separated from her fellows. Talebot could also fetch help for the character. Either possibility can lead to a fast friendship.

During the Crusade Talebot's friend might be endangered again, and in his attempts to assist, Talebot is captured by the Crusaders, who intend to execute him. Do the characters feel responsible? Do they dare a rescue attempt? Such a turn of events might prove interesting if Mistrudge is trying to stay out of the Crusade.



MYTHIC PLACES

CHAPTER FOUR



The Val du Bosque is peppered with strange and magical places where unusual beings exist and peculiar events occur. These places are largely known and feared by common folk, who seek to preserve their immortal souls from evil and the supernatural. Since mundane folk don't fully understand these odd places, they often invent rumors about the locales. Adventurous covenfolk often seek the truth behind these rumors, investigating mythic places. But, be warned, doing so without caution can lead to harm, insanity, death, and other fates too horrible to imagine.

The mythic places that follow are purely for your use as Storyguide. Each of the places is located on the color map of the Val du Bosque, or is depicted with a map of its own. That doesn't mean that you have to incorporate all the locales into your Mistrudge Saga. If you would rather leave some out, simply reduce the significance of mapped locales to peasant rumor and nothing more. And, if you wish, invent more mythic places that suit the themes and trends of your Saga.

Regardless of the mythic places you use in your Saga, all are invaluable story tools. These places alone offer enough drama and conflict to inspire an infinite number of tales for the Mistrudge setting. A mythic place need not even be the focus of a story. One may be visited casually, or may only make a "cameo appearance" as characters travel beyond it. Ultimately, mythic places in the Val du Bosque can become mainstays of your stories as the characters become familiar with and seek out

locales, in search of certain plants, animals, or the services of magical inhabitants.

The mythic places described here need not be used solely in a Mistrudge Saga. They can be lifted directly from this book and used in any other story or setting. How the mythic places of the Val du Bosque are used is up to you and your Troupe.

Horn's Hill

Many centuries ago, before the Romans conquered Gaul, an important shrine stood on Horn's Hill. It was dedicated to an ancient god whom the invading Romans called Cernunnos, a horned fertility deity who ruled the animals of the forest. The god was secretly worshipped by the native folk throughout the Roman occupation, and the Hill's shrine was even reestablished in the Fourth Century AD. However, the coming of Christianity was a fatal blow to the old god, who has now retreated into Arcadia.

Today some of the locals of the Val du Bosque still speak of an old god living in the hills, and a few claim to have seen his companion, a great stag. A small shrine is maintained at Horn's Hill, and optimistic locals sometimes dig holes on the Hill, looking for a treasure rumored to be buried there. In Plaplean, on the first of May, the villagers still hold a festival in honor of the ancient god. They stage a great feast, in which a straw effigy of a horned man sits at the head of the table. Though the village priest mutters a few Christian prayers before the meal, it is clear even to him that the feast is a pagan affair.

THE HILL

To the mundane observer, Horn's Hill seems an ordinary hill that simple folk have come to venerate. The Hill actually has levels of Faerie *regio*, which, when entered, lead one further into the Faerie realm, and closer to the supernatural occupants who reside on the hill. The map of the Hill illustrates the location and range of the *regio* boundaries.

The concept of supernatural *regio* is presented in the Realms Chapter of *Ars Magica* Third Edition. The rules presented there also state how characters may enter, leave and understand *regio*.

The Mundane Level

If a visitor does not or cannot pass into Horn Hill's levels of Faerie *regio* — the mundane level alone is visited — the Hill appears relatively ordinary. At the top of the Hill stands a great oak tree. Its branches are garlanded by villagers with wreaths of withered flowers and tattered ribbons. Located beneath the tree's branches are the remains of a makeshift shelter, suggesting a vagrant has recently stayed here.

The First Level (Aura 1)

The first level of the Faerie *regio* exists just "above" the mundane world and has a Faerie Aura rating of one. The Hill on this level assumes a different appearance than on the mundane level. This level includes a shrine which is tended by Gillet and his family (see below), who worship the ancient god of the Hill.

From the boughs of the tree the family hangs bright ribbons and flowers which remain fresh for months after their picking. The family also places offerings of food in the sturdy wooden hut they have constructed to house the makeshift shrine. Sometimes Gillet even sleeps at the shrine in hopes of receiving prophetic dreams. The shrine consists simply of a table bearing an ancient pair of antlers and Gillet's frequent offerings.

Gillet is a simple freeman, scratching a living from fields on the edge of Plaplean. He tends the shrine as his father did before him, believing that his offerings are received by faeries and ancient powers, who safeguard the fertility of his village. Gillet is therefore ignorant of the true power which resides at the Hill. Gillet and his family can move freely in and out of the first Faerie *regio* level, and receive considerable respect from the local villagers, being honored as the ancient power's agents. However, the family members do not fully understand the Faerie realm they enter. They simply believe the ancient powers have a magical place in which offerings are to be left.

The Second Level (Aura 3)

"Above" the Faerie level that houses Gillet's shrine is a realm of more potent faerie power. Here the oak tree is stronger and more gnarled than in the lower levels. A sturdy wooden

hall, not a shack or shrine, is also sheltered beneath the tree's branches.

The hall is the home of Coffa, the embodiment of the peoples' "memory" of the ancient god Cernunnos. Coffa seems to be an ancient, haggard man, who is clad in rags and wears a heavy gold torque about his neck. His appearance and power reflect the peoples' reverence for the ancient deity. If the old god is completely forgotten by the people of the valley, Coffa fades away. If the people begin to worship the old god once again, Coffa grows in strength, stature and power.

The hall contains simple Celtic furniture, including a table laden with food, which corresponds to the altar on the lower *regio* level. If Coffa removes any of this food, some of the offerings disappear from Gillet's shrine. While Coffa is rarely interested in eating, he often throws food to the animals who live around the hall on this *regio* level. A remarkable feature of

Coffa

Faerie Might: 25

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence (ancient knowledge) +4, Perception (disinterested) -2, Strength (brawny) +2, Stamina (tough) +2, Presence (compelling) +3, Communication (captivating) +3, Dexterity 0, Quickness (casual) -2

Personality Traits: Lethargic +1, Miserable +1

Reputation: None (in current society)

Confidence: 1

Combat Totals:

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), **Soak** +2 (8 Action), **Fatigue** +2

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Speak Provençal 4

Powers: As the peoples' memory of Cernunnos, Coffa has access to the full range of the old god's powers, but has only a fraction of the god's might.

Curse, PeHe, PeCo, PeMe, PeAn 30, 4 points — Can inflict a curse as if the victim has the -3 Flaw, *Cursed*.

Communicate with Animals, InAn 20, 0 points

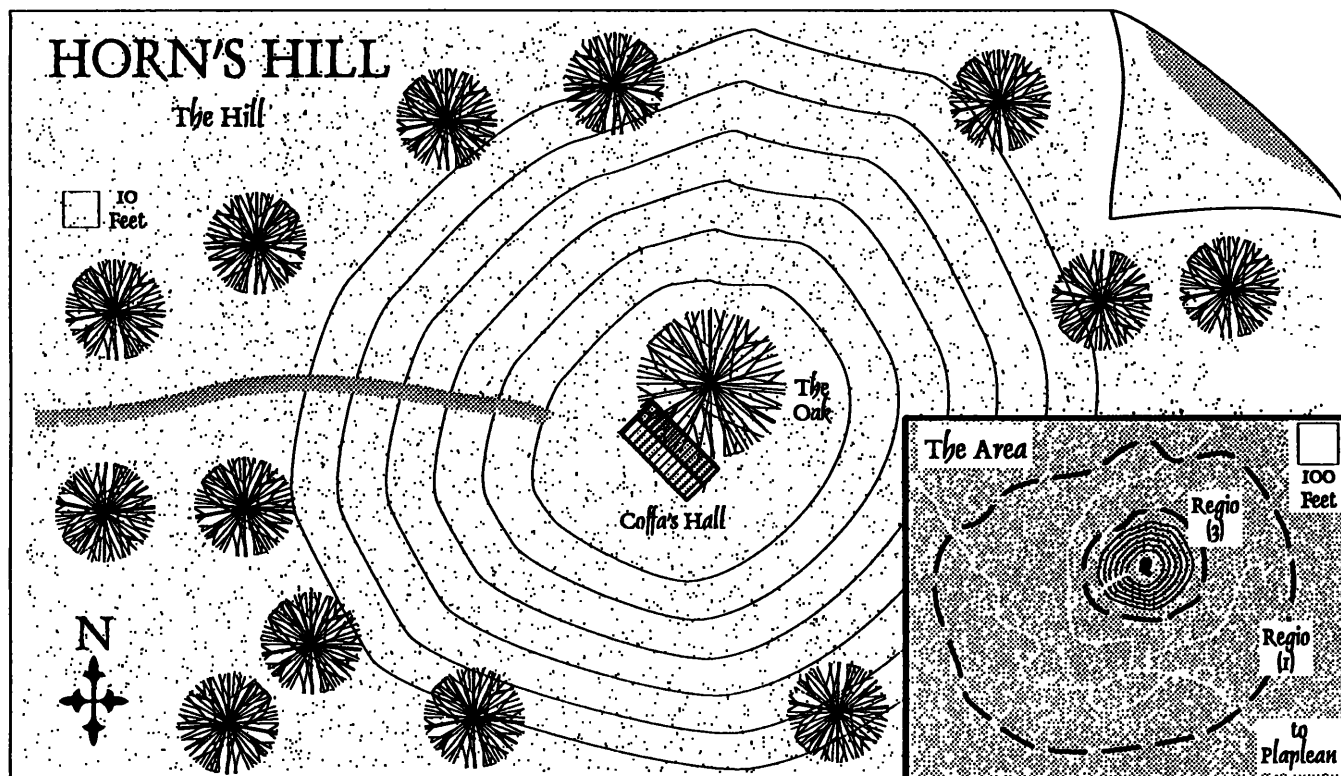
Shapechange to Animal, MuCo(An), 2 points — It takes a Round to change. Physical statistics for the animal assumed are used, though Fatigue and Body Levels remain the same. Other powers function normally.

Control Animals, ReAn 25, 3 points — treat as the ReAn spell, *Mastering the Unruly Beast*.

Control Strength, PeCo, CrCo 15, 1 point — A victim loses or gains 3 points of Strength. To gain Strength, a Stamina simple roll of 3+ is necessary. To avoid losing Strength, a Stamina stress roll of 12+ is necessary. Modified Strength reverts to normal after the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first.

Fertility, ReCo, ReAn, ReHe 40, 5 points — A victim is cured of infertility or stricken barren. Stamina roll of 15+ needed to resist infertility.

Vis: 3 Mentem, in torque



the hall is a deerskin cloak and horned headdress that hangs from a peg by the door.

The most notable aspect of this *regio* level is its animals. The area around the hall is inhabited by a great number of forest creatures, from squirrels to wolves, all of whom possess an uncanny intelligence, though none can speak. All are muscular, agile creatures, but all also have mangy pelts and weary eyes. Indeed, most appear to be quite old.

The "leader" of these animals is Mawredd (meaning "Majesty" or "Nobility"), a great stag who once accompanied Cernunnos in the world, before the god retreated into Arcadia. Mawredd is the size of a horse and is as strong as a bull, yet despite his strength and size, looks elderly and tired. His skin is wrinkled in places, suggesting that he was once even more powerful than he is today, and his coat is dull and bald in spot. A great weariness, sadness and disdain are apparent on Mawredd's face. Though he is capable of speech he no longer feels there is anything in the world worth speaking of.

RELATIONS WITH COFFA

If characters are able to enter the Faerie *regio*, they are welcomed into Coffa's hall. The being is not a warm host, but provides rest and food for the tired and hungry.

Coffa has little concern for the characters' objectives and needs. The only thing of importance to him is news of religious conviction in the outside world. Largely isolated in his hall,

Coffa gets little word about man's dedications toward Cernunnos, only being able to measure that dedication by the wax and wane of his power. The only way to contract Coffa's aid in any worldly matter is to promise to spread the word of Cernunnos. If characters can provide means to restore worship of the old god, Coffa offers his services.

Physical and magical threats mean little to Coffa. He senses that his existence in the world is limited, as his waning powers tell of the spread of other faiths. Thus, Coffa can be destroyed, and only halfheartedly defends himself.

ATTACKS ON HORN'S HILL

Assaults upon Horn's Hill and its occupants have devastating effects upon the region of the Hill, and maybe Mythic Europe itself. Depending upon who or what is destroyed on the Hill, Cernunnos's wrath takes a different form.

Destruction of Gillet's shrine or Coffa's hall causes crops to fail in Plaplean, and neither the village's women nor animals can bear children for at least a year. Unless the shrine or hall is rebuilt, crops continue to suffer and few children or animals are ever born.

Likewise, if the village's annual feast in honor of Cernunnos is not held, maybe because it's prevented by the Church, similar infertility is suffered.

If Mawredd is killed, every faerie forest across Mythic Europe is affected. Faerie forests recede and the strongest of them (those with Faerie Auras of eight to ten) become slightly weaker (losing a point of Aura rating). While such damage to faerie forests is not obvious to the mundane eye, more perceptive people realize that faeries are forced to retreat further into their forests, and some gateways to Arcadia may be sealed permanently.

If characters are directly involved in Mawredd's death, they become the hated enemies of many faeries, and acquire a bad Reputation of 10 amongst Mythic Europe's faeries.

Coffa is the embodiment of man's memory of Cernunnos. If Coffa is killed, the people of Plaplean and the rest of the Val du Bosque forget Cernunnos almost immediately. The annual feast at Plaplean is not repeated. Given these conditions, the same infertility and famine said to strike Plaplean, above, affects the Val du Bosque as a whole.

Once Cernunnos is forgotten by the Val du Bosque, the memory of feasts and the god may only be summoned up by the questions or stories of an outsider — someone with faerie ties

who would not forget Cernunnos. If the people of the Val du Bosque are made to remember the old god by some outside force, and worship of him resumes, Coffa is effectively resurrected. The valley is then saved from complete destruction.

Playing the Curse

The criminals who assault Horn's Hill are not unaffected by the suffering they bring about. These individuals are afflicted with Cernunnos's curse. The curse affects the strength and virility of its victims, and is the equivalent of the -4 Flaw, *Curse* (see the Supernatural Virtues and Flaws lists in the *Ars Magica* Third Edition rules). At important moments — such as at desperate times in combat — curse victims become weakened or exhausted. Unless a Stamina stress roll of 7+ is made, the victim automatically loses 3 Strength points and drops one Long-Term Fatigue Level. Lost Strength is regained when the Fatigue Level is regained. If the Stamina roll is Botched, the victim is also stricken permanently infertile. Any male creature touched by the curse victim is in turn stricken infertile for one year. Even if the curse victim is successful at the Stamina roll, a Short-Term Fatigue Level is lost.



Mawredd

Faerie Might: 30

Vital Statistics: Size +3, Intelligence (ancient knowledge) +2, Perception (tired) -2, Strength (pulling) +8, Stamina (resisting force) +4, Presence (majestic) +2, Communication (solemn) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (powerful stride) +4

Personality Traits: Lethargic +4, Miserable +4, Noble +4, Vindictive +2

Confidence: 0

Combat Totals:

Gore (antlers) Totals: First Strike +8, Attack +9, Damage +20

Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +6 (12 Action), **Soak** +15 (12 Action), **Fatigue** +15

Abilities: Speak Provençal 4

Powers:

Communicate with Animals, InAn 20, 0 points

Control Animals, ReAn 25, 3 points — treat as the ReAn spell, *Mastering the Unruly Beast*.

Vis: 8 Animál, antlers

One of Cernunnos's original companions, Mawredd represents a bitter, twisted remnant of the lost Celtic ideal of nobility: courage, mercy and strength. Unwilling to desert the mundane world completely, Mawredd decided not to follow Cernunnos into Arcadia, staying behind in a typically lonely and futile gesture of defiance. There is little romance left in Mawredd's martyrdom, and perhaps one day his master will return to take him into Arcadia. When that day comes, and his master denies him even this last hollow victory, Mawredd will have lost everything he has ever valued.

STORY IDEAS FOR HORN'S HILL

The characters may investigate Horn's Hill if they are interested by its rumors of ancient deities, or if they hope to find a new source of vis there. If the shrine is destroyed or the feast banned, the villagers may come to the Magi for help when they and their animals become infertile. The shrine could be destroyed or the feast banned with the efforts of Crusaders or monks from San Blas, to stamp out paganism and heresy.

Perhaps mercenaries find their way to Coffa's hall and steal some possession of his (maybe his headdress or even his torque). Coffa may contact the characters and ask for their aid, offering them virility and strength in return. Why did the mercenaries take Coffa's possessions? They may actually be working for another Covenant (Windgraven?). How did they find their way into Coffa's regio?

The Devil's Nostril

Above the village of Sharneal, a collection of silver mines plunge into the mountainside beneath a sharp promontory of rock. Believing the mines to be occupied by demons, the locals have dubbed the place "The Devil's Nostril." The mines were abandoned for years before the Magi of Mistridge arrived — the creatures found within frightened away the owners. The Magi of Mistridge cleared the mines, though, and now operate them to fund their Covenant.

Many of the locals are willing to work the mines since the "astrologers" claim to have defeated its beasts, and the astrologers pay well. In addition to local miners, other workers are recruited in Foix. Sometimes Grogs are even put to work in the mines as a form of punishment. Mine work is dangerous for all, but risks are taken for silver doesn't mildew or wither like farmer's corn, and doesn't tear or bite like a wild wolf.

The mines reach from steep caves that burrow into the rock, with vertical shafts plunging downward from the caves. Here and there narrow crawlways reach deeper into the mountain from the main passages, and in here miners have followed narrow seams of silver. Indeed, with no aid from Magi except for the supply of tools and some winches, a team of thirty miners chips away at the rock, carrying rubble out on their backs. Children are even used to work in cramped crawlways. Outside the caves, women sort through the rubble, and carry worthwhile rocks down to the village to be crushed and smelted. The mountainside is littered with piles of worthless stone.

THE GOBLINS OF THE MOUNTAIN

The mountain's mines existed before Mistridge was established, but its miners had been forced to abandon the area by the "demons" they believed resided within. In reality, the mines intrude upon the homes of "goblins" — faerie creatures — living in the mountains.

To secure the mines for their own use, the Magi of Mistridge led an attack into the passages. The Magi killed a number of goblins and trapped many more in a passage which they magically sealed. In the decades since, the creatures have only been encountered one other time, when miners broke into a large cavern full of the creatures. The Magi of Mistridge defeated the goblins once again, resealing the goblins' deeply recessed prison.

As of late miners are reporting sightings of figures in the shadows, or of glowing eyes in the dark. They've also begun blaming the "devils" when they loose their tools or a miner is killed by a collapsing tunnel. The Magi of Mistridge cannot afford the time to investigate each of these rumors. Besides, it's more likely that miners are stealing tools themselves, and the dead are easy enough to replace.

Schakkar

Faerie Might: 28

Vital Statistics: Size +1, Intelligence (considerate) +1, Perception 0, Strength (stony muscles) +4, Stamina (stone skin) +6, Presence 0, Communication (slow speaker) -1, Dexterity (slow-handed) -3, Quickness (plodding) -2

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent +1

Personality Traits: Just +2, Patient +8

Reputation: Vengeful (faeries) 1

Confidence: 6

Combat Totals:

Obsidian Bastard Sword Totals: First Strike +7/+3*, Attack +6, Damage +22, Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Incapacitated

Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +8/+28 (14/34 Action), Fatigue n/a

*unarmored/crystal armor

Encumbrance: 1

Abilities: Leadership (goblins) 5, Dousing (precious metals) 6, Meditation (planning) 4, Diplomacy (treachery) 3, Speak Provençal (questions) 2

Powers:

Shapechange to Stone, MuTe 20, 0 points—Can assume the form of solid rock of any shape, and up to Size +1. The physical qualities of stone are assumed, though normal Body Levels are retained. Mental abilities are also preserved.

Communicate with Stone, InTe 20, 0 points—Can communicate with stone as people communicate with each other, though at a ponderous conversational speed.

Elemental Control (Terram), 7 points—Any Terram spell up to Level 35 is "cast" automatically. For each 5 Levels of the spell "cast," one Faerie Might Point is spent.

Vis: 20 Terram, body

In truth, while Mistridge's Magi line their coffers with silver stained by the blood of dead miners, the goblins are active. Schakkar, the Goblin King, and his kin have their own blood to consider. The last two times they fought the people from the world above, the goblins were bitten by iron and beaten by unfamiliar magics. In each battle, fine friends fell, their hearts now turned to earth, their stoney bones lining now unvisited rooms. And, to add insult to injury, the invaders steal the mountain's very rock. As far as the goblins are concerned, these invaders rape the mountain. Schakkar plans revenge; not the collapsing of tunnels on trespassers, no such petty vindictiveness. (In fact, the tunnels collapse naturally, mostly due to miner incompetence.) No, Schakkar prepares for vindication of epic proportions.

In a hall of quartz deep beneath Mount Tierné, guarded by caverns which close on trespassers like great mouths, Schakkar

sits on a ruby throne. His clear crystal armor and black obsidian sword lie at his side, as constant reminders of the battles he has fought. Thus Schakkar schemes. He rubs his hands across his bald head, grey skin grating like granite. His featureless grey eyes dwell on every detail of the beauty around him. Like the rock itself, he is in no hurry.

And, to while away the endless hours until their revenge, Schakkar's kin create magnificent sandstone sculptures. They use no crude mallets for their art, but trickles of water, caressing the rock in an act of love. No single sculpture takes less than a millennium to complete. The avengers also create music from dust and dry stone, music so slow that mortal men would call it silence. Music it is, though, music about wanton revenge. On his throne Schakkar sits and listens.

One day very soon, the Goblin King will have one of the trespassers brought to him, so that he can question the invader about the habits and powers of the Magi. His revenge will come soon. But "now" for Schakkar is a year. And "soon" may be a century.



Cerrigyn, a lesser goblin of the mines

Faerie Might: 12

Vital Statistics: Size -2, Intelligence (slow-witted) -2, Perception (patient) +2, Strength (awkward frame) -1, Stamina (resilient) +2, Presence 0, Communication (slow speaker) -2, Dexterity (slow hand) -1, Quickness (plodding) -2

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talent +1

Personality Traits: Cautious +4, Brave -3

Reputation: None

Confidence: 1

Combat Totals:

Fist Totals: First Strike +1, Attack +6, Damage +12

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +8 (15 Action),
Fatigue n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Stealth (caves) 4, Direction Sense (underground) 4,
Search (underground) 4, Climb (rock) 4

Powers:

Elemental Control (Terram), 3 points — As Schakkar's power, but only spells of Level 15 can be cast.

Vis: 3 Terram, body

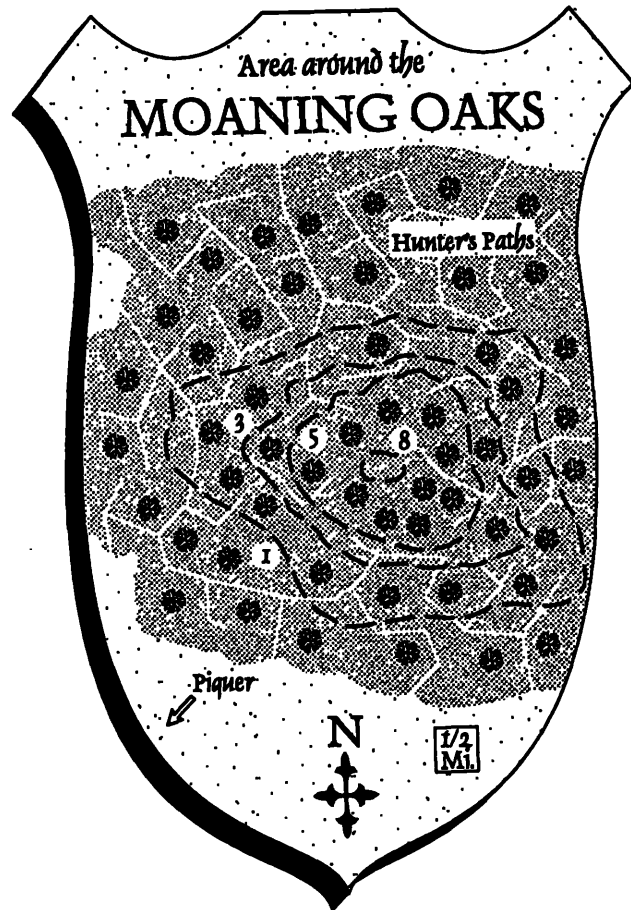
Schakkar and his kin are a varied bunch. Most are grey or brown, though some have more human skin. Some have long, sharp claws for digging, some have the limbs of rats, some have feet like shovels, or elongated thumbs like pickaxes. Some have lichen instead of hair. Some have great glowing red eyes that see in the dark but are pained by light. In height they range from three to six feet, though almost all can somehow squeeze through even the thinnest of cracks in the rock, and some can even take other objects or people with them.

The goblins enjoy spying on the miners, charting the progress of the humans' tunnels. However, the goblins never attack or pester the invaders, for now...

STORY IDEAS FOR THE DEVIL'S NOSTRIL

One of your players can enact a Grog, captured by the goblins and interrogated by Schakkar. Play up Schakkar's just personality and the raw beauty of his Seelie Court, but make it clear that Schakkar poses a threat to the Covenant. The captured Grog disappears for a few days, to finally be found in the caves, dehydrated and hungry. Schakkar considers three days no time at all, so assumes the human cannot be hungry and isn't missed by his kind. Furthermore, Schakkar doesn't think the humans will believe the Grog's story, the Grog having been missing for so "short" a time. Herein lies Schakkar's hubris.

If the characters can quickly and accurately tunnel into Mount Tierné they may be able to rescue the missing Grog (assuming they can determine where he's gone). Alternately,

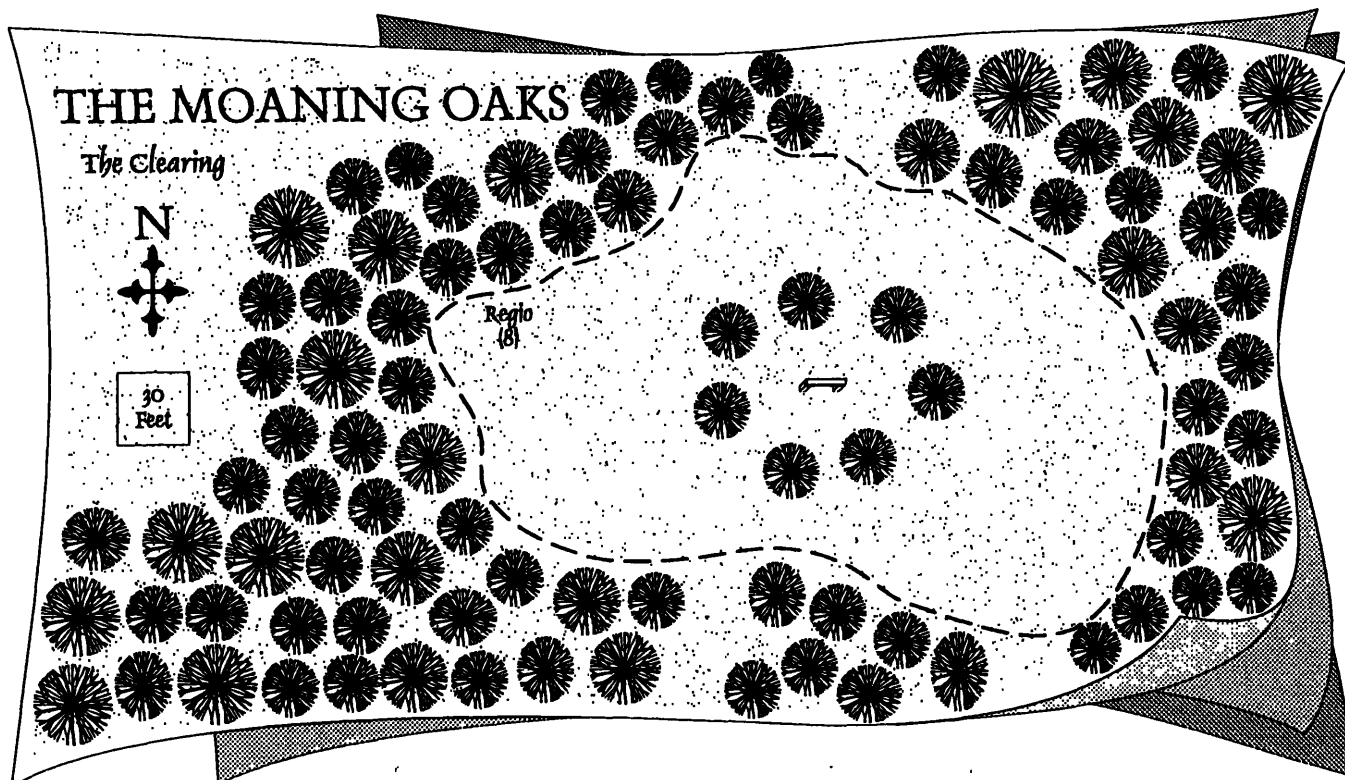


the characters may launch an attack when they hear the Grog's story. Otherwise, they may try to trap or ambush a goblin in the cave to interrogate it in turn. However, the creatures are virtually impervious to pain, can slip through cracks, and in any case hardly notice a year's imprisonment.

Unless the characters defeat him beforehand, Schakkar may finally have his revenge. His retribution could even be the means of Mistridge's death at the end of its Winter Season, unless the Crusaders get to the Covenant first. Schakkar's final revenge may involve luring Magi into the mine and collapsing it on top of them. Or, the goblins may undermine the whole of Mistridge, causing the cliff on which it stands to give way, and the tower to plunge into the valley below. Schakkar's revenge may even involve the aid of the Dagda, the Tuatha de Danann (faerie) earth god (see the Faeries supplement for *Ars Magica* for more information on this deity). Whatever the means of Schakkar's satisfaction, it should make for a grand and tragic story. After all, Schakkar has decades to plan.

The Moaning Oaks

In the woods northeast of Piquet the north wind always blows, and the breeze cuts coldly even in the heat of summer. Scraggly animals dash nervously around the woods, and unexplained whispers and rustlings may startle travelers. In the center of the wood is a circle of seven oak trees, surrounding what appears to be a stone arch. A low moaning echoes between the trees, and is certainly not caused by the wind. The



locals avoid the place and no huntsman ventures near, and yet a rumor has somehow spread that to sleep for a night in the archway is to wake to a perfect dawn.

The wood is home to a number of faerie creatures, who live mainly on the higher of the four levels of Faerie *regio* which exist in the forest. These faeries and *regio* are under the rule of seven faerie princes of the Unseelie Court who are remarkable for their cruel feasts (see *The Faerie Rulers*, below). Many of the forest's Fay willingly serve these seven, while others do so under duress, persuaded by the magical boars who accompany the rulers, or by threats to wake "the Devourer" (see below). Most Fay simply obey the princes in hopes of not having to participate in the princes' feasts.

These seven princes live in the branches of the trees that form the central circle, in the highest of the forest's *regio* levels. They have no power over "the Devourer," a demon ensnared beneath the circle in the Tenth Century by the Magus Dilynwr (see *The Three Pillars*, below). Indeed, the presence of the demon beneath the circle has reduced the strength of the area's Faerie Aura, and has closed the gate which once existed between the circle and Arcadia. And yet, the faerie princes cannot destroy the demon. If it were released it would ravage the forest and destroy many faeries. Thus, the princes can do nothing, and all the while their power fades with the ever waxing Infernal power of the demon.

THE FAERIE REGIO

There are four Faerie *regio* levels in the Moaning Oaks. Their locations are indicated on the *Area Around the Moaning Oaks* map. *Ars Magica* Third Edition provides rules for handling *regio*.

The Mundane Level

On the mundane level the forest is startling and frightening. Its trees are gnarled and ugly, its animals skittish and nervous, and its soil a reddish brown, regardless of soil color in surrounding lands. Biting cool winds blow year round.

The center of the forest's faerie power, the seven oaks, even shows some of its power here on the mundane level of the forest. The seven oaks stand around a clearing some fifty paces across, their branches swaying in the wind a little too much to be natural. Their exposed roots are twisted and somewhat blackened, but branches and the upper parts of trunks are graceful, and appear extremely healthy. In the center of the clearing is a stone monument resembling a doorway. It is comprised of two upright stones (set immovably in the ground) capped with a third oblong stone (equally immovable). All three stones bear the remains of some ancient carving, worn away by time and covered by lichens and mosses.



The floor of the ring on the mundane level is always frosty in the winter, an indication of the Unseelie power that rules "above." The disconcerting moaning which gives the wood its name is also always audible in the ring on this level.

On the mundane level of the tree ring, the demon's power is most evident, as the Faerie realm is less able to suppress it here. At all times, just beneath the surface, infernally tainted blood is mixed with the soil. Anyone with the Sense Holiness and Unholiness Ability, upon touching the ground, can detect an Infernal presence with a roll of 12+. There's no way to pinpoint this presence, though.

Regio Levels 1 to 5

As one travels through the Faerie *regio*, approaching the highest level at the seven oaks, the forest becomes less ugly and less frightening. The animals grow more sedate and seem less haggard, but have heavier coats. The trees seem healthier, their trunks becoming less scarred and their branches less distorted. The north wind blows progressively harder and colder, though, another indication of the Unseelie power at work here.

According to the nature of *regio*, the seven oaks exist on all levels of this *regio*. (A person can fail to enter into each, higher *regio* level, remaining on the current one, in which case the seven oaks on that level can be visited, but they do not have the full faerie power of the highest *regio* level.) Only the ring on the highest level is the home of the seven faerie princes.

The physical features demonstrated by the ring on each *regio* level are appropriate to the degree of faerie power on each level. For instance, as one visits the ring on level 1, the trees seem healthier than they do in the mundane ring, the frost on the ground remains for a longer portion of the year, and the blood in the soil is thinner (Sense Unholiness roll of 13 to detect it). On level 5 the trees are dramatically more vibrant than on the mundane level, frost remains on the ground for much of the year, and blood in the soil is almost undetectable (Sense Unholiness roll of 17+).

The carving on the ring's standing stones also becomes clearer as one visits higher *regio* levels. On level 3 anyone making a Faerie Lore roll of 12+ can read the letters, which are crafted in a faerie script, indicating the stones as a gateway to the "home" beyond. The markings are even clearer on level 5, requiring a roll of 10+ to read.

The Faeries' Clearing (Level 8)

On the highest *regio* level (8), frost stays on the ground all year round. The oaks are both extremely beautiful and perfectly healthy, although their branches are twisted dramatically, and seem sometimes to move with a will of their own (even against the strong, bitter wind that blows through the ring). There is no detectable moaning to be heard in the area, and there is only a slight trace of blood in the soil (Sense Unholiness roll of 20+ to notice it).

It is in this *regio* level that the faerie rulers of the wood normally remain, concealed in their trees. All of the animals encountered here are faerie, and many Fay plants, such as Mistletoe and Inky Cap, grow here.



