

Black Death



©1991

Credits:

Written By: Thomas M. Kane
Development: Stewart Wieck, Ken Cliffe
Editing: Ken Cliffe
Layout: KC Lancaster, Sam Chupp
Production: Josh Timbrook, Wes Harris
Cover Art: Jeff Menges
Back Cover: Chris McDonough
Title Logo: Richard Thomas
Interior Art: Tom Dow
Cartography: Eric Hotz
Ars Magica created by: Jonathan Tweet and Mark Rein•Hagen

This book is dedicated to Sue Kimball,
Mistress of the Inferno.



Special Thanks:

Thomas "Here's another copy of what you lost" Kane, for putting up with office disorganization and an awfully long wait.
Stewart "Da Bears, da Bulls, da Leafs" Wieck, for being able to broaden his sporting horizons.
Ken "The Jays may have blown the Series, but at least Toronto still has a hockey team... sort of." Cliffe, for not giving up on the home team, no matter how grim things look.
Jeff "When's Black Death coming out?" Menges, for putting up with our office confusion and having the same patience as Thomas.
Chris "I must be tone deaf." McDonough, for never knowing who he's talking to on the phone.
Richard "Eagles rule!" Thomas, for having an awesome computer team in the pre-season, but in the regular season...
Tom "I don't know if I can. I've got a lot to do." Dow, for fitting this project into his busy schedule, and for imbuing it with a wonderful sense of the sombre.
Eric "If you leave your name at the sound of the tone..." Hotz, for having a very... unique... answering machine message.
Sam "I am the Crime Doctor!" Chupp, for turning to evil one night a year.
Andrew "Moldy face." Greenberg, for coming up with a grotesque last minute Hallowe'en costume.
Wes "Bengals are going down!" Harris, for winning the game, but blowing the picks.
Mark "Stomp... stomp... stomp." Rein•Hagen, for being the only person in the world to mutely endure a recurring Four Square injury.
Josh "McDonough had to have cheated! I was supposed to win!" Timbrook, for defying the odds by suffering an upset.
KC "You mean I can get paid for doing this? Cool!" Lancaster, for last minute, cross country, snow-bound assistance.

Black Death

Digital Edition Version 1.0

Copyright © 2006 Trident, Inc. d/b/a Atlas Games.
All rights reserved.

©1991 by White Wolf. All rights reserved. Black Death, Ars Magica, Mythic Europe, Vampire, and White Wolf Magazine are all copyrights of White Wolf. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly denied, except for short excerpts for the purpose of reviews.



The Plague

There are times in the world, when the Lord smiles upon his humble servants, that much time passes without whisper of plague, and people dream they are free of its pain. But, when a wretch drops in the street, old terrors grow resurgent. Though the renewed destructor may work in unprecedented ways, spreading illness never seen before, the destructor only renews old, familiar pains and hardship. There is no new evil under the sun.

In desperation to survive people supplicate the Lord's mercy, shelter their faces and look to herbs, burn their neighbor's house, and flee from failing kin. But, despite all effort, disease lingers on, depositing corpses in every cranny. No one knows what brings the Death. Priests call plague the judgment of sin. Learned men indicate foul miasmas, imbalances of the bile, and conjunctions of Heavenly forms. Peasants blame Demons. All men, whether the wisest of councilor or the simplest of farmer, have their explanations for tragedy. There are times, though, when simple folk perceive more than any scholar...



Table of Contents

Introduction6

Montrouge, *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, and surrounding lands

Chapter One21

Into the Ruins

Chapter Two68

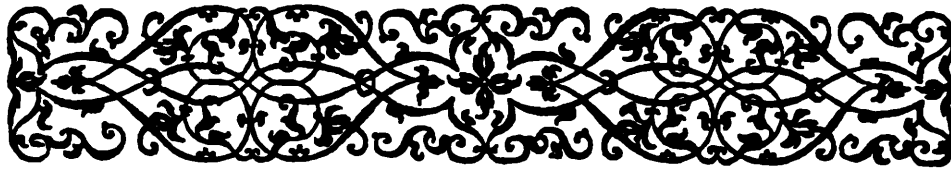
Up from the Ashes

Chapter Three91

Castle Under Siege

Appendix: The Plague112





Preface

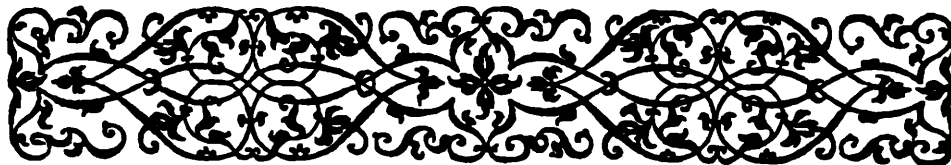
Ars Magica is first and foremost a fantasy roleplaying game designed to tell stories. In a game session the Storyguide (you) and the troupe (your players) work together to create characters, settings and situations that combine to spin heroic yarns of good versus evil. An **Ars Magica** game does not simply pit player-characters against monsters, with the sole intent to make those player-characters more powerful. And, the rules strive not to let you fall into that rut. Rather, **Ars Magica** helps you create the stuff of epic poems — characters, settings and events that seem real and alive, and above all, fascinating.

One of the essentials of a fascinating **Ars Magica** story, and indeed a Saga (campaign), is the Covenant. Physically, the Covenant is a structure of some sort, like a fortress, but it could just as easily be a cave system or sea-going ship. The physical design of the Covenant is not important, though. The inhabitants are. Your players' characters inhabit the Covenant and their interactions determine who is in control, and determine how the contained society is organized. More than anything, the Covenant is a permanent fixture that many magi inhabit. Over time, the accumulated knowledge of those magi makes all that follow more knowledgeable and powerful. Indeed, it is the

Covenant that sustains magi and fosters the growth of their magical might.

What happens when a Covenant fails and collapses, though? Those who survive the fall must come to terms with their loss, and maybe try to rebuild. But what if the fall results from the attacks of an inside, unknown force? Reconstruction becomes difficult if not impossible. In fact, those who survive the fall must go into hiding for not only are they alone and beaten, but their magical stores, which they relied upon so heavily, are lost with the Covenant. Such is the risk taken when investing such dependency in one institution.

Such is the lesson characters learn in **Black Death**. They witness firsthand the results of the collapse of a Covenant, *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. Collecting the shattered remains of the fallen Covenant, the characters may apply the experience they gain from the task to the future safety their own Covenant. They learn the danger of taking the institution of the Covenant for granted, and realize the necessity for individual self-sufficiency. These are lessons that might mean the future destruction or salvation of the characters' Covenant. Let us hope they learn these lessons well.





Introduction

TO THE STORYTELLER. . .