Faerie Boars

Faerie Might: 16

Vital Statistics: Size +1, Intelligence (brutal) -3, Perception 0, Strength (sinewy) +8, Stamina (unrelenting) +10, Presence (fear-some) +2, Communication n/a, Dexterity (rough) -2, Quickness (direct) +1

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Wild +4, Enraged +6, Devoted +3

Reputation: None

Confidence: 5

Combat Totals:

Charge Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +10, Damage +20

Body Levels: OK, 00, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Fatigue Levels: OK, 00, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5/-5, Unconscious

Dodge Defense: +0 (6 Action), Soak +11 (17 Action), Fatigue +8

Encumbrance: n/a

Abilities: None

Powers: None

Vis: 2 Animal, 1 in each tusk

Coedenceg

Faerie Might: 20

Vital Statistics: Size -1, Intelligence (malicious) +2, Perception 0, Strength (weak) -2, Stamina (thin) -1, Presence (bright eyes) +1, Communication (alluring voice) +2, Dexterity (nimble) +2, Quickness (swift) +3

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Cruel +2, Selfish +2, Reliable -3, Brave -2

Reputation: Dangerous (faeries) 1

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Weapon Totals: First Strike +13, Attack +9, Damage +7, Parry Defense +12 (18 Action)

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Dodge Defense +8 (14 Action), **Soak** -2 (4 Action), **Fatigue** n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Charisma (faeries) 3, Charm (mortals) 5, Guile (lies) 6, Subterfuge (faeries) 5, Play (wood flute) 2, Dance (festivals) 4, Quarterstaff Attack (surprise attacks) 5, Quarterstaff Parry (fleeing) 5, Dodge (iron weapons) 4, Speak Provençal (jokes) 5

Powers:

Invisibility, ReIm 30, 3 points — Can become undetectable to all human senses, not just sight, for up to three hours before spending more points (1 per hour). Visibility and invisibility can be alternated between during this time. This power does not fool other faeries, demons, or those with the Second Sight Ability.

Control Person, ReMe 50, 10 points — Treat as the *Enslave the Mortal Mind* spell, requiring only initial contact between faerie and victim (Ease Factor of 10 to resist).

Vulnerability to Iron — Wounds from iron weapons cause double damage (after Soak). Faerie powers also fail to affect iron. Those bearing iron are considered enemies.

Vis: None

The other six rulers of the Unseelie Court each have one of the following powers instead of Control Person:

Shapechange to Animal, MuCo 25, 4 points — Allows animal form (up to Size +2) to be assumed. Animal shape can be maintained for four hours. Mental abilities and powers are retained, but physical capabilities are restricted to those of the animal shape (though normal, current Body Levels are maintained).

Shapechange Other to Object, MuCo 30, 5 points — People within Range of Sight can be changed into inanimate objects. A Stamina Natural Resistance roll (10+) is allowed. The object changed into must be Size 0 and that form is retained for five hours. Those transformed retain their mental capacities, but have the physical capacities of the object assumed.

Illusions, 5 points — *Creo Imágonem* spells up to Level 25 can be simulated (at a cost of 1 point per 5 spell Levels). Illusion duration is based on faerie concentration (which often isn't long).

Control Animals, ReAn 25, 6 points — Treat as the *Mastering the Unruly Beast* spell. An animal of up to Size +3 can be controlled for 12 hours. Only initial contact is required to establish control, after which the faerie can control the animal by concentration.

Curse, Perdo and any Form 30, 10 points — A curse can be lowered with details determined by the faerie at the time. Treat curses on characters as the *Cursed* -3 Flaw.

Flight, ReAu 25, 5 points — Allows flight up to five miles in distance before landing is required. A cost of 7 points bestows flight on another for a distance of five miles.

The entrance of the stone "doorway" is completely filled by a slab of ice, which, although it always seems to be melting, never appears to shrink. The carvings on the stones are at last clearly distinguishable (no rolls are required to read them by a person with Faerie Lore), and the whole structure seems to be covered in a "Celts knot" (a roughly symmetrical pattern comprised of one continuous line) of incredible complexity. The doorway once led to the faerie realm of Somniare, but the link is now severed. The only way to pass through the door now is for a mortal to sleep beside it from dusk until dawn. However, it is only the person's soul that passes through, abandoning a lifeless body. Return is not possible (or at least has never occurred).

THE FAERIE RULERS

The seven Unseelie faeries who rule the forest sometimes appear in the branches of their trees, emerge from trunks to confront trespassers, or appear to seek "entertainment."

The highlight of the year, for them, is the midwinter feast which they hold annually. The faerie creatures of the wood fear an invitation to this banquet, and those traveling through the forest should be wary of hospitable offers from the princes. The banquet usually consists of numerous mundane animals, prepared in various imaginative manners. Entertainment involves such games as "Sprite Throwing," "Leg Eating," and "Dodge the Invisible Daggers." Occasionally the faeries princes find a special dish for the feast, such as "Basted Baby" (from a nearby village) or a special game, such as "Knight Baiting" (which may begin with the serving of a guest's trusty horse or squire as a pregame appetizer).

If mortals trespass into the forest, they are usually ignored by the princes, even if those mortals reach the higher levels of the wood. Occasionally some are "teased" a little, as a local named Pep experienced, though this teasing is usually not fatal for travelers. Alternately, travelers may simply be confronted and told to explain their presence, particularly if they look dangerous. In such conversations most of the faerie princes

remain concealed while Coedenceg speaks, backed up by a number of magical boars.

Coedenceg is similar in appearance to the forest's other rulers, with a slight frame and snow-white hair and skin. Like the others she can control the strength of the north wind (to knock an adversary down, pick an object off the ground, or blow dirt into peoples' eyes) which constantly blows through the forest. Each of these seven also has a special power; Coedenceg's is the power to control humans, as well as the ability to speak any human tongue. However, she would rather avoid a fight and flees unless victory is clear.

The faerie princes are extremely interested in characters who demonstrate magical powers. If such characters seemed trustworthy, the faeries gladly tell of the demon and try to get mortals to help them. Above all, the princes want the demon out of their wood without any damage done to their realm.

STORY IDEAS FOR THE MOANING OAKS

Initially characters may enter the forest to investigate rumors about the place, or in connection with investigations into the Three Pillars (see below). Characters' first contact with

the faeries may be as the butt of the princes' japes, or may involve a confrontation with Coedenceg. A fight can develop, or the characters may be invited to one of the midwinter feasts (as guests or entrees).

The faeries eventually realize the Magi may be able to get rid of the demon. Although they make substantial promises in return for the characters' aid, the faerie princes prefer to secure the characters' help by blackmail or threats. Batches of mistletoe berries could also be MistrIDGE's in return for aid. Shelter in the *regio* in times of crisis, or even access to Arcadia, if the Faerie Aura returns to full strength (after the demon is removed), may be offered. However, the characters have to bargain shrewdly to guarantee any of these things.

For a less involved story, a child may be stolen from Piquer in early winter, and the Magi are asked to get the child back. Of course, the Fay intend to use the child in a feast, and the characters have to bargain for the infant's release, or must attack the faeries. Perhaps, in return for the child, the faeries ask that a character provide some superior entertainment at the feast. Or, the characters may mistakenly rescue a Fay creature masquerading as the child.

Caves of the Shimmering Pool

On the north face of Mount Tierné a vertical gash in the rock forms the mouth of a confusing network of dark caves. Inside, somehow familiar voices echo through the still air, carrying snatches of forgotten conversations and perhaps peoples' names. Locally called "The Scar" or "Satan's Womb," the Magi know the place as "The Cave of the Shimmering Pool," given their knowledge of a still, black pool at its heart.

The pool smells sulphurous — the smell of infernal brimstone — but has no Infernal Aura (indeed, it has a Magical Aura of 4, which may lure magical creatures to live in the cave for short periods). To look into the pool and silently pose a question yields strange visions. To drink from it causes nausea, terrifying hallucinations and possibly death, though the water surprisingly tastes like sweet apples. In fact, the pool acts with a curious intelligence, refusing to answer mundane or unimportant questions, and being particularly helpful to Magi. As a rule, roll a stress die and consult the boxed table to determine the results of a question. These rolls are best made by the Storyguide on a player's behalf.

The Magi of MistrIDGE treat the pool with a nervous reverence, and do not use it often. Oculo warns that the pool has been created by devils, and is worried that nothing can be divined of its power. Consuelia, the founding Magus of MistrIDGE, once said the pool provided her with misleading information. But, on occasion, the pool has also been an invaluable help to MistrIDGE, and the Magi consult it at times of crisis and when there are important decisions to be made.

Visions in the Pool

Botch: A vision of an earthly paradise, containing all the people the character has ever loved, and all the things she has ever valued or desired. The character feels the pool promises all these things and feels a great, irrational desire to stay by it and prevent others from approaching. Any character staying near the pool for more than a Season begins to physically waste away, dropping one Body Level per successive Season unless a Stamina stress roll of 10+ is made (rolled each Season). If the roll Botches, two Body Levels are lost.

Only powerful magicks can save an entranced person, the nature of such magicks being uncertain.

0: The character has terrifying, hellish visions of the minions of Satan trying to drag him toward and into the pool. This experience should be roleplayed through since the character may react quite violently. In any case the character is visibly shaken and quite jumpy for the rest of the Season (add a Personality Trait, *Frightened of Demons* +3).

2: There is no vision, except perhaps for a shadowy glimpse of a man's face (Custofonus's, see below). However, the character gets a sense of awe, and of a confrontation with an incredible wisdom.

3-6: The visions are unclear, ambiguous, or misleading, depending upon the pool's attitude to the character's motives.

7-9: Visions are seen which certainly relate to the question posed, but do not obviously answer it. These visions may provide hints, warnings, or veiled answers to the question. The pool may deliberately mislead characters whose motives it disapproves of.

10+: A vision with a clear message, usually a direct answer to the question posed, though not necessarily a completely true answer.

THE POOL'S SECRET

The caves are actually a place where the passage of time is blurred. For the pool, time is irrelevant; past, present and future are all perceived as the same. As the characters enter the caves, the echoes of their pasts and futures mutter around them.

When the pool was first created, it was made by a demon to tempt humanity into serving him in return for secret knowledge. However, the pool has come to be inhabited by the "ghost" of a Criamon Magus, named Custofonus, who defeated the demon and was driven into Twilight by the confrontation. Since Custofonus went into Twilight, however, his ghost is not actually his soul. He therefore has no ability to communicate or change, and does not really think or feel anything. It's more accurate to say that the pool embodies the powers and ideals which Custofonus had gained by the time of his death. His ideals, in particular, are/were the furthering of human knowledge, and the protection of House Criamon and the Order as a whole.

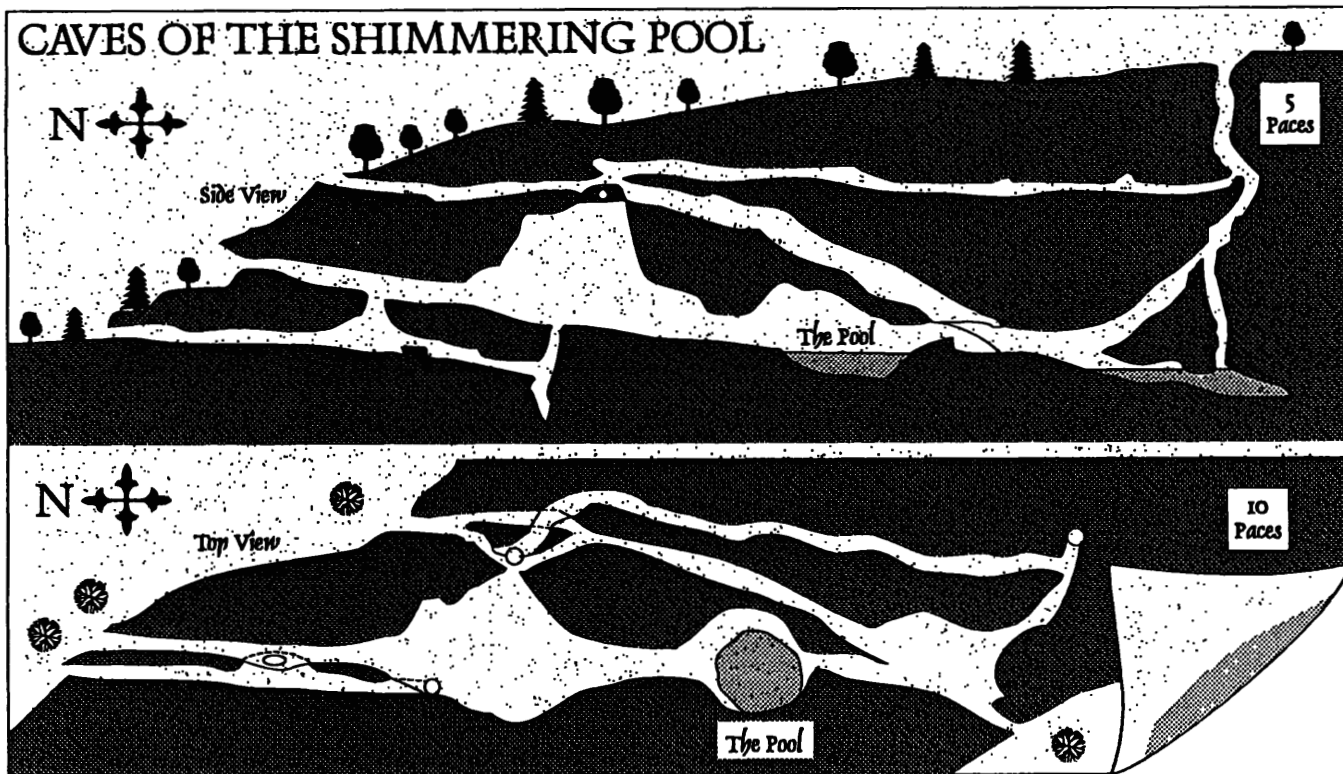
However, since Custofonus's powers involved an understanding that time is an illusion, his victory over the demon not only changed the nature of the pool after the battle, but before it as well. His essence defined the nature of the pool in the past, present, and future, because, for him, the three are the same. Paradoxically then, Custofonus need not necessarily have fought the demon yet when your Saga begins.

STORY IDEAS FOR THE POOL

A Criamon Magus named Custofonus arrives in the Val du Bosque. He is difficult to talk to since he tends to answer questions that have not yet been asked, and ignores those which have. He also talks to people who are not there and ignores those who are. Custofonus wanders the valley and its woods, and may make prophecies concerning coming events, or may explain long-forgotten secrets, though never in response to direct questioning.

Custofonus's statements or actions can lead the characters to investigate the shrine at Horn's Hill, for example. Or, the Criamon Magus may lead the characters into a story concerning a long-forgotten murder or a lost treasure of some kind.

After a while, Custofonus stumbles across the Cave of the Shimmering Pool. Uncharacteristically, he arrives at Mistridge, demanding the Covenant's aid against demons he has found in the nearby cave. If the characters arrive at the cave without Custofonus there are no demons present. On the other hand, if they arrive with him the cave has a powerful Infernal Aura and is occupied by a major demon (Demon Might around 45). The demon (being the creator of the pool and thus part of its time paradox) already knows Custofonus will defeat him, and so tries to corrupt the characters before being destroyed.





Maendwrn

Magic Might: 20

Vital Statistics: Size +3, Intelligence (simple) -3, Perception (unobservant) -2, Strength (massive chest) +8, Stamina (rugged) +5, Presence (foul) -4, Communication (guttural) -2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (long stride) +1

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Vengeful +4, Aggressive +5

Reputation: Murderous (villagers) 3

Confidence: 1

Combat Totals:

Stone-headed Axe Totals: First Strike +10, Attack +6, Damage +24, Parry Defense +8 (14 Action)

Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), **Soak** +20 (26 Action), **Fatigue** +5

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Stealth (mountains) 4, Folk Ken (frightening peasants) 1, Climb (mountains) 5, Dodge (mounted attacks) 3, Track (horses) 2, Speak Provençal (insults) 1

Powers: None

Vis: 6 Perdo, body (half of which is in his claws). Peri's remains contain a further 2 pawns.

Maendwrn

Overlooking the pass into Aragon, five miles south of Montsegur, is a tall cliff called Leveret's Leap. A hundred paces up the cliff, sheltered by an overhanging rock, is a conventionally inaccessible cave which is home to a giant named Maendwrn (Maynddoorn). This scabby creature is nine feet in height and nearly as broad, wearing just a few scraps of fur. Around his heavy flint axe he has tied the long black hair of his dead mate, Peri. He harbors a violent grudge against the "little men" who slew her two decades ago. The two giants squabbled endlessly, but since a Spanish knight lanced Peri on a road, Maendwrn has come to remember only the best parts of their relationship (basically the sex), and now mourns her terribly.

Initially Maendwrn launched sporadic, vengeful attacks against humans along the road. For the last few years, however, on the anniversary of Peri's death, Maendwrn makes it customary to kill and eat a young woman from a village in the valley. The villages around Sir William's manor have particularly suffered, and the villagers' attempts to defend themselves have not deterred the creature. Sir William himself has lost three men-at-arms trying to defend the villagers, and his soldiers now refuse to fight the "Devil."

During the rest of the year, Maendwrn sits in his cave, eating rocks and surveying the pass. His cave contains Peri's grave, and other than to attack a small group of travelers, he does come down from his perch. The giant climbs the cliff by digging his incredibly powerful claws into the rock as if it were

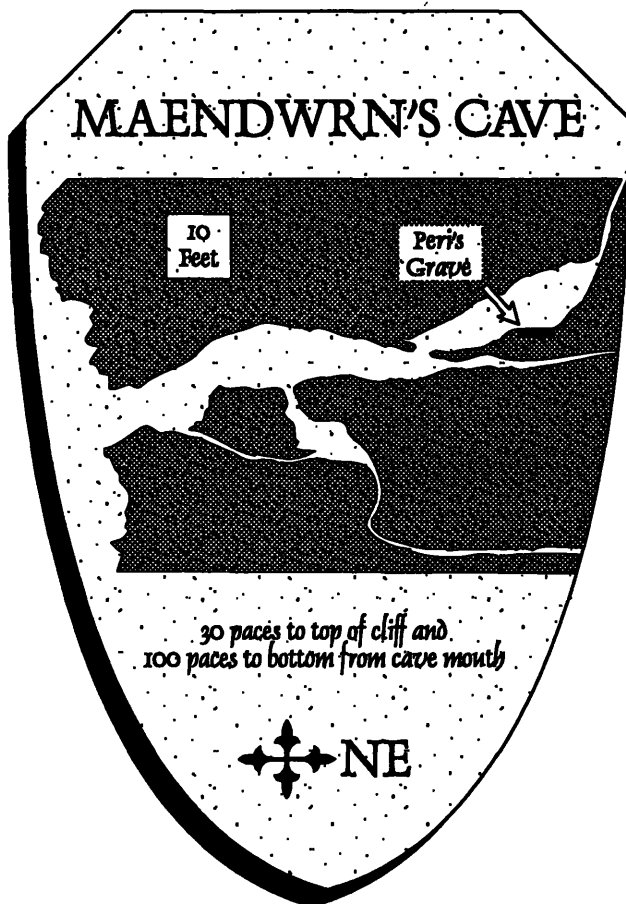
mud. It is almost impossible for any human to scale the cliff. And, since the rock that overhangs the cave makes it extremely difficult to reach from above, attacking the cave is impossible for mortals.

STORY IDEAS FOR MAENDWRN

A group of characters can be spending the night in a village when it's attacked by the giant. After Maendwrn's first attack is repelled, some villagers may actually want to hand a woman over (perhaps a stranger, like one of the characters), while others want to reorganize their defences or flee. The characters may be asked to lead or advise the villagers. Alternately, Sir William may offer a reward for the creature's head, or may specifically ask Mistrudge to hunt the creature down.

Saint Martin of Mercille

In the Tenth Century the Val du Bosque was ravaged by a demon. The creature was eventually bound by the Magus Dilynwr of House Diedne (see *The Three Pillars*, below). Mercille was repeatedly threatened by the fiend, but it never attacked the village because the local priest, Martin, led the people in prayer whenever danger loomed.



Then, one night, the creature attacked the church as the priest prayed alone (and the church still shows the signs of reconstruction that followed the attack). Though the church itself suffered, the priest's faith protected him and drove the abomination off. When the demon disappeared for good that night, many claimed the prayers of Martin, rather than the spells of Dilynwr, drove it away. The Church has upheld this falsehood to this day, whether out of ignorance or arrogance, and the tale is often told of how a diabolist named "Dilinar" failed to overcome the piety of Saint Martin. Many Magi who hear this tale are even willing to believe Dilynwr was a diabolist, since he was a member of the accursed House Diedne.

When Martin approached death, he feared the devil would come seeking a final victory over him. To protect his soul, he had himself walled up in a cave near Mercille, with nothing but a copy of the Gospels and the Holy Sacraments. The Pope made Martin of Mercille a saint after the priest's death, and the Mercille church is now dedicated to him.

MARTIN'S TOMB

Martin's tomb and its surroundings have become invested with the righteous might of the man who is buried there. The tomb area thus houses several levels of Divine *regio*.

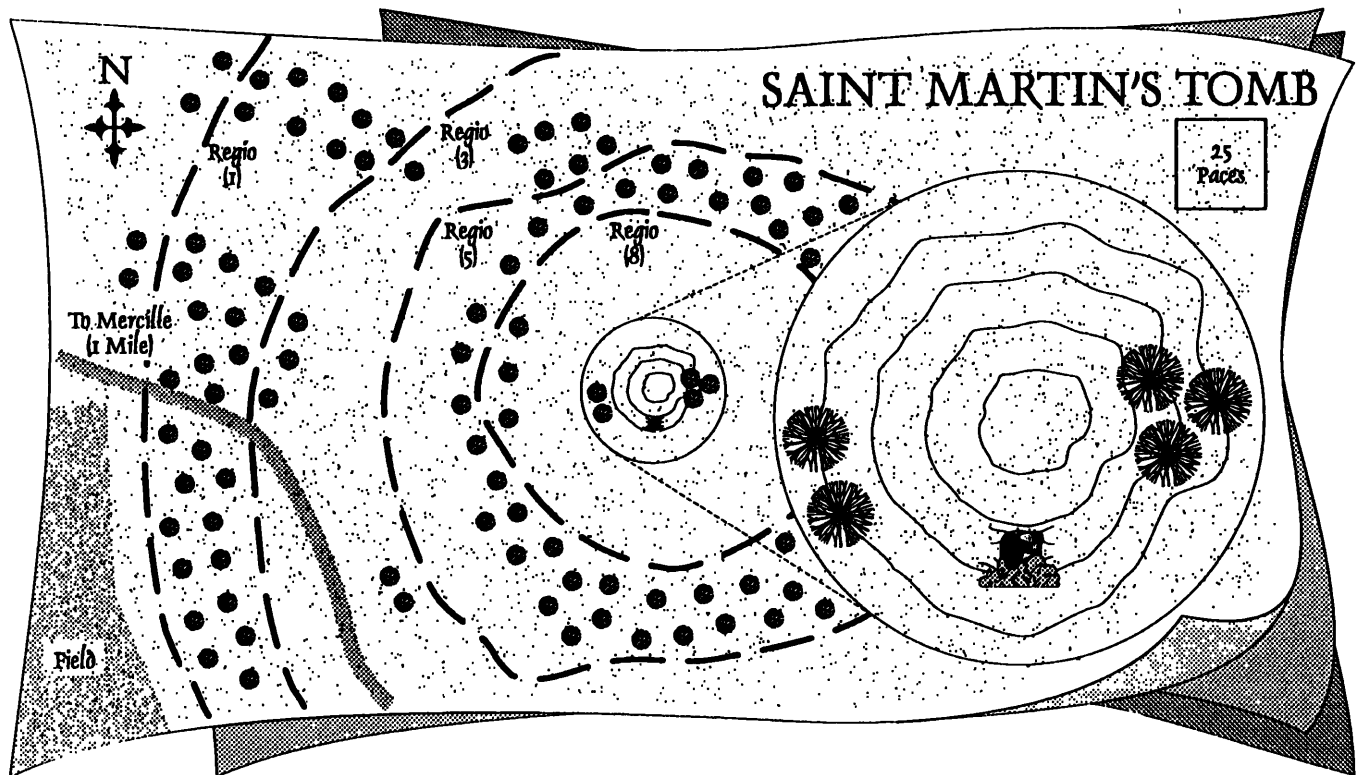
The Mundane Level

Martin's tomb, the old cave, is hard to find, as vines and creepers have grown to cover it. However, on the day of the Saint's death, December 3rd, these vines burst into bloom with red, white and golden flowers, marking the gravesite. The weak dry-stone wall of the tomb, built to seal the cave, can easily be broken down. Inside is a chamber four by six paces across, containing the remains of a bed, a simple copy of the Gospels, a wooden chalice, and a pewter plate. There is no sign of a body, though an *Intéllego Córpoem* or other suitable spell may discern that it was in this bed that the Saint died.

The Divine Regio (1, 3 and 5)

These lower *regio* levels are largely identical in appearance to the mundane world, except that the air seems purer and the blooms brighter. However, because of the Saint's antipathy toward demons and their like, no infernal creature can enter the cave area unless its Might score exceeds the level of the *regio* entered, multiplied by ten. Likewise, demons cannot cast infernal spells into the cave area unless extra Infernal Might points are spent: 5 points on level one, 15 on level three, and 25 on level five.

Remember, if characters do not penetrate the next highest *regio* level, they remain on the current level and may investigate the tomb that exists on that level. The tomb is as it appears on the mundane level. Only on level 8 of the *regio* do the contents of the tomb change.



The Divine Servant, Numinel

Divine Might: 30

Vital Statistics: Size +1, Intelligence (knowing) +1, Perception (visionary) +4, Strength (Divine power) +2, Stamina (Divine will) +5, Presence (awe-inspiring) +4, Communication (mute) n/a, Dexterity (graceful) +5, Quickness (swift) +6

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Stoic +6, Calm +6, Brave +6,

Reputation: None

Confidence: 6

Combat Totals:

Silver Bastard Sword Totals: First Strike +18, Attack +15, Damage +14, Parry Defense +12 (18 Action)

Body Levels: OK/OK/OK/OK/OK/OK/OK, Dissipates

Dodge Defense +12 (18 Action), Soak +20 (26 Action), Fatigue n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Intimidate (the sinful) 6

Powers:

The Lie Made Plain, InMe 25, 0 points — Any half-truth or misdirection spoken to Numinel is taken as a lie. About half way through telling a lie, the character may intuitively realize (Perception roll of 5+) that the Servant sees through the deception.

Redeeming Blow, CrCo, PeCo 20, 2 points — If a fatal blow strikes a character who is essentially a pious or moral person (at your discretion), it Incapacitates rather than kills. On the other hand, if the character is a sinner (again, your discretion) or an atheist, being struck by a Redeeming Blow causes the character to lose an additional Body Level. If the victim is Incapacitated by this blow, all sins and blasphemies pass before the character's eyes while prostrate and bleeding. This power can only be applied to the blows the Servant delivers.

Blinding Light, CrIg 40, 6 points — Numinel begins to glow brighter and brighter, the light taking on a bluish hue. After two Rounds anyone looking at the Servant is blinded for 1d10 Rounds (blinded victims and those attacking without looking are -5 to Attack and Defense). After four Rounds anyone still in the cave with eyes open is blinded. The light continues at this intensity for four more Rounds before fading to nothing. Note that Numinel can fight normally while generating the light.

The Divine Regio(8)

The immediate area outside Martin's tomb (the area of regio level 8) seems much like the lower levels. If there are differences, the vines are tougher, their blossoms more perfect, and the air is more fresh. Absolutely no infernal spells can be cast into the cave and its immediate surroundings, and an infernal creature attempting to enter the regio level must have an Infernal Might score of 80+.

The wall to the tomb is stronger here than it is on the mundane and lower levels. A Strength simple roll of 12+ is needed to break through. Otherwise, spells and weapon attacks work (the wall is considered to have a Soak score of +3 — 9 in Action Combat — and 3 resistance levels).

Inside the tomb the air is clean, without dampness or dust. The Saint's skeletal body lies in the bed, peacefully at rest. These remains can be profitably dismembered, each bone providing a potent charm against demons, but that assumes one can touch the body. Standing over the remains of the Saint is a grim-faced Divine Servant, wielding a silver sword. The Divine Servant has no interest in frivolous or irrelevant conversation, nor, for that matter, can it speak. Rather, its looks speak intuitively of what it means and intends. The Servant's sole intent is to prevent the unworthy — those who desecrate the grave — from pillaging the Saint's remains.



Only an outright display of piety by a character with the True Faith Virtue can stay the Servant's swift hand. If this character can also provide devout reasoning for disturbing the grave (though the Servant never actually asks for such), like acquiring the bones to defeat a demon, the Servant steps aside. When the body of the Saint is touched the Servant, in a flash of light, disappears forever.

STORY IDEAS FOR THE TOMB

There are occasional rumors of an old healer in the Val du Bosque helping those who are injured. If a pious character is abandoned, unconscious and badly wounded, in the vicinity of the tomb, the character may regain consciousness in a nearby grove. The character has vague memories of an old man tending painful wounds in a cave. No such aid is given to the skeptical or sinful, though. The characters may seek the cave out, perhaps looking for sanctuary or relics if they are troubled by demons.

Silvestre

Silvestre was once a mercenary, fighting against the Moors in Spain. During a long siege in northern Spain he and his friends, starving to death, resolved to eat one of their dead comrades. When a priest tried to restrain them a scuffle ensued and the holy man was slain. The soldiers survived the siege, though only by eating several bodies (including that of the priest), and by murdering one of their number for food.

Returning to the Languedoc, Silvestre found himself disinterested in normal food, but driven by a desire for human flesh. Furthermore, he has not aged a day since beginning his gruesome diet, though he has become pale and gaunt, smelling slightly of stale meat. To hide his horrible self Silvestre lives like a beggar and wanders the local lands on foot. Common people who have seen him consider Silvestre a possessed spirit or ghoul.

A gangling figure in vile rags, Silvestre may often be seen at a distance by those traveling through the Val du Bosque. The only way he can sustain himself is by secretly feeding on the dead, whether their deaths be natural or arranged. He feels incredible guilt for his sins. Indeed, he struggles to somehow make up for them. So, he follows travelers into dangerous places, watching over them and alerting them if danger threatens. He may also bring clues about diabolists to a local priest or to Mistrudge (though he hates showing his face or talking with "upright people"). Silvestre may even approach a lone priest on the road, offering to carry baggage for a while. Remorseful for his sins as he is, Silvestre's ways have still not changed, and those he helps may become his next meal.

Silvestre

Characteristics: Intelligence (addled) -1, Perception (sharp-eyed) +2, Strength (strong grip) +1, Stamina (hearty) +1, Presence (offensive) -3, Communication (ashamed) -2, Dexterity (steady hand) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 28

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Disfigured -1 (-3 to Presence rolls involving looks)

Abilities: Stealth (woods) 4, Speak Provençal (pity requests) 3, Track (woods) 4, Alertness (people) 4, Scan (woods) 3, Mace Attack (surprise attacks) 3, Mace Parry (fleeing) 3, Dodge (missiles) 5

Confidence: 0

Reputation: Ghoulish (travelers) 3

Personality Traits: Guilty +4, Ashamed +4, Cautious +3

Weapons and Armor:

Mace Totals (1h): First Strike +5, Attack +7, Damage +9, Parry Defense +4 (10 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

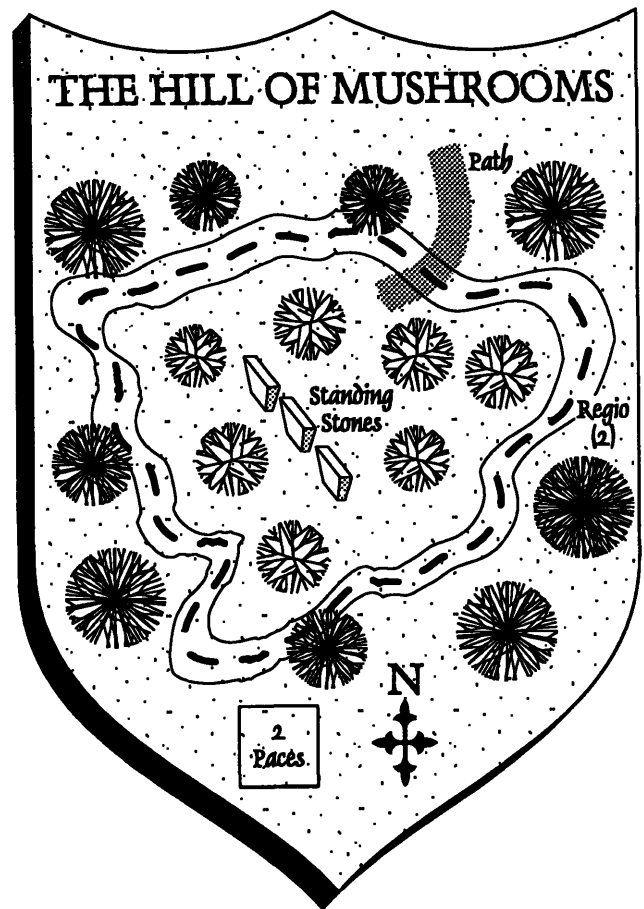
Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

STORY IDEAS FOR SILVESTRE

You may use Silvestre to introduce stories to your Troupe. For example, Silvestre could be watching over a group of brigands, and tries to frighten off travelers whom the brigands intend to ambush. Losing their livelihood, the brigands may go to Sir Guifre posing as hunters, warning of the "demonic" creature prowling the woods. Or, the brigands may be friends of Sir William's. In either case, the knight concerned may ask that the folk of Mistridge (as good Christians) take the "hunters" as guides to destroy the evil. A bounty is offered, and though the hunt gives the characters a good public image, they may not want to kill the poor wretch they finally corner. Of course, the "hunters" have no qualms about killing.

The Hill of Mushrooms

Between Pasaquine and San Blas stands an unremarkable, low hill with a slight Faerie Aura at its summit. The hilltop looks slightly different depending on which of its *regio* levels one is on, mundane or faerie. On the mundane level, amidst a grove of gnarled cedars, is a row of three standing stones, each nearly as tall as a person. The stones have no distinguishing features.



THE FAERIE REGIO(2)

On this, level two of a Faerie *regio*, the stones look strangely different than on the mundane level. The stones are slightly taller and roughly resemble three cowed figures facing northeast (toward Horn's Hill — see above).

Here, on Midsummer's Eve, the Magi of Mistridge collect 7 pawns of Herbam vis from silver mushrooms that annually sprout up around the stones. The stones on this level, with a Legend Lore roll of 12+, remind a character of three cowed Celtic gods who appear in various myths. The gods are associated with fertility and healing.

The Legend of Sante Fabía

Sante Fabía is a local saint who is said to have performed many miracles, mostly involving healing, over one hundred years ago. Her first and best-known miracle was to heal a son of the Baron d'Uverre of the time, who had been mortally wounded by his own brother. Having performed this miracle, Fabía is often petitioned by those who have been wounded in battle, and by soldiers in general.

Other tales are also told of Fabía, and every village in the valley claims she performed at least one miracle there. Some of these claims — generally the most believable — are simple,

earthy stories. Others are elaborate and quite untrue. So, for example, in Javielle a traveler may hear of a crippled farmer whose family was saved from starvation by Sante Fabía's healing hand. On the other hand, in Cariel a traveler might hear of the Saint driving thirteen demons from a Moorish princess, and of Fabía's conversion of the princess' diabolist mother.

There are also many tales explaining Sante Fabía's death. Some say she was slain by a mounted "demon" called the Stormrider (who has most certainly terrorized valley peasants within living memory). Others say Fabía died peacefully, at an old age, while choirs of angels sang hymns in praise of her. One tale, probably started by the Cathars, states that as Fabía died her body turned to pure light and ascended towards Heaven. Many local Catholics have little difficulty accepting this last tale, although they simultaneously make pilgrimages to the convent where they believe her bones are kept.

Because of Fabía's numerous supposed miracles, the Val du Bosque is scattered with ramshackle shrines to the Saint. Most are simple altars or crosses raised by the pious. People come to such shrines to pray to the Saint (who is then expected to present requests to the Divinities) and often leave red flowers, which Fabía is usually depicted carrying. Such shrines have a Divine Aura of 2.

Two more important shrines (where the Dominion rises to 3) also exist in the valley. One stands just to the north of Javielle, commemorating the Saint's first miracle. The other stands on the western slope of Mount Tierné, near the base of the mountain, where Fabía was in fact killed by the Stormrider.