Black Death is an *Ars Magica* story (adventure) that pits the characters against the forces of nature, the masses, political authority, corrupt magic and Infernal power. More than anything, **Black Death** assaults the characters with the horror of plague, a fact of life in *Mythic Europe*[™]. Traveling to lands ravaged by "dark vapors," the characters must try and save those exposed to what is a cause of certain death. And, exposed to deadly contagion, can the characters defy death to perform their magical quest, or do they become yet more fodder for nameless, mass graves?

Black Death opens when another of many plagues comes to France. Ordinarily magi might not be concerned with such mundane affairs, but this time the Death strikes the Barony of Montrouge, home of the tiny Covenant called *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. The players' magi know of this Covenant because it contains a peculiar treasure, a source of *vis* which continually regenerates itself. To save, and maybe lay claim to this source of power, the characters must go to Montrouge and find the magi who survived the plague. They must then reunite the refugees into a whole, into a Covenant. The task is not without its dangers, though. A Demon brought about the plague with the intent to destroy *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. If the players' characters act to rebuild Montrouge, they must first defeat the Demon and the magus who is his mortal servant. If the characters fail, not only do they lose a fabulous source of valuable *vis*, but they endanger the Order of Hermes itself as a new Infernal power rises in the world.

Needless to say, characters undertaking the tasks demanded by this story must be capable and prepared for any contingency. Since the characters are dealing heavily with magi of another Covenant, they must themselves number several magi in order to garner respect from others. Accordingly, the troupe should include three to four magi of moderate power (i.e. from a Covenant in its Summer or Autumn). If the characters partaking of this story originate from a Covenant in its Spring, more magi may be needed, or the characters may have to recruit as much help as possible from magi refugees of *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. If characters originate from a Covenant in its Winter, you may have to increase the power of the Demon, A'Fienluh, and his minions in order to offer those powerful characters a true challenge. Still, such a powerful group needs a few magi as characters may separate to perform the many tasks possible in, and necessary to, the story.

Though magi have much to do in **Black Death**, companions and grogs are not overlooked. While magi are dealing with their kind from *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, *custos* must serve their masters, and may have their own agenda as well. The village of Montrouge is in ruins after the plague, its inhabitants in fear of sorcerers. Companions and grogs are particularly suited to befriending and leading the villagers. There are also bandits near Montrouge that must be dealt with using special tactics and caution — magic alone cannot stop them. *Custos* are also important as the Inquisition arrives at Montrouge, given the mysterious nature of recent local events. Suddenly magi find themselves the victims of a witch-hunt. If companions and grogs can make allies in Montrouge, or appear to

divest themselves from the magi, companions and grogs can campaign to have their masters spared. Ultimately, though, all characters are needed to stop the Demon behind Ad Vis Per Veritas's fall.

Time and Location

This story is set in the early Thirteenth Century. The Great Plague of the 1340's has not yet swept Europe, but its precursors have ravaged humanity since the beginning of time. The tale takes place in early July. Montrouge lies in the Ardennes forests, near the modern border of Belgium, and is part of the *Mythic Europe™* setting. However, you may place Montrouge and its Covenant anywhere and at any time you wish. The characters do not even need to belong to a Covenant of their own, as long as they will help a circle of stricken magi.

The town of Montrouge is typical of medieval habitations, but is also unique in certain ways — or was, before the plague struck. One thousand souls once lived within Montrouge, making the place as populous as a small city. The centers of trade lay somewhat to the north, and this barony, like nearly all communities, derived its chief income from the land. It did enjoy slightly more trade than the typical fiefdom, though, and a number of freedman bourgeois lived there. That gave it both a touch of learning and a measure of rural isolation, making it the ideal site for a Covenant. Though *Black Death* is set in Montrouge, you are free to base the story in any somewhat isolated, rural town.

No matter where the story is set, the people characters meet should speak the same language as the travelers. To learn what's happened and is happening at Ad Vis Per Veritas, the characters must speak with many people, so shouldn't have any problems understanding those people. The group has enough to do without overcoming a language barrier as well. If you desire, people encountered might speak in a dialect strange to the group. That dialect shouldn't hamper communications entirely, but maybe make people's meanings ambiguous at times ("*Did he just tell me to eat my scabbard or watch out for bandits on the road?*") A dialect also makes people easier for you to roleplay, and makes them unique from people the characters are used to dealing with.

Summary of the Plot

The story of *Black Death* leaves the course of the plot up to the troupe, to an even greater extent than the typical *Ars Magica* story. That's so because the characters may choose to travel wherever they like around Montrouge, and may investigate whatever mystery

they like, at any time. Accordingly, you need to be prepared for any story contingency. However, a typical telling of *Black Death* might flow as follows:

Upon receiving word of the plague's disaster, the group departs for Montrouge. When they arrive, they find a wasteland. The profusion of death is obscene. A combination of simple horror and fear of infection paralyzes the survivors, from the Baron of the lands sealed in his castle to peasant families barred in their huts. The spring harvest rots along with human corpses in the streets, while the midsummer crop goes unplanted. Those who survived the plague may soon starve.

Characters must brave the plague in Montrouge to search for magi, forced from Ad Vis Per Veritas. They encounter several magi, some helpful, many feuding and a few corrupted by the evil in the town. As the characters explore Montrouge and Ad Vis Per Veritas, they come to realize that the people who destroyed those places still exist and may strike again.

Searching for the source of the Covenant and town's hardship, characters hear many rumors and conduct numerous investigations. Many rumors prove hard to follow. Many investigations prove fruitless. But eventually, the group meets the magi Aramin, Juan, Carolta, or some other people with a keen understanding of the Covenant's last days. With these people's help, the group forms an idea of what happened in Montrouge.

Meanwhile, outside events distract the characters. Bandits lurk in the woods. The Baron sends troops into town. Friction develops between the characters and local authorities. Then, the Inquisition comes to Montrouge.

By now, the group should suspect the true nature of its enemies. The characters go to the Baron's castle, either willingly, or as prisoners of the witch-hunters. There the group meets its foes. At this point, the story rests on the number of Storyguide characters the group has managed to extract from the Demon's web of traps. Those who have been saved by the characters are no longer under A'Fienluh's, the Demon's, influence. Thus, when the Demon summons the aid of those he's corrupted, with the intent to have them fight the characters, the characters have a better chance of surviving if they've saved many. Still, the group must contend with those who could not be saved, and, of course, the characters must contend with the Demon himself.

A campaign against a Demon is more than a physical battle. It is a struggle for souls. Among the townsfolk and nobles, magi and hermits, the characters meet people who, for the most human of reasons, find that disaster leaves them little choice but to side with evil. Characters may choose to simply slay those people. A'Fienluh wants them to do exactly that, for all those who die in his name become his, forever. Truly wise

characters, or those who understand the ways of Demons, may choose to save the souls of the lost rather than kill those people. Such characters go far in defying the machinations of Hell, and may survive to see the conclusion of this story.