The Three Pillars

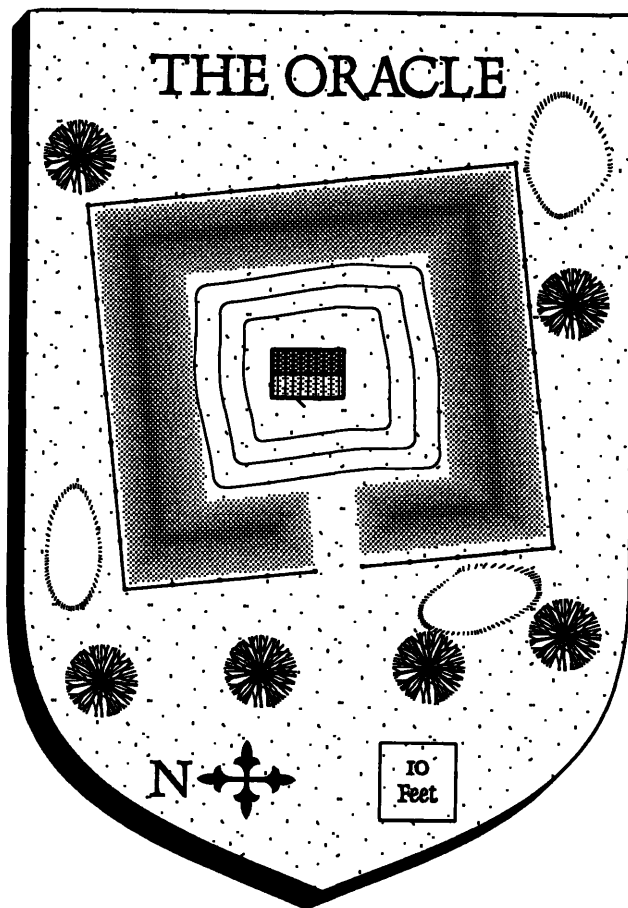
During the Tenth Century, before House Diedne was exterminated in the Schism War, a Magus of that House fought a series of long magical battles against a demon of violence and destruction. Rather than try to defeat the creature by force, the Magus, named Dilynwr ("Dillinoore"), bound the creature beneath the Forest of Moaning Oaks.

In order to do this, the Magus raised three great stones from the earth in a triangle around the forest, and caused thick brambles to grow around each so they should not be interfered with. One of these Pillars can be found a mile north of the convent of Sante Fabía, one in the forest six miles northeast of Montsegur, and the third on the eastern slope of Mount Tierné. Each Pillar is four paces high and a pace across, and contains 14 pawns of vis (six Vim, six Rego, and two Terram).

It takes a Magus a Season to determine the purpose of the Pillars. Use the *Investigating an Enchantment* rules in the Laboratory Chapter of *Ars Magica* Third Edition, assuming the Pillars' purpose to be of Level 50. Such study is conducted in the field; the Pillars cannot be taken back to the lab. Another Season is required to extract any discovered vis in the Pillars, assuming a successful Lab Total roll of 35+.

Hopefully characters realize the vis is in the stones for a purpose, and leave well enough alone. The stones act as anchors, holding the demon beneath the forest. For each Pillar





that is destroyed or has vis removed, the demon gains power until, with the disruption of the third Pillar, the demon breaks free. If the demon is released all of the Val du Bosque suffers its wrath.

Should the demon ever be freed you should create it to suit your Saga. You may want the demon to be subtle, powerful and elusive, if you want to run a long string of stories based on it. Or, you may want to make the abomination something characters can confront and defeat in a single story. The latter option is viable if you feel the demon might sidetrack the characters from other Saga events. The demon Harkerr, from the Realms Chapter of *Ars Magica* Third Edition, might be suitable for such a opposable demon.

STORY IDEAS FOR THE PILLARS

The Pillars can be found by a character with the Magic Sensitivity Ability, or if covering brambles are cleared away (maybe by nuns enlarging a field, or by forest fire). If the characters give in to the sin of greed, and irresponsibly take the Pillars' vis, the valley suffers. Make sure the characters suffer too. Maybe the demon's rise plunges their Covenant into death after its Winter Season. At the very least the Covenant earns the enmity of the valley's faeries, particularly those of the Moaning Oaks, who lose much power to the demon's unchained evil. Rumors may also start that the characters are responsible for

the valley's fate, that they are diabolists. Characters in this position have to deal with the demon to clear their names, which isn't easy to say the least.

If the characters realize that the stones must not be disturbed, stories could arise from their efforts to keep other Magi (i.e., those of Windgraven) from taking the vis and releasing the demon.

The Oracle

When Dilynwr died, exhausted by his efforts against the demon, his apprentice buried him in the woods between Siernami and Xanec. A square burial mound was erected over his body, surrounded by a ditch, in the manner of the ancient Celts. Today, a small hut sits on top of the mound, home to an "oracle" named Benoit. Oracles — diviners, fortunetellers, and prophets — have lived on this spot for over 200 years. Since the Schism War destroyed house Diedne these oracles have ceased to be Magi, and few have even had the Gift. The people of the valley have long forgotten that the place is also a tomb; they simply consider it a place to go for guidance.

The present oracle, Benoit, was a farmer's son, born and bred in Alopoc. A shambling, bent figure, dressed in rags, he has an intense squinting stare and an infuriating inability to remember how long ago particular events occurred. Little remains of his original personality, and his memories are confused. In fact, Benoit has gained parts of the personalities, memories, and specialties of his predecessors who, in a way,



Benoit

Characteristics: Intelligence (insightful) +1, Perception (intuitive) +5, Strength 0, Stamina (robust) +1, Presence (unsettling) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (slow reflexes) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 24

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Exceptional Talents +1, Hatred Passion (demons) +3

Abilities: Speak Provençal (visions) 4, Folk Ken (peasants) 8, Second Sight (ghosts) 4, Premonitions (individuals) 4, Survival (forest) 4, Track (forest) 2, Val du Bosque Lore (history) 7

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Inspired (peasants) 4

Personality Traits: Cold +2; Confused +3; Resents Nobles, Clergy, Magi +4

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

live on through him. Benoit's soul — his personality and abilities — remain dominant, though, and the magical abilities of his predecessors are still lost to him. However, in exceptional instances, such as at the time of his imminent death, Benoit may suddenly "regain" these talents, including powerful Vision or Hex Talents, or the ability to cast Spontaneous magic.

Benoit has inherited the opinions and prejudices of his predecessors, as well as possessing his own. So, as well as fearing and resenting nobles, he dislikes and distrusts Hermetic Magi, and particularly demons!

Should Benoit be killed, the spirit of the Oracle "calls" possible candidates to the mound, "possessing" them over the period of a week. Anyone with a mystical talent and general intelligence is suitable, so long as the person is not intimately involved with the Order of Hermes. The "call" can affect people up to ten miles from the burial mound. Mathieu, the Cathar from Sir Guifre's manor, is an ideal candidate, except that his faith might preclude him from possession.

STORY IDEAS FOR BENOIT

Introduce Benoit into your Saga slowly. Uncooperative peasants may mention that "the Oracle" has warned them against associating with the Magi (of Mistrudge or Windgraven). They may also hear of him arbitrating peasants' disputes (ruling on whose grandfather really did own a disputed strip of land), or helping to silence an unquiet spirit. Eventually, the characters may wish to confront or investigate this Oracle. Depending on relations established with Benoit, he may become a source of elusive information, summoned up through his premonition ability. However, the establishment of such relations require that approaching characters disguise their Hermetic origins.

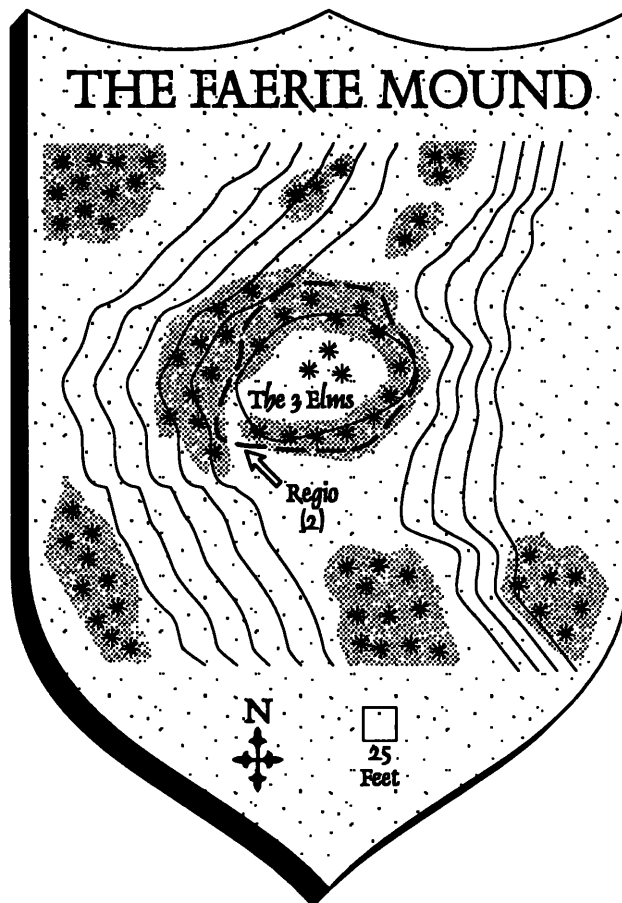
Should Benoit die, a Companion or, even better, a Grog from Mistrudge may be "called" to replace him. If the Magi can't restrain the Companion or Grog, or can't find another replacement for Benoit within a week, the summoned person is lost to the Covenant.

The Faerie Mound

A mile east of Mistrudge stands a low hill, over which three ancient elms preside. On certain nights during the year strange voices and lilting music drift across from the hill, and lights may sometimes be seen moving about, particularly on the pagan festivals of Samhain (October 31) and Beltaine (May 1).

The Magi of Mistrudge have discerned that the hill has a Faerie Aura about it (3), and that the elms are magical in some way. They have considered investigating the hill further, or trying to extract vis from the trees (each of which offers 5 pawns of Mentem vis), but have so far refrained from doing so. They are not above plundering faerie forests, but realize that it would be foolish to anger faeries so close to home. Only Oculo has ever met any of the Fay at the Mound, and that was a bizarre dwarf, accompanied by an array of sprites. The drunken dwarf introduced himself as "King of the Mountain," bowed, and fell into a stupor — that was the end of it.

The three elms are, in fact, sentinels — faerie "beings" set there to watch over the Mound. The trees see and hear all that happens on the Mound, and silently communicate it to Feggimer, who is the faerie lord of the hill.





Feggimer

Faerie Might: 18

Vital Statistics: Size -2, Intelligence -2, Perception -1, Strength +1, Stamina +1, Presence 0, Communication 0, Dexterity +2, Quickness +3

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Hedonistic +1 (winter)/+5 (summer), Proud +3, Caring -4

Reputation: King of the Mound (faeries) 4

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Claw Totals: First Strike +7, Attack +7, Damage +5

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), **Soak** -1 (5 Action), **Fatigue** n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Drinking (faerie brews) 6, Folk Ken (songs) 2

Powers:

Create Wine, CrHe 5, 0 points — Any amount of wine can be created at will, in whatever vintage desired.

Invisibility, ReIn 30, 5 points — Can become undetectable to all human senses, not just sight, for up to five hours before spending more points (1 per hour). Visibility and invisibility can be alternated between during this time. This power does not fool other faeries, demons, or those with the Second Sight Ability.

Bound By Iron — If held by iron fetters (e.g., a cage or manacles made of iron), Feggimer is forced to truthfully answer questions until released.

Vis: None

THE FAERIE REGIO(2)

Surrounding the three elms is a Faerie regio level, rated 2. Beneath the faerie regio, on the mundane level, the hill seems perfectly ordinary, with all three trees present. The three elms seem completely unusual.

It is on the faerie level of this regio that the Fay gather at Beltaine and Samhain, that Feggimer's interim parties occur,

and on which all encounters with Fay here are likely to take place. In order to spy on or participate in the faerie gatherings a character must be on this regio level. Any character on the mundane Mound during a Fay celebration experiences a disturbing cacophony of shouts and whispers, dim lights and dancing shadows, but cannot tell anything of what's actually going on.

FEGGIMER

The faerie lord of the Mound, Feggimer, is around four feet tall, with an extremely broad face and a toothy grin. Neither male nor female, Feggimer's appearance and character change with the seasons. Between Samhain and Beltaine he seems to be predominantly male, with muscular limbs and sharp teeth — cruel and destructive. During the summer, however, Feggimer becomes chubbier and apparently female, moving with an unexpected grace, full of the joys of life. It is not that Feggimer is any more caring during the summer, it's just that she is so full of joy (and liquor) that her cruelty is less apparent.

Although not a powerful faerie, Feggimer is certainly quite important. The hill is the traditional spot at which, every Samhain, the Seelie Court hands over supremacy in the valley to the Unseelie ("dark") Court. And, at Beltaine, the Unseelie are bound by their word to return control, again at this hill. Throughout the year Feggimer is King and Tender of the Hill. In the summer she serves the Seelie Court, in winter he serves the Unseelie.

Responsibility for the Mound is not a matter of choice for Feggimer. It's the way things must be, and that's that. In any case, the joyous summer Feggimer certainly makes the most of her position, and frequently hosts small but bizarre parties. Sometimes similar events are held in the winter, but these are miserable gatherings which always leave Feggimer bad-tempered and irritable.

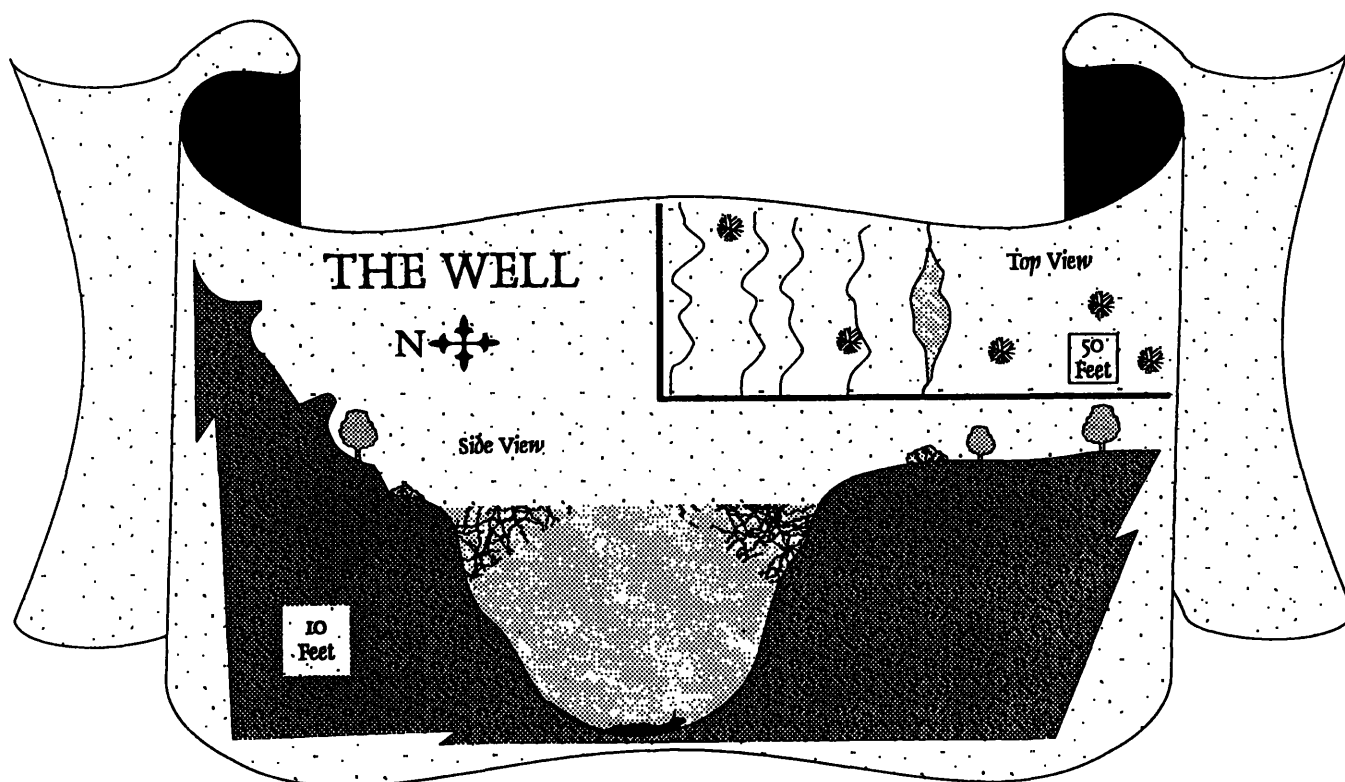
STORY IDEAS FOR THE MOUND

The Seelie Court at the Mound has no interest in involving Mistrudge in its affairs. Even the Unseelie rulers of the Moaning Oaks don't want Magi interfering with the Mound. The Magi may come here looking for the Fay, but are unlikely to be welcomed by either Court.

The summer Feggimer, however, is quite happy to sit and drink with Groggs and covenfolk who happen to wander past alone. Such a drunken situation provides lots of opportunities for enjoyable roleplaying. If flattered, Feggimer may even present visitors with a barrel of wine. Unfortunately, this faerie brew can have all manner of strange effects on humans (although Feggimer neither knows, nor cares about such). Sometimes the drink may cause hallucinations, prolonged sleep, extreme aggression, blindness, or lasting delusions.

The Well

At the southeast foot of Mount Tierné a small river runs. About four miles from its source is a deep pool, called the Well, like a small lake with extremely steep sides. On the brightest days of summer the sun seems to reflect against hundreds of small objects deep in the water. Most locals claim these objects are faerie illusions, designed to lure the greedy to their deaths.





Ckisstis, the Worm

Faerie Might: 35

Vital Statistics: Size +5, Intelligence (sleepy) -2, Perception (half-lidded) -1, Strength (coiled muscles) +6, Stamina (hard scales) +6, Presence (vile) -1, Communication (spits) -2, Dexterity (whip-like) +2, Quickness (swift) +6

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Lazy +4, Bad-Tempered +5

Reputation: None

Confidence: 4

Combat Totals:

Bite Totals: First Strike +14, Attack +12, Damage +18

Claw Totals: First Strike +12, Attack +10, Damage +24

Tail Totals: First Strike +11, Attack +15, Damage +14, Parry Defense +2 (8 Action)

Breath Totals: First Strike +10, Attack +10, Damage +8 (see Powers)

Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5/-5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), **Soak** +18 (24 Action), **Fatigue** +8

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: None

Powers:

Steaming Breath, CrAq 20, 2 points — This is a jet of scalding steam which shoots out to a range of ten paces (see *Combat Totals* for stats).

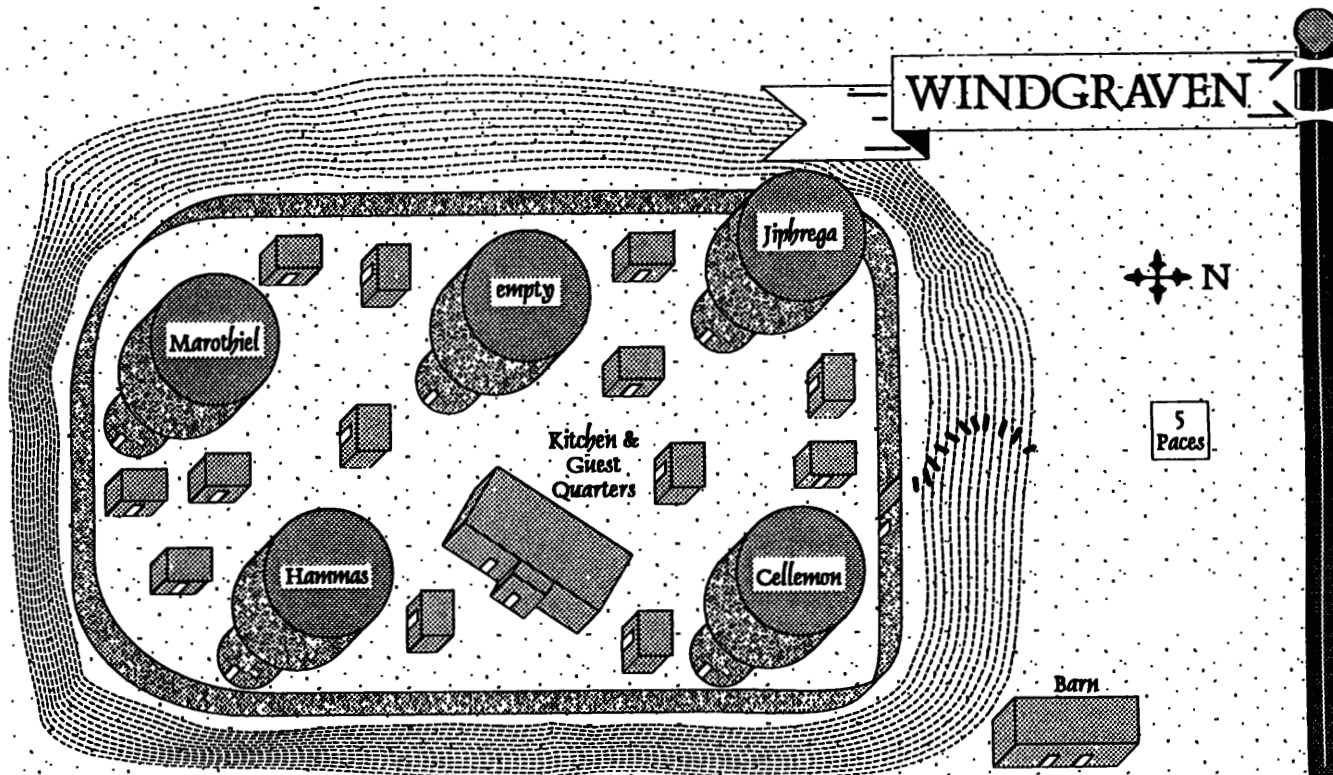
Invisibility, PeIm 30, 4 points — While immersed in water Ckisstis can become completely invisible. This lasts until she is injured or until a part of her is exposed to the air — or until she falls asleep.

Vis: 18 Aquam, body

Ckisstis is around forty feet long, with a body as thick as an ox, six powerful legs, and scales that resemble all manner of precious stones (although they aren't). She can breathe normally underwater and can swim as fast as she can run. If she is killed or driven from the pool, the pool's power fades and the weed ceases to yield vis.

The locals also claim the pool is bottomless. During the summer the sides of the pool are thick with pond weed, from which bubbles seem to rise.

The pool is not bottomless, though it is very deep, and the bubbles actually rise from its floor. Should anyone manage to swim down to the bottom of the pool (which is at least thirty feet deep, and may inexplicably seem to be a lot deeper), they find that innumerable gems and colored pebbles seem to be



embedded in the mud. Persistent attempts to pull or prize free these gems could severely annoy the worm (a smallish dragon) whose scales these "gems" actually are. Quietly napping for a few centuries, the worm is unlikely to appreciate such a disrespectful awakening.

In any case, the Magi of Mistridge have discovered that the pool has a slight Magical Aura (rated 1), and that this somehow affects the pond weed. As the weed begins to die in the early winter Mistridge usually sends a handful of Grog to the pool with some rakes to drag the weed out. Mules carry it back to the Covenant. The load is bulky, and stinks appallingly, but yields six pawns of Aquam vis.

STORY IDEAS FOR THE WELL

Naturally enough, the characters may one day find out what lies at the bottom of the pool. But, until then, stories can arise from the vis produced by the pool. Windgraven might, for example, attempt to steal the weed. Perhaps, if the characters have not disturbed the creature already, another Magus could learn of the dragon's existence from some dusty tome. She may

try to enlist the worm's help in the Crusade, possibly leading to the furious beast running amok for several days, unless someone stops it.

Windgraven

Since Mistridge was established in AD 1067, the Covenant of Windgraven has been a constant threat and competitor. Then in its Summer Season, Windgraven sought to dominate the area, refusing the new Covenant access to any of the valley's magical sites. Since then the power of Mistridge has increased, while Windgraven has slipped through Autumn into a long, lingering Winter. Although Mistridge now undoubtedly holds the upper hand in the rivalry, its old enemy in the Order still retains a great deal of power, and still dreams of dominating the Val du Bosque.

The four Jerbiton Magi who make up Windgraven were all once apprentices of the same Magus, Belrapphazor, whose mastery of Rego magics they all share. Each also specializes in a different Form (Auram, Córpoem, Ignem and Mentem). Their ethos is one of domination — that they must fully control their surroundings, their Grog, and their allies.

In the early days of Windgraven the Provençal Tribunal imposed heavy penalties on the Covenant's Magi for their interference with mundanes. The Magi's control over the minds of their covenfolk has also had particularly dire consequences, and the entire Covenant is now haunted. When Belraphazor entered his final Twilight, in AD 1160, his passing released the souls of hundreds of mortals whose minds he had enslaved. Their week-long rampage around the Covenant left the remaining Magi even more frightened, and even more desperate to control everything around them.

Thus, Windgraven entered its Winter Season. Its Magi are paranoid, and its Groggs and servants mentally enslaved and tormented by ghosts. Indeed, the harder the Magi try to control the Covenant, the more tormented the ghosts and covenfolk become. In truth, the Magi spend so much time trying to control the Covenant that little else is ever accomplished, and with every mortal generation the hauntings become worse. Eventually the Magi of Windgraven will be overwhelmed, but for the present their Covenant is slowly falling apart.

APPROACHING WINDGRAVEN

The Covenant is thirty-five miles west-northwest of Mistridge, a day's journey from the nearest human habitation (locating Windgraven beyond the color map of the Val du Bosque). The Covenant's terrain is rugged, and the surrounding mountains quite majestic. On a huge boulder set into one such mountain, the Covenant's squat towers crouch, surrounded by rough shacks, with a low stone wall running around the top of the boulder. On the hillsides nearby, ragged peasants tend thin goats and coax vegetables from the rocky soil.

As one approaches, a set of broad sweeping steps become visible on the gentler north face of the rock, with a small barn at the base (housing two dozen mules and horses). Also near the base of the boulder is an extensive cemetery. Here lie two centuries of covenfolk, although most of the graves are now empty. The bones of the dead seem to work their way to the surface, as if trying to return to the Covenant for some reason. Flocks of ravens feast on the human remains.

The worn steps on the rock provide the only feasible method of ascent to the Covenant, and at the top stands a great stone gate. Not that the gate works any more, though. Several years ago the walls buckled inexplicably. Now the Magi cannot open the gate, and have neither the time nor resources to reconstruct the wall. And yet, the gatekeeper still stands above the gate, tugging fruitlessly on the counterweight system as visitors approach. The man has become unable to accept new orders, and Windgraven's Magi have yet to persuade him to perform other tasks, so successful was the previous Rego Mentem spell used on him. The guard never leaves his post.

Given the main gate's status, entrance to the Covenant is now gained via a small wooden gate next to the stone door. An inexpressive Grog demands to know what visitors want, and

only lets them in if a Magus of the Covenant gives permission, which sometimes involves a wait of several hours. Just inside the wooden gate, a skeleton wearing armor and clutching a spear is propped up against the wall. This is no intentional, magical creation, but a tormented Grog whose body no longer lets him perform the guard duty his lost mind so desperately strives to continue.

INSIDE WINDGRAVEN

The area on the top of the boulder, upon which Windgraven is situated, is a large barren courtyard, scattered with pathetic hovels and sleepy chickens. The loyalty of the covenfolk is magically assured, so the Magi see no reason to house or feed them properly. The appalling state of the servants' huts simply means that they die a little earlier than normal. All animals in the compound are also extremely sleepy, and thus conveniently docile, due to a spell the Magi cast every month.

The covenfolk often congregate in the Covenant's long, low, stone kitchen when the Magi cannot find anything for them to do. Having been largely robbed of their personalities, these folk sit in silence around a fierce fire at one end of the building. If the fire burns low, or the usual Rego Ignem spell is not cast each month, the fire sputters dangerously, threatening to burn the building down. At the best of times the fire seems to act maliciously, particularly towards Magi.

Above the kitchen are a number of rarely-used guest chambers, a couple of which have had their doors walled up. By and large, wise visitors prefer to camp at the foot of the Covenant's boulder rather than risk the guest rooms, fearing ghostly possession. Several less prudent, now quite mad, visitors have had to be walled up in their guest rooms.

Five short, fat towers stand around the edge of the compound. One belonged to Belraphazor. Its dusty rooms now echo with forgotten voices and half-cast spells. Each of the other towers is home to one of the living Magi. Each has a heavy oak door, securely fastened, and the narrow windows of each are barred or bricked up. Each tower also has five floors, twenty paces across, the top story being somewhat wider, giving the towers the appearance of giant mushrooms. Technically, only the top three floors of each tower is a Magus's sanctum. Windgraven's Magi are very careful about who they let into their towers, and may become agitated by people standing near or even looking at their buildings.

Whilst inside Windgraven, visitors are accompanied for the duration of their stay by a Companion named Barris, an abnormally large and extremely astute man who tends to talk of himself in the plural, as "we". A quiet and selfless servant of the Magi, Barris is concerned only that visitors do not threaten or pry into the affairs of Windgraven. Of course, his charges are told he is their guide and bodyguard. Barris is polite, but never servile. His voice is slow but firm. An alert character may note that both of Barris's hands are actually right hands, and with closer observation may realize that there are a number of apparent seams on his body, where he looks to have been sewn together.

DEFENCES

All in all the Covenant is well defended. As well as guards on the gate and walls, the courtyard is frequently patrolled, for no discernable reason, and several defensive spells have been cast over the area.

It is well known throughout the Provençal Tribunal that Windgraven's library contains one of the most powerful *Aegis of the Hearth* spells ever devised, an awesome spell of nine magnitudes (+45)! But, it would be wrong to assume that the Covenant has the resources to maintain such a magnificent *Aegis*. Not only is Windgraven incapable of gathering sufficient vis, but since Belraphazor passed into Twilight no Magus has known enough about Vim to reliably cast the spell. Furthermore, since the Magi have become increasingly paranoid, they have ceased to cooperate, even in the defence of the Covenant, so each tower has a separate *Aegis*, created by its owner. It is not unusual for a single Magus to be incapable of gathering enough vis to create any *Aegis*, and none exceed +20.

Most of the Covenant's magical defences are either controlled by individual Magi, or affect those entering the fortress via the now useless main gate. However, several older *Waiting Spells* still exist. First, there are simple *Spasm of the Uncontrolled Hands* spells which affect the first three people to attempt the near impossible task of scaling the walls. This spell insures that climbing intruders suffer a long fall from just below the wall's top. Second, a Level 15 *Creo Imágonem* spell causes a loud scream to sound should anyone manage to enter the Covenant over the walls. This spell is also triggered if any living creature of Size -1 or greater moves over the walls less than 15 feet above the parapet. Third, the clashing of metal (such as swords in combat) over the threshold of the current gate sets off *The Earth's Carbuncle* spell immediately outside the gate. This is designed to affect those assaulting the Covenant. Small bells, clanking chain mail and the like do not set the spell off, but

Grog Combat Statistics

Mertreth

Bastard Sword: First Strike +9, Attack +9, Damage +15, Parry Defense +8 (14 Action). Soak +11 (17 Action) with Scale Hauberk

Typical Grog

Short Spear: First Strike +9, Attack +6, Damage +7. Round Shield: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action). Soak +4 (10 Action) with full leather.

Skeletal Champion

Infernal Might 15. Barbed Long Spear: First Strike +16, Attack +10, Damage +14, Parry Defense +10. Soak +16/22 Action (+24/30 Action, versus puncture damage) with full ring mail.

Typical Skeleton

Infernal Might 4. Long Spear: First Strike +7, Attack +1, Damage +6, Parry Defense +3 (9 Action); or Club (2h): First Strike +1, Attack +2, Damage +3, Parry Defense +1 (7 Action). Soak -2/4 Action (+5/11 Action, versus puncture damage) unarmored.

Raise the Unsleeping Battalions

Spell Focus: A Human Bone (+1)

R: Near, D: Perm, Ritual

This spell raises seven corpses as undead soldiers. One is chosen as the Champion, and is in control of the other "soldiers." These other six are fairly weak creations, and cannot be given orders directly. Instead, they follow the will of their Champion, or if it is destroyed, then that of the most powerful infernal creature within a hundred feet. The lesser skeletons cannot voluntarily move more than one hundred feet from their commander, and if they do so, or if there is no Infernal creature present, they attack the nearest living human. The Champion obeys the orders of its creator, unless a creature with an Infernal Might of 20+ issues different commands. (Hammas does not know that his undead are susceptible to Infernal command.)

transporting large metal objects into the compound can prove problematic.

Windgraven's twenty Grog, and the peasants who work the surrounding lands, are all made loyal by *Rego Mentem* spells which have to be renewed every lunar month. In truth, the minds of these folk have been so destroyed by constant domination that they would probably be little different if the spells ceased to be cast. The Grog are an unimaginative but totally loyal turb, with generally low Intelligence and Communication scores.

The Grog's leader, Mertreth, is a burly man of advanced years, quite incapable of forming words into complete sentences. His left hand has been transformed into a claw by the iron arm band he wears. Most heavily enchanted of all the Grog, Mertreth's innate sadism has only become magnified, and the uncomplaining Grog are frequently lashed by the whip which Mertreth always carries. Mertreth and the other Grog are first loyal to Cellemon, one of the Covenant's Magi, and the Covenant second.

Another twenty "Grog" are loyal to Hammas, the Magus who created them. These Grog are all undead, raised in batches of seven by the Infernally-inspired Ritual spell, *Raise the Unsleeping Battalions*, which Hammas stole from a diabolist a century ago. Although generally less proficient than normal human Grog, the skeletons have the advantage of striking terror into foes and require neither food nor sleep. They are often used on "suicide missions," attacking mundane enemies without orders to return to Windgraven. The Magi know that if mundanes ever follow the skeletons back to the Covenant, Windgraven would probably be besieged and starved out. The Magi refuse to take that chance.

And, of course, there are always the ghosts who in their own way defend the Covenant. Sometimes the wind blows the voices of the dead across the compound. The towers themselves have been known to whisper the words of the dead. Sometimes, on the darkest nights, long-dead guards may be seen patrolling the walls, and it's not unusual for servants to be given orders by Companions who died long ago. If these



frightful sounds and sights don't scare intruders away, conventional defenses certainly cannot.

THE MAGI

There are four Magi at Windgraven. None cooperate or even trust each other. They generally remain in their towers. When they do venture beyond tower and Covenant walls, these Magi are assured to be up to something foul and indecent.

Marothiel

Marothiel is the eldest of the Magi living at Windgraven, and was Belraphazor's first apprentice. A gaunt and wrinkled woman, with nervous eyes and voluminous, rust-brown robes, she styles herself leader of the Covenant. Marothiel has even taken many of Belraphazor's possessions, including the Covenant's magical library, to reinforce her claim to power.

Extremely adept at Ignem magics, as well as Rego, Marothiel maintains her position as nominal leader largely because the other Magi fear her power. Marothiel has a vile temper and becomes almost hysterically outraged if she perceives a threat against her. She certainly has an uncanny knack for sensing others' hostile attitudes or harmful intent, but is also prone to imagined threats where none exist. Her wrath can be unleashed at anyone watching her too closely, skulking around her tower, or asking too many questions about her. She hates, and is terrified of, being touched.

Mundanes who anger Marothiel are likely to be slain on the spot, even if they are visitors. Marothiel is rarely seen outside her tower, fearing that Cellemon or Hammas may order their servants to assassinate her. Her food is passed through a small hole at the base of her tower, and she passes her orders back through the same gap.

When Covenant council meetings are held — which is most infrequently — the Magi meet nervously in the bottom floor of Marothiel's tower.