Storyguide Ideas

When the group arrives at shattered Montrouge, it faces a great variety of disparate tasks. Gradually, these tasks and their consequences culminate to the tale's conclusion. In Storyguiding *Black Death*, keep in mind that the characters may follow an infinite number of courses through the early parts of the tale. This means the characters may perform actions that take them on a direct route to the tale's climax, or they become embroiled in subplots and side events. For example, the group could labor through every Event in Chapter Two, or head straight for the palace. However, no matter what course the group chooses, this story's chain of incidents inevitably leads to the Demon.

The Chapters of this story overlap. Remember that. No other consideration is more important to running this story. Chapter One covers the people and situations characters might encounter while exploring. Chapter Two contains no encounters per se, but describes tasks the group must accomplish and events that may trouble them. Chapter Three describes the Baron's palace and the Demon's attack. Obviously, the group may skip between these subjects in any variety of ways, first exploring, then visiting the castle, then returning to town because of some Chapter Two Event. You must be prepared to deal with any contingency.

The freeform nature of these Chapters becomes all-important at the story's climax. A'Fienluh does not launch his final attack just because it is time for the game to end! Nor does the group proceed step by step through a linear story until it reaches the Demon's room, where he lives. Rather, the climax occurs after characters' actions draw them into direct conflict with the Demon. Perhaps the group finds an irresistible clue, and pursues it, despite all opposition, into the heart of the Baron's palace. Perhaps the group labors to rebuild the town and Covenant until someone accuses their magi of diabolism. In a frantic attempt to clear their name, the characters find their way to the town's Bishop, Ceravantes, learn of his plight and trace the town's evil to its source. Ultimately, you must decide when the Demon strikes out at the characters directly, based on what your players do.

Furthermore, not only events outlined in this book need lead to the story's climax. The group's magi might evade the witch-hunt with a clever spell of disguise, and go into hiding. Then the group might

labor for weeks in Montrouge before some other event opens their eyes to A'Fienluh and his works. The possible chains of cause and effect are limitless. Essentially, do not feel limited to the events mentioned in the text.

Storyguide characters in this tale should also plot and maneuver as much as the group. Play Storyguide characters actively at all times, and exploit whatever opportunities the characters give them to further their own ends. Feel free to make up new events as well. Perhaps a wandering friar visits the town with his own mystical ideas for the future of Montrouge. Perhaps a witch-hunt develops, not against the character magi, but against some completely innocent (or less-than-innocent) Storyguide character. This story is only limited by your imagination.

At times it may be possible that the story comes to a halt as the characters get bogged in a miasma of clues. That's when you should intervene and keep things moving. There are many ways of doing so. The best is to have helpful Storyguide characters make valid suggestions to the characters. Assume Storyguide characters know everything they might reasonably know or remember about events at Montrouge. Everyone who was at the Covenant, for example, knows how the first witch-hunt was miraculously waylaid, and knows how Tierus, another magus, received the post Damon sought. Even if this text does not specify that a magus can clarify a certain point, he may be able to. Even though the characters interact and deal with Storyguide characters to further their own ends, that doesn't mean you can't use Storyguide characters for your own ends.

In telling *Black Death* you should also remain conscious of the powers and motivations of Demons. A'Fienluh, like all his kind, has a supernatural insight into people's desires, fears, and inner secrets. This insight need not always be quantified in game terms. He simply *knows* things, and uses them to cause as much misery as possible. Given A'Fienluh's power over a Baron, a Bishop and a powerful magus, A'Fienluh can almost always exploit his discoveries. Throughout *Black Death*, feel free to have A'Fienluh "learn" characters' secrets, and have those secrets used against the characters by their enemies. Maybe the Baron hears tale of another baron a character once killed, and immediately mistrusts the characters. There's no telling what harm A'Fienluh can do to the characters with the secrets he learns about them.

Also remember that Demons have nearly unlimited patience. They may have the strength to murder their enemies, but most prefer to compel mortals to corrupt themselves. A'Fienluh, however, does not always adhere to these rules, as his use of the plague suggests. Instead of seducing victims through subtlety, he likes

to put them in untenable positions, where they must do evil or die. Keep in mind, though, that where A'Fienluh's tactics are brutal, they are not rash, and always have a purpose.

When characters begin interfering with a A'Fienluh's plans, he may act against them, intervening at many points in the story, well before the tale's climax. His intention is to capture the characters' souls along with the townsfolk's. Toward that end he puts the characters in situations where they have a choice between some horrible pain or fate, and the performance of some harmful act. For example, the characters can allow Rico Ceil, a citizen of Montrouge, to slander them in town, bringing the Inquisition down upon them. Or, they can save themselves and capture or kill Rico. The characters may justify the latter course, claiming it necessary to the greater good of saving the town. That course is still harmful, though, and puts characters in A'Fienluh's clutches. You must decide whether any character has been particularly vicious in Montrouge. If she has, she may well succumb to A'Fienluh's call for help against the characters at the story's climax. That means the character fights her friends.

In order to determine the outcome of crucial events in this story, this text often calls for the rolling of dice. For example, extensive rules for determining crowd behavior, with the use of Social Skills checks, are provided. Do not allow these rolls to replace roleplaying! These Social Skills rolls are simply designed to resolve particular challenges, and indicate the consequences of success or failure. If the characters can resolve these events without dice, they should be allowed to.

The text also contains a number of Inserts, presenting the established wisdom of the order of Hermes, which may be applied to situations that arise in this tale. One, for example, presents standard policy on magi who tie themselves too closely to mortal rulers. Another describes proper conduct regarding renegade magi. You may copy these Inserts and hand them out when the players need advice. The information in these Inserts may result from a characters' memory, or may be found while conducting any research into a subject that the characters are concerned with.

Theme

Black Death is a story that forces characters to weigh their own morality against actions they must perform to save a dying town. Ofttimes the characters are faced with a decision to impose their will on the town, ignoring the people's will, or are faced with a decision to perform some harmful act for the town's good, but an act which conflicts with the characters' ethics. For

example, an act like wiping out a group of bandits seems to preserve the good of the town, so seems inherently virtuous. However, those killings are harmful and damaging, particularly when inflicted upon people simply trying to survive the plague. Thus, the characters must decide what's right and what's wrong, and must live with their decisions if they act against their morality. And, don't forget that harmful, sinful decisions place the characters within A'Fienluh's realm of influence.

There are many realms in which the characters must weigh necessity against morality. While the plague lasts, people behave as if the world is about to end. But the world does not end, and afterward, somebody must rebuild society from its remains. This story addresses the rebuilding of society after a common catastrophe. In helping to restore order, the characters must decide whether the threat of death makes social bonds less constraining, or more. Does the characters' end — the restoration of order — justify their means, which may include the brutalization of those who impede restoration?

One might hope that hardship would draw people closer together, instilling a spirit of sharing and cooperation. Unfortunately, disaster tends to produce less admirable behavior. At exactly the moment when circumstances demand the greatest sacrifice, people can least afford to make it. Therefore, barring even the human traits of greed and vengefulness, society can seldom recover from destruction without strife and iron leadership. Can the characters become such leaders, justify any oppression imposed on the people, and sleep at night?