Marothiel's scores in her most potent Arts are: Rego 26, Ignem 28, Imágonem 16, and Terram 15.

Hammas

Hammas was Belraphazor's second apprentice, and can most truly be called insane. His bloodstained brown robes contain numerous hidden pockets, in which he carries daggers, poisons, and innumerable other objects which he is unskilled with, but which he would in any case be too nervous to ever use. His eyes dart around him constantly, and he sits or stands huddled up in corners with his arms tightly crossed.

Perhaps always too mentally weak to deal with the neurotic paranoia of Windgraven, Hammas's behavior has become increasingly erratic since the terrible hauntings which accompanied Belraphazor's final Twilight. Incurably fidgety and extremely energetic, Hammas lives in constant fear of Windgraven's ghosts, and constantly plots to protect himself against "Cellemon's slaves" (the grogs and covenfolk). He is also terrified of the Church, mundane nobles, and rival Magi (particularly those of Mistridge).



Cellemon

Characteristics: Intelligence (clever) +2, Perception (astute) +1, Strength 0, Stamina (nagging cough) -1, Presence (sallow complexion) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (shaky) -2, Quickness (quickly winded) -1

Age: 105, born in 1092

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Inventive Genius (+3 to inventing rolls), Magic Affinity +3

Abilities: *Certamen* (Mentem) 5, *Parma Magica* (Rego) 8, Penetration (Mentem) 4, Magical Affinity (Mentem) 8, Pretend (emotions) 5, Diplomacy (negotiation) 4, Intrigue (rumormongering) 4, Speak Provençal 5.

Confidence: 3

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Cautious +3

Techniques and Forms: *Creo* 5, *Intéllego* 9, *Muto* 10, *Perdo* 9, *Rego* 20, *Animal* 4, *Aquam* 3, *Auram* 4, *Córporem* 8, *Herbam* 4, *Ignem* 8, *Imágonem* 9, *Mentem* 13, *Terram* 6, *Vim* 6

Spell Casting Speed: -1

Twilight Points: 6

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *The Shrouded Glen* (ReMe 40) +40, *Coerce the Spirits of the Night* (ReMe 35) +40, *Ring of Warding Against Spirits* (ReMe 35) +40, *Exchange of the Two Minds* (ReMe 30) +40, *Incantation of Summoning the Dead* (ReMe 25) +40, *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 25) +29, *Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20) +40, *Recollection of Memories Never Quite Lived* (MuMe 20) +30, *Disguise of the Transformed Image* (Mulm 15) +18, *The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 15) +40, *Discern the Images of Truth and Falsehood* (InIm 15) +17, *Trust of Childlike Faith* (PeMe 10) +29

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Hammas's obsession with defending himself reached its peak immediately after Belraphazor's passing, when Hammas began using diabolical rituals to create undead. That's also when he started his "Fruit Pit." The Pit is a deep hole, half filled with writhing, living human flesh. Each year between one and five living human beings are hurled into the Pit, and the following year an equal number of pawns of *Córporem vis* can be extracted from it ("just like fermenting fruit," Hammas says). All those thrown into the Pit remain alive, conscious, and in immeasurable pain. Victims will continue to suffer until the Pit is left unfed for two years, when it and its victims will die.

When encountered outside his tower, Hammas is always accompanied by several undead bodyguards.

Hammas's scores in his most potent Arts are: *Rego* 24, and *Córporem* 23.

Cellemon

Cellemon is a short, broad man with a bald head and prominent nose. He is perhaps the most contented of Windgraven's Magi since he, above all others, controls the Covenant. His *Rego Mentem* spells keep the ghosts at bay and control the living inhabitants. Although always fearful of Hammas's creations, Cellemon is actually confident enough to concentrate on matters beyond the walls of Windgraven. If not for the Code of Hermes — and the *Quaesitoris* who enforce it — Cellemon would like to enslave all the local leading mundanes. Cellemon is also the Magus responsible for most of Windgraven's conspiracies against Mistridge.

To pursue his ends, Cellemon may sometimes leave Windgraven, traveling in merchant's garb with a couple of Companions, to gather information or to negotiate with mundanes or Magi in the surrounding area. Still, Cellemon is careful not to put himself at risk, and always returns to Windgraven by the new moon to insure the loyalty of the Covenant's inhabitants.

Status, comfort, affection and other normal human concerns are irrelevant to Cellemon. His sole interest is power. All of his actions are designed to increase his power and that of Windgraven. A methodical, measured man, Cellemon answers all questions only after a brief pause, during which his grey eyes



Jiphegra

Characteristics: Intelligence (cunning) +1, Perception (alert) +2, Strength (small build) -1, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication (high-pitched voice) -1, Dexterity (clumsy) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 64, born 1133

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: *Certamen* (Auram) 8, *Parma Magica* (Ignem) 5, Scribe Arabic (magical texts) 3, Speak Provençal (threats) 5, Finesse (precision) 5, Meditation (problems) 3, Subterfuge (Magi) 4.

Confidence: 3

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Patient -2, Sensitive -2

Techniques and Forms: Creo 10, Intéllego 5, Muto 7, Perdo 8, Rego 15, Animal 6, Aquam 6, Auram 11, Corporeum 3, Herbam 3, Ignem 8, Imágonem 2, Mentem 4, Terram 7, Vim 5

Spell Casting Speed: 5

Twilight Points: 4

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Wings of the Soaring Might* (ReAu 25) +26, *Circling Winds of Protection* (ReAu 20) +26, *Talons of the Winds* (MuAu 20) +18, *Broom of the Winds* (ReAu 15) +26, *Earth's Carbuncle* (ReTe 15) +22, *Wreaths of Foul Smoke* (CrAu 15) +21, *Leap of the Fire* (Relg 15) +23, *Whispering Winds* (InAu 10) +16, *Despair of the Quivering Manacles* (ReCo 10) +18

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

narrow and his brow furrows. Even his emotions are false. If he is happy or jolly, or sad or somber, Cellemon simply intends to impress others, so he may gain their trust or exploit their reactions.

Jiphegra

Jiphegra is the youngest of the Magi at Windgraven and is perhaps the least paranoid. She is acutely aware of the Covenant's weaknesses, and argues that the Magi should spend less time fighting amongst themselves and should find a new location for Windgraven. She is the Magus most often absent from the Covenant, and is particularly interested in seizing some of Mistridge's magical sites.

A dumpy, awkward woman, apparently in her forties, she infrequently visits the Val du Bosque, clad in bulky grey robes and accompanied by a dozen lethargic Groggs. Such visits

usually mean trouble for the Magi of Mistridge, usually involving an attempt to steal their vis or use their magical sites.

Jiphegra is not a cold or dispassionate Magus. She pursues all her goals with passionate zeal and frightening intensity. Even passing interests excite great fervor in her, and she is unable to conduct any lengthy discussion without shouting at her opponents. This does not mean Jiphegra is sensitive, emotional or understanding, though. On the contrary, she is a self-absorbed and selfish person, with no interest or concern for others.

STORY IDEAS FOR WINDGRAVEN

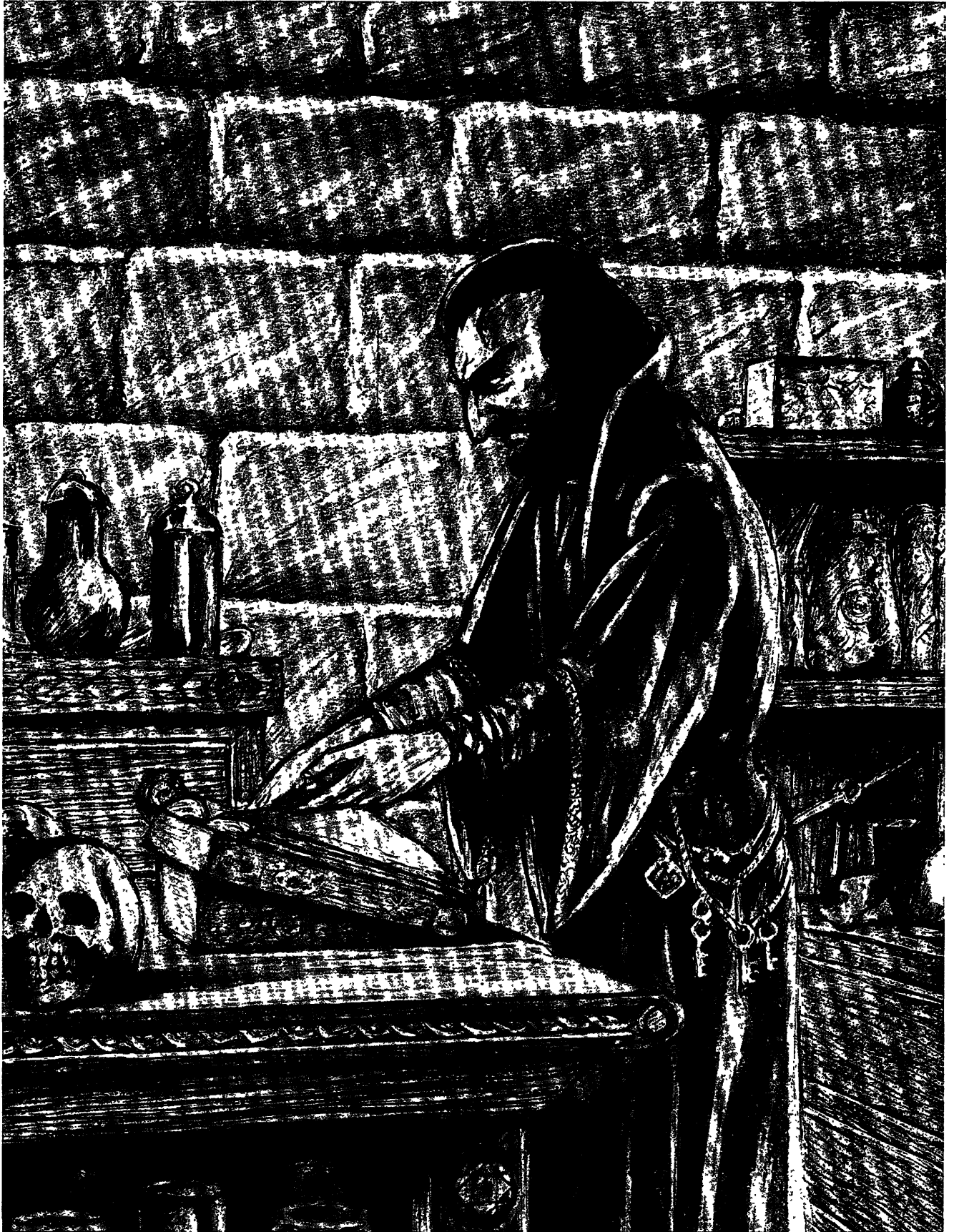
The Magi of Windgraven and the Albigensian Crusade are probably the two greatest and most constant threats to the Covenant of Mistridge. Numerous stories can involve Windgraven's attempts to plunder Mistridge's vis sources, to secretly use the Cave of the Shimmering Pool, to discredit Mistridge in the eyes of the peasants, and to turn Baron d'Uverre against Mistridge.



The outcomes of such stories are important at Tribunal meetings, for disputes are undoubtedly brought before the other Covenants. A Mistrudge-Windgraven rivalry should provide an excellent way for you to get the characters involved in the politics of the Tribunal.

One less obvious story involves Hammas's need for victims to feed his "Fruit Pit." Windgraven can't afford to buy Moorish prisoners from Aragon, as it used to, and can only spare so many of its own covenfolk. So, the Magi may occasionally kidnap

wandering beggars or lone iron miners. If one such victim is a friend or relation of one of the characters (such as one of Grimgroth's mundane family), the characters presumably search for the missing person. The conflict between loyalty to the Order and loyalty to family, plus the broader moral and political implications, make this more than just a story of investigation and negotiation. And, what would Mistrudge concede in return for the freedom of the captured mundane? Betrayal might easily become the theme of such a story.



THE COVENANT OF MISTRIDGE

CHAPTER FIVE



s discussed in the introduction of this book, Mistridge and its occupants can be used in several ways in your Saga. We don't need to go over those uses again here, but it's important to keep in mind the realms of

possibility that the Covenant presents. Though Mistridge is greatly detailed in the following pages, you may want to change those details to suit your needs. You may also want to add more details that you feel your players and Saga require. All in all, keep in mind that this material is yours to work with, and the details of the Covenant provided here can even change with each new story in your Mistridge Saga.

Background

The Covenant of Mistridge was founded in AD 1067 by a group of young Magi led by a Terram specialist named Consuelia. Now well into its Summer Season, the Covenant is firmly established in the Val du Bosque. Indeed, stable relations have been achieved with the mundane powers of the area, based on an unspoken agreement that neither bothers the other. The same relationship has been unofficially established with the local clergy. And, though a rivalry persists, Mistridge holds its own against the older and dangerous Windgraven Covenant. The Mistridge Covenant has thus achieved a degree of power and respect in the Val du Bosque based on the competence of its Magi. Still, the Covenant seeks to build on and consolidate

its power and influence, hopefully one day to recruit new, young Magi to insure its future.

In its Summer Season, Mistridge offers its occupants security and privilege over those in the mundane world. Grog and servants of the Covenant serve with a tradition of loyalty. In return they lead relatively comfortable lives, with assurances of daily food and shelter. Companions, the allies of Magi, are assured protection, sanctuary, and respect at Mistridge, instead of the ostracism or misunderstanding they might receive in the outside world. And, Magi at Mistridge are provided with all the tools they require for their studies, including reliable supplies of vis and an adequate library.

Though Mistridge is a welcome haven now, it will not remain so in the future. As Mistridge's Summer Season advances, signs of an approaching Autumn become clear. Not only are aggressive mundane politics mounting, but they are likely to force the Covenant into a defensive position in the valley. There are also supernatural forces mounting against the Covenant, including those of hostile faeries, like the goblins of the mine, and those of infernal power, like the demon beneath the Moaning Oaks.

There are even indications that the Covenant's Magi are losing their vigor, which may ultimately lead to the Covenant's decline. As you read sections devoted to Mistridge's Magi, consider ways in which they are losing their drive and their energy. Clavius, for example, is becoming increasingly uncommunicative. Grimgroth grows increasingly prone to melan-

choly. Felix is already quite obsessed, and neither Oculo nor Vulcris have the charisma nor inclination necessary to inspire or unite the Covenant.

In and of themselves most of these growing threats to Covenant and Magi are not lethal. However, in light of the Covenant's continued growth into Autumn, when authority and power is needed most, Mistridge faces definite dangers without greater cooperation and managerial aid. Indeed, clashes of personality and policy only become exaggerated as the Covenant's influence grows. The current Magi may simply reach a point where they are not able to control any greater power. At that time the Covenant will be in Autumn, and must look to younger, more cooperative and more aggressive Magi who are willing to maintain relations with the surrounding world. These Magi have to be willing to deal with problems at hand, maintaining order while the old guard retreat further and further into their own little magical worlds.

Inhabitants

There are myriad people who reside at and visit Mistridge. Most of the people are common covenfolk, servants who keep the Covenant running, without whom the place would fall into chaos. Others are Groggs, the essential guardians of the fortress and its inhabitants. Still others are Companions, the allies and sometimes-residents of the Covenant. And, last but not least, some inhabitants are Magi, who run things and are the inspiration for the Covenant. All of these people can be used as players' characters, and those that aren't may certainly interact with players' characters on a day to day basis.

MAGI

Undoubtedly the most important inhabitants of Mistridge are its leaders, its five Magi. They are Grimgroth, Felix, Vulcris, Oculo, and Clavius. The nominal leader of these five is Grimgroth, of House Tremere, but his rule over the Covenant is far from secure. Felix, obsessed with death and clearly insane, considers Grimgroth a sentimental weakling, while Vulcris, a squawking crone whom some say was once Grimgroth's apprentice, is inexplicably hostile toward him. Thus, Grimgroth depends upon the dubious cooperation of the uncommunicative philosopher, Clavius, and Oculo, who already demonstrates dissension with her deep distrust of Clavius. Already are the seeds of inter-Covenant hostility sewn.

Until recently Mistridge's founder, Consuelia, had organized and maintained order at the Covenant. Under her, the other "childish" Magi were forced to get along. However, not long ago Consuelia took her belongings and left for Mount Tierné, where she disappeared. Without the order she imposed, Mistridge's Magi flail about in an effort to restore order or gain control of it.

Perhaps Grimgroth will not, eventually, lead the Magi, though it is hard to imagine who might replace him. The others are too self-concerned or reclusive to effectively handle political and administrative concerns. Such tendencies are evident

even under Grimgroth's authority. For example, the Magi should make comprehensible copies of their spells and make them available in the Covenant library for everyone's use. However, it's clear that most have invented spells, or learned them at other Covenants, without making them available to the others.

Magus cooperation at Mistridge is not completely nonexistent, though. When important decisions must be made the Magi agree to meet in the council chamber, to argue issues and eventually vote on a course of action. Such discussions are usually necessary to divide *vis* between the Magi, to respond to external threats, and to discuss Hermetic or mundane politics. Unfortunately discussions often degenerate into petty personal squabbles. Regardless of topic, each Magus has one vote, the rest of the Covenant being ignored.

A Magus who joins Mistridge agrees to certain restrictions, and as a member has a number of privileges. As well as the usual oath to protect and support other members, a newcomer must swear to give the Covenant half the silver and *vis* acquired on expeditions, and must agree to relinquish anything magical owned but no longer used. Newcomers must also abide by the decisions of the council. Such councils even decide which Magi should attend to which Covenant problems or threats.

In return for all these pledges, initiate Magi may take up to one-twentieth of the silver in the treasury to fund expeditions. They also receive access to the Covenant's magical and mundane libraries, may call upon the time and abilities of covenfolk, and are each entitled to one vote at council meetings. The Covenants Chapter of *Ars Magica* Third Edition discusses many of the privileges Magi are entitled to in Covenant charters.

APPRENTICES AND FAMILIARS

As of the late 1190s, three of Mistridge's Magi have apprentices. Both Felix and Grimgroth have apprentices, Caeron and Lucienne, respectively. As of the year 1197, the "official" starting date of a Mistridge Saga, both of these young people are able to undergo the Apprentice's Gauntlet, and may become Magi. Caeron and Lucienne make ideal starting characters for players, especially if you intend to incorporate players' characters into an already established Covenant, with older Magi at the helm. The *Stormrider* Second Edition makes it possible to assume the roles of these two initiate Magi, and you may use that book to introduce the characters to the players.

Alternatively, you can use Caeron and Lucienne as incidental characters, or may have them leave the Covenant upon becoming Magi, to make room for the players' characters. Or, you may omit the two young Magi entirely, replacing them with characters of the players' creation.

The third apprentice at Mistridge is Oculo's. The apprentice is named Dalio and lives in Oculo's antechamber. Dalio is

MISTRIDGE



50
Paces

The Tower of Mistridge

RIVER

3 1/4 Miles
to Ford

still quite young by the year 1197 and is not yet ready to become a full-fledged Magus. He may still become a player's character, though, if that player doesn't mind a role of subservience and limited power. Dalio is an obnoxious young lad whose insatiable curiosity leads him to ask incessant questions about the most trivial of matters. He is also deeply insecure and hero-worships a succession of father figures within the Covenant. The Grog despise this privileged idiot, and try to make life unpleasant for him.

Of Mistridge's Magi only Clavius currently has a familiar. The creature is named Wartze, and is a large, lumpy toad. One of Grimgroth's ex-familiars is now the Magus Vulcris. Felix also had a familiar for some years, but he killed it.

COVENFOLK

About thirty adult covenfolk live in the Mistridge tower, along with their twenty children. Although there are a few male goatherds and other servants, most covenfolk are women — wives, widows and daughters of Grog. The women live in family units with their menfolk, though they eat separately and perform separate duties from the men during the day. The covenfolk see to the daily mundane tasks necessary for the running of the Covenant, such as cooking, cleaning, weaving, and sewing. Some covenfolk have special skills they apply in addition to their normal chores. These skills include making quills or sewing leather, but none of the covenfolk have any valuable specialist abilities. Consequently, parchment, ink,

Gaston, a Typical "Bodyguard"

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception +1, Strength +1, Stamina +1, Presence -1, Communication -1, Dexterity +1, Quickness 0

Age: 22

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Brawl (punching) 3, Drinking (keeping alert) 3, Ride (journeys) 1, Speak Provençal (commands) 1, Stealth (woods) 2, Swim (calm water) 1, Climb (ropes) 1, Hand Axe Attack (charging opponents) or Broadsword Attack (charging opponents) 3, Round Shield Parry (standing ground) 4

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Bodyguard (Grog) 1, Expectorating (accuracy) 5

Personality Traits: Devoted +2, Brave +2, Lazy -1

Weapons and Armor:

Ring Mail Hauberk

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +6, Damage +11

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +8, Damage +10

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -2

Torlen

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (blurry vision) -2, Strength 0, Stamina (iron-willed) +1, Presence (scarred) -5, Communication (demanding) -3, Dexterity (stiff joints) -2, Quickness (heavy legs) -4

Age: 62

Size: 0

Decrepitude: 2

Virtues and Flaws: Common Sense +1, Disfigured -1 (-3 to Presence rolls involving looks)

Abilities: Speak Provençal (orders) 4, Brawl (pinning) 3, Mace Attack (multiple targets) 4, Shield Parry (bodyguarding) 5, Javelin Attack (running throw) 3, Dagger Attack (cut ropes) 1, Leadership (in combat) 5, Intimidation (lessers) 2, Alertness (on watch) 2, Chirurgy (quick work) 4, Val du Bosque Lore (enemies of Mistridge) 2

Confidence: 5

Reputation: Not to be Crossed (Grog) 2

Personality Traits: Devoted +4, Brave +4, Reliable +2, Seething Anger +1, Hate to be Stared At +3

Weapons and Armor:

Ring Mail Hauberk

Mace Totals (1h): First Strike -2, Attack +5, Damage +9

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Dagger Totals: First Strike -6, Attack +3, Damage +3

Javelin Totals: Rate -10, Attack +0, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -8 (-2 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -3

glass and metal wares, weapons and most armor must be imported from the outside world. Even so, some of the more skilled, or purely adventurous, of the covenfolk assume virtual Grog status, helping Companions and Magi, and sometimes joining entourages on journeys.

In theory, the covenfolk are organized by Torlen's wife, Blanche. However, she is a weak and unimposing woman, so in practice servants follow instructions given by Georgine, the large, sharp-tongued cook.

Two other men live at Mistridge. They are not normal folk, and not quite Grog, so are best described as Companions. One of these people is Thibaud, a physician whom the Magi rescued from being burnt as a diabolist in Brittany. The other is Courtnay d'Assini, an impoverished Norman noble from southern Italy, who serves as a translator and negotiator.

THE TURB

Mistridge employs twenty-five henchmen — "Grog" — to guard the Covenant and protect the Magi on their travels. Many of these Grog were born and bred in the Covenant, while others are runaway serfs or mercenaries settled down to the

relative security of Covenant life. In line with the expectations of medieval society, most Grog's are male (while their wives and sisters perform domestic duties around the Covenant), but unlike mundane society the Covenant is prepared to accept women as warriors.

The Grog's, collectively called the turb, are commanded by an old man named Torlen, whose father commanded the Turb before him. Marked by bad burns across the left side of his face, Torlen is rather self-conscious of his appearance, and hates being stared at. He prefers not to venture out of the Covenant often. The Magi are happy for him to remain at Mistridge, where he is invaluable as a conciliator between the Grog's and Magi, and where he expertly maintains the discipline of the turb and the tower's watch.

As Grog commander for the Covenant, Torlen is also best thought of as a Companion.

As Torlen restricts his command to the Grog's in the Covenant, others are required to lead turbs beyond the fortress walls. One such commander is Dolores, a noblewoman from Castile. Another is Guy, a sexist local who has risen from the ranks by virtue of his loyalty and aggression. A fierce rivalry exists between these two field commanders (and Companions), and between the groups they command.

A Typical Grog

Characteristics: Intelligence -1, Perception 0, Strength +1, Stamina +1, Presence 0, Communication -2, Dexterity +1, Quickness 0

Age: 20

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Brawl (punching) 2, Drinking (contests) 2, Swim or Climb 1, Stealth (woods) 1, Speak Provençal (foul language) 3, Short Spear Attack or Hand Axe Attack (formation fighting) 2, Round Shield Parry (missiles) 3, Dodge (surprise attacks) 2

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Devoted +1, Brave +1, Lazy +1

Weapons and Armor:

Full Hard Leather

Short Spear Totals (1h): First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +6

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +5, Damage +10

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Encumbrance: 2

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +5 (11 Action), Fatigue -1



Guy's Grog, fifteen in all, are the less-respected and less-motivated recruits, armed with cheap weaponry and poor armor. They are responsible for maintaining the watch on the windswept battlements, and for guarding the silver and silver mines at Sharneal (although only five Grog are there at any one time, since little silver is actually stored at Sharneal for long).

Dolores's Grog, collectively known as the "Bodyguard," are usually given more comfortable duties, but are always chosen to accompany Magi on obviously dangerous expeditions. These Grog are the most skillful, courageous, disciplined and motivated Grog in the Covenant, so receive better equipment and pay.

The objective of a two-turb system is to encourage the lower Grog to strive to be accepted into the Bodyguard, while the Bodyguard are proud of their tradition of excellence. By keeping the differences between the two slight, no terrible enmities divide the groups, for neither can really claim superiority over the other. Furthermore, if membership in the Bodyguard is within reach through hard work, lesser Grog are more motivated to pursue that membership. It can't be denied, though, that the less-motivated of Guy's Grog do resent the Bodyguard.

Mundane Assets

The following is a breakdown of Mistridge's ordinary supplies, commodities and equipment — assets. This list tells you what the Covenant has or can get in mundane terms.

EQUIPMENT

Picks, shovels, rope, barrels, sacks, spare pouches, cooking pots, sleeping blankets, bits of furniture, hunting trophies and innumerable other pieces of bric-a-brac can be found in the various storerooms located in the cellars, by the stables, and everywhere else around the Covenant. Over the last century Mistridge has accumulated enormous amounts of junk, which may one day be useful, but which now clutters up storerooms. Thus, finding anything mildly unusual can take some time. It's nobody's job to keep these rooms in order, so nobody does.

FOOD

Almost all of the Covenant's food is bought from the surrounding villages, purchased with silver from the Devil's Nostril. Some goat milk, goat cheese and chicken eggs are produced at the Covenant.

GROGS

The Covenant has twenty-five Grog. Fifteen have inexpensive armaments (typically full leather armour, hand axe or short spear, and round shield). Ten "Bodyguards" have generally Standard armaments (ring mail hauberk, hand axe, spear or broadsword, and round shield). These henchmen are described under *Inhabitants*, above.

HORSES

There are seven riding horses and four pack mules in the Covenant stables.

MUNDANE LIBRARY

Kept in the same room as the magical library, the mundane library contains books on Legend Lore (Pyrenees) 4, Hermes Lore (history) 6, Humanities (Plato and Aristotle) 8, Provençal Lore (history) 4, and Hermes History (Houses) 2.

LIVESTOCK

Some of the covenfolk herd goats on the nearby mountainsides. The Covenant's 20 goats are kept in the spare stables during the winter. A dozen chickens are kept in wooden cages on the ramparts of the Covenant.

MINING EQUIPMENT

These materials are generally kept at Sharneal, for use by the miners at the Devil's Nostril.

MONEY

The silver mines of the Devil's Nostril produce enough wealth to keep the Covenant going, plus an extra 800 silver deniers each year. The "treasury" (a chest in Grimgroth's sanctum) contains a further 1,500 deniers for emergencies.

TENTS

A large tent (three paces by five paces when erected) is kept in the store room by the stables. The tent requires a mule to carry it. A dozen two-person tents (Load 5) are kept by the Grog in their quarters.

WATCH

Guards on duty at Mistridge include two on the roof, two at the front gate, and two or three in the central guard room on the third floor. Guards serve in three shifts, each for eight hours a day. Including the five Grog stationed at Sharneal, at least 23 Grog are required to maintain watch over Covenant territory.

When Magi travel they usually take up to ten Grog with them. At these times each of the three guard posts is manned by one Grog, accompanied by a child. An alarm bell on the third floor can be rung there, by hand, or it can be rung by pulling a rope from the roof.

Mystical Assets

The following is a breakdown of what magical commodities and possessions Mistridge has. Magical facilities are

generally available to Magi only, unless a Companion, Grog or servant is given special license.

ÆGIS OF THE HEARTH

This Rego Vim Ritual spell is cast on the Covenant every year by its Magi. The spell is Level 15, so gives +15 protection against spells cast into Mistrudge by other Magi. The spell's casting requires three pawns of Rego or Vim vis each year.

MAGIC AURA

The mountainside around Mistrudge has a Magical Aura of 3, and the mist which so often clings to the slope seems to be tied to this Aura. The Magi have no idea why the area should have such an Aura, but they aren't complaining.

LABORATORIES

Each Magus, at present, has an adequate laboratory contained within his or her own sanctum. If new Magi join the Covenant, however, Mistrudge cannot immediately afford to equip a laboratory for each of the newcomers. Alternate or shared facilities have to be arranged for new Magi.

OTHER SPELLS

In addition to the Covenant's Aegis, and spells cast on individual Magus's sanctums, there are two further spells in constant operation at Mistrudge. One is a Creo Auram spell designed to keep the air in the tower fresh and breathable (the spell is similar to *Chamber of Spring Breezes*). The other is a Rego Ignem spell designed to maintain a tolerable temperature in the tower throughout the year. As it is, transporting firewood up the cliff to the kitchen is a major duty for Grogs and covenfolk. It would be quite impossible to bring up enough wood to keep fires burning to heat the entire tower, especially through winter.

VIS

The Magi of Mistrudge collect seven pawns of Herbam vis from the Hill of Mushrooms and six pawns of Aquam vis from the Well each year. The Herbam vis is officially Mistrudge's, according to a ruling by the Provençal Tribunal. The Covenant's Magi have not yet officially told anyone in the Order about the Aquam vis. After all, though Windgraven would have no rightful claim to the Aquam vis, Windgraven Magi might make an attempt on the Well.

Of the thirteen pawns annually collected by Mistrudge, four are usually given to Bellaquin, in return for the three pawns of Rego vis, needed for the Mistrudge's Aegis of the Hearth spell.

THE MAGICAL LIBRARY

The Covenant possesses a number of tomes which explain Magic Theory and the various magical Arts. The scores given below represent the scores to which a Magus can advance his or her knowledge of the Arts. Spells mentioned after Form scores are spells that have been written down and placed in the magical library. Most of the books and scrolls have been copied from the libraries of other Covenants, notably Bellaquin, usually in exchange for silver or vis.

Magic Theory 4

Creo 8, Intéllego 6, Muto 10, Perdo 3, Rego 2

Animál 4: *The Immaculate Beast* (MuAn 15), *Disguise of the Putrid Aroma* (ReAn 5), *Panic of the Elephant's Mouse* (ReAn 15).

Aquam 8: *Douse the Fire* (CrAq 5), *Creeping Oil* (CrAq 10), *Footsteps of Slippery Oil* (CrAq 15), *Deluge of Rushing and Dashing* (CrAq 20), *Call of the Rushing Waters* (InAq 15), *Bridge of Frost* (MuAq 20), *Incantation of Putrid Wine* (PeAq 15), *Break the Oncoming Wave* (PeAq 20), *Gift of the Floating Wood* (ReAq 10), *Wave of Smashing and Drowning* (ReAq 20).

Auram 2: *Stench of Twenty Corpses* (CrAu 10), *Clouds of Thunderous Might* (MuAu 10), *Fog of Confusion* (MuAu 25).

Córpore 12: *Charm Against Putrefaction* (CrCo 5), *Bind Wound* (CrCo 10), *Gentle Touch of the Purified Body* (CrCo 15, carries Felix's Sigil), *The Surgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20), *Restoration of the Defiled Body* (CrCo 25), *Revealed Flaws of the Mortal Flesh* (InCo 10), *Tracing the Trail of Death's Stench* (InCo 25), *Eyes of the Cat* (MuCo 10), *The Silent Vigil* (MuCo 30), *Mists of Change* (MuCo 30), *Invocation of Weariness* (PeCo 5), *Endurance of the Berserkers* (ReCo 15), *Awaken the Slumbering Corpse* (ReCo 20), *The Walking Corpse* (ReCo 25), *Leap of Homecoming* (ReCo 35).

Herbam 7: *Conjure the Sturdy Vine* (CrHe 10), *Hunt for the Wild Herb* (InHe 15), *Converse with Plants and Trees* (InHe 25), *Curse of the Rotted Wood* (PeHe 10), *Wizard's Autumn* (PeHe 15), *The Great Rot* (PeHe 25), *Repel the Wooden Shafts* (ReHe 10).

Ignem 1: *Moonbeam* (CrIg 5), *Lamp Without Flame* (CrIg 10), *Flash of the Scarlet Flames* (CrIg 15), *Tales of the Ashes* (InIg 10), *Words with the Flickering Flame* (InIg 25), *Hornet Fire* (MuIg 15), *Soothe the Raging Flames* (PeIg 15), *Leap of the Fire* (ReIg 15).

Imágonem 5: *Image of the Past State* (InIm 15), *The Ear For Distant Voices* (InIm 20), *Taste of the Spices and Herbs* (Mulm 5), *Aura of Ennobled Presence* (Mulm 10), *Notes of a Delightful Sound* (Mulm 15), *Invisibility of the Standing Wizard* (PelIm 15), *Restore the Moved Image* (ReIm 20).

Mentem 8: *Words of the Unbroken Silence* (CrMe 5), *Sight of the Transparent Motive* (InMe 10), *Perception of the Conflicting Motives* (InMe 15), *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 25), *Calm the Motion of the Heart* (PeMe 15), *The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 15), *Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20), *Ring of Warding Against Spirits* (ReMe 25), *The Shrouded Glen* (ReMe 40).

Terram 15: *Stone of the Hundred Shards* (CrTe 15), *Conjuring a Mighty Tower* (CrTe 75, the spell which created the tower of Mistridge), *Eye of the Eons* (InTe 10), *Tracks of the Faerie Glow* (InTe 25), *Stone Tell of the Mind That Sits* (InTe 30), *Sense the Feet that Tread the Earth* (InTe 35), *The Forgiving Earth* (MuTe 10), *Rock of Viscid Clay* (MuTe 15), *Earth that Breaks No More* (MuTe 20), *Cascade of Rocks* (PeTe 25), *Trackless Step* (ReTe 10), *The Earth's Carbuncle* (ReTe 15), *The Earth Split Asunder* (ReTe 25).

Vim 6: *Wizard's Subtle Touch* (InVi 5), *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* (PeVi 15), *Aegis of the Hearth* (ReVi 15), *Waiting Spell* (ReVi 20), *Watching Ward* (ReVi 15).

Outside Relations

In its earlier days, Mistridge had closer dealings with the mundane and magical powers in the Val du Bosque, and the Languedoc as a whole. The Magi had to establish a *modus vivendi* with the mundanes, fend off the avaricious Magi of Windgraven at the height of their power, and make alliances with other Magi to build and defend Mistridge. Today, in 1197, Mistridge's Magi are more self-sufficient and more remote from the people around them.

A whole generation of mundanes have passed away since Mistridge last had any major contact with the clergy or nobility of the area. Now the only real contact with mundanes comes with occasional journeys to Foix or the fair at Javielle. No one in the valley holds any considerable grudges against Mistridge, nor owes the Covenant any favors.

However, during the coming Crusade relations with mundanes change. The nobility want to know where the Covenant's loyalties lie. With political tensions mounting, the characters probably have to get involved with the mundanes to some degree. Fortunately, the present good (nonexistent?) relations between Magi and mundanes allows the Covenant to open talks with a virtual clean slate.