Granted, any calamity creates bitterness. However, the plague which struck Montrouge and *Ad Vis Per Veritas* is the product of an evil genius. The Demon deliberately attacked Montrouge at its most vulnerable spot. Disease inspires heartlessness in ways that an earthquake, for example, never can. Nobody dares to comfort the victims of contagion for fear of falling ill themselves. If the characters intend to save Montrouge and its Covenant, they must choose between acts of self-sacrifice or coldheartedness; they may expose themselves to disease to save those dying from illness, or may turn their backs on the dying to protect their own lives. This is a decision the characters' humanity and morality must make.

Furthermore, some within Montrouge do not want the group to save their town. Those people may fear the characters, or may be too proud to have outsiders decide their fate. No matter how pure the motives of a rescuer, any attempt to save a people becomes a matter of politics. The one who rebuilds a society cannot help but form it in his own image. If the characters can save Montrouge, do they impose their

own order upon it, or do they restore the old order, allowing those saved to retain their former identity? The characters must decide how they rebuild Montrouge, based on their own morality, either respecting the townspeople, or disregarding them.

The group must also consider what gives them the right to impose solutions on Montrouge's problems, and what does or does not give them the authority to lead. Medieval thought considers nobility rulers by natural right. Yet, the Baron cannot save Montrouge. Does that negate his natural authority? And, if aristocratic birth does not confer rulership, how does one assert one's right to govern? Can one legitimately achieve authority by sheer force? In taking control of Montrouge, the characters have to consider the former order. Do they respect the Baron and hand the reigns of power over to him, or impose their own rulership? And, how can the characters morally justify any power they impose?

It's also possible that characters may disregard the town and its fate in favor of rescuing Ad Vis Per Veritas. Magi, preoccupied with their magical obsessions, may not recognize the importance of the townsfolk and their survival. Though such indifference may coincide with magi's aloof morality, indifference may not coincide with the morals of *custos* — more common folk. If companions and grogs want to save the people of Montrouge, they may have to convince the magi of the necessity to do so. If the *custos* cannot convince their masters, do they live with their grief or try to save the people themselves? And, though *custos* saviors may expect thanks, they may equally expect aggression as the people turn against them when the Inquisition comes.

Damon Le Mont is at the center of Black Death's theme of necessity versus morality. By consorting with a Demon and bringing a plague upon Montrouge, he committed the grossest offense imaginable against both society and the Order of Hermes. However, he felt his only alternative to Infernal dealings was death. Can the characters show Damon that his end did not justify his means. Can the characters forgive him? And, can they prove that in his circumstances, they would have not done the same?

The History of Montrouge

The lands around Montrouge did not always belong to humankind. Long before mortals walked on Earth, the Ardennes contained a mighty source of magic, buried beneath the limestone of what would become a town. This magic enriched the land, giving birth to wondrous creatures and, eventually, sustaining the primitive people who lived on the lands. And, a mighty spirit of the order Angelica dwelt in those

regions, protecting them, and embodying the spirit of the countryside.

The earliest humans called this angel A'Fienluh. They worshipped him as if he were a god, and credited him with creating the enchanted crystals of the land. In worshipping, the savages of the time committed no sin. They had no way of knowing about the true God. However, A'Fienluh knew the Word of God and was duty bound to refuse the primitive people's offerings. Instead he was to prepare them for the eventual arrival of the Church and the deliverance of the Lord's blessing.

For centuries, A'Fienluh fulfilled his duty. But, he gradually became tempted by and then accustomed to the honor and sacrifices offered him as a deity. The gifts of his worshippers nourished him and allowed him to exploit the resources of the land. Once, the *vis* of his followers' lands lay open to the sages and healers of the mortal tribes. Accepting pagan status, A'Fienluh took to gathering the *vis*, first for a select band of priests, then for himself alone. Before long A'Fienluh fully deviated from his higher purpose; he became like those proud angels who fell with Lucifer.

However, not even an angel can commit such hubris unpunished. A'Fienluh was stripped of his title, his rank, and his lands. Indeed, his entire world collapsed. The Romans conquered his tribe, and as the Empire was converted to Christianity, A'Fienluh's lands were as well. Furthermore, Roman magi of the order of Hermes discovered the magic inherent in A'Fienluh's lands — already the lands of a burgeoning village — and built a Covenant to take advantage of its bounty. They treated the *vis* of the land, not as a gift from a pagan deity, but as a simple natural resource. Few of them believed that A'Fienluh even existed.

Defeated, and with nothing more to gain, A'Fienluh might have repented his pride and restored his Divine standing. He didn't. Instead, he made his rebellion against Divinity complete, and joined the fallen angels who fought against Heaven. He became, in other words, a Demon. As a Demon, he petitioned the Prince of Darkness to give him the lands he used to guard — reward for his choice to join the dark horde.

A'Fienluh did not get what he requested, though. Rather, he was given a mission. "Destroy the village" the Prince of Darkness said, "When you smash the town, leaving only your own followers, you shall rebuild in any way you desire." A'Fienluh accepted the task in hopes of restoring his former glory. All he need do was plot and await his opportunity to strike.

As more centuries passed the town became a feudal Barony under the House d'Montrouge, and took that House's name. Its Covenant took the name Ad Vis Per Veritas, and prospered. Ad Vis Per Veritas never developed more than a small circle of magi, but re-

mained an especially close-knit community of brethren.

Just prior to the coming of the plague, which marked A'Fienluh's revenge, Baron Franc d'Montrouge ruled the town. He is still in power when the characters arrive at Montrouge. At Ad Vis Per Veritas, before the coming of the plague, a magus named Silber governed, exercising such judgment and foresight that people called him the Wise Hand. When A'Fienluh finally struck, one winter ago, he entered the chambers of Silber Wise Hand and surprised the old magus, alone. Using powers of the Infernal realms, the Demon stopped the old magus's heart. Then A'Fienluh vanished into the forests. The death of Silber Wise Hand brought uproar to Ad Vis Per Veritas.

News of A'Fienluh's deed also upset the mundane rulers of Montrouge. The Order of Hermes tried to keep the mysterious death concealed. However, Montrouge's Baron had an Uncle among the magi, the magus Damon Le Mont. Damon Le Mont informed the Baron of the incident. Terrified that some evil force was at work, Montrouge's Baron sent a secret petition to the Church. He hoped for Divine protection for himself and his people, not just from the unknown evil, but from the untrustworthy magi connected with the evil. The Church responded by sending a Bishop named Ceravantes to investigate the magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas.

The arrival of the Bishop threatened Ad Vis Per Veritas with extinction — not even a council of magi can resist the relentless persecution of an Inquisition. At that point, A'Fienluh appeared once more, making a midnight visit to Damon's chambers. Demons know secrets, and A'Fienluh knew one about Ceravantes. He therefore told the magus how to cope with the Bishop. (Ceravantes secretly bought his rank from an infamous group of heretics known as the Tuscan Simonists, though he now regrets the act and seeks to amend his past indiscretions). With the information given him,

Le Mont approached his fellow magi and revealed how all could be saved through the blackmail of Ceravantes. The plan was distasteful to most, but as any other course risked imminent Inquisition, the magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas acquiesced to Le Mont's plan. Thus, Ceravantes fell to the power granted Le Mont. Of course, Damon never revealed where he had gained his information.

With the threat of a witch-hunt temporarily stilled, the magi found the time to choose themselves a new leader, Silber Wise Hand's successor. Damon Le Mont was unquestionably the most learned, and as of late most influential, magus at Ad Vis Per Veritas. Never-



theless, to the minds of the magi, Le Mont had brought near disaster upon the Covenant, given his familial ties to the Baron. And, after all, the codes of Hermes firmly discourage such shackles to mundane politics. (The magi's minds were also under the influence of A'Fienluh, who wanted to drive a wedge between the Covenant's magi and Damon Le Mont.) Consequently, Ad Vis Per Veritas did not give Damon its crown. The magi instead chose a magus named Tierus, who claimed no great accomplishments in magic, but had always done what magi asked of him and had avoided any taint of scandal.

Damon grew furious, and stormed out of the meeting. The other magi took advantage of his absence to discuss his case. His relations with the Baron disturbed them. Furthermore, many felt qualms over the whole blackmailing of the Bishop, particularly because, despite his role, Ceravantes seemed a particularly humane and conscientious man, who might understand the Covenant's good intentions. So, to settle the disturbances caused by Le Mont's recent activities, and to determine a way to smooth relations with local mundanes, the magi decided to send for a permanent representative of House Quaesitoris. They thought an outside judge could restore the old harmony of Ad Vis Per Veritas, and could act as a representative of the Covenant among the commoners.

A'Fienluh informed Damon of everything the magi council decreed. Damon spent the next few days brooding, not knowing whether to believe his diabolical friend or not. Then Juan the Quaesitor arrived, making it obvious to Damon that A'Fienluh had told the truth.

Juan snooped about the Covenant, asking questions, but seldom volunteered his opinions or intentions. Damon became convinced that the Quaesitor intended to impose some terrible punishment upon him. He also began to tell himself that Tierus had some conspiracy with Juan, that the two intended to destroy him. Desperate for information, Damon began attempting rituals to contact A'Fienluh — the Demon never seemed to be present when Le Mont needed him.

It was then that the Quaesitor discovered instruments from Damon's Demonic rituals. Damon was visiting his Nephew, the Baron, when Juan searched the magus's quarters. A'Fienluh immediately warned Damon of this turn of events, and the news left Damon petrified with fear. Damon knew that the Order does not countenance diabolism in any form. And, as a rather unpopular magus, he could not expect any sympathy, particularly with his story of a spiritual advisor who had led him astray. Damon also knew that at the next Tribunal, the Quaesitors would almost certainly call for a Wizard's March. Furthermore, if

word of his latest activities ever leaked out, Damon knew his own nephew would want him burned as a diabolist. And after the blackmailing, Bishop Ceravantes would certainly welcome a chance for revenge. All seemed lost.

However, once again, A'Fienluh offered a solution to Damon's problems. He told the magus to destroy Montrouge. A'Fienluh suggested that he kill the people and wipe out the Covenant, erasing all knowledge of Juan and Damon's indiscretions. The Demon further promised that if the magus's efforts were devastating enough, folk might even believe Damon himself dead, thereby ending all attempts to investigate him. At first Damon was horrified by the concept and refused it outright. With time, though, his imprisonment and death impending, Damon decided he had no other choice. With some research, his past spell experimentations, and the aid of A'Fienluh, Damon cast a special version of *Curse of the Unportended Plague*. Shortly thereafter plague struck Montrouge and the surrounding lands.

After casting the spell, Damon went to his nephew, the Baron. He offered his services as a healer and advisor, and Franc d'Montrouge accepted. The choice proved wise, since Damon shielded his nephew's palace from the plague. And, to avoid arousing suspicion, he taught the guards a worthless "ritual of cleansing."

Most of Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi died in the plague. Their retainers also perished. Many of those who survived suffered disasters of other kinds. Suffering unbearable hardships, the magi of the Covenant added to them by falling into in-fighting.

The plague, meanwhile, lay on the land, forcing magi and commoners alike to huddle in their shelters. Then terror broke out in Ad Vis Per Veritas. Violent spells began exploding within the Covenant halls, killing *custos* and even magi. Damon Le Mont was secretly using the spell *Opening the Intangible Tunnel* to bombard the Covenant. To avoid detection, he timed his attacks in such a way as to close the *Tunnel* before anyone managed to detect it and cast spells back at him. Damon's intent was to kill those magi who still lived, or at to least drive them out of hiding to be captured.

Damon's attacks had their effect. Tierus, the Covenant's new leader, and Juan, the Quaesitor, fled the destruction of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Juan found safety in a sanctum which once belonged to Silber Wise Hand, but Tierus made the mistake of entering Montrouge, where the Baron's Provosts captured him. They took him to the Baron's palace on charges of witchcraft — someone had to be blamed for the plague, and a witch-hunt seemed the most efficient means of finding a scapegoat. Damon Le Mont arranged to have Tierus burned.

Magik In Tyme of Plague

Written by the magus Lot, of House Bjornaer, year 950. Lot, a magus of the Shetland Isles, made a study of a plague which afflicted Norse raiders in his homeland. His notes remain of interest to magi who conduct investigation into plague, possibly in search of a cure to use at Montrouge.

To enter that city was to die, for creatures of fur and warm skin. I went in the form of a snake, and explored to my heart's content. I absorbed each detail with the passionless gaze of the reptile, and felt not a hint of pity or disgust. Now that my form has resumed humanity, I am left with the memories. I tell you, I am frightened by the plague. But I am even more frightened by the numbness of my own serpent's heart. I would not take that shape again for any cause, nor for any prize.

The first thing one sees in the city is corpses. I crawled across more Norsemen than I dare count, all cheated of their place in Valhalla. That, I soon learned, is what frightened them. No Viking fears to die, but none can stomach the ignominy of death by disease. Years later, in human shape, I talked with a survivor from that town. He told me this: 'Those who die quietly have no place with Odin.'

I do not care what their bloodthirsty god demands. I only know that the plague victims I saw did not die quietly. The most one could say is that a few died quickly, when they took the plague in the lungs. Victims moaned with fever and shook with cramps. At the end they would shudder madly and collapse.

The disease began with heat, spasms and swellings, which gradually developed into true buboes. Sometimes, the buboes would burst and expel pus. Then the victim had a chance to live. However, no use of force could make the buboes erupt if they did not choose to.