As with current mundane relations, relations with other Magi are fairly simple. Windgraven is a rival, but no outright hostility exists between the Covenants. More often than not, Mistridge discovers some plot staged by Windgraven to steal local vis or to humiliate Mistridge before the mundanes. However, such activities are rarely more dubious.

Likewise, Mistridge's relations with Bellaquin are simple. Bellaquin is Mistridge's only real ally in the Order of Hermes. Relations between the two are not as close as they once were, although Mistridge is somewhat indebted to Bellaquin, given the generous aid Mistridge was provided in its Spring Season.

Today Mistridge is almost as powerful as Bellaquin. With the coming Crusade Bellaquin may be at terrible risk. Perhaps, in return for their past generosity, Bellaquin's Magi may ask for Mistridge's aid against the Crusaders, or for sanctuary for its survivors should Bellaquin be destroyed. (More details of the artistic and decadent Covenant of Bellaquin are provided in the *Ars Magica* supplement, *Covenants*.)

As for relations with faeries, the Fay and other magical beings are largely unaware of or disinterested in Mistridge. As

yet it appears that no Infernal powers have attempted to tamper with the Covenant, but Infernal powers never make their activities known. It's conceivable then, that Mistridge could fall victim to an Infernal plot at any time. Only the vigilance of Mistridge's Magi guards it from this threat.

Given that Mistridge's relations with the outside world are currently fairly quiet, this is an ideal time to start a Saga at the Covenant. In your Saga the attitudes of outsiders toward Mistridge can be formed in the course of your stories. The players' characters also have the freedom to make their own friends and enemies. And, the Troupe doesn't have to worry too much about remembering the details of events which occurred before the Saga even begins.

TRIBUNAL MEETINGS

The Covenants of southern France, including Mistridge, are organized as the Provençal Tribunal. (The Tribunal is mapped and its Covenants located on the *Tribunals and Covenants in Mythic Europe* map in the Introduction of this book.) Every seven years, and occasionally more frequently, the Tribunal meets at the powerful Covenant of Doissetep. The meetings are supposed to be courts, trying those who break Hermetic Law, and forums for debate and arbitration on major disputes between Magi. In practice, decisions made tend to be in accordance with the wishes of Doissetep, which invariably has more members present than any other Covenant.

The Magi of Mistridge do not always send a representative to Tribunal meetings, though when important matters are to be discussed several of them may wish to go. In the past, Mistridge has secured rulings from Tribunals, confirming its rights to various magical sites in the Val du Bosque, and censuring Windgraven over various transgressions of Hermetic Law. Who knows what new issues may be brought up in the future? No doubt as Mistridge's power increases, its Magi will bring more issues to Tribunals, issues concerning ever more far-reaching matters.

VISITORS

From time to time Mistridge entertains guests. The Covenant maintains extensive accommodation for visitors, but rarely has use for the rooms. The approach of the Crusade and the Covenant's rise in power are two factors which may increase the number of visitors arriving at Mistridge's door.

At present, most of the Covenant's guests are lone Magi, arriving on personal business, rather than on behalf of their Covenants. They come mainly from Spring Covenants, asking for support in Tribunals, for access to the library, or to trade vis.

Another type of visitor currently arriving at Mistridge are mundane scholars intent on meeting the famous Clavius. There are few scholars who trouble to make the journey to Mistridge, and most who do so are slightly disturbed by what they find. Ramon d'Uverre, a cathedral Canon from Foix and the Baron's nephew, is one occasional visitor who has over-

come his initial fear of Mistridge, and now sees the tower as a place of wonder.

Over the coming decades, more powerful Magi start to arrive at Mistridge, and visit more frequently. They behave as emissaries from their Covenants to discuss Hermetic and mundane politics, more regular exchanges of vis, and other political matters.

Choosing a Sanctum

If your players create new characters to join those already at Mistridge, the newcomers have to be given sanctums. This poses a considerable problem since the hierarchy of the Covenant, such as it is, is symbolized by the position of the Magi's sanctums in the tower. Thus, as Grimgroth is acting leader, his status is reinforced by the position of his sanctum immediately beneath the council chamber (see the *The Tower of Mistridge* maps). Clavius has the next most prestigious sanctum, and Oculo the next. Vulcris and Felix have chosen sanctums — on the roof and in the cellar — which put them outside the hierarchy, and which underline their position as political outsiders at Mistridge.

With all this sanctum space already occupied at Mistridge, there's only space left for four small, cramped sanctums on the seventh and eighth floors of the tower. Prestige-hungry characters may be concerned with securing the highest of new sanctums. Covenfolk, and even other Magi, often show more respect to any characters higher up in the tower. If necessary, additional sanctums can be made by clearing storerooms on the tenth floor and in the cellars. However, cellar sanctums provide little political influence.

The Tower of Mistridge.

The tower of Mistridge is an immense structure, magically summoned from the very rock of the mountain over a century ago. The Covenant is composed of a single piece of stone, standing over two hundred feet tall. It is covered with elaborate carvings, most notably four dragons which rise up the structure's sides. From the village of Javielle it seems that the tower rises out of a wall of mist, since the mountainside is often covered in thick fog, especially in the mornings and in winter.

There are thirteen floors to the tower, plus several cellars and a roof. Many of the rooms are currently in use. As previously stated, the tower can accommodate a few new Magi, though neither comfortably nor productively, and cellar chambers can be used to house additional Groggs.

The tower's cellars can also be used to store enormous amounts of food should the Covenant ever fall victim to siege. Furthermore, the tower only has a few windows, all very narrow. Added to the tower's precarious position on the edge of a cliff, these features make the tower practically unassailable by mundane forces.



The following are two people who might visit Mistridge on Hermetic business:

Carlane

Carlane is a sour-tongued Redcap who visits the Covenant roughly once a year, bringing letters, proclamations, rumors and gossip to the Magi. He is a short, stocky man with an officious attitude and poor table manners. He is well-meaning, though, and extremely loyal to all Magi. Carlane travels to most of the Covenants in the Provençal Tribunal, pausing in towns and cities to gather rumors unless he has urgent messages to deliver. Many common folk in the valley think of him as a simple minstrel.

Jerines

Jerines is a Quaesitor, responsible for overseeing Provençal Tribunal meetings and insuring that its members do not break the Code of Hermes or the Peripheral Code. He travels around the Covenants of the Tribunal, arriving at each roughly once every four years, and staying for a Season. Jerines is a tall, thin man with a long face and prominent, jutting chin. He dresses in rust-brown velvet robes, similar in style to a wealthy merchant's. His stays are usually relaxed, friendly affairs.

Jerines is well-versed in Intellego and Vim magicks, but prefers to gather information subtly, by casting Intellego Mentem spells during apparently informal conversations with Grogs and covenantfolk. Jerines only imposes himself upon Magi if he has reasonable grounds to suppose that the Code of Hermes has been broken. In such cases he adopts a humorless and stern approach, revealing himself to be an astute interrogator.

Indeed, Mistridge is set on a rocky outcrop, five hundred feet above the valley below, jutting out two hundred paces from the steep mountainside. (For the layout of the Covenant's location, see the *Mistridge* map.) The spit that connects the Covenant's outcropping of rock to the mountain has been narrowed, using Perdo Terram spells, until only a smooth rock causeway now remains. The causeway is like a narrow road that leads to the Covenant. The causeway is eight paces across and is flanked by downward plummeting cliffs. Falling over the edge of the causeway results in a 200 foot drop to the lower mountains below.

Visitors approaching the Covenant along the causeway are visible to the watch on the tower's roof. In fact, people approaching can be seen emerging from the woods as far as a mile to the south of the structure. Using the causeway, travelers arrive at a pair of ten foot high doors. Grogs question them from a guardroom above the door, contacting a Magus if suspicious of visitors.

SNEAKING UP TO MISTRIDGE

Of course, the Covenant's view makes it difficult to approach without being spotted. Cunning folk may sneak up to

the beginning of the causeway by clambering along the steep mountainside, through trees that grow there. But, approaching the foot of the tower itself then involves climbing up a nearly vertical slope, covered with loose dirt and stones. The feat is nearly impossible.

Moving along the mountainside toward the causeway is relatively easy. Tree trunks and roots can be used for support. Traveling discretely along the mountain, from the woods to the south of the Covenant to the beginning of the causeway (a distance of two hundred and fifty paces), requires six die rolls. The rolls consist of a stress die + Climb + Dexterity - Encumbrance - 2 for every hand not used for climbing (e.g., a hand holding a sword). A result of 6+ is required.

A failure means a character slides five paces downhill, suffering 1d10-3 damage (Armor has half its normal Protection score for Soak use). A Botch results in a tumble; ten paces are fallen. Damage on a Botch equals 1d10+3 (armor counts as half again). If a Strength or Dexterity stress roll of 6, to grab rocks or roots, fails, the character continues to slide downhill. For each Strength or Dexterity roll failed, another ten feet is fallen with appropriate damage suffered. Such recovery rolls are made until successful or until fifty paces are fallen, after which the falling character falls to his final death. Recovery rolls are made every Round.

The second part of the approach, actually sneaking up the side of the causeway, uses the same rolls as above, except that a result of 9+ is required, two extra Botch rolls are necessary, and more damage is taken. On a failed roll five paces are slid downward and 1d10 damage is suffered. On a Botch, ten paces are slid, incurring 1d10+6 damage. Recovery Strength or Dexterity rolls to stop a "Botch fall" are made against a value of 9. If failed, the character continues to fall, with further rolls made and damage suffered every Round. In this case, though, if three consecutive Rounds are spent sliding, the character falls to his death. The character also falls to his death upon a double Botch, made with the original climbing roll. Remember that armor only protects for half the normal value in a fall.

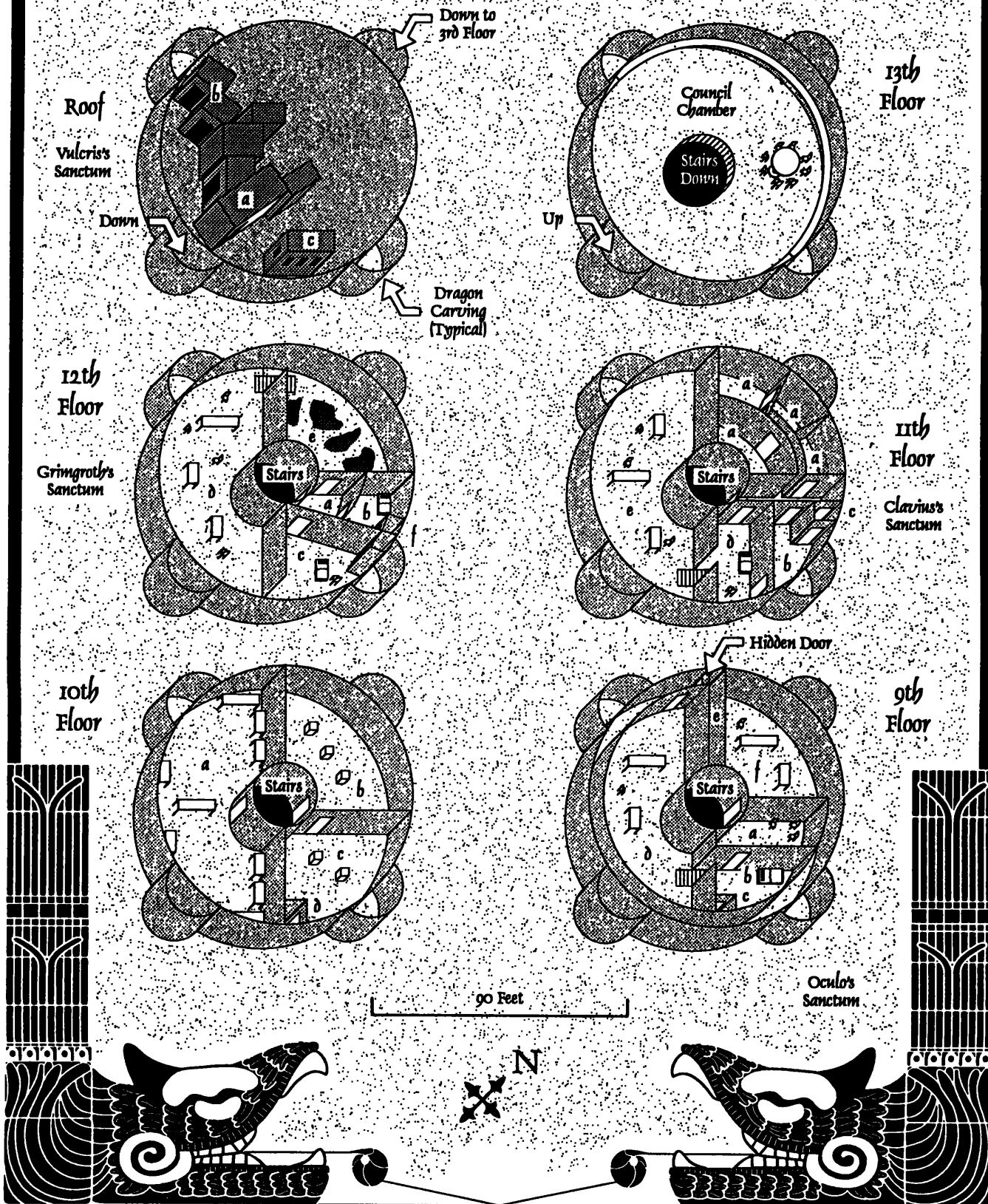
INSIDE THE TOWER

The following is a key to the maps provided of Mistridge's interior. The room descriptions begin with the structure's roof and move downward to the lowest cellars.

All the tower's internal doors can be locked. Each of the Magi has copies of all keys, whereas Torlen has copies of all those for the sixth floor and below. Other people own the keys for their own specific domains (e.g., Georgine the cook holds the larder and kitchen keys). Most doors can be picked with a Pick Locks + Dexterity roll of 8+, but the doors to Magi's sanctums require a roll of 12+ to open. In addition, Magi can secure the doors to their sanctums with wooden and iron bolts, not to mention protective *Waiting Spells*. Doors leading out of the Covenant are reinforced with iron-shod, wooden beams, and thus cannot simply be picked.

Note that a Magus's sanctum is rarely entered by another Magus, since the trespasser can legally be killed under Her-

THE TOWER OF MISTRIDGE



metic Law. Thus, most Magi have antechambers attached to their sanctums, where they can meet in private with other Magi. Visitors to Mistridge are rarely invited into the actual sanctums of Magi. Usually only apprentices, trusted Companions, and occasional servants are ever allowed inside.

Roof

Vulcris has made her sanctum here (a). It consists of a pile of shoddily built huts, leaning over on top of one another. The shacks are full of birds of all species, which the old crone refers to as her friends. Over a hundred birds live here, nesting on the roofs and in the walls of huts, in unused laboratory equipment, and in specially-constructed boxes. Sometimes a stork, owl or hawk stays for a season or two; Vulcris forbids any member of the Covenant to harm the bird.

There are no books in Vulcris's sanctum, and all Lab rolls are at -1 due to Vulcris's abuse of her equipment. There are two rooms (b) on which Vulcris imposes some order. One, which is relatively tidy, is the hut she uses to enchant objects and cast Ritual spells. The hut is out of bounds to her animals. The other room is Vulcris's personal hovel, her "nest," littered with piles of sticks, animal furs and pillows, which she guards territorially. Only Vulcris's favorite friends may enter this shack.

Vulcris does not welcome human visitors, and has no antechamber to her sanctum, where Magi may safely sit and talk with her. If other Magi wish to speak to her, they have to stand outside while she scrambles to a thatched roof and crouches, screeching at visitors.

One other building also sits on the roof. This is the guards' hut (c), where two Groggs constantly sit, surveying the path approaching the Covenant.

Two staircases descend from the roof. In the southern dragon-tower, steps descend to the council chamber, and the Groggs are forbidden to use the stairs except in the direst of emergencies. In the northern dragon-tower, stairs spiral down to the third floor, and an alarm rope runs down from the top of the stairs to a heavy bell at the bottom. This bell is a signal to Covenant Groggs that some threat approaches.

Thirteenth Floor

This floor houses the council chamber. In the center of the floor is the top of a broad stone staircase which spirals down to the sixth floor. The shaft is twenty feet wide. A wooden bannister carved like a dragon runs around the staircase's rim here at the stairs' top, and the bannister runs down the edge of the stairs.

A large circular table, ringed by heavy wooden chairs, sits at the east side of the room. On the southern wall is an eight foot tall map of the world, painted onto wood. The map was presented to Mistridge by a past Bishop of Foix. The map shows the world as a disk, with Jerusalem at the center. In detail it is even less accurate than most of Oculo's maps (see below), though the Magi probably have no way of knowing this. A

stone bench runs around the circumference of the room, extending from the wall. Otherwise the chamber is empty.

Twelfth Floor

Grimgroth's Sanctum. The door from the stairs leads into a high-ceilinged antechamber (a), comfortably furnished, which Grimgroth uses to speak with other Magi and visitors. An adjacent room (b), is a well-maintained guest room, which Grimgroth always keeps ready for various guests, though none ever come. In a rare fit of practical enthusiasm, Grimgroth had hidden bolts fitted into the door of the guest room so visitors could be locked into it, becoming prisoners.

Grimgroth's own sleeping chamber is the next room (c), which is sparsely furnished. However, it's crammed with useless mementoes, souvenirs, handicrafts and other junk collected over a century spent assuming the trappings of a normal mortal. A privy (f) is adjacent to this room, and another is adjacent to the guest room. Waste flows down a narrow chute and beyond the tower wall.

Up a flight of steps is Grimgroth's underused and untidy laboratory (d). By the entrance, two stone dragons are engraved on the floor, and anyone entering without this symbol emblazoned on their person set off three *Waiting Spells*: Three *Stones of the Hundred Shards* take effect above the doorway (Dodge roll of 9+ to escape each). Grimgroth wears the above symbol on a ring. As Grimgroth is happier passively studying books than actively working in a laboratory, his equipment is rarely used, and there is little method to its storage. The state of the room is a reflection of Grimgroth's lethargy and apathy.

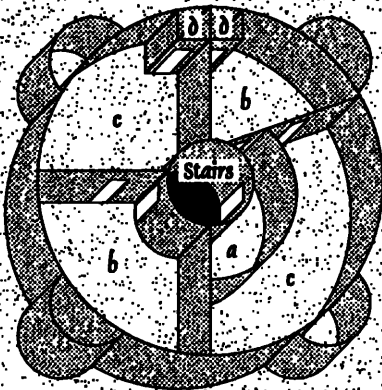
The last room on this floor (e), is practically inaccessible. After moving into Consuelia's old Sanctum, Grimgroth carefully moved all of her remaining belongings into this room. He set them out carefully and used to retreat to this room when the other Magi got him down. But, six months ago, in a fit of melancholy and anger, Grimgroth simply burnt everything. Now the charred remains of Consuelia's belongings sit in the room, the room's doors warped so as to be unopenable. Grimgroth started work on a spell to restore the ashes, but gave up within a week.

Eleventh Floor

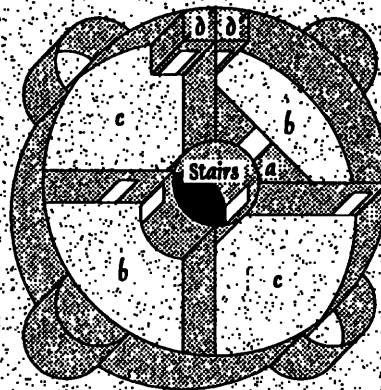
Clavius's Sanctum. Clavius maintains a suite of rooms (a) for his personal visitors, scholars and Criamon Magi who sometimes arrive to speak with him about Aristotle or *Zeno's Paradoxes*. The privy is accessible from the main corridor and from the well-furnished antechamber (b). Clavius's living quarters (d) are extremely Spartan, containing just the bare minimum, reflecting his disinterest in physical life. The largest chamber (e) is Clavius's laboratory, containing neatly arranged shelves of skulls of innumerable animals and humans, and a cluster of reading stands supporting his collection of Classical texts, mainly Latin translations of Aristotle. Inferior translations of these, and of a few other authors, are kept in a locked stone chest, along with a few Byzantine Greek versions of the same texts.

THE TOWER OF MISTRIDGE

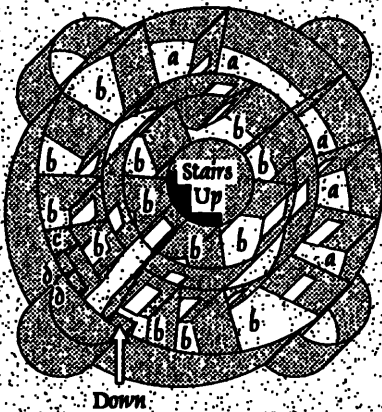
8th Floor



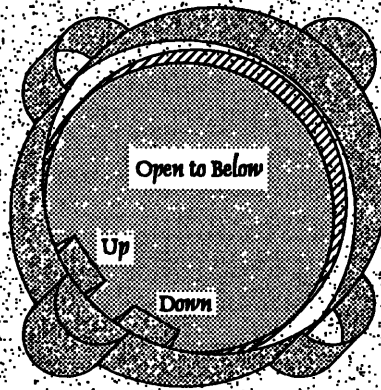
7th Floor



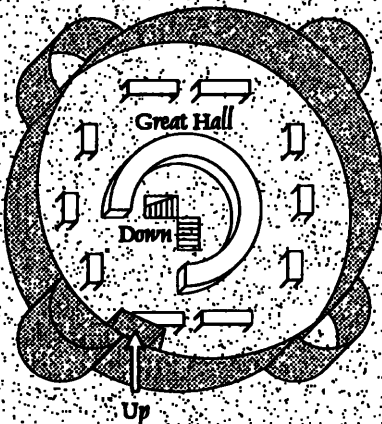
6th Floor
Guest Rooms



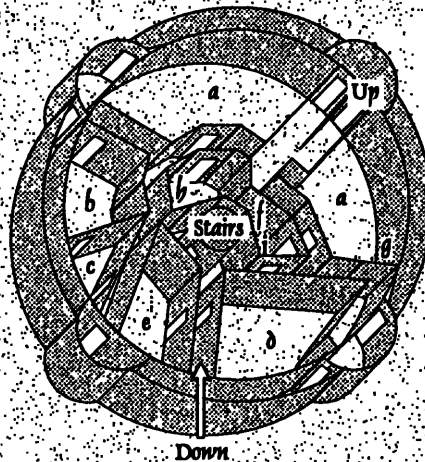
5th Floor



4th Floor



3rd Floor



Tenth Floor

The largest room on this floor is the library (a). There are only sixty tomes here, but many of them are extremely large volumes, up to four feet across. The library has been systematically expanded over the last century, and there are rarely two books whose subjects overlap. Almost all of them are laid flat on wooden tables around the edges of the room, but some of the more rarely consulted volumes are kept in chests underneath the tables. A larger table sits in the center of the room, with four reading stands. A supply of quills, inks, and parchments is also kept here. Lighting is supplied by three glowing engravings of the sun, chiselled into the walls. It is forbidden to carry a lit torch, lamp or candle into this room.

The other half of the floor is occupied by rooms designed to be a Magus's sanctum, containing a living room (b), laboratory (c), and privy (d), but at present they are used as storerooms. Of all the tower's storerooms, these contain the least mundane equipment and the most bizarre objects. No one has ever catalogued the rooms' contents, and there is no logic to the storage of that contents. The Magi have simply used these rooms to dump objects they don't want in their sanctums, but feel should still be saved. Most items in here have been forgotten. As examples, there are bones of various sorts, bags of colored pebbles and sands, strange seashells, a barrel of sweet tasting water, a mummified woman's head, some ice cubes which never melt, and an empty clay pot labelled in Latin, "*herein is the world.*"

Ninth Floor

Oculo's sanctum. Since birth, Oculo has been accustomed to living in luxury, and has taken care to equip these rooms in a manner which a noble would deem comfortable. The furniture in the antechamber (a) is comfortable, but not ostentatious, with embroidered cushions on the seats, and fine wine served from silver goblets. The tapestry on the wall is a copy of the map kept in the council chamber.

Oculo's personal chamber (b) contains a comfortable bed with fine linen sheets and a thick quilt. The room also has carved wooden furniture. By contrast, the "laboratory" (d) is poorly equipped, and on closer examination appears to be unused. In fact, Oculo's jealously guarded secrets are found beyond these rooms. Her real laboratory (f) and the room in which she keeps her maps (e) are behind a door which visitors never usually notice. Given a chance, Oculo uses *Image of the Inanimate Thing* to make this door, and the door to the map room, appear to be part of the walls. She can also use this spell to create illusions of expensive laboratory equipment in the false lab as well.

Eighth and Seventh Floors

These floors were designed as sanctums, but have never been used. If new Magi are recruited, they are allocated these rooms. Otherwise the rooms can be used to house temporary

members of the Covenant (e.g., visitors of House Mercere or Quaesitor), or to hold siege stores, prisoners, or extra Groggs. Two "sanctums" include antechambers (a), and all include living rooms (b), laboratories (c), and lavatories (d). All sanctums are currently empty.

Sixth Floor

This floor houses several guest rooms. Specifically designed to accommodate visiting Magi, there are two suites of rooms (a) and thirteen separate chambers (b), allowing the Covenant to host a sizeable gathering of Magi. For those idiosyncratic visitors who insist on risking death by Flux through excessive washing, a small room (c) is provided with a cauldron, firewood, barrels of water, and a large wooden tub. Grimgroth and Oculo bathe here occasionally, but rarely more than once a month. It would be unhealthy to bathe more often. Next to the bath room are two lavatories (d).

Fifth Floor

A stone balcony runs around the outer wall, overlooking the great hall, below. A stone hand rail around the balcony is supported by carvings of dragons. When mundane guests are present in the tower, a guard is placed by the central stairs, to prevent people from snooping around the higher floors.

Fourth Floor

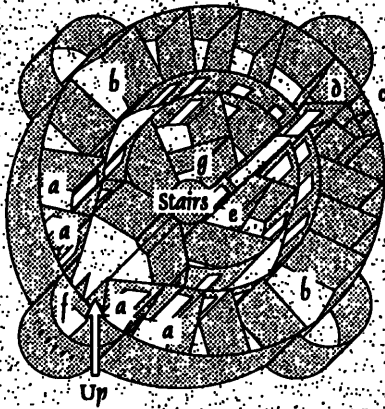
The great hall. A great oak table sweeps around this room, forming a three-quarter circle. Benches are arranged around the outside of the table, so that all seated look into the center of the room. The Magi and their honored banquet guests sit at the head of the table, opposite the top of the stairs. Guests often speculate on how such a huge table could have been manufactured and transported into the tower, and can often be seen scrutinizing its surface in the hopes of finding a joint of some sort.

Third Floor

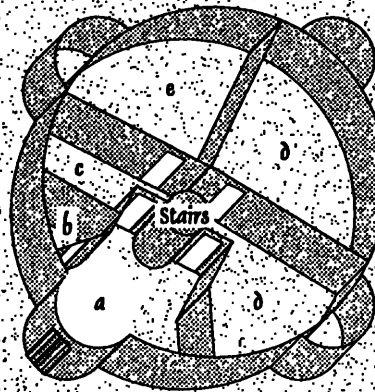
The bulk of the rooms here are living quarters (a) for the Groggs and their families. The older Groggs, whose children are grown, are given two connected rooms, while younger couples simply have one room. Unattached Groggs share a common room (b) and dormitory (c), while unattached covenfolk — mostly women — sleep in the kitchen (d), a large room dominated by an open fire and stone oven. Wine, smoked fish and meat, bread, and vegetables fill the well-stocked larder (e). Three Groggs are always on duty in the guard room (f), where they play Pigs' Knuckles (like throwing dice) and chess. Torlen, his three children, and his wife Blanche occupy two centrally positioned rooms (h). Dolores (i) has a room on this floor, and Guy lives with the other single Groggs. There are two lavatories (g), and those who wish to bathe do so in a wooden bath in the kitchen, or in the river.

THE TOWER OF MISTRIDGE

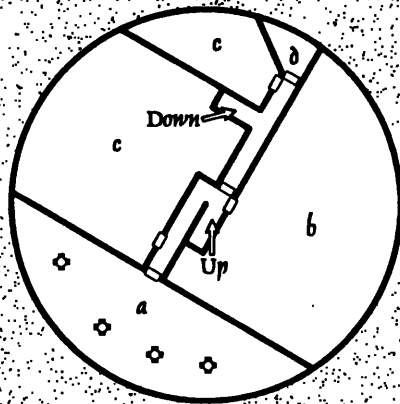
2nd Floor



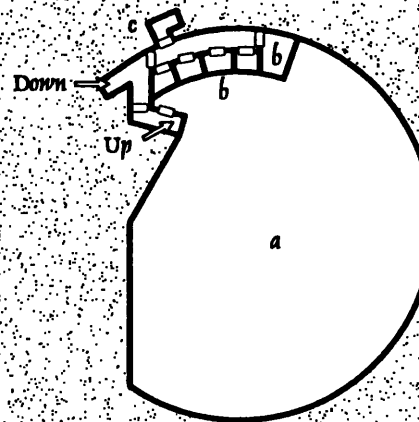
1st Floor



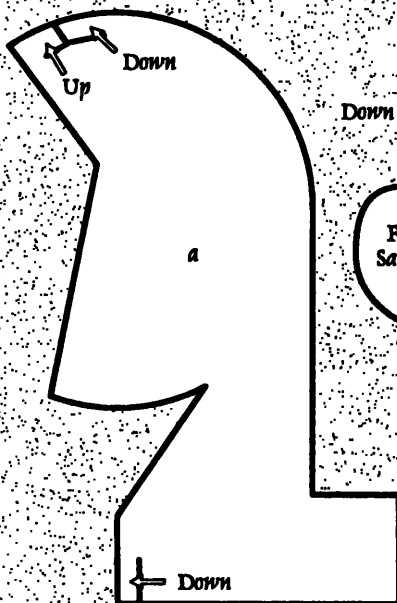
1st Cellar



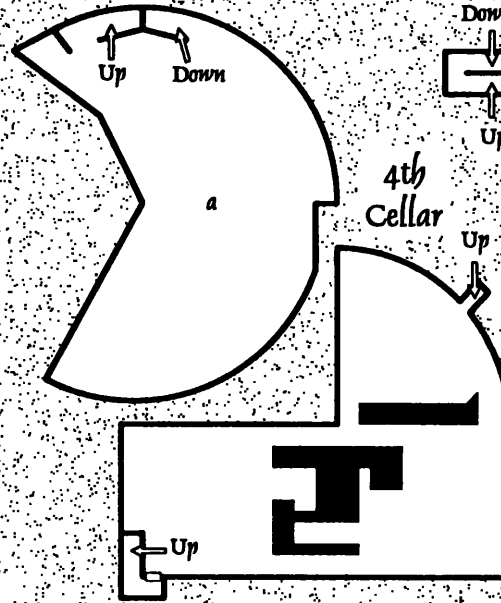
2nd Cellar



3rd Cellar



4th Cellar



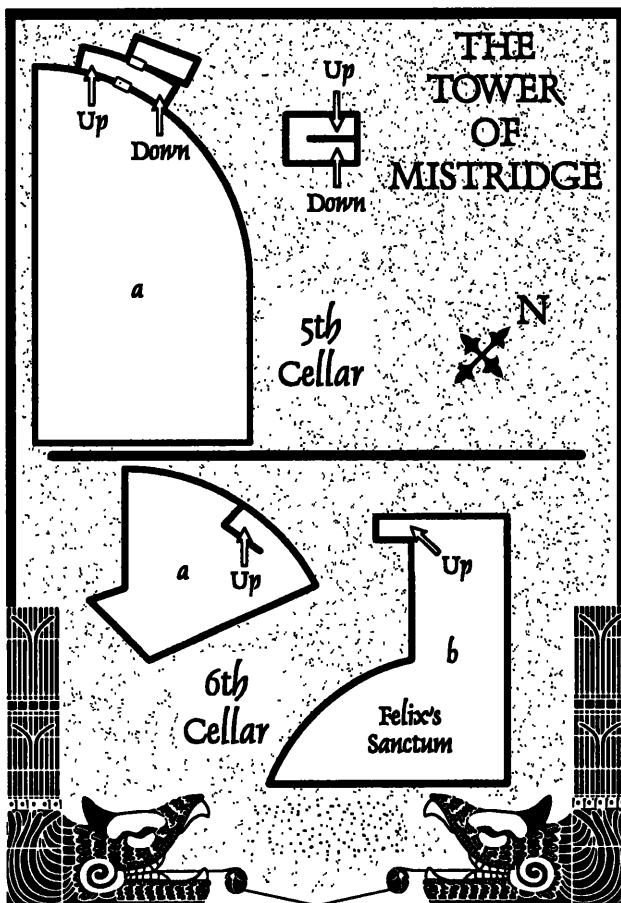
Second Floor

Most of these rooms are set aside for mundane guests. Two suites of rooms are provided for visitors of note (a), while a further nineteen rooms (b) are provided for lesser visitors, such as a wandering priest, visiting Groggs and Companions, or a noble's retainers. (If Mistridge takes on more Groggs, they may have to be housed here, since the floor above is already crowded.) Two lavatories (c) and a bath room (d) are provided.

Three other rooms here have distinct purposes. Thibaud, the physician, lives next to the stairs (e), opposite Courtnay's chamber (g). At least two Groggs are always on duty in the room above the gate (f). This defensive room includes arrow slits, chutes for pouring boiling oil onto attackers (plus wood, a cauldron and some oil), and small openings in the floor which allow defenders to shoot into the entrance hall.

First Floor

This floor contains an entrance hall (a), a room designed to store several carts (b), and stabling for visitors' and the Covenant's horses (c). Additional stabling is available (d), although at present the goatherds live here with their animals. Riding equipment, hay, oats and firewood are kept next to the stables (e), along with a tent, various bits of rope, scrap leather, cloth and other junk.



First Cellar

One of these rooms (a) has been set out with straw mattresses and other very basic furniture, to house mercenaries or other soldiers temporarily taken on by Mistridge. However, the mattresses are starting to rot and should be replaced. The largest chamber (b) is used by Groggs for weapon practice, and two other rooms are used as storerooms (c). These contain all manner of junk, plus a few useful objects, and are a shambles. The final room (d) has a heavy door with strong iron bolts, and is designed to contain wild animals or berserk prisoners.

Second Cellar

The large chamber (a) which dominates this level is one of the largest in the tower, and is often used by Magi to test spells and cast other magicks, whether for pleasure, practice or necessity. Grimgroth, in particular, finds such spell casting an excellent way to relieve anger and depression. The walls to the room are strangely colored, pitted, and rippled in places, while piles of ashes, pieces of animal, warped sticks and other debris litters the floor. A number of secure cells are also maintained here (b), with a guard post (c), though Mistridge's Magi rarely have need to hold prisoners.

Third to Sixth Cellars

Most of these chambers (a) are unused at present, partially because they are relatively detached from the bustle of the higher floors, partially because a musty dampness seeps from the walls, and partially because they are disturbingly close to Felix's sprawling sanctum (b).

A bucket of excrement, minced animal, and other waste appears outside the door of Felix's sanctum each day. Some poor servant has to collect, empty and replace the bucket, usually as a form of punishment.

It is clear from the contents of Felix's sanctum that the Magus is quite obsessed. There is no difference between his laboratory and personal chambers (he has no antechamber). In every chamber or alcove, hanging from the ceiling or propped up against a wall, are dead or dying rodents. In fact, decaying rodents fill the sanctum. They are hung on spikes, starved in cages, suffocated, and choked. Some are in jars full of swirling purple smoke. Some are bound in silver twine. Some corpses even have threads attaching their limbs to bells, so if they somehow move the bells ring.

Hundreds of deaths have been contrived by Felix, all different. He has tried killing rodents with different metals (such as silver, which is often associated with life), under different astrological signs, and at different speeds. Those few people who have spent time here say one eventually comes to hear the pleading voices of the dead creatures. Felix can certainly hear them. He thinks the sound is fascinating.

Felix's books lie around at random. A pallet bed sits in one corridor. A clothes chest has been pushed under a table in the main chamber. Caged corpses have been left on the chairs. Felix lives for his work. It shows.

The Magi

To be used as players' characters, or as characters for use by the Storyguide, the Magi of Mistridge require detailed description. The following pages provide that description.

FELIX NECROMIUS

In the damp caverns beneath the tower of Mistridge, Felix has made his home, his sanctum. He says he likes it because it's private, and certainly few people want to disturb him there. The dampness does not bother him, either, and he never mentions the stench that drifts from his chambers.

From time to time Felix emerges from his lair to stand at a window in the council chamber, gazing at Javielle bellow, watching the tiny-looking mortals mill about. In such melancholy moods he is sometimes talkative. He reflects on the view being akin to that which the gods of Greece beheld from the summit of Olympus. Felix also talks of the power and energy of the Gift which courses through a Magus's body. And, he reflects on the meaninglessness of mortals' lives as they scurry around beneath him, like little rodents.

Years in his dark sanctum have made Felix pale and thin. Consumed by his work, he has neglected both his health and his appearance, and now shrouds his emaciated body in shabby grey robes, which are caked with mud, dust and blood.

Personal History

Orphaned at an early age, Felix was found by his first master, Fildirius, when he was nine. He had been living as a beggar in Athens for two years and was happy to be fed and educated. He became quite loyal to his master, and was distraught when Fildirius was killed in a Wizard's War. Felix was then taken as an apprentice by an Ex Miscellanea spirit master. Though the two only stayed together for a year, Felix was deeply impressed by the possibility of breaking down the barriers between life and death, a possibility shown to him by his new master. Felix's training was completed by a Bonisagus Magus, Belavius, at Doissetep, who took the apprentice on and taught him to specialize in Intéllego magicks.

As soon as Felix became a full Magus he began to study Córpoem magicks almost exclusively, to pursue his obsession with death and its conquest. Three years after passing his gauntlet, Felix joined Consuelia's new Covenant, Mistridge. He has hardly left the Covenant since. Indeed, in the last decade Felix has become a recluse, rarely venturing out of his sanctum.

Personality

Felix Necromius is obsessed. His sole passion is to defeat death. He has rejected diabolism as a possibility toward that victory because to gain immortality from a demon is to become a slave. Otherwise, no price is too high to pay.

Felix Necromius of House Bonisagus

Characteristics: Intelligence (creative) +1, Perception 0, Strength (enfeebled) -2, Stamina (emaciated) -3, Presence (smells) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness (flat-footed) -1

Age: 156, born 1041

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Affinity (with the dead and dying) +4, The Blatant Gift -1 (-6 to social rolls), Tainted With Evil -1, Driving Goal -1

Abilities: Speak Greek 4 (slang), Speak Provençal (about death) 3, Speak Latin (about death) 5, Scribe Latin 4, Magic Theory (inventing spells) 10, Hermes Lore (history) 4, Hermes History (necromancy) 2, *Parma Magica* (Mentem) 4, Finesse (involving death) 10, *Certámen* (Córpoem) 4, Concentration (involving death) 8, Magic Affinity (with Death; Rego) 10, Occult Lore (undead) 4, Legend Lore (the afterlife) 4, Intimidation (Grog) 2, Dagger Attack (to kill) 2

Confidence: 4

Reputation: Insane (Grog) 1, Innovative (Order of Hermes) 2

Personality Traits: Morbid +6, Distant +3, Depressed +3, Angry +3, Obsessed +4

Techniques and Forms: Creo 12, Intéllego 14, Muto 7, Perdo 2, Rego 10, Animal 10, Aquam 12, Auram 3, Córpoem 22, Herbam 14, Ignem 2, Imágonem 4, Mentem 12, Terram 1, Vim 8

Spell Casting Speed: 9

Twilight Points: 9

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: All CrCo (+33), InCo (+35) and ReCo (+43) spells up to Level 35, all CrMe (+23) and InMe (+25) spells up to Level 25, *Mists of Change* (MuCo 30) +28, *Voice of the Lake* (InAq 25) +16, *Leap of the Fire* (Relg 15) +21, *Creeping Oil* (CrAq 10) +23, *Agony of the Beast* (PeAn 10) +11, *Eye of Hades* (InMe 20) +25—see below

Wizard's Sigil: A lingering smell of decay

Weapons and Armor:

Dagger Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +6, Damage +2

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Felix does not trust people. Anyone he's ever trusted has died while he's still been dependent on them, and deep down he feels bitterly betrayed, which only fuels his obsession. As the years have passed Felix has become increasingly detached from other people. He has ceased to be able to understand them and no longer cares about others at all. In fact, most people infuriate him, even irrationally so. Felix pours scorn on love and friendship, and on all the emotions which he cannot bring himself to feel. Although he despises the warm-hearted for their weakness, he is consumed by his jealousy of them, though never admits it even to himself. Since he almost never leaves the

tower, however, the only person against whom Felix can direct his hatred is Grimgroth.

Felix's Research

When anyone travels to the fair at Javielle, Felix always asks that they buy him any live rats, mice, rabbits, or other rodents they can find. These he takes to his sanctum and impales on spikes, starves in cages, decapitates, drowns, or otherwise abuses. When his research progresses further, Felix thinks, he will need human subjects for his experiments, but this will not be for some years.

The purpose of Felix's experiments is to determine the exact nature of life and death. Both have advantages, he believes, but also disadvantages. Life is fragile, but can create. Death is strong, and can destroy. His ultimate goal is to merge the two, creating an active state which is as strong as death and which can both create and destroy.

Felix has also developed a theory that there are three stages of death, or more accurately, three deaths: first the body dies, then the spirit dies, and finally there may eventually be the death of the form. The death of the body is what most people call death, and is usually inevitable. The second stage may not happen for centuries after a person's physical death, and God can keep a soul alive forever, as can the Devil. The final death is linked into Plato's theory of forms. There is, Felix believes, a true essence of "Man" which exists separately from all men and women. If all humans died, this ideal form would also die. If the form can somehow be destroyed, humanity would be destroyed, or at least transformed into something else. Felix wonders if there may not actually be several human forms, including Man, Woman, and Child.

Based on this theory, Felix has devised an elaborate plan. He hopes to develop a state of being in which the body is largely, but not completely, dead. It is sustained by the spirit, which is still within it. His problem is to sustain the spirit within a dead body. He also fears that it may not be possible to do so. He speculates that since such a new state is not part of the essence of humanity, it is not a possible variation on the human form. Perhaps, he hopes, it is possible to create a new form simply by

changing one individual. Or, perhaps there already exists a form which can encompass such a state of being.

At present, Felix's plan is still in its early stages. By carefully studying hundreds of deaths, Felix is beginning to learn exactly what's involved in each case. He has recently begun to experiment with causing partial physical death. That is, he has tried to kill animals without all of the usual symptoms of physical death. For example, he seeks to insure that a dead rodent can still see or move. Thus far he has failed to make any progress.

GRIMGROTH

Since Consuelia left Mistridge Grimgroth has gradually come to assume her role as leader. It is not a responsibility which he relishes, and he only accepts it in order to prevent the other Magi from splitting up. His efforts are not wholly successful, however, since Clavius and Oculo still bicker endlessly, and Vulcris and Felix spitefully oppose his every proposal.

Characterized by his slow, purposeful movements and perpetually furrowed brow, Grimgroth has carefully cultivated an air of stern, aristocratic dignity. His carefully groomed black hair and expensive purple robes give an impression of power and confidence. The cruel coldness in his eyes, the Groggs say, could freeze fire. But, in private, Grimgroth's eyes seem helpless and pleading, his hair becomes messy and seems less black, and he dons a set of ill-fitting brown woolen robes which make him look almost awkward.

Grimgroth has recently moved his sanctum to an upper floor of the tower, so his rooms are now directly beneath the council chamber. His is now the sanctum Consuelia used to use. The move has confirmed him as nominal leader of Mistridge, though in practice his power is dependant solely on the unreliable support of Clavius and Oculo.

Personal History

Originally from the Val du Bosque, Grimgroth was kidnapped by his *Parens* when he was twelve, and was taken to Iberia. He joined Mistridge shortly after becoming a Magus to be close to his mundane family in Xanec and Siernami. By then, however, he was thirty. His parents were dead, and he never managed to get close to his brother or sister. They, too, are now dead.

However, Grimgroth continues to watch over his surviving relatives, inspired by a profound sense of duty and by a guilt he feels for being emotionally incapable of loving his family. Grimgroth's sister has two living descendents, one who lives with her growing family in Xanec, and another — a Cathar Perfecti — in Siernami. Another of his sister's descendents, Pere, has recently been recruited by Mistridge as a Grog, and Grimgroth has befriended the young lad. Their unusual friendship has caused resentment amongst the other Groggs. It has thus made life difficult for the new recruit, who has no idea he is related to the Magus.

Eye of Hades (InMe 20)

Spell Focus: A piece of Obsidian (+2)

R: Near, **D:** Conc, **Req:** Córpoem or Anímal

This spell allows a person to watch the dying soul or mind of a person or animal. The spiritual changes as death approaches are visible as movements of different colored vapors, the mists eventually departing up toward Heaven, down toward Hell, or simply dissipating if the being has no soul.

As well as allowing Felix to determine the probable destination of a person's soul, he claims this spell is invaluable to his research. He certainly enjoys using the spell. As Felix invented the spell, the smell of rotting flesh lingers around any place where it is cast, and remains for several hours.



Grimgroth of House Tremere

Characteristics: Intelligence (discerning) +3, Perception 0, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence (imposing stance) +2, Communication (reasoned speech) +1, Dexterity (slow reflexes) -1, Quickness (plodding step) -1

Age: 157, born 1040

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Superior Characteristic (Intelligence) +2, Gentle Gift +1 (no -3 penalty to social rolls), Magic Affinity (winds) +2, Special Magical Ability (when angered gains forceful demeanor, offering +2 to Presence rolls) +1, Weakness (needs love) -1, Warped Magic (spells accompanied by winds and a whistling sound) -1, Cursed (relationships are always painful) -1, Deleterious Circumstances (-5 penalty when sky is mostly clear of clouds) -1, Major Magic Deficiency (any sums involving Terram are halved) -3, Restriction (magic doesn't work within earshot of music) -1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (slang) 4, Speak Latin (speaking about feelings) 5, Scribe Latin (skim texts) 4, Magic Theory (potions) 7, Hermes Lore (politics) 6, Hermes History (legal processes) 4, *Parma Magica* (Vim) 4, Finesse (grace) 3, *Certamen* (Perdo) 5, Concentration (ignoring pain) 3, Penetration (Perdo) 4, Magic Affinity (winds) 4, Meditation (controlling emotions) 4, Provençal Lore (history) 6, Humanities (philosophy) 4, Legend Lore (Pyrenees) 4, Medicine (anatomy) 4, Pretend (to be strong) 4, Folk Ken (Grog) 2, Church Lore (history) 2, Leadership (Grog) 2, Broadsword Attack (fatigued) 2

Confidence: 1

Reputation: Pleasant (Grog) 1

Personality Traits: Caring +2, Brave +1, Patient +1, Energetic -2

Techniques and Forms: Creo 6, Intéllego 6, Muto 10, Perdo 16, Rego 9, Animal 4, Aquam 10, Auram 15, Corpore 10, Herbam 14, Ignem 5, Imaginem 9, Mentem 8, Terram 15, Vim 8

Spell Casting Speed: 2

Twilight Points: 11

Effects of Twilight: +2 to politics rolls, angered by discussion of Tribunal where went into temporary Twilight

Spells Known: All PeHe +40 spells up to Level 30 and MuTe +25 spells up to Level 25, *Charge of the Angry Winds* (CrAu 30) +25, *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15) +16, *Fog of Confusion* (MuAu 25) +25, *Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20) +17, *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20) +16, *Waiting Spell* (ReVi 20) +17, *Repel the Wooden Shafts* (ReHe 15) +23, *The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 15) +17, *Aegis of the Hearth* (ReVi 15) +17, *Incantation of Putrid Wine* (PeAq 15) +26, *Endurance of the Berserkers* (ReCo 15) +19, *Stone of the Hundred Shards* (CrTe 15) +21, *Aura of Ennobled Presence* (MuIm 10) +19, *Conjure the Sturdy Vine* (CrHe 10) +20, *Lamp Without Flame* (CrIg 10) +11, *Creeping Oil* (CrAq 10) +16

Wizard's Sigil: A slight, humid breeze

Weapons and Armor:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Note: Differences between Grimgroth's traits here and in the *Ars Magica* Third Edition rules are a result of Grimgroth's accumulated years of experience and hardship.

Though drained of the capacity now, Grimgroth has known love. When he was seventeen he fell deeply in love with a servant girl, but his master quickly forbade the two to see each other. After arriving at Mistridge Grimgroth fell in love again, this time with Consuelia. Initially surprised by Grimgroth's attention, she eventually accepted his affections, and the two began a miserable affair which lingered, on and off, for decades, until Consuelia finally left the Covenant. Throughout the relationship Consuelia was always preoccupied with her researches, and though happy to spend spare time with Grimgroth, resented his attempts to replace her magic as the center of her life. The relationship was thus tense and turbulent, often terminated and renewed again.

Smitten with Consuelia, Grimgroth found little to interest him in his work. Now that Consuelia is gone, Grimgroth suspects she left in order to escape him. So, the Magus currently spends many hours on the slopes of Mount Tierné, vainly hoping that Consuelia will contact him and allow him to apologize. The other Magi of Mistridge rarely mention Consuelia's name in Grimgroth's presence, except for Felix, who speaks her name to spite his opponent.

Personality

Grimgroth is a thoroughly miserable man. Once a warm, caring person, perhaps the worst thing that could ever have happened to him was to become a Magus. All of his relationships have been failures. Even his familiars (one of which is now the Magus Vulcris) turned against him. Grimgroth deeply regrets that he can not live as a normal mundane, and hates Felix for his insensitivity.

Behind his stern mask, Grimgroth is probably the kindest of the Magi at Mistridge, having a genuine concern for the welfare of the Grog and covenfolk. He also detests many of the practices of the other Magi, such as their kidnapping of potential apprentices. Though compassionate, Grimgroth can no longer feel genuine love after being deserted by Consuelia.

Indeed, Grimgroth feels something of an outsider in the Order of Hermes (particularly since his *Parens* holds his Sigil, which limits his participation in Hermetic politics). Unfortunately, he cannot really feel comfortable with mundanes either, for all his good intentions.

Grimgroth's Research

Felix often mocks that Grimgroth knows something about everything, but nothing about anything. Though Felix is deliberately trying to be hurtful there is much truth to his criticism. When his affair with Consuelia was going badly, Grimgroth would try to lose himself in his research. But, after a while, he would always become bored with it, and turn to some other subject until that too bored him, usually within a Season. Grimgroth has looked into every Form and Technique, and has looked into many nonmagical subjects as well, so he has very broad knowledge, but no specialties. Grimgroth has also found distraction in diplomacy with mundanes, and more recently in a growing involvement with the Cathars.

CLAVIUS

A tall, bearded man with piercing grey eyes and lank reddish brown hair, Clavius, of House Criamon, specializes in the study of the mind (Mentem) and the philosophy of Aristotle. He is not a passionate man, but has a sense of brooding malice about him, particularly when faced with ignorance and stupidity.

Clavius has not spoken in sixteen years. Occasionally a mundane scholar comes to stay with him, and such people are told Clavius is mute, though he could speak if he felt the inclination. When communicating with other Magi, simple affirmative and negative answers are given by Clavius's toad Familiar, Wartle. More complex exchanges, and conversations with mundanes, require that Clavius write out, in his lazy sprawling scrawl, what he wishes to say.

Personal History

Born in Burgundy, Clavius was willingly taken from his peasant parents by a Magus named Quaerstus, who was from what is now a destroyed Winter Covenant. After becoming a full Magus, Clavius traveled south, toward the political heart of the Order and the learned Moors of Spain. It was thus that he came to aid the running of the new Covenant, Mistrudge.

Growing his beard to cover his Criamon tattoos, Clavius then spent much of his time traveling the Iberian and Provençal Tribunals, reading, observing, and trying to gain allies for Mistrudge. This was the formative period of his life. Although his diplomatic successes were limited, Clavius, along with Grimgroth, helped Consuelia establish her only lasting alliance, with Bellaquin. Clavius's success in this mission derived largely from his former master's recent initiation into Bellaquin.

More importantly, Clavius's relations with Bellaquin allowed him to discover the wonders of Greek philosophy. Previously Clavius had accompanied the King of Castile's army, when Toledo fell in 1085. He had seen the city's treasures and spoken with its scholars before they were executed. It was thus that he recognized Latin copies of texts the scholars had mentioned, and was awestruck by them. His life of philosophical pursuit began there.

Fifty years ago, when the King of Aragon took the city of Tortosa, several books were recovered, including an Arabic copy of Aristotle's greatest work, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Knowing the Arabic translations to be superior to the Latin, Clavius asked that he be permitted to fetch some money in order to buy the book. He rushed to Mistrudge and asked for the thousand deniers that the looters demanded. The Magi refused, saying that they would rather buy some horses. The money was eventually procured by Bellaquin, but by then the looters had become impatient and sold the book to a monastery. Clavius has never forgiven his fellow Magi for this. Imagine, valuing horse flesh above the wisdom of Aristotle! Absurd!

Personality

Clavius's silence is just one result of a Wizard's Twilight he went through sixteen years ago. The Twilight resulted from an Intellego Mentem spell cast on groaning noises heard around the Forest of Moaning Oaks. The true result of the Twilight is that Clavius's mind is no longer firmly attached to his body, making complicated physical activities difficult and tiresome. Speaking just seems such an effort, and ultimately so futile, since, to him, words can never communicate real human truths. Only in rational philosophy — and Aristotle in particular — can Clavius find any value for words.

The distant relationship between Clavius's mind and body is the key to understanding his personality. Petty physical discomforts no longer bother him, and he feels pain less severely than normal people. Consequently he finds it difficult to understand why hunger and cold distress others.

Clavius is similarly unable to comprehend the way in which people are affected by their emotional and physical drives. Lust, love, sorrow, and pity are things which he neither feels nor even properly remembers. He eats and stays warm and avoids danger simply because he understands that it is wise to do so. However, the sheer irrationality of humanity never ceases to amaze him. Indeed, his plans and calculations are usually based on the hopelessly mistaken presumption that people behave as coldly and rationally as he does.

To those around him, however, Clavius does not seem as cold as all this. His face is occasionally clouded by anger or spite. It is quite possible that somewhere in his soul, a forgotten, passionate part of himself still functions, quite detached from his lofty intellect.

Another result of Clavius's weak tie between mind and body, which manifests in his personality, is his relationship with his familiar, Wartle. Clavius is aware that he can control the toad's actions when he wants to, and others have noticed that the toad's personality has altered until it is almost now indistinguishable from Clavius's. But, even Clavius is astonished when, occasionally, his human mouth opens and his tongue darts at an insect hovering several feet away. Others have noticed Clavius deliberately swat flies and eat the remains, but he refuses to believe he does such things.

Clavius of House Criamon

Characteristics: Intelligence (clever) +2, Perception (nose in a book) -1, Strength 0, Stamina (resolute) +1, Presence 0, Communication (reserved) -5, Dexterity (slow reflexes) -4, Quickness (slow feet) -1

Age: 59, born 1138

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Clear Thinker (+3 to confusion rolls) +1, Book Learner +1, The Blatant Gift (-6 to social rolls) -1, Delusion (that he's fully in control of his body) -1

Abilities: Speak Burgundian peasant French (slang) 3, Speak Provençal (about ideas) 4, Speak Latin (precise vocabulary) 5, Speak Greek (philosophical terms) 4, Speak Arabic (philosophical terms) 2, Speak noble northern Spanish (courtesies) 4, Scribe Arabic (names) 1, Scribe Latin (critical reading) 6, Scribe Greek (detecting scribes' errors) 4, Magic Theory (enchanting items) 8, Hermes Lore (philosophers) 2, Hermes History (House Criamon) 2, *Parma Magica* (Mentem) 5, Finesse (precision) 5, *Certamen* (Mentem) 6, Concentration (long periods) 8, Enigmatic Wisdom (metaphysics) 5, Humanities (Aristotle) 9, Ride (long distances) 4, Aragon Lore (history) 4, Languedoc Lore (history) 2, Quarterstaff (desperate defense) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Scholarly (educated mundanes) 4

Personality Traits: Sensitive -3, Cautious +1, Toad +3

Techniques and Forms: Creo 14, Intéllego 9, Muto 8, Perdo 4, Rego 6, Animal 7, Aquam 12, Auram 4, Corporeum 10, Herbam 15, Ignem 3, Imágonem 9, Mentem 26, Terram 7, Vim 6

Spell Casting Speed: 4

Twilight Points: 13

Effects of Twilight: Insight into people's minds gives +5 to InMe spells cast at Near or closer Range. Enduring Constitution (as +1 Virtue — penalties from lost Wound and Fatigue Levels are reduced by one)

Spells Known: *The Shrouded Glen* (ReMe 40) +33, *Return of Mental Lucidity* (CrMe 35) +41, *Gift of Reason* (CrMe 30) +41,

Peering into the Mortal Mind (InMe 30) +36, *Thoughts Within Babble* (InMe 25) +36, *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 25) +36, *Ring of Warding Against Spirits* (ReMe 25) +33, *The Great Rot* (PeHe 25) +20, *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20) +25, *Bridge of Frost* (MuAq 20) +21, *Coerce the Spirits of the Night* (ReMe 20) +33, *Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20) +33, *Loss of But a Moment's Memory* (PeMe 20) +31, *The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 15) +33, *Perception of the Conflicting Motives* (InMe 15) +36, *The Earth's Caruncle* (ReTe 15) +14, *Invisibility of the Standing Wizard* (PeIm 15) +14, *Stone of the Hundred Shards* (CrTe 15) +22, *Watching Ward* (ReVi 15) +13, *Repel the Wooden Shafts* (ReHe 10) +22, *Tales of the Ashes* (InIg 10) +13, *Binding Wound* (CrCo 10) +25, *Clouds of Thunderous Might* (MuAu 10) +18, *Sight of the Transparent Motive* (InMe 10) +36, *Lamp Without Flame* (CrIg 10) +18, *Words of the Unbroken Silence* (CrMe 5) +41

Wizard's Sigil: A smell of burnt meat that hangs in the air for a few minutes

Weapons and Armor:

Quarterstaff Totals: Parry Defense +8 (14 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

Wartzle, Clavius's Toad Familiar

Size: -4

Body Levels: OK, Killed

Cord Strengths: Gold 0, Silver +2 (added to Clavius's mental rolls), Bronze 0

Bond Qualities:

Mental Communication—The two can communicate at will, over any distance. Each shares the Personality Traits of the other.

Shared Speech—Wartzle can speak all of Clavius's languages fluently, though Clavius cannot speak with frogs and land animals, but might be able to if he chose to speak to them.

Within the Covenant, Clavius gets on well with Felix Necromius since both of them despise the majority of their fellow human beings. But, unlike Felix, Clavius never deliberately harms anybody. He is too elevated and enlightened to wish harm on anyone. He is also simply too detached from his emotions. True, his heart may simmer with the occasional desire to end the sickening lives of the crass and foolish around him. This is particularly true for Mistridge's drunken Groggs and their mentor, Guy. However, Clavius is only aware of his hatred as a cold intellectual opinion, and his mind sees no purpose in harming other people. Though he never admits it, Clavius sometimes even finds interest in the minds of the moronic herd, if only because they are so different from their educated superiors. Still, Clavius often wonders why the Divinities populated their creation with so many fools.

Clavius's Research

Clavius's time is spent studying various magical Arts and spells, particularly the Mentem Art and spells to defend himself in his travels. Clavius has also spent much time studying

Words Through Walls (InTe 20)

R: Touch/Near, **D:** Sun/Year, **Req:** Auram

The caster places her ear against a wall, and can listen in on any conversation taking place within five paces of any other part of that same wall.





Aristotle, and frequently writes open letters to centers of learning around Christendom — as far as Oxford, Paris and Rome — but cannot learn more unless he gets better translations of Classic texts. Most of Clavius's spare time is spent contemplating the riddles by which his House sets store. At present he is trying to comprehend "the color of the shadow of oblivion."

VULCRIS

Vulcris is an old and twisted woman, with straggly, dark grey hair which is balding on top. Her robes are made up of innumerable layers of tattered greasy black and grey fabrics, from which feathers occasionally fall when she moves. Her face is thin, with a long nose and tight bluish lips. She shuffles around the Covenant on her misshapen feet (her big toes are located at the back of her heels), grumbling to herself. She half snarls and half screeches when she speaks, and displays a deep loathing of Grimgroth. This makes Vulcris the natural ally of Felix in council meetings, but the two rarely think of any alternative policies to Grimgroth's.

Vulcris can usually be found in the shacks which form her rooftop sanctum, or in the library. She keeps birds — scores of them, her friends — in her huts. Accordingly, the other Magi have refused to let her take books from the library back to her sanctum. Many books still bare the evidence of days when she did so; they are scarred with claw and beak marks, filth, and bird droppings.

The covenfolk say Vulcris hates Grimgroth because she was once his apprentice, and that he mistreated her. The Magi know that she was never his apprentice, and in fact, was once his Familiar, having bargained with Grimgroth for human form. Vulcris rarely leaves the Covenant — at least in "human" form. When she does go beyond the walls, the other Magi try to steer her away from local villages. No one at MistrIDGE wants rumors spread that one of the Magi is a witch, which is precisely what many peasants would say if they ever met the old woman.

Personal History

About a century ago Grimgroth took a vulture as a familiar. She immediately began to show signs of insubordination, and over the next forty years became so argumentative, belligerent and difficult that she at last persuaded Grimgroth to transform her into a human. Grimgroth duly found a Bjornaer Magus capable of performing the ritual, and gathered the required vis. Unfortunately something went wrong, and the transformation was imperfect. Vulcris's new body was ugly and misshapen, and caused the now-woman constant pain. In addition to this, it was found that she both knew and could use Hermetic magic, so she was forced to join House Ex Miscellanea and MistrIDGE Covenant to avoid persecution.

Since becoming reborn, Vulcris has lived on the roof of the Covenant with her only real friends. She rules them as a queen, and forbids the predatory among them to eat the smaller birds. Vulcris rarely ventures out in human shape, though she often

soars through the sky in her original form, magically restored for a while.

Personality

After fifty years of virtual slavery to Grimgroth, being transformed into her painful shape by his friend, and being forced to join the Order to avoid being killed, Vulcris is no friend of Grimgroth, or of Magi in general. She is frightened by Magi whom she does not know, and is even slightly nervous of those whom she has been living with for the last century. In truth Vulcris loathes Grimgroth and would love to enslave him for fifty years or more, causing him the pain she feels was inflicted upon her.

The increased potential of human life and her lifespan as a Magus prevent Vulcris from permanently returning to her old shape. Indeed, Vulcris is hard-pressed to find any aspect of her life which she actively enjoys. However, she struggles on with the abstract idea of enjoying a long human life, and also fears that, as an animal, she may not have a soul which could survive death.

Vulcris's Research

Vulcris's studies have generally been devoted to solving the problems of her failed transformation. As such, she has tried to specialize in Muto, Animál and Córpoem Arts, but a lack of adequate books in the library, and an absence of any relevant, local vis proves problematical.

Vulcris and her birds sometimes hunt out a lone wolf, killing it with magic for the Animál vis of its eyes (which Vulcris never reveals to or shares with the other Magi of Mistrudge). Vulcris is too frightened to approach other Magi to trade for vis, so her studies are very slow. Accordingly, Vulcris has taken to studying other magical concerns, as fancy takes her, and has developed a reasonable repertoire of spells.

OCULO

A short, thin Magus with an almost spherical face and pudgy hands, Oculo is a strangely misshapen person. Unruly blond hair sits matted on her head, and deep wrinkles surround her dark blue eyes. Clad in light green silk robes, or a brown woolen tunic for informal occasions, Oculo appears to be any age, or ageless, and of either sex, or neither. In fact she is a woman, but this doesn't really interest her, and she is quite used to being referred to as a man.

Most of the Covenfolk whisper that Oculo was cursed at birth by a faerie, or demon, or some other such nonsense, and most feel pity for "him." However, few actually have any affection for "him." And, Oculo asks for none. She never speaks to mundanes, except to give orders, and her brusque manner alienates them. However, she often, through magic, listens to their conversations and is aware of most of their gossip.

Vulcris of House Ex Miscellanea

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (keen vision) +3, Strength (sinewy) +4, Stamina (leathery skin) +3, Presence (bird-like) -1, Communication (squawks) -2, Dexterity (misshapen body) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 97, born 1100

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: The Gentle Gift +1 (no -3 social roll penalty toward animals only), Magical Affinity (birds) +1, Keen Vision +1 (+3 to sight rolls), Knack (+4 to rolls involving wild animals and birds) +2, Piercing Gaze (+2), Disfigured (-3 to Presence rolls) -1, Restriction (magic only works in the open air) -5, Hatred Passion (Grimgroth) 3

Abilities: Speak Provençal (insults) 2, Speak Latin (eavesdropping) 4, Scribe Latin (methodical reading) 3, Magic Theory (Ritual spells) 6, Hermes Lore (aggressive Magi) 4, *Parma Magica* (Córpoem) 3, Penetration (Perdo) 5, *Certámen* (Animál) 3, Concentration (ignoring pain) 2, Magical Affinity (birds) 10, Animal Handling (injured animals) 8, Folk Ken (Grogs) 1, Dodge (missiles) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Scary (covenfolk) 1

Personality Traits: Cautious +2, Trusting of Magi -3

Techniques and Forms: Creo 8, Intéllego 4, Muto 10, Perdo 4, Rego 2, Animál 8, Aquam 6, Auram 1, Córpoem 12, Herbam 14, Ignem 1, Imágonem 4, Mentem 5, Terram 4, Vim 6

Spell Casting Speed: 0

Twilight Points: 5

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Earth that Breaks No More* (MuTe 20) +17, *The Immaculate Beast* (MuAn 15 — if cast on Vulcris it turns her back to her original vulture form) +21, *Hornet Fire* (Mulg 15) +14, *Panic of the Elephant's Mouse* (ReAn 15) +13, *Image of the Past State* (InIm 15) +11, *Watching Ward* (ReVi 15) +11, *Strike of the Angered Branch* (ReHe 15, her own version, carrying her Sigil) +19, *Tongue of the Birds* (InAn 15, her own version, carrying her Sigil) +25, *Gift of the Floating Wood* (ReAq 10) +11, *Agony of the Beast* (PeAn 10, her own version, carrying her Sigil) +13, *Curse of the Rotted Wood* (PeHe 10) +21, *Eyes of the Cat* (MuCo 10) +25, *Reveal the Flaws of Mortal Flesh* (InCo 10) +19, *Conjure the Sturdy Vine* (CrHe 10) +25, *Trackless Step* (ReTe 10) +9, *Invocation to Weariness* (PeCo 5) +19, *The Weary Beast* (PeAn 5, as *Invocation to Weariness*, but directed at animals, another of her own creations) +15, *Disguise of the Putrid Aroma* (ReAn 5) +13

Wizard's Sigil: Several various feathers float to the ground around the target of the spell

Weapons and Armor: None **Encumbrance:** 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +3 (9 Action), Fatigue +3

Note: Vulcris is usually affected by Córpoem rather than Animál spells, but because of her origins some Animál spells may affect her, such as the *Immaculate Beast*. It's the Storyguide's discretion as to whether an Animál spell takes effect.



Oculo of House Jerbiton

Characteristics: Intelligence (studious) +1, Perception 0, Strength (slight build) -2, Stamina (frail) -1, Presence (manly looking) -2, Communication 0, Dexterity (fat hands) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 156, born 1041

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Disfigured (indiscriminate sex and age) -1, Fragile Constitution -1 (-2 to wound and disease recovery rolls), Small Frame -2, Loose Magic (cannot Master spells) -1, Magical Affinity +4

Abilities: Speak Provençal (courtesies) 4, Speak Latin (giving speeches) 5, Scribe Latin (copying tomes) 4, Magic Theory (inventing spells) 7, Hermes Lore (politics) 3, Hermes History (Covenants) 6, *Parma Magica* (Rego) 6, Finesse (precision) 5, *Certamen* (Intéllego) 4, Concentration (ignoring sounds) 5, Penetration (Intéllego) 6, Magic Affinity (Rego) 4, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 4, Intrigue (gossip) 3, Faerie Lore (Fay forests) 3, Legend Lore (gods) 3, Occult Lore (sacrifices) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Cursed (covenfolk) 1

Personality Traits: Considerate -3, Proud +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 7, Intéllego 24, Muto 10, Perdo 6, Rego 2, Animal 4, Aquam 15, Auram 3, Córporum 14, Herbam 20, Ignem 4, Imágonem 7, Mentem 8, Terram 10, Vim 8

Spell Casting Speed: 5

Twilight Points: 8

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: All InAq (+38), InAu (+26), InCo (+37), InHe (+33), InIm (+30), InTe (+33), and InVi (+31) spells up to Level 20. *Sense the Feet that Tread the Earth* (InTe 35 +33), *Stone Tell of the Mind that Sits* (InTe 30 +33), *Words with the Flickering Flame* (InIg 25 +27), *The Earth Split Asunder* (ReTe 25 +15), *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 25 +31), *Converse with Plants and Trees* (InHe 25 +43), *Shriek of the Impending Shafis* (InHe 25 +43), *The Great Rot* (PeHe 25 +25), *The Walking Corpse* (ReCo 25 +19), *Tracing the Trail of Death's Stench* (InCo 25 +37), *Wave of Smashing and Drowning* (ReAq 20 +20), *Break the Oncoming Wave* (PeAq 20 +20), *Words Through Walls* (InTe 20 +33, see insert), *Soothe the Raging Flame* (PeIg 15 +9), *Footsteps of Slippery Oil* (CrAq 15 +21), *Aegis of the Hearth* (ReVi 15 +13), *Perception of the Transparent Motive* (InMe 10 +31), *Image of the Inanimate Thing* (CrIm 10 +13), *Creeping Oil* (CrAq 10 +21), *The Forgiving Earth* (MuTe 10 +19).

Wizard's Sigil: A bluesheen affects all transparent surfaces on the target (e.g., surface of ponds, the pupils of peoples' eyes, windows)

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -1

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Fatigue Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Personal History

Before becoming a Magus, Oculo was Ophelie d'Uverre, cousin to the then-Baron d'Uverre, and an embarrassment to her family because of her looks. With no real marriage value, her father was quite happy to let Consuelia take the girl as an apprentice. Always used to having servants to order around, Oculo quickly adapted to life in a Covenant, and her confidence quickly developed.

Mistridge was established just as Oculo became a full Magus, and its establishment was partially due to her relationship with the Baron. Soon, her family thought her dead, and she never thought of them. For a century Oculo was a recluse in Mistridge, never venturing outside. To her the world outside remained threatening and hostile, but fascinating. Confident enough in her own domain, she felt naked outside. It was at this stage that she began collecting maps, trying to learn of the world without having to experience it.

Today, Oculo has gained the confidence to travel outside Mistridge, though she still dislikes having to speak with outsiders.

Personality

Oculo's noble arrogance has mellowed over the years, and she is no longer as haughty as she once was. She still expects to be obeyed by Groggs and covenfolk, however, who, as her natural inferiors, are simply considered tools for her use.

Oculo's childhood scarred her deeply. The servants and her family always whispered behind her back, but rarely spoke to her. The worst part of it was not knowing what others were saying. Oculo's devotion to Intéllego magicks is a result of her need to know such things. She listens to Covenant gossip, not because she is interested in what mundanes have to say, but because she cannot bear not knowing.