I saw Norsemen hack at their sores with great war-axes, all in vain. The tools of physicians served no better. Nor did spells, either those cast by Viking wizards nor the orthodox incantations of Creo Córporum. We can slow the plague, but not stop it.

I ended my time among the Vikings with one of their healers. He allowed me to slither about his hut at will, and nose through his herbs and recipes. Perhaps he had heard the Hellenic tales of Ophiuchus and considered snakes an auspicious omen for a doctor. And, perhaps I was an omen, for he eventually saved his people from their disaster.

This doctor concocted a certain tea from the grass we call Bitter Cane. This drug could not cure plague, but it could delay the victim's death, for weeks and even months. To survive, one needed dose after dose of the drug.

I anticipated fierce fighting as the Bitter Cane grew scarce. However, I had misjudged the Vikings. Their warriors divided the Bitter Cane honestly among themselves. Then they boarded their longships and sailed for the Scottish coast. Upon reaching land, they hurled themselves upon the strongest keeps of the region. All fell in the resulting battles.

The Vikings died in battle, just as their honor demanded. They also achieved another feat dear to every warrior's heart. A few weeks later, the plague broke out in Scotland, and spread down the island to Londonium itself. Hence, the Vikings slew many times the number they lost.

In the absence of Tierus, Detric, the Covenant's gateward, defended the Covenant. Detric had a young apprentice named Luc-Paul, whom he sent into town for protection from Damon's spells. The Baron's guards promptly caught Luc-Paul as well, and used him as a hostage, intent of luring Detric into capture as another witch. Detric willingly surrendered himself to the mundane authorities, but not without ensuring that Luc-Paul would be released first. Damon had Detric executed as well. Though Luc-Paul tried to join his master at the pyre, Detric sent the boy away. The apprentice eventually took shelter at the local Inn.

Meanwhile, another young magus was active, and had a hand in the complete dissolution of what little remained of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Before his betrayal of Ad Vis Per Veritas, Damon Le Mont had a student, named Aramin, and this novice magus contracted the plague. Aramin knew of A'Fienluh and knew much of what was really happening to Montrouge. Upon becoming sick, he grew desperate to become Damon's servant again, knowing his old master could provide a cure. Therefore, Aramin raided the Covenant, trying to steal something that Damon would desire, to be used in barter for a cure. In his raid, Aramin encountered and vanquished Carolta, the last loyal magus of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Recovering from her defeat, she took the Covenant's few remaining grogs and hid in the fortress's catacombs, preparing to kill the next person who defied the Covenant.

Though he helped Damon complete the destruction of Ad Vis Per Veritas, Aramin did not win Damon's approval. However, he did obtain a supply of Bitter Cane, an herb which slows the effects of the plague. So, seeking power for himself in this time of turmoil, Aramin took his herbs to a hut in the Fens around Montrouge, where he organized other victims of the plague into a cult. Aramin now keeps his followers alive with the herb. In return for their reprieve, they must help him worship A'Fienluh, whom Aramin has also embraced. Aramin hopes that his devotion to

A Court Wizard Confesses

The Peripheral Code of Hermes forbids any magus from acting as a court wizard to a mundane nobleman. The following testimony from an Eleventh Century Tribunal illuminates some of the reasonings behind this regulation, and Hermes's attitude toward its violators. The information delineated in this record may be referred to by characters as a precedent for trying Damon Le Mont. He too demeans the Order by serving a mundane court. Of course, the characters soon learn that Damon is guilty of many, more heinous, crimes.

Havel of Quaesitoris: *I call before this Tribunal one Dvina Borov, magus of the House Jerbiton. Borov, do you understand the complaint against your conduct?*

Borov of Jerbiton: *Yes . . . yes, I do. My fault. I can only beg forgiveness.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *You stand accused of prostituting your honor and your art to a mundane lord. You admit to that? . . . Good, then your guilt is established. You may present your account to the Tribunal.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *Yes . . . And so I will. This all began when I made a discovery . . . concerning Maria, daughter to the Landgrave of Ostrava. She has the Gift. A very strong Gift. And more to the point, she has the honed mind to use it. She could be a sorceress of the sort the world has not known in centuries. It would have been positively sinful to leave her untutored and untrained. Therefore, I received permission to make Maria my apprentice.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *When the typical magus takes an apprentice, Borov, he does not go to live in the apprentice's palace.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *I asked her to come to my Covenant, Quaesitor Havel, but there was an impediment. Maria was betrothed. Her father had offered her hand to the Margrave's son Wojcek. I dared not disrupt such a marriage. Therefore, to allay gossip, I went to live among her suitor's kinfolk. I moved into the Margrave's castle. . . Yes, I cast fortunes to earn my keep, but I did nothing forbidden to a magus. My plans proceeded perfectly until Wojcek died.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *The Margrave suspected that you poisoned his son.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *I cannot blame him. But he's wrong! I swear, of all crimes, that is one I did not commit. Wojcek was a fine man, not bright, but steadfast and cheerful, exactly the husband a genius like Maria required. He was also rich, and I had induced him to support my Covenant. We built a new tower with his contributions, and had money to spare. I . . .*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *Ah, yes. He was rich. That explains why your colleagues did nothing to stop your meddling. But continue.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *I had to prove my innocence. I sought day and night for the killer, and, I confess, my spells proved quite helpful. I finally tracked him down. Maria's own brother slew her future husband. He hoped to join his house with that of a third lord, the Knight of Slavomarch. The marriage stood in his way. And, he knew that blame for the killing would fall on me.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *That does not explain your participation in a war.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *Yes . . . yes it does, Quaesitor. When I found the culprit, I naturally informed the Margrave. To him, the whole matter was a pretext to seize land. He declared war upon the Landgrave and his household. As a servitor of the Margrave, I had no choice but to fight. I fought as I knew best. Yet despite my conjuring, the Margrave suffered a bitter defeat.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *You have ruined many lives, Borov. Hear now my sentence. You have brought shame and outrage upon the Order of Hermes. You deserve death. But I will spare you for one reason alone: this Maria, the genius you meant to train. I cannot allow her to remain half a magus. Having learned what you taught her, she deserves a full apprenticeship, and Hermes deserves her contributions. Therefore, I lay on you this charge. Find Maria, and teach her as a magus should be taught. Then I will consider your repentance sincere.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *Alas, Lord. I cannot approach Maria.*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *Why not?*

Borov of Jerbiton: *You recall that I lost the final battle with the Landgrave?*

Havel of Quaesitoris: *Yes.*

Borov of Jerbiton: *His armies could hardly have bested a magus. It was Maria who defeated me. She sided with her father . . . and won. You see, I had taught her magic . . . all too well.*

A'Fienluh will eventually regain him the favor of his former master, whom he still admires.

Thus, when the characters arrive at Montrouge, the town, its surrounding lands, and the Covenant lie in ruins. For the most part the plague is over, having completed its evil work. Still, survivors huddle in their homes, and the last victims die wherever the plague found them. Damon Le Mont, a brooding recluse, currently lives in the Baron's palace, and has a part in all his nephew's decisions. The Demon lurks there with him, planning the final destruction of Montrouge, and his resurgence of power.

BEGINNING THE STORY

Unless you decide otherwise, the characters learn of the plague in Montrouge from Luc de Jon, marshal of grogs in Ad Vis Per Veritas. He strides up to the gate of the character's Covenant one night after dinner, firmly erect, despite displaying the loose flesh and sagging stomach of a starving man. Luc identifies himself by presenting a white, polished stone with the Eyes and Ears symbol of Ad Vis Per Veritas carved on it. He then tersely explains that five months ago, a plague came to Montrouge that not even spells could vanquish. *"Fear not,"* he adds hastily. *"I have not brought disease upon you. 'Twas May when I left Montrouge. If I was infected, I should have fallen in the first week of my journey here."*

Luc de Jon's address continues with rumination about what happened after the plague ended. This recount includes famine and riots. He also explains that a witch-hunt staged by the local mundanes has driven any surviving magi into hiding, and indicates that a dearth of survivors are still in town who can help rebuild. On that last point he forces himself to finish:

"I have come to request . . . alms, of a fashion, on behalf of my Covenant, not myself. We shall certainly repay you if Heaven grants the opportunity."

"Our magi have scattered to the four winds throughout the town. Please come to Montrouge, find the covenfolk who survived, reclaim our old dwellings, and restore us to a Covenant again."

"You have, perhaps, heard of Ad Vis Per Veritas's well of vis. If you can restore our Covenant, we shall share of it freely."

After any customary Covenant politics, and undoubtedly a council meeting of some sort, the Covenant may choose the characters as its envoys to help Ad Vis Per Veritas reorganize. If there is some indecision, Luc de Jon continues to press his case at all meetings of the magi.

Remember that Luc de Jon is only one tool by which you can call the characters' attention to Ad Vis Per Veritas. You will undoubtedly come up with another means that better suits your Saga and the players' characters. If you need them, here are a few more ways to get the characters to Montrouge:

- When the plague broke out, some alert townsfolk recognized their danger and fled the area. They travel the lands as refugees in search of a new home. They might settle around the characters' Covenant, hoping for magical protection of some sort. Though the refugees don't know it, they are actually carriers of the plague. A'Fienluh has slowed its assault on their bodies so that they might carry the disease to other lands, killing people there as well, ensuring him further territories to rule.

Once commoners around the characters' Covenant start dying, the group must track down the source of the plague. That means locating the refugees, who are themselves now near death, and traveling to Montrouge. If the characters cannot find a cure to the plague afflicting their Covenant, they may find one at Montrouge and bring that cure home. Alternatively, the characters may cure the plague at their Covenant and travel to Montrouge to do the same there, before the contagion spreads anywhere else. Traveling to Montrouge, the characters are sure to become embroiled in reconstruction attempts at Ad Vis Per Veritas.

- Before the plague strikes Montrouge, magi and their retainers could be there, maybe attending a Tribunal or simply trading for a share of Ad Vis Per Veritas's renewing *vis* supply. The plague strikes while the characters are in Montrouge. In this case, play up the plague's spread. Maybe it appears as a great billowing cloud that creeps across the land, infecting all those who come in contact with it. The speed of the plague's spread is a sure sign of the magical activities behind it.

Though magi may try to stop the cloud's spread, its Infernal nature defies all magical deterrents. The characters may have the foresight to escape the plague, maybe taking some of Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi with them, or may themselves become infected. Either way, the characters have undeniable reasons for seeking to save Montrouge, particularly so if they have the plague. Take note, though, that this introduction involves the characters in the plague's inception, so events and situations in Montrouge may not yet be developed to the point described in the text that follows.

As an alternative to the above introduction, those in Montrouge at the plague's arrival might not be characters, but other covenfolk. When those covenfolk do not return from Montrouge, the characters are sent to find the missing party. Traveling to Montrouge, the characters discover the plague. Not only must they save

the town and the Covenant, but they must save their diseased friends, if any still survive.

- Word gets to the characters' Covenant, just as it does to that in the Stonehenge Tribunal (see below), that Ad Vis Per Veritas has fallen. Maybe one of Montrouge's refugee magi puts out a magical distress signal that many Covenants receive. No matter how they hear of Ad Vis Per Veritas's distress, the characters must decide what they plan to do about it. They may already be on good terms with the Covenant, so seek to preserve what is left of their ally. Alternatively, the characters may seek to loot the fallen Covenant. That is certainly what the magi from Stonehenge intend to do. Who knows what magi from other Covenants might intend. Thus, while the characters contend with events and conditions in Montrouge, they must also contend with other magi, who may

have the same goals as the characters, or may have completely different plans. Those with the same hopes may certainly work together, but those who seek only to profit may soon come become at odds with their "allies."

In this scenario, you must also consider what Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi think of all these intruding magi. Do they ally themselves with those intent on rebuilding the Covenant, attack those intent on looting, or manipulate those who are confused by chaos in the region? Regardless of magi's intentions, all become allies when mundane folk stage an Inquisition, which is bound to happen if feuding magi bring their conflict out into the open. And, don't forget that magi from other Covenants may fall victim to A'Fienluh's influence, and may be called upon in the story's climax to fight the characters.

| Luc de Jon — Grog Captain | Luc de Jon's Statistics |
|--|---|
| <p>Description: a tall man, whose short hair and trimmed beard are elegantly curled. He wears a cap of steel and coat of mail whenever possible, and bears the arms of the de Jon family on his shield. The emblem consists of an alligator-like dragon's head joined to a lion's body, all surrounded by a border of fleur-de-lis. Luc carries himself proudly but is not haughty and defers to superiors with unfeigned respect.</p> | <p>Str +2 Confidence 2 Age 27 Personality Traits Brave +1/Cowardly -2 Honorable +3/Dishonorable -1 Taciturn +1/Talkative -1 Important Skills Broadsword (wild swing) +3 Lance +2 Shield Parry +1 Survival +1 Ride +2 Courty Grace (requests) +3 Weapons Lance: 1st +5 Atk +4 +10 Broadsword: 1st +6 Atk +7 Dam +11 Def (Knight Shield) +5 Fat +4 Soak (Hauberk Chain) +12 Enc +6</p> |
| <p>Luc belongs to a family of landless nobles. As a cavalier, the grog captain strives to display the spirit one expects from noble blood. He is no mercenary, though, as his father pledged fealty to the magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Luc serves them as a perfect vassal, just as he would a feudal lord. The grog captain does not behave pompously, but cares deeply for his Covenant titles. Luc does not protest if others call him a "grog," or use his first name, but he always refers to himself as <i>custos</i>, and identifies himself as "de Jon" — terms of self-respect.</p> | <p>Luc de Jon as a Companion</p> |
| <p>Luc feels confident enough of his nobility not to boast about it, and nobody would describe him as haughty. But, of course, he does not accept direct insults.</p> | <p>You should decide whether you want Luc de Jon to join the characters. He makes an interesting role for a first mate (an assistant Storyguide who runs Storyguide characters for you), or for a player who has no other character. If Luc remains a Storyguide character, tensions in the group might rise if he volunteers to return to Montrouge with the characters, but promptly contracts the plague. His constitution may have resisted disease only to falter now.</p> |
| <p>Roleplaying Tips: When you speak, use a resonant voice and waste no words. Obey nobles, Churchmen and magi gladly, since respect is the highest mark of a knight. Keep your peace unless asked for advice, even if your masters appear to be wrong. Treat inferiors considerately as well.</p> | |

Luc de Jon, continued

Maybe he was plague-ridden all the time, but the contagion only manifests itself now (again, as a result of A'Fienluh's intervention). Of course, his illness puts everyone he met at risk, and introduces the potential for fear, death and tumult within the characters' Covenant. Disease in the Covenant may play a roll in some future story. See the *Appendix* for details on the plague.