Mistridge's Magi talk to her openly enough, though, except for Clavius. Oculo finds Clavius particularly frustrating and has developed a considerable dislike for him. It's impossible for her to know anything of Clavius's attitudes and motives because he never speaks, and he writes very little about himself. Oculo is therefore convinced that Clavius has some terrible secret or dangerous intent. She has even tried scrying on him. Her failure to discover anything conspiratorial about him only convinces her that Clavius plans some treachery.

All in all, Oculo is not a trusting person. Her suspicions of Clavius simply exaggerated this trait. Although she reveals what gossip and suspicions she has if Mistridge is threatened, Oculo prefers to hoard her knowledge.

Oculo's Research

The bulk of Oculo's time is devoted to studying Intéllego and related spells, and she occasionally travels to other Covenants to trade *vis*. She has few other interests, besides her collection of maps.

There are around twenty maps in Oculo's collection, most of which contradict each other and all of which have some major inaccuracies. Most of the maps are of countries or large areas, and none show roads. She has three maps of the world, all totally different, including an ancient (and nearly accurate) copy of a Greek map by Ptolemy, an Arabic map showing Mecca as the center of the world, and another from Paris showing Jerusalem at the center. She also has a number of sea charts giving fairly accurate details of the Mediterranean coast. And, she has Roman maps, which are completely out of date, showing nothing but the topological positions of Roman forts. Of course, these are just some of Oculo's maps. Many have quite huge mistakes, including misrepresentations of the sizes and shapes of countries, and omissions or insertions of channels, mountain ranges, and islands. However, there is little way of telling which maps are correct and which are not.

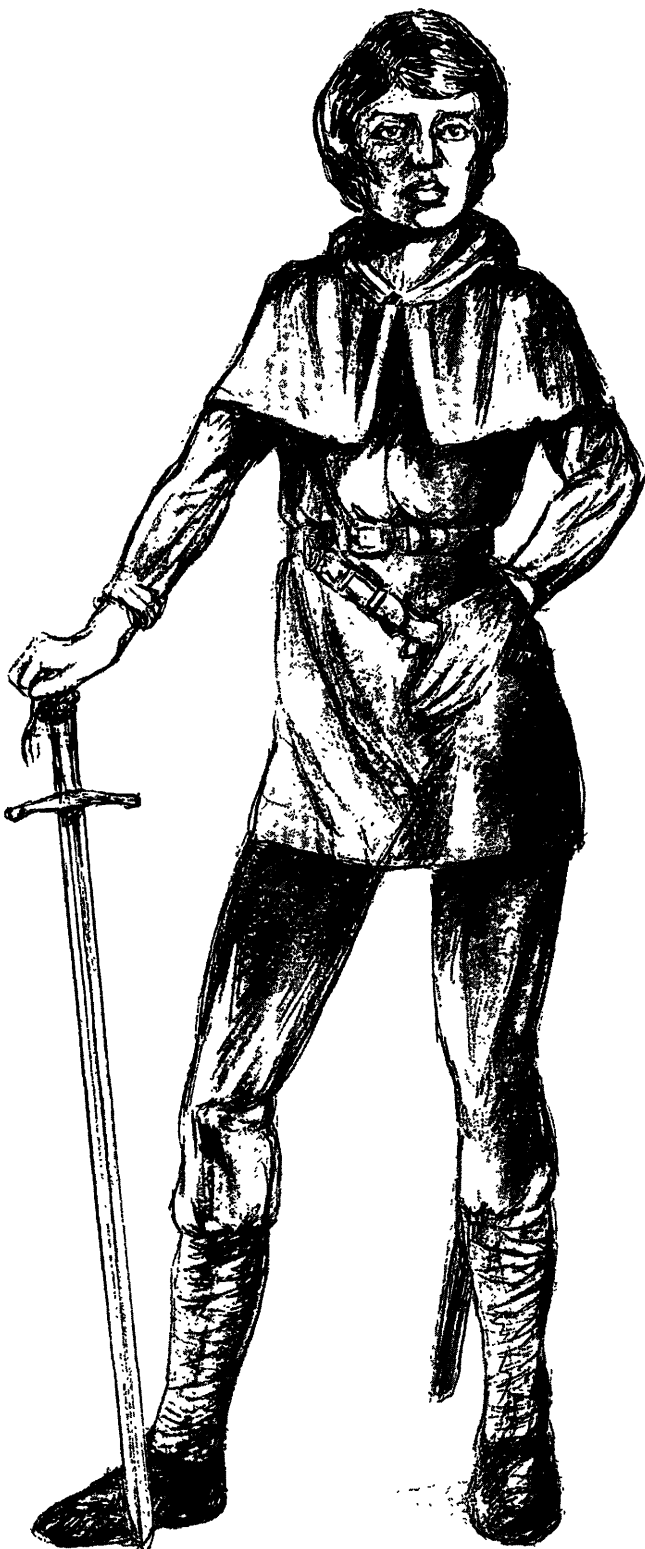
The Companions

The Companions of Mistridge are people of just as unique identity as the Magi who reside at the Covenant. These Companions are the "middle ground" between Magi and Groggs, and between Magi and mundane folk. Companions make ideal ambassadors between the classes and thus are as interesting to play as they are to meet.

COURTNAY D'ASSINI

Born the third son of a Norman noble family in politically unstable southern Italy, Courtney joined the entourage of a local count, and served in delegations to various surrounding courts, including the Papal Court in Rome. His career progressed well, and a marriage was arranged into a powerful Venetian family, but in the politics surrounding the appointment of the new Pope, Courtney openly supported the wrong candidate. His patron disowned him, his marriage collapsed, and he was left embarrassed and broke.

Courtney has only arrived at the Covenant recently, having met Grimgroth in Foix, just a month after the election of Innocent III. The Magus saw a use for the man, and although Courtney finds it difficult to settle into the strange tower, he likes to think he is adaptable. One of his major concerns is that his natural superiority does not seem to be fully appreciated by



Courtnay d'Assini

Characteristics: Intelligence (bright) +1, Perception (ambitious) +2, Strength (toned) +1, Stamina 0, Presence (dashing) +2, Communication (suave) +3, Dexterity (lazy) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 29

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Self-Confident +2, Social Contacts (Italian noble) +1, Well-Traveled (giving +2 to speaking dialects) +1, Knack (+2 on language rolls) +1, Knack (+4 with noble courts) +2, Deep Sleeper (-3 to rolls after waking up) -1, Bad Reputation (with Pope) -1, Black Sheep -1, Sensitive (to lack of comfort) -1, Sensitive (to insubordination) -1, Common Fear (of being considered unimportant) -2

Abilities: Speak Norman French (speeches) 5, Speak High French (courtesies) 5, Speak middle-class southern Italian (giving orders) 1, Speak Provençal (small talk) 2, Speak noble Greek (courtesies) 2, Speak Arabic (courtesies) 4, Speak Latin (eavesdropping) 1, Scribe Latin (writing letters) 4, Church Knowledge (hierarchy) 1, Charisma (politics) 1, Charm (witty) 1, Subterfuge (arguments) 2, Diplomacy (tact) 4, Guile (lying to employers) 1, Folk Ken (nobles) 1, Church Lore (the Papacy) 1, Animal Handling (falconry) 1, Ride (hunting) 2, Broadsword Attack (duels) 2, Broadsword Parry (lunge) 2, Lance Attacks (attacking objects) 2, Dodge (knights) 1

Confidence: 5

Reputation: Disloyal (Papacy) 5, Foolish (Italians) 5

Personality Traits: Brave +1, Loyal +1, Proud +2, Considerate +1

Weapons and Armor:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +5, Damage +9, Parry Defense +5 (11 Action)

Lance Totals: First Strike +9, Attack +3, Damage +11

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

the tower's inhabitants. Still, the place is warm and comfortable enough, and the Magi say they have uses for his diplomatic talents. And, Courtnay has heard that a local baron has an attractive, unmarried daughter. A barony is a desirable rank.

DOLORES

Sexually abused by her father and pushed into an arranged marriage with an obese, slimy baron, no one could blame Dolores for running away. Not that justifying things lessens the guilt she feels. After all, she thinks, a girl should obey her father and her husband. But there are plenty of places to run to in Spain.

Dolores eventually married a minor noble in Navarre. He was a kind, sensitive man, who kept her safe and well-off. Their love was doomed, though. True, there were brigands in the mountains, against whom Dolores learned to fight, but it was an impersonal epidemic that swept her husband away, along

with their daughter and countless others. When the estate was inherited by her husband's cousin, Dolores was homeless again, and set off toward France.

In 1195 Dolores came to Mistridge. After a year spent proving her abilities she was given command of the cream of the Grogs. Of course, the situation at Covenant is still not ideal. The Magi are only tolerable, meaning they leave her alone. Torlen tries hard to be reasonable, but obviously sees her as a woman first, rather than a fellow soldier. And Guy is an unbearable, belligerent little peasant, filled with wine and innuendo. The Grogs Dolores commands, the "Bodyguard," are good soldiers, obedient and competent, but Dolores only hopes they see her as a warrior and nothing more. Most of the lesser Grogs, foul-mouthed and soft-brained, quite deserve the beatings that follow the sideways looks and muttered comments they direct toward her.

In battle, Dolores wears her dead husband's tabard, emblazoned with his coat of arms, and wears his chain mail. A lock of his hair is strapped beneath the leather of her sword's grip. Dolores's armor includes a plumed helm which totally covers her face. She has found enemies pay her more heed if they don't know her true gender. However, it annoys Dolores that she has to pretend to be a man in order to be taken seriously.

Dolores

Characteristics: Intelligence (apprehensive) +1, Perception (wary) +2, Strength 0, Stamina (determined) +1, Presence (alluring eyes) +1, Communication 0, Dexterity (graceful movements) +1, Quickness (athletic) +2

Age: 25

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Knack (+4 with swords) +2, Clear Thinker (+3 to resist confusion) +1, Superior Armaments +2, Fury (if sexually harassed) -3

Abilities: Speak noble northern Spanish (expansive vocabulary) 5, Speak Provençal (precise descriptions) 4, Speak Latin (factual information) 3, Speak High French (courtesies) 2, Ride (combat) 4, Leadership (the "Bodyguards") 2, Embroidery (detail) 1, Intimidation (men) 1, Brawl (kick) 2, Swim (fast) 1, Play Flute (dances) 1, Broadsword Attack (mounted combat) 4, Shield Parry (mounted) 3, Dodge (close fighting) 3

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Cold (Grogs) 2

Personality Traits: Brave +4, Proud +1, Tolerant -2, Forgiving -1

Weapons and Armor:

Full Chain Mail

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +2/+9*, Attack +9, Damage +10

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 7/1

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2/+5 (4/11 Action), Soak +15/+1 (21/7 Action), Fatigue -6/+1

* armored/unarmored

Lydie

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (preoccupied) -1, Strength (weak grip) -2, Stamina (vulnerable) -1, Presence (demure) +2, Communication (exuberant) +1, Dexterity (graceful) +2, Quickness (swift) +3

Age: 16

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Knack (+4 with animals) +2, Exceptional Talents +1, Sharp Hearing (+3 to hearing rolls) +1, Small Frame -2, Common Fear (towns and cities) -2, Common Fear (Jews) -1, Bad Reputation (in Javielle) -1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (fast speech) 4, Animal Ken (horses) 3, Weather Sense (storms) 3, Second Sight (at night) 2, Animal Handling (goats) 4, Weaving (large cloths) 1, Subterfuge (whine) 1, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 1, Dodge (charging animals) 1, Stealth (at night) 3, Swim (diving) 1, Survival (woods) 1, Track (mountains) 1, Ride (journeys) 1, Dagger Attack (medical use) 3

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Gifted With Animals (Mistridge) 1, Witch (Javielle) 2

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Sensible -2

Weapons and Armor:

Dagger Totals: First Strike +6, Attack +9, Damage +3

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +6 (12 Action), Soak -3 (3 Action), Fatigue -1

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Some say Dolores is too quick to judge people, particularly men, and that she should be more forgiving. Maybe those folk are correct for Dolores gets quite angry if such comments are spoken to her face, and she denies them hotly.

LYDIE

Born and bred at Mistridge, Lydie is the daughter of a goatherd. She has grown up caring for animals, and in addition to herding goats, she is responsible for the Covenant's horses and mules, sometimes accompanying Magi on their journeys to care for the animals. Lydie's talents concerning animals are, in fact, quite remarkable, and though she is not yet twenty she is already uniquely respected by the farmers and goatherds throughout the Covenant area. Still, some villagers in Javielle whisper that her intuitions have diabolical origins.

Lydie tries to be of use to Mistridge. The Magi do not often appreciate her unsolicited efforts to scout around farms and villages, but she knows she can move quietly and quickly, and doesn't see that Magi should object if her forays yield useful information. And besides, sneaking around hamlets and camps is exciting, particularly in the dark. In an innocent way, Lydie



Thibaud

Characteristics: Intelligence (learned) +1, Perception 0, Strength (thin arms) -1, Stamina (short winded) -2, Presence (unimpressive) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (quick hands) +1, Quickness (alert) +1

Age: 27

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Educated +1, Magic Susceptibility (-3 to resist magic) -1

Abilities: Speak Breton Gaelic (colorful language) 5, Speak Provençal (about illness) 4, Speak Latin (about medicine) 4, Scribe Latin (meticulous reading) 3, Medicine (using leeches) 3, Chirurgy (wounds) 5, Humanities (French law) 2, Pretend (carefree) 1, Sing (folk songs) 2, Church Knowledge (decrees) 1, Folk Ken (peasants) 1, Fantastic Beast Lore (healing abilities) 1, Ride (journeys) 1, Dagger Attack (from behind) 1, Quarterstaff Attack (angry villagers) 1, Quarterstaff Parry (several opponents) 3

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Blasphemer (Breton churches) 1

Personality Traits: Pious +1, Honest +2, Nervous +1, Curious +1, Brave -1

Weapons and Armor:

Quarterstaff Totals: First Strike +7, Attack +4, Damage +4, Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Dagger Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +6, Damage +2

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2

is ambitious. She wants to be appreciated, to be useful. However, her ideas of being "useful" are romanticized, involving more than simply caring for animals.

Lydie also wants to be loved, being of the marrying age. She had set her sights on marrying one of the Bodyguards, but most are already married, and none that are eligible fit the romantic hero image she has of her ideal husband. Recently, though, a stranger has come to the Covenant. He is Courtney d'Assini, an impoverished nobleman from Italy. Lydie considers him perfect husband material. Unfortunately, Lydie is not witty nor charming nor sophisticated, but if she can get him to notice her...

THIBAUD THE BRETON

Thibaud is Mistridge's resident physician. In his home village of Hennebont, in Brittany, he was caught exhuming graves. It was discovered that he was dissecting bodies, desecrating them, destroying the form which is resurrected by God on the Day of Judgement. Clearly guilty of blasphemy, and

Guy

Characteristics: Intelligence (ignorant) -1, Perception (arrogant) -2, Strength (broad shoulders) +1, Stamina (tireless) +4, Presence 0, Communication (crude) -1, Dexterity (brutal) -1, Quickness (overconfident) -1

Age: 29

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Light Sleeper +1, Resilient Constitution (+3 wound recovery) +1, Tough (+3 to Soak) +1, Strong-Willed (+3 to willpower rolls) +1, Superior Characteristic (Strength) +2, Sensitive (to rebellion) -1, Offensive to Animals (because he's brutal to them) -1, Common Fear (being subservient to women) -2, Delusion (that Vulcris is really a man) -1, Weakness (for pretty women) -1

Abilities: Speak Provençal (precise orders) 4, Drinking (competitions) 5, Brawl (against animals) 6, Leadership (inspiring bravery) 4, Intimidate (soldiers) 3, Folk Ken (Groggs) 2, Charm (crass seductions) 2, Guile (lying to women) 1, Charisma (fighting) 1, Swim (lifesaving) 1, Greatsword Attack (great blow) 3, Greatsword Parry (standing ground) 3, Hand Axe (great blow) 1

Confidence: 4

Reputation: Indestructible (Groggs) 1

Personality Traits: Devoted +4, Brave +4, Caring -2, Kind -2, Lazy +1, Brutal +2

Weapons and Armor:

Full Ring Mail

Greatsword Totals: First Strike +3/+7*, Attack +5, Damage +15, Parry Defense +8 (14 Action)

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike -2/+2, Attack +2, Damage +9

Encumbrance: 4/0

accused of witchcraft, Thibaud may have been burnt at the stake had Clavius not been passing by and arranged for his escape.

Now Thibaud serves the community who saved his life six years ago. The Groggs' frequent wounds have given Thibaud much opportunity to practice his chirurgy. And he has taken every opportunity to travel the Languedoc with the Magi, talking with other physicians and surgeons, learning as much as possible from them. However, Thibaud is always looking over his shoulder, nervous that his past will somehow catch up with him.

Strangely, Mistridge has unsettled the physician, making him reflect more critically upon his past. Soon after arriving at Mistridge, he was confronted by Felix who demanded answers to all manner of unsavory anatomical questions. The other Magi are hardly more normal. Thibaud wonders if the place is dangerously far from the Church, allowing for the corruption of its inhabitants. Thus, the rebuilding of the church in Javielle is most welcome to Thibaud, and the physician has given his meagre savings to the Canon for the cause, also encouraging the clergyman to visit Mistridge.

Growing closer to the Church, Thibaud has developed some doubts about his art. He knows that flesh rots, so God must restore it on the Day of Judgement. Therefore, he figures, there should be no harm in slicing bodies a little, in the interests of God's children. And yet, he also knows that the Church is the Body of Christ, and must be respected and obeyed. Ultimately, he recognizes the importance of the Church, for should it be abandoned, the whole world would clearly be ruled by men as mad as the rulers of Mistridge.

Thibaud's main regret is that he never married. There is little opportunity to meet women at Mistridge. There are the covenfolk, but Thibaud considers them too insular and shallow. The strength of the few female Groggs also frightens him. As of late, though, Thibaud has become attracted to the young Lydie, who has a naive charm and unsophisticated beauty. Her simplicity simultaneously attracts and repels him, for he is somewhat ashamed of his interest in a goatherd's daughter. Thus, the role Thibaud tries to adopt with Lydie is that of a protective uncle, which is easy enough since she's ten years younger than he.

GUY

Guy is not a clever man. He is not educated. He is not sophisticated. And he never pretends he is. He is an honest, relaxed soldier, who enjoys strong wine and weak women. In fact, he is a brutal slob, but he'll smash the teeth out of anyone who says so. He is the Covenant's undisputed Wine Drinking and Ram Wrestling champion, and is loved by his men. As far as the Magi are concerned, his strengths are his pig-headed refusal to consider death, and his total acceptance of their natural superiority.

Born of a peasant woman from Javielle and a Grog at Mistridge, Guy has many of the attitudes common to simple folk in Mythic Europe, except that he is more belligerent about things. He respects the Church, and believes in God, but can't accept that killing "enemies" is a sin. He is mindful of his innate inferiority to those of higher birth — such as Courtney, whom he greatly respects — and to his lifelong masters, the Magi. Dolores, however, infuriates him, despite her noble blood. She is a woman, certainly not his equal. Guy believes she should find a man, cook his dinner, and keep his bed warm. He tells



her this, frequently. He believes the Magi are mad to put her in charge of the Bodyguard, although he doesn't dare argue with them. Perhaps Dolores has bewitched them?

Ultimately, Dolores disturbs Guy because her adoption of a male role confuses and threatens him. He reacts with the same antagonistic hatred toward anyone who behaves inappropriately, always claiming that his reactions are justified, and that others' actions are obviously offensive. All the same, something about Dolores tells Guy she is dangerous. This, coupled with her higher birth, prevents him from laying a finger on her, so Guy remains all mouth toward her.

Mistridge in its Four Seasons

The bulk of this Chapter describes Mistridge as a Summer Covenant, at a time when it has both a degree of power and considerable vigor. However, you may wish to start your Saga earlier or later in the Covenant's life. You may also find that it is useful to have some idea of how Mistridge has changed over time, and how it can continue to do so.

Not only does this part of the Chapter indicate how Mistridge can change in the future, but it provides ideas on how you may organize your Mistridge Saga. The following material illustrates how historical events as we know them can determine the course of the Covenant's fate. Of course, you are not held to these developments, and may change them as you see fit. They are only provided for your reference and may be disregarded entirely. However, we hope you may find some Saga inspiration in these words.

SPRING, C. AD 1080

The first Covenant buildings are little better than a peasant village, with Magi making their sanctums in wattle and daub shacks. A small stone tower has been erected on the edge of the cliff as a strong point in case of attack, but there is no money left for further construction.

The Magi devote a lot of time on practical matters, like opening up the silver mine, copying books, and negotiating with the local notables. The Magi's studies are appropriately neglected. The Covenant's libraries are inadequate and its laboratories sparse. Until profitable forays into and negotiations are made with the outside world, there are no regular sources of vis or money, the few Groggs are opportunists with no tradition of loyalty, and there are too few servants. Even local lords are making trouble, trying to tax the Magi and insisting that Groggs be only lightly armed.

EARLY SUMMER, C. 1140

The Covenant is much as it's described in the rest of this Chapter. The library is growing respectably and laboratories are adequate. A great stone tower has been raised out of the cliff, and reliable sources of silver and vis have been secured. The

Grogs have quietly become better armed, and more numerous, and the nobility and Magi have learned to ignore each other.

Only Windgraven presents a major threat. Still a powerful Autumn Covenant, Windgraven's fierce expansionism is making life unpredictable and fraught with danger. Rego magicks have caused fierce winds to bedevil travelers from Mistridge, Grogs suddenly become disloyal, and for a while the ford just south of the Covenant becomes impassable. And, the rival Covenant still disputes Mistridge's ownership of local magical sites. Between Tribunals, skirmishes and *Certámen* are used to settle Covenant disputes.

Nonetheless, it is a great time for the Magi of Mistridge. Clavius, in particular, spends much time traveling. His journeys take him to the Covenant of Bellaquin to the north, and to the cities of Barcelona, Ripoll and Toledo to the south. (A new interest in art and learning is growing in the Languedoc — centered around Bellaquin — and excellent Arabic versions of Classical Greek texts are being recovered from the Moors in Iberia.)

LATE SUMMER, C. 1197

This is the period detailed in this book. This period marks the beginning of a transition into Autumn, and the probable starting point for your Saga. Mistridge appears to have established some degree of security, both politically and financially. Windgraven is less of a threat, and the Magi can enjoy a degree of power and vitality.

AUTUMN, C. 1223

Swelled by refugees from the Albigensian Crusade, Mistridge expands to contain nearly a dozen Magi and numerous scholars, artists, poets and craftsmen. Refugees come from as far as Narbonne, and include Magi from Bellaquin and teachers from the informal University of Toulouse. The Covenant's libraries have grown as a result of the new books brought by these people, and the Covenant is made stronger by new Magi.

Dragged irresistibly into war by the loyalties of its individual members, the Covenant is now an important center for resistance against the Crusaders. Having decided an issue of succession over the Baron d'Uverre's lands, Mistridge is now in effective control of the Val du Bosque and its nobility, and has become the most valued ally of Montsegur.

But, new problems have arisen. Although many young Magi, particularly of Flambeau and Tytalus, travel to Mistridge to lend a hand in the struggle, the leaders of the Order of Hermes are fiercely critical of the Covenant's involvement in mundane politics. It is even rumored that the Order's Arch Magi, and the Covenants of Doissetep and Windgraven, may be plotting against Mistridge.

WINTER, C. 1244

Autumn lasted all too briefly for Mistridge. In the last year, many who had sought asylum from the advancing Crusade have now fled from Mistridge too, as the Crusaders threaten Montsegur itself. As that fortress comes under siege, the Quaestoris threaten to declare a Wizard's March on Mistridge if it intervenes, and several young Magi (of Flambeau and Jerbiton) ignore the warning and travel to help in Montsegur's defence.

Castle d'Uverre falls to the Crusaders, though Mistridge launches a counter offensive, destroying the small Crusaders' army, the castle, and much of the village of Riecrax. Mistridge itself has already been besieged once, and food is being hoarded in preparation for another siege.

In its desperate attempts to strengthen itself, Mistridge actually gains many supernatural enemies. Extracting vis from the Three Pillars, the Magi release the trapped demon, who is not decisively defeated by the Magi. Mistridge also offends the Seelie and Unseelie Courts by trying to force them to help against the demon and Crusaders. Furthermore, the Covenant's Magic Aura is being sapped by some unknown force, and the Covenant's physical structure is noticeably cracking as a result.

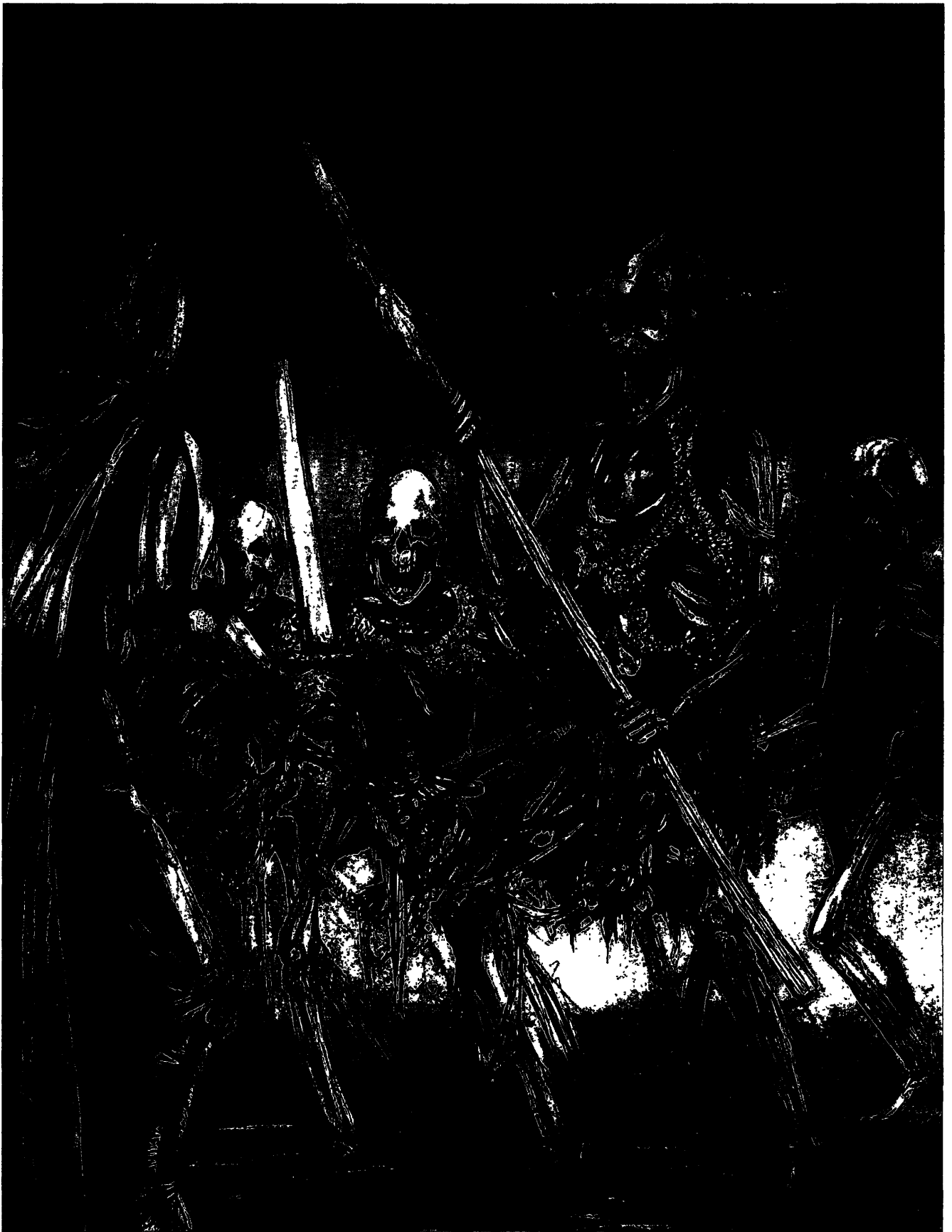
But, most importantly, the oldest Magi of Mistridge are being defeated by time, or by their own weaknesses. Oculo has already fled the Covenant. Clavius sits silently in the council chamber and has not communicated with anyone in any way for five years. Grimgroth seems almost relieved that Mistridge is being destroyed, and waits patiently for his death. And Felix, who has blinded himself "to see more clearly," eagerly anticipates the impending slaughter.

A NEW SPRING, C. 1255

When the besieged Covenant ran out of food in 1246, Grimgroth led most of the surviving Grogs and Magi in an attempt to break out and start anew. Many died, and Grimgroth himself was last seen riding towards the summit of Mount Tierné, badly injured, where he simply disappeared. Some books and other tools were taken by those who fled, and other artifacts were recovered when the survivors returned to Mistridge's ruins six months later. Most of the bodies were found, and buried, although Felix's remains were never recovered.

A new site has been found for the Covenant, deeper in the Pyrenees, with new customs and many new members. The old Covenant site is avoided, since it is said to be haunted, and all important council meetings are held in the ruins of Montsegur, a day's journey away. Stone buildings are being erected, with an earthen wall thrown up around them. The closest town is still Foix, and many covenfolk and Grogs still originate from the Val du Bosque, but the Magi prefer to journey to Aragon if it's necessary to contact the outside world.

The old problems of logistics, exploration and cooperation now confront a new Covenant.



TALES OF MISTRIDGE CHAPTER SIX



he following is a short story, about the equivalent of one or two game sessions, that you may incorporate into your Mistridge Saga. This story introduces several locales and inhabitants of the Val

du Bosque and thus is effective at bringing the valley to life for players, especially ones unfamiliar with the Mistridge setting.

Echoes

Echoes is a story that portrays the horror and torture of relations with the Windgraven Covenant, particularly for those who enter the ranks of its covenfolk. After all, once a member of Windgraven, always a member, even after the end of mortal life.

INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago the Magi of Mistridge sent a spy to Windgraven, hoping he would be able to uncover information about the Covenant, its defenses and its inhabitants. The spy, Theoron, never returned, for although Windgraven never suspected his motives and took him into complete confidence, their Rego Mentem spells soon made him quite loyal to them.

Eight years later, Theoron broke free of Windgraven's control. He had been working as a servant, cooking and

cleaning, and was trusted implicitly because of his mental slavery. So, when he fled, Windgraven's inhabitants were taken completely by surprise. Their surprise turned to fury when they discovered Theoron had seized a number of objects from a Magus's store room.

Windgraven immediately sent out a valued Companion, named Grevis, and a number of "Grog" (skeletal warriors) to pursue the thief through the mountains. The pursuers chased Theoron into a hermitage and destroyed the place, but failed to recover the stolen treasure.

In fact, Grevis was killed in the assault, becoming one of the undead he commanded. The undead Companion resolved to remain at the hermitage, awaiting another chance to get at the stolen treasure within. To avoid complications, he and his warriors slew all the local villagers. Thus, the unliving remains of the invaders are still at the hermitage, pursuing their old orders with unimaginative loyalty.

Knowing through their magicks that Grevis was killed, Windgraven's Magi assumed his Grog were also destroyed, probably by Mistridge. However, their needs were largely fulfilled — Theoron had been killed — so life at the vile Covenant returned to normal, short a few expendable servants and magical baubles.

Two years after the death of Theoron (which Mistridge's Magi knew nothing of, let alone his escape from Windgraven, or even existence past his initial disappearance), occasional

reports began to reach Mistridge of a man asking directions to the Covenant. The man was always seen on the roads around the village of Alopoc, the nearest village to the one which was destroyed. Eight such reports have reached Mistridge in the past twenty years, all identical. Until now, Magi haven't had time to look into the mystery, and frankly haven't been terribly concerned by it. That all changes, however, when the identity of the man becomes known. It is the ghost of Theoron that haunts the roads, still trying to get back home.

Overview

At the fair at Javielle, characters from Mistridge meet Robine and Chanoine, a couple who have recently met the oft-heard of "man near Alopoc," and they remember his name — Theoron. The characters may persuade the couple to lead representatives of the Covenant to find this man. Traveling to the site where the couple saw Theoron, they instead find a wandering Perfecti who tells them of a ruined hermitage in the woods. Lacking any other leads the characters can head off toward the hermitage. Their search through the woods leads them to an inn (in the middle of nowhere) and the ghost of a little girl, before they finally find the hermitage.

Theme

This story is about loyal followers suffering for the greed and envy of their leaders. All the "followers" in this story — Theoron, Chanoine, Grevis, and maybe the Magi's Grog —

suffer for the sins of their masters, as do a number of innocent bystanders. Use such tragedy as a touchstone to explore the relationship between the Magi and Grog at Mistridge. Do the Magi treat their Grog humanely, or simply as disposable tools to achieve their selfish ends?

The way this theme develops depends mainly on the Magi present on the expedition. If players' Magi are those detailed earlier in this book, it's ideal for Grimgroth and Felix to be involved, since they have conflicting attitudes toward Grog. Grimgroth is probably interested in the mystery of the "man near Alopoc" after learning his true name. Felix is probably interested in pursuing Theoron to study a mundane who apparently has not aged in 30 years.

Mood

The characters' encounters around Javielle and Alopoc should create a fairly homey, safe feel. The players should get a feeling of comfort in the story, that nothing terrible may befall them. However, once the characters move into the forest a sense of gloom and decay prevails. The woods were once tame, but are now overgrown, and the story's climactic events may take place in a cold morning mist, emphasizing their terror and drama.

AT THE FAIR

The characters may be at the fair for any number of reasons, most likely to acquire supplies or to meet with some mundane. At this point only Grog need be involved in events. Those Grog may take word of their discoveries back to Mistridge, leading to an expedition. However, any characters can be involved in the beginning of this story.

It's advised that you roleplay through several mundane encounters at the fair, with pedlars, buskers, entertainers and



Robine

Characteristics: Intelligence (quick-witted) +1, Perception (self-absorbed) -1, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication (brutally direct) -1, Dexterity (calm) +2, Quickness (swift) +3

Age: 24

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Athletics (running) 2, Storytelling (love stories) 4, Charm (peasants) 2, Evaluate Jewelry (cheap) 2, Speak Provençal (stories) 4, Church Lore (Catharism) 2, Val du Bosque Lore (roads) 3

Confidence: 4

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Cautious +2, Selfish +2

Weapons and Armor: Noncombatant

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Chanoine

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (lovesick) -1, Strength 0, Stamina (devoted) +1, Presence 0, Communication (quiet) -1, Dexterity (nervous) -1, Quickness (personally indecisive) -1

Age: 23

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Play Flute (dances) 4, Speak Provençal (acting) 2, Sword Attack (defending Robine) 2, Sword Parry (protecting Robine) 3

Confidence: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Panicky +2, Devoted (to Robine) +3

Weapons and Armor:

Shortsword Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +5, Damage +6, Parry Defense +5 (11 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0



the local guard. Refer to the previous material on Javielle and its fair for folks who may be met here.

At some point a character overhears a couple describing a man they met near Alopoc. The account rings true to that heard several times at the Covenant — that a man near the village was asking for directions to the “astrologers.” (The character overhearing the conversation should at least be old enough to have heard rumors of the man near Alopoc.) This time the rumor takes a new twist as the couple knows the stranger’s name, Theoron. It’s a name older characters, and certainly the Magi, remember, and are probably astonished at hearing.

Characters can interview the couple — Robine and Chanoine. They describe Theoron, apparently quite accurately, as a man with light blond hair, long thin fingers and a distinctively crooked nose. However, instead of depicting him as the man of 50 years that he should be, they describe him as being in his mid-20s. They also mention Theoron claimed to have some things needing delivery to the “astrologers.” This delivery alone should pique characters’ interest.