If Luc does return to Montrouge, he provides a mechanism for steering the group into important encounters. Since he lived at Ad Vis

Per Veritas, he can also offer clues or suggestions if the story slows down. If you fear Luc will reveal too many mysteries about Montrouge and its surroundings, keep in mind that he spent a month traveling to the characters' Covenant. His intelligence is therefore outdated. Furthermore, being only one man, de Jon can't know everyone in Montrouge. And, Luc was little more than a grog at Ad Vis Per Veritas. He may not fully know what the magi of his Covenant were up to before their feuds and flight, so may not know where to find them now, and may not fully know their intentions. These are still things the characters must learn firsthand.

What's Known of Ad Vis Per Veritas

The magi of the group's Covenant have certainly heard of Ad Vis Per Veritas and its renewing source of *vis*. You can use Int + Hermes History rolls to determine exactly what they know. Each of the following bits of information has an Ease Factor attached to it. If the characters roll the Ease Factor or more, they know that piece of lore, along with all other tidbits that have lower Ease Factors. Give the characters bonuses to their rolls if they have texts or other documents that might refer to Ad Vis Per Veritas. A higher roll does not necessarily mean more accurate information, it just means a greater volume of knowledge. If an initial information roll is low, characters may conduct research to learn more, with a suitable expenditure of time.

- 4+ *Custos* of Ad Vis Per Veritas identify themselves with a symbol depicting two eyes and two ears.
- 6+ A Bishop recently arrived in Montrouge to conduct an Inquisition against magi.
- 8+ The House *Quaesitoris* know Ad Vis Per Veritas as a particularly tranquil Covenant. Its magi seldom disturb mundane folk, and almost never quarrel with one another. They organize themselves under a particularly benevolent leader, whom they call "Silber the Wise Hand."
- 10+ One brilliant magus of Ad Vis Per Veritas is an Uncle to Baron Franc d'Montrouge. This magus calls himself Damon Le Mont.
- 12+ An unknown being slew Silber Wise Hand one winter ago.
- 14+ In pagan times, the people of Montrouge sacrificed to a particularly vain and acquisitive spirit known as A'Fienluh.
- 16+ Despite the stability of Ad Vis Per Veritas, the House *Quaesitoris* recently dispatched a special inves-

tigator to Montrouge. This man is reputed to have arrived just before the plague began. Outside magi do not know exactly why he went, or what became of him.

- 18+ Magi of the House Flambeau, from the Stonehenge Tribunal, anticipate a Wizards' March in Montrouge, with the prospects of valuable booty.

Whatever the group rolls, you may wish to give players copies of the documents shown throughout this book (usually presented as inserts). Luc de Jon might have Silber's dying letter. Plague journals might appear in a dead magus's diary. Or, the history of Ad Vis Per Veritas might appear in some arcane library. These sources of information might also include details listed above, that you can add verbally. At the least, these sources give the characters a feel for the sort of Covenant they are about to investigate.

In relation to the inserts that can be given to players, The Vann brothers (see the boxed text of *Silber's Will*) have no direct role in this story. However, they certainly give the group something to think about. In *Black Death* the Vanns represent the realistic business of a Covenant's life. A Covenant can see old members leave and new ones arrive at a fairly frequent rate. Those people cannot be held accountable for everything that occurs at the Covenant outside their presence. In this case, the Vanns have left Ad Vis Per Veritas, but aren't responsible for its hardships. They certainly seem prime suspects, though. Thus, the Vanns are used as red herrings to lead the characters astray in their investigations. The characters may initially suspect the brothers of causing the plague, but they are completely innocent. In fact, after their break from Ad Vis Per Veritas (they hated Silber because he took the place of their last beloved leader), the brothers traveled to other regions to continue their lives. No one at or around Ad Vis Per Veritas knows where the Vanns went. Perhaps the characters can meet them in another tale and bring them back to Ad Vis Per Veritas. The brothers response is left to you. You can make their intentions as sinister, tragic, deranged or insignificant as you wish.



*Being the Last Will, Testament and
General Epistle of
Boniface Silber, Magus Proctor of
Covenant Ad Vis Per Veritas*

Our Covenant is indeed a small one and I myself am a poor man. I have little to leave my followers but the Covenant itself. However, I will say what I can, and give what I can. To my successor as Proctor, congratulations. And to my fellow magi, farewell. I know I leave Ad Vis Per Veritas in secure hands.

I wish that my successor as Covenant leader should receive my Sanctum at Orbonne Pools.

I wish that all others should have the benefit of my advice.

In a time when so many Covenants have given themselves to internal feuding, I am proud to say that Ad Vis Per Veritas has not. I have, perhaps, offended many in my tenure. Nevertheless, I think that I can honestly say that I have improved the Covenant. Several of our magi have left, but those who remain are the best, the truest, and ones who can cooperate with one another.

I am accused of driving the brothers Vann from this Covenant. Upon my death, I invite them to return. Both were competent magi and honest men. It simply happened that they considered me a rival, for reasons I do not fully comprehend. When I became leader of the Covenant, both pronounced, many times, their hatred for me. I did not feel I could lead two who despised me so thoroughly, nor did I wish to make them serve under one they loathed. Therefore, I sent them into exile.

But even as they departed, I told them that they would one day be free to return.

Folk have said that I treated the magus Damon harshly. I chastised Damon because he was, by far, the best of us. As our most skilled magus, he had the greatest responsibility to our Covenant. As the Uncle to our Baron, he must have felt the temptation to seize temporal power. You were proud, Damon, proud, angry and often rude. But you are a great magus and have trained your apprentice well. Use your power wisely.

Tierus, you have almost been a son to me. However, you are too soft-hearted. At times, a magus must hurt feelings and judge harshly. Furthermore, a magus must always place power before life. You have been too generous with your time and have given far too much of it to lonely old men like myself. From now on, horde every spare moment you gain! I have enjoyed your company, but I would rather