Robine and Chanoine

Wandering traders, pedlars and storytellers, these two are also Cathar *credentes*. While not actually married, they generally live as man and wife. They perform in this story as a means to initiate events, but also to perpetuate the story’s theme.

Robine, the woman, is the “leader.” It is she who negotiates with the characters, agreeing to show them where Theoron was, and refusing to hear otherwise. She wants to know more about the man who warrants so much attention, suspecting that he might be a soul displaced from Heaven, having apparently existed without aging. She therefore wants to meet this

soul to better understand Heaven and the next world, to fulfill her lust to understand the Good God’s universe. She thus insists on accompanying the characters to Alopoc, withholding precise information on Theoron’s locale until her terms are agreed to.

Chanoine is the “follower” of the pair. He simply does as Robine suggests, following her because he loves her. She, however, is confident, arrogant and ultimately unconcerned with Chanoine. Though both are ordinary mundanes, Robine is at least fleet of foot whereas Chanoine is quiet, nervous, and hopelessly devoted to his “mate.” Chanoine probably doesn’t survive this story, becoming a victim to Robine’s petty desires and selfishness.

To perpetuate the theme of this story, the relationship between Robine and Chanoine should be emphasized more than their relationship with the characters. Basically, Robine gives orders and Chanoine solemnly obeys them, but not without showing some distress or reservation before resigning to the other’s will.

If the couple travels with the characters in this story, don’t forget that they are always around. Thus, always insure that Robine has her say in decisions, and insure that she reacts to events. Chanoine, on the other hand, simply obeys his love. Don’t let the players forget the pair, either. Being somewhat demanding and headstrong, Robine can make trouble for the characters at any time.

AROUND ALOPOC

The journey to Alopoc is probably quite uneventful, unless you want to throw in an encounter of your own, though it should be true to the story's theme. Maybe a baker's delivery boy is seen being beaten by a customer. The bread the boy carries is hollow inside. The boy had no idea his master was cheating customers.

Robine knows exactly where she met Theoron, on a little-used road near Alopoc. Traveling there brings the characters in contact with many people of the village. You may roleplay through several mundane encounters, as at the Javielle fair. Characters can meet a woodcutter along the road, some serfs in a field, or the Reeve in Alopoc. These people have not seen Theoron, nor anyone fitting his description, though they may vaguely remember that some years ago a traveler (Xavier the Hood, perhaps) mentioned meeting a similar man.

When the characters arrive at the spot where Robine met Theoron, the mystery man is nowhere to be found. Their lack of success in finding or even hearing news of Theoron may justifiably frustrate the characters.

Talebot, the Perfecti

However, hopes are raised by the meeting of a grizzled Perfecti near Theoron's supposed location. The Perfecti, Talebot (see his description in the Cathar Chapter of this book), kneels in a grassy dell just off the road. Beside him is a mossy stone slab, three feet by five, with a Crucifix carved into it. Talebot explains that beneath the slab rests the remains of two sinners, a suicide and an adulteress.

He continues that about twenty years ago, in a small village in the wood, there was the home of a young married couple. The woman was having an affair with a local noble, much against her will, and when she confessed to her husband he flew into a rage, bade his wife flee, chased and murdered her (the site of the killing being the resting place of the couple). The noble heard of the crime and ordered that the murdering husband be hanged. But, when soldiers entered the couple's shack to seize the murderer they found that, tormented by grief, he had compounded his sin by taking his own life.

And, Talebot adds, so vile were the sins of the man, woman, and noble, that demons from Hell itself were freed by their crimes. The demons, the Perfecti claims, attacked the couple's village (which was on the noble's lands). The village was destroyed, along with its hermitage located nearby.

No one dares go to the site of the village anymore, fearing the ghosts and demons who assuredly still roam there.

Asked about Theoron, Talebot admits having heard of the man for several years, a man supposedly in search of the "astrologers," to give something to them. He has also heard the strange man's description several times, so knows that Theoron has not aged. Thus, Talebot believes Theoron is actually a ghost from the destroyed village, since the man has only been seen locally. He also believes Theoron's soul must be evil, being

trapped on the evil earth. Talebot therefore tells characters to give up their pursuit of Theoron, to save their own souls instead. He adds that the character's pursuit of Theoron's "gift" only adds to their sins for the gifts of the Devil are not to be prized.

If the characters choose not to talk with Talebot to get this information, Robine certainly does. After all she is *credentes* and seeks the Perfecti's guidance in her mission to find Theoron's tormented soul. Robine can therefore lead the characters to the ruined village and hermitage if there seems no other means of luring them there.

Talebot is not interested in joining the character's journey to the destroyed village. He explains that the souls there chose their sins in life, and that God punishes them for a reason, a reason mortal man is not meant to interfere with. He believes that prayer is the best medicine for the tortured villagers' souls. Robine is more driven, wanting to interfere with those souls in pursuit of her own understanding of Heaven. She receives Talebot's blessing, but nothing more.

Of course, Talebot is mistaken about the destruction of the remote village. The "Groggs" who pursued Theoron years ago were the ones who destroyed the place, but peasant rumor has turned the mysterious destruction into a melodramatic and Infernal plot. Characters probably recognize Talebot's mistake once they've found Theoron and dealt with his undead killers.

IN THE WOODS

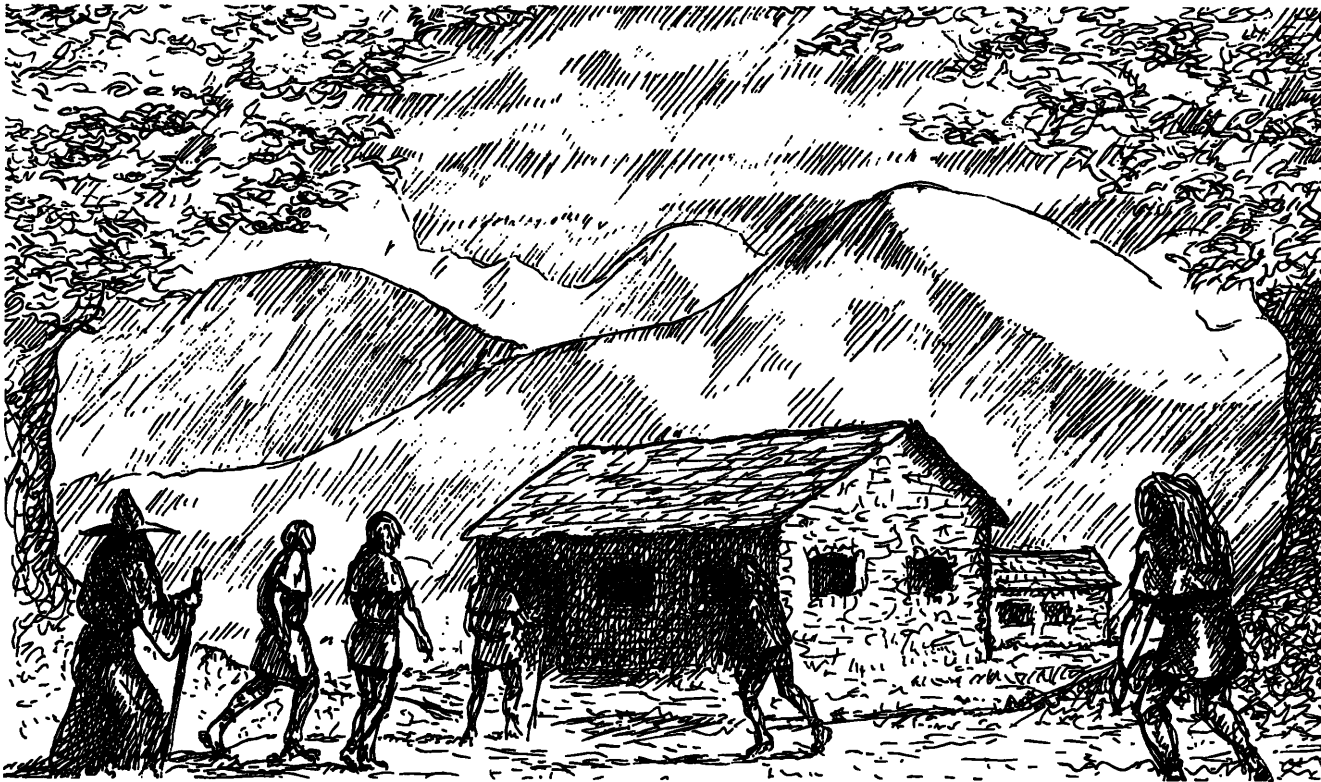
The site of the destroyed village is some miles to the southwest of Alopoc, in the forest, nearly beyond the border of the Val du Bosque. Talebot gives directions to the village but isn't certain of the precise distance. It actually takes the characters the rest of the day to get there.

The forest southwest of Alopoc is immense, so the characters may spend some time wandering around blindly, unless Survival, Track or Direction Sense simple rolls of 4+ are made.

After some time the characters pass a rotten bridge which has collapsed into a dry stream bed. They also find the bare remains of an old hut, nothing now but rotting corner posts and fallen beams. A couple of old human bones can even be found scattered about (Scan or Search simple roll of 6+ to find them). All these signs indicate the group's approach to the destroyed village.

As evening approaches the characters begin to climb out of the valley. The ground is rockier and the undergrowth sparse. Finally, the group approaches what seems to be an inn, though there is no road or settlement for miles around.

The inn is surrounded by small fields, and two goats are tethered nearby. Two old tables sit in front of the building, and benches beside them, all quite rotten. A sign hangs above the door, though the picture has long since worn away. Behind the building are two old graves, marked by wooden crosses and planted with flowers. The tavern itself is well maintained, with sturdy doors and shutters fitted with particularly strong latches.



As the characters' approach the inn a young girl, about eight years old, leaves the building and walks into the woods, away from the group. The characters may follow or stop her. The characters may also enter the inn to find an old man preparing it, as if expecting customers, though he is quite terrified by the characters' arrival. The options of pursuing the girl or entering the inn are each discussed below.

Adaline

If the characters follow or pursue the girl, she claims to be Adaline, the daughter of a local peasant. She is quiet and fairly nervous, but her trust is easily won and she may become talkative. Her visit to the inn was to inquire after her father, who has not yet returned from hunting. His tardiness worries her a little, but isn't terribly unusual. Her mother, she explains, died several years ago, and she has no brothers or sisters, so is totally dependent on her father.

If the characters decide to escort Adaline back to her hut, she leads them about three hundred paces through the woods to a broken down building, which looks as if it hasn't been lived in for well over a decade. The thatch is rotten, and holes have developed in the wattle and daub of the walls. Cobwebs and dust fill the recesses of the hut. The fields around it are overgrown with ferns and even young trees.

Adaline seems to think the state of her home is normal. If all the straw of her bed has rotted away, she explains that she doesn't mind sleeping on the floor. If her blanket is moth-eaten,

she explains how brave she is, not minding the cold. If there is no food anywhere, she explains that that's why her father has gone hunting. If the rats have devoured the rope on the well, she explains the rope needs replacing. If the cooking pot is full of spider webs, she comments on how clever the spiders are to have woven all those webs since "last night's supper." These explanations seem quite reasonable to the eight year old. Besides, Adaline has grown used to the hut's deterioration in the decades since her death.

Of course, the girl is a ghost. However normal she may appear, she has no physical form, although she can lift and move things in the house and surrounding fields. With the stubbornness of a desperate child, she cannot be persuaded that she is dead.

On the night of the Grog's attack, 22 years ago, Adaline cowered in the corner of her hut, desperately hoping her father would return from hunting in time to save her. He never came back. Windgraven's Grog's had already caught him in the woods, and in the small hours of the morning they found and killed Adaline as well. Her bones lie scattered in the woods, her body having been dragged off by wolves.

Every night since, Adaline has waited for her father to come home, having completely forgotten the means of her death. Indeed, every day is spent the way she spent her last living day. She gets up, finds her father has gone hunting, no doubt to return for dinner. Should any characters stay with Adaline for the night she vanishes shortly before dawn. In that time she can be heard screaming but is nowhere to be found.



Lucio

Characteristics: Intelligence (confused) -2, Perception (afraid of truth) -1, Strength (weak legs) -1, Stamina (tired) -1, Presence 0, Communication (sorrowful) -3, Dexterity 0, Quickness (frightened) +3

Age: 52

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: True Faith +3

Abilities: None

Faith: 1

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Sad +6, Confused +3, Brave -3

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

always come out full to the brim—such wonderful magic! And of course, Lucio is pleased that his family has come home, and that they like the flowers he's planted on their graves.

However, the night of the characters' arrival is different. The ghostly locals stand in nervous clusters at the outer edge of Lucio's fields, too frightened to approach the tavern when strangers are about. If approached by even the stealthiest character the ghosts flee silently into the darkness. Lucio's family does not join him tonight, either.

Of course, Lucio is quite frightened by the characters' arrival. What do the strangers want? Perhaps they want to kill his family again? Or steal his magic barrels? Or has God sent them to answer his prayers? He prays every night that his nightmare will end. And, he prays every night that nothing will change. Lucio serves the characters, of course, though he hasn't his wife's knack with the barrels, and it's embarrassing for an innkeeper to be caught with no wine. Lucio also hopes the characters like the bread and goat cheese he offers them, because it's all he has, aside from porridge for breakfast.

Indeed, no trace of her remains except for a few small pools of warm blood which vanish by sunrise. Should characters be in the hut near midday, they see Adaline reappear in her bed. She wakes up shortly, demanding to know who the characters are and why they're in her house. Thus her tortured cycle begins again.

Adaline cannot be persuaded to leave the area of the hut. Two decades of waiting have compounded her resolve to stay. However, she does remember from her former life, as if it were yesterday (and it was, in her mind), that a stranger came to the village. Adaline says she saw him at the hermitage.

Lucio's Tavern

When Grevis and his undead "Grog" from Windgraven attacked 22 years ago, Lucio hid in the cellar of his inn. He survived the assault, and indeed, was the only survivor. Not even his wife and daughter lived. Lucio planned to quietly move on after that, but when his family and friends—who had been killed—came back to the inn, Lucio decided to stay. Certainly he was at first frightened by the ghosts of his fellow villagers, but he soon grew used to them. Today Lucio still lives at the inn.

On a normal day Lucio's inn is full of the ghosts of happy locals, who joke and drink like they did when they were still alive. The ghosts haven't noticed any change in their existence. Lucio doesn't even have to get wine or cider for them. When his wife and daughter dip into the dusty old barrels, the mugs

Robine's Reactions

Robine reacts to both Adaline and Lucio in similar ways. She feels tremendous pity for the plight of both, but lacks the compassion to treat them with sensitivity. Thus, in pursuit of her understanding of the Good Universe and Heaven, Robine assails both people with questions about death and the next world. Her questioning is so intense that it sends both Adaline and Lucio into wailings. The only way to make Robine stop her interrogation is for a character to win a Personality Trait contest with her. A character might, for example, roll his Intimidating +3 Trait against Robine's Selfish +2 Trait. The person with the higher roll wins and imposes his or her will on the other. Personality Traits used in this way by characters must be of an appropriate nature, like Intimidating or Angry. Robine simply ignores other Traits impressed upon her.

Grevis

Magic Might: 15

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Intelligence (cunning) +1, Perception (wary) +1, Strength (inhuman power) +3, Stamina (tenacious) +3, Presence (skeletal face) -5, Communication (grinding voice) -2, Dexterity (quick-handed) +2, Quickness (lithe) +3

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Mean +3, Determined +3, Persistent +4

Reputation: None

Confidence: 5

Combat Totals:

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +10, Attack +11, Damage +14, Parry Defense +8 (14 Action)

Composite Bow Totals: Rate 2/1, Attack +7, Damage +9

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Destroyed

Dodge Defense +4 (10 Action), **Soak** +10 (16 Action), **Fatigue** n/a

Encumbrance: 1

Abilities: Stealth (woods) 6, Broadsword Attack (sneak attacks) 5, Broadsword Parry (charges) 5, Bow Attack (small target) 5, Dodge (blunt weapons) 2, Alertness (intruders) 4, Athletics (jump) 3, Climb (trees) 3, Track (woods) 3, Bargain (for treasure) 4, Speak Provençal (taunts) 4, Set Traps (woods) 4

Powers:

Immune to mind spells

+5 on Soak versus puncture damage

Vis: 5 Mentem, body

The former Companion from Windgraven has been dead for 22 years. He was mortally wounded by Theoron, but his unwavering loyalty to Windgraven and his fanatical desire to complete his mission allow him to remain active beyond the bounds of mortality.

The characters have to be very gentle to get any information from Lucio. If his family or neighbors are mentioned tactlessly, Lucio easily dissolves into tears, sobbing incoherent prayers. Mention of his barrels, Theoron, the hermitage, ghosts, demons or any related subject has a similar effect on Lucio, as does threatening him.

In truth, the old man is completely insane, so unless characters are extremely sensitive, they get nothing from him. Of course, Lucio knows all that happened to the locals 22 years ago, except for where the "demons" came from. Theoron had stayed at his inn the night before the massacre, but Lucio doesn't make the connection himself. He does know that Theoron spent time at the hermitage.

If left alone Lucio leans on the bar, staring at the door, waiting for his customers to arrive.

GREVIS'S SABOTAGE

Grevis, existing in the forest as a skeleton, like those he commanded from Windgraven, is aware of the characters' arrival in the vicinity of the destroyed village. He watches their every move from a safe distance, waiting to see what they do. Any character with the Second Sight Ability can sense that something is watching with a simple roll of 8+. Such rolls are made every few hours, or whenever the characters are active in the outdoors. The focus of this sensation cannot be pinpointed, nor can the nature of the observer, but once the feeling is experienced it cannot be shaken.

Grevis's hope is that the characters go to the hermitage (see below) and bring out Theoron's treasures, after which he plans to kill the group. Grevis therefore takes steps to insure that the characters don't get away.

During the night, whether the characters stay in the inn or camp in the woods, Grevis attacks their horses if they have any. If the horses are in the inn's bare stable, Grevis cuts through the wall with his sword and butchers the animals. If the characters camp in the woods, Grevis shoots their horses from a distance. He makes this attack to slow the characters down, fearing they will retrieve Theoron's treasure and get away with it.

No matter what form Grevis's attack on the horses takes, he is extremely cautious. It's important that characters not be able to defeat Grevis at this time, to allow for a more climactic battle later. However, characters might get a glimpse of their skeletal attacker, and might get a shot or two off at him.

If the characters don't have any horses, Grevis can still inconvenience their travel. He might steal their boots or lay some foot traps in the woods to immobilize some characters. The option is yours, but having him steal boots puts Grevis at extreme risk of being captured by the characters.

THE RUINED HERMITAGE

If the characters get directions to the hermitage from Adaline or Lucio (the hermitage is about a mile south of the inn), they probably get to the place while the cold morning mist still clings to the landscape. Everything looks vague and ghostly beneath the cold shroud.

Twenty-two years ago, Grevis led his undead "Groggs" from Windgraven against the hermitage, where their quarry Theoron was hiding. Given the Infernal nature of his skeletal legions, Grevis could not lead them into the blessed building. Grevis even slew the monk who stood at the entrance holding a crucifix, but still the Groggs would not enter. Once badly wounded by a shot from Theoron, Grevis ordered the hermitage burned. The thatch and the beams of the hermitage were engulfed in minutes. Theoron and the two remaining monks were choked by the smoke, while Grevis died of his wounds outside.

Skeletons

Magic Might: 5

Vital Statistics: Size 0, Cunning -4, Perception -2, Strength 0, Stamina +3, Presence n/a, Communication n/a, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: None

Reputation: None

Confidence: None

Combat Totals:

Short Spear Totals (1h): First Strike +7, Attack +4, Damage +5

Round Shield Totals: Parry Defense +5 (11 Action)

Body Levels: OK, Destroyed

Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), **Soak** (w/out armor) +8 (14 Action), **Fatigue** n/a

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: Spear Attack (charge) 2, Shield Parry (blunt weapons) 2

Powers:

Immune to mind-affecting spells

+5 bonus on Soak versus puncture damage

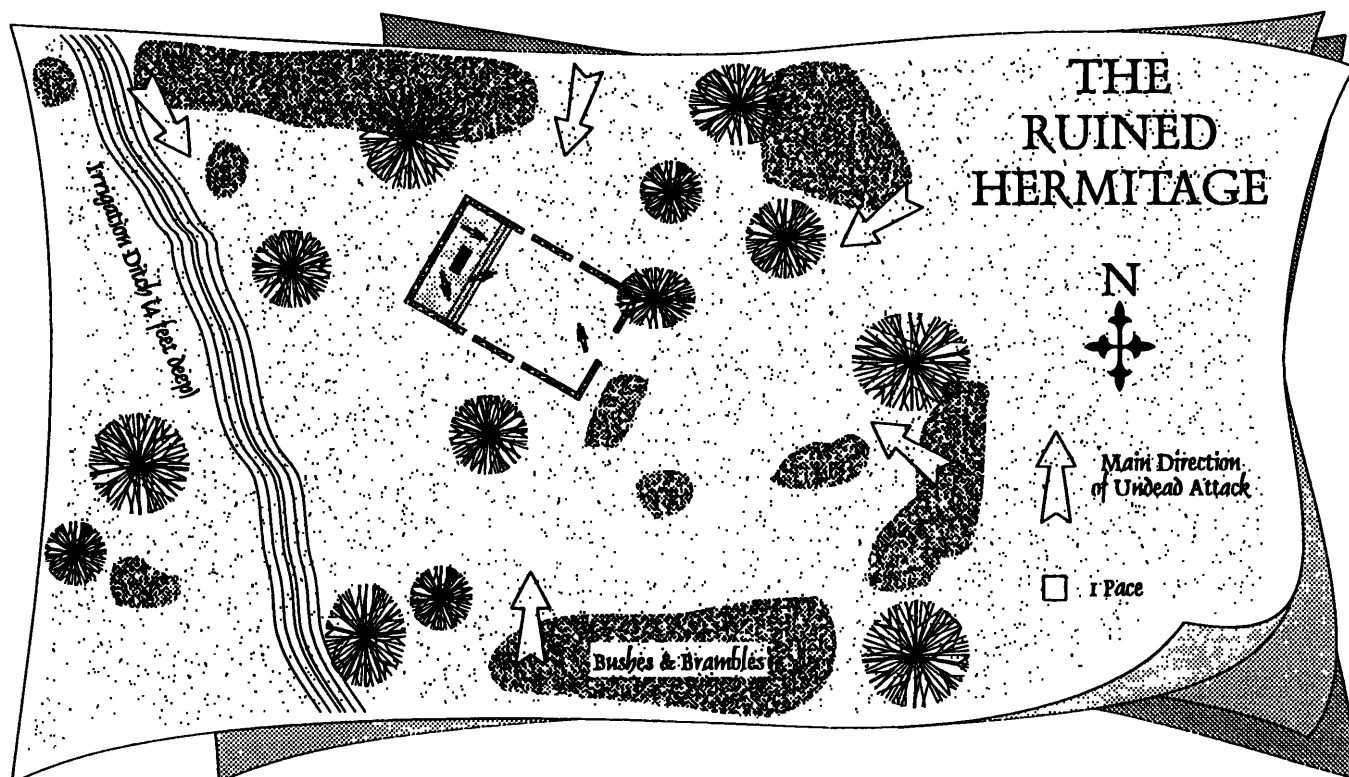
Vis: 1 Córpoem, body

The stone walls of the hermitage still stand but little else remains. There are no doors or shutters, or furniture apart from the stone altar. Also, there is no evidence of animals having entered the building in the last two decades. Its emptiness might be due in part to the structure's Divine Aura rating of 4, which local animals could find offensive.

On the floor are four human skeletons. One figure, by the door, still clutches a bronze crucifix. The other three lie by the altar. Their clothes have rotted away, but belt buckles, a silver crucifix and some other ornamentation has survived. There is no sign of Theoron's loot. But, by some miracle, a leather pouch still lies by one of the bodies. Inside, a hastily scribbled letter is barely legible. It reads:

"Lord have mercy on my soul. Today a man came to us, asking for sanctuary. With him were stolen treasures, and at his heels were unspeakable things. They demanded the treasures, and we refused. Lord have mercy. I pray our death is no suicide, and that the Lord will not weigh against us. They have lit the fires now, and we can smell the smoke. I am no heretic, Lord— why shall I burn? I would pray that we do some good by withholding these stolen treasures. But, I would better pray for the soul of the thief, and for the soul of the evil man responsible for this. Lord help me. I would pray that our fate could somehow be a lesson to our evil race. O Lord have mercy."

Outside the hermitage, scattered all around for about forty paces, the skeletal Groggs lie beneath bushes and brambles that have grown through their ribs in the last twenty years (Scan or



Search simple roll of 8+ to find the skeletons). The undead are still armed and active. They are interested only in fighting to defend themselves and recovering the objects Theoron stole. Should any of those objects be removed from the hermitage, the skeletons know of it immediately (they have been interested in nothing else for two decades).

As Grevis watches the characters, he knows they're in the vicinity of the hermitage. Through his own will Grevis commands the skeletons to delay their attack until the strangers produce the stolen treasures. However, if characters start tampering with the bodies of his warriors, Grevis orders the skeletons to rise and attack. He also stomps through the woods to join the battle. In being forced to attack characters prematurely, Grevis hopes to defeat the characters and force them to get the treasure for him.

There should be enough skeletons to provide the characters with a challenging fight. If the characters find themselves outnumbered and failing, they can take refuge in the hermitage, where the skeletons, Grevis now included, cannot tread.

Theoron's Treasure

When Theoron came to the hermitage for protection against his pursuers, the kindly clergy put his treasure inside the altar. The altar, being made of stone, protected the treasure from both fire and "demons." The stone slab which forms the top of the altar slides back part way, revealing a deep cavity (Scan, Search or Stonework simple roll of 6+ to find the hidden compartment). Inside are twenty deniers (all the monks' wealth), and a small chest containing the following:

- A brass armband, covered with runes. It permanently holds the Rego Ignem spell *Ward Against Heat and Flames*, but protects against up to 40 points of fire damage. This is the item Windgraven wants back the most.

- A roll of parchments, covered in Arabic writing. If translated, the writings seem to be gibberish — nonsense sayings and ridiculous proverbs. But, at certain times (Storyguide's discretion), a day's study of the Arabic text may give a prophetic insight into a reader's difficulties with a Scribe Arabic + Intelligence roll of 7+. If this roll is successful, the reader receives a +5 bonus to a roll involving some problem he

has been working on, such as the creation of a magical item, or the understanding of a cryptic puzzle.

- A tin knife
- A roll of silver twine, valued at 30 deniers.
- The shin bone of a centaur, containing three Muto vis.

AFTERMATH

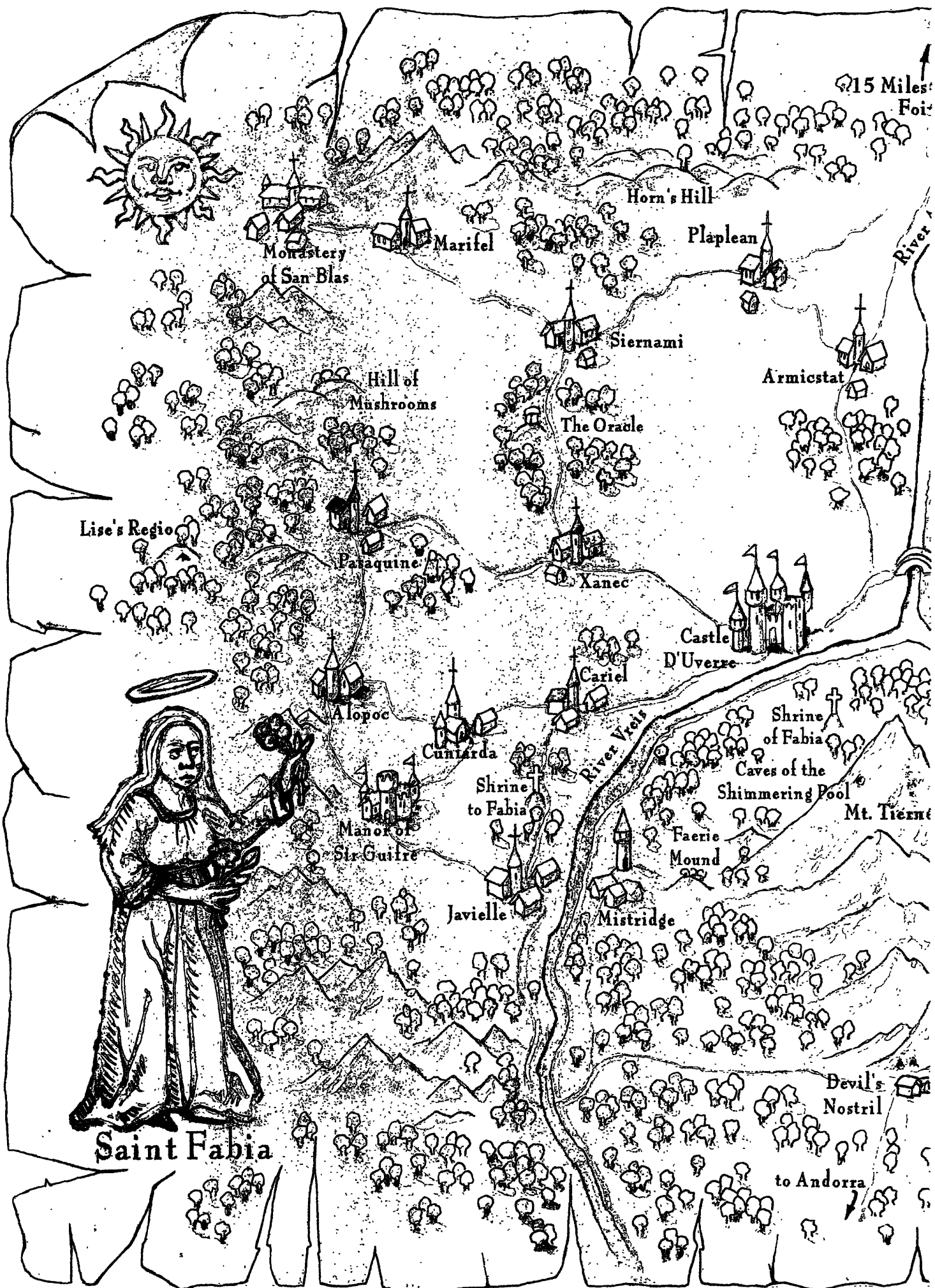
There are several ways for the characters to defeat Grevis and his skeletons. If all else fails the characters can shoot and cast spells at the skeletons from the safety of the hermitage. Don't forget the effects of the hermitage's Divine Aura on spell casting, though.

What the characters do with the loot — if they find it — is up to them. Keep in mind, though, that the armband need not go to a Magus, but could be used by a Companion or even a Grog. Magi from Windgraven might even recognize the armband one day and pursue Mistridge to get it back. If the issue of the armband is taken to Tribunal, the ruling might just go in favor of Windgraven, since it was stolen from that Covenant.

During any fight with the undead it's suggested that Chanoine be mortally wounded. Ideally, he can be dragged into the hermitage where he dies a dramatic death, asking Robine not to feel guilt for having led him to his doom. The scene moves Robine to her very soul as she realizes how abusive she has been and is. When the story is finished, Robine commits herself to restoring the destroyed village, amending her former sins.

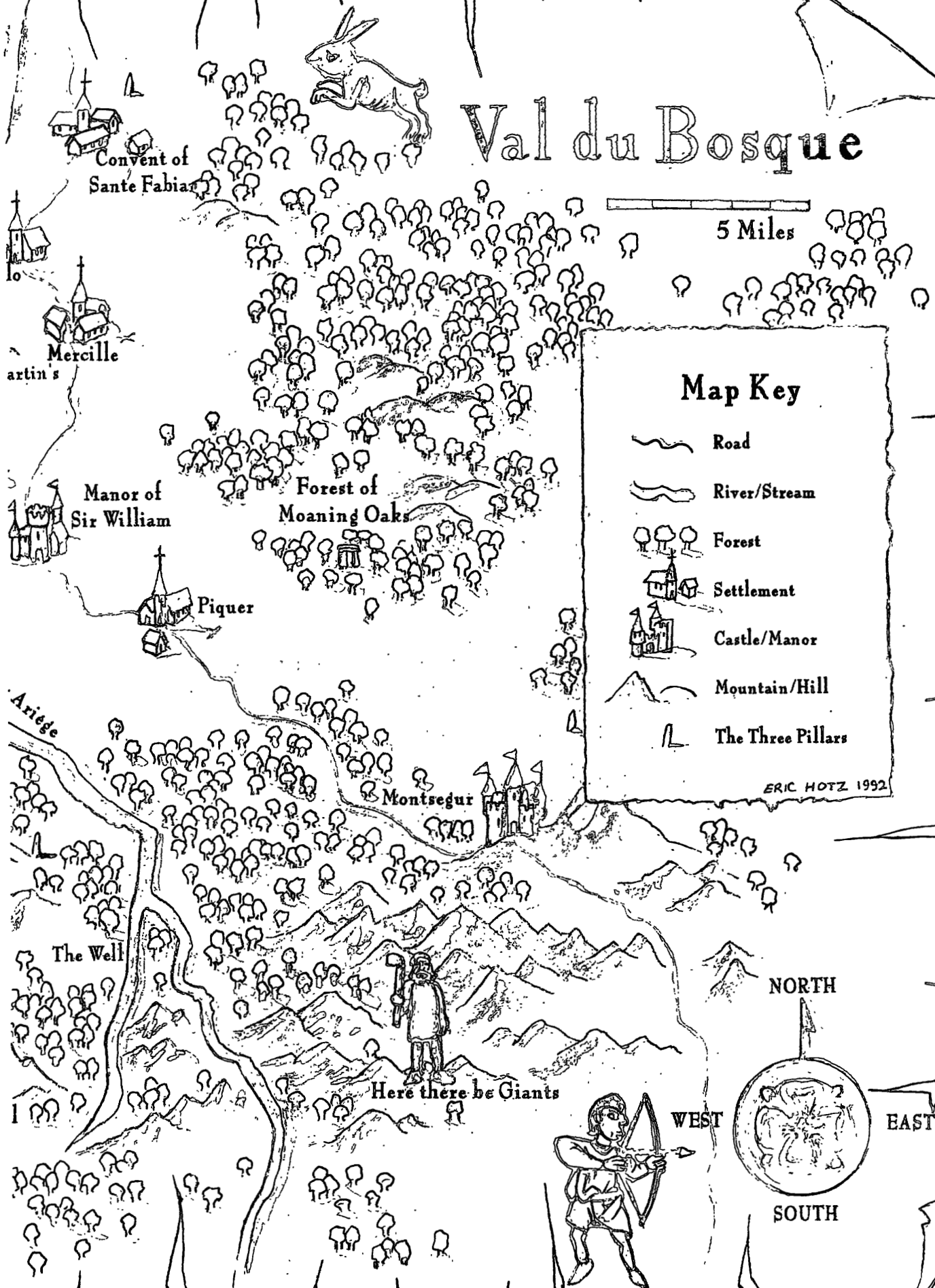
Perhaps the Magi even recognize the abuse they heaped upon Theoron by not rescuing him from Windgraven. The Magi may particularly feel guilty because Theoron was loyal to Mistridge, even after years of torture, and died on behalf of the Covenant, whereas Mistridge wrote the poor man off out of hand. Maybe such a realization makes the Magi reconsider their treatment of the Grogs as well.

Of course, events of this tale do not explain the young man who turns up around Alopoc asking for directions to Mistridge. Theoron's ghost continues to haunt the lands, still trying to get home. Rumors of Theoron's queries continue to reach the Magi's ears for years to come, a testament to the injustice done him.



Saint Fabia

Val du Bosque



ERIC HOTZ 1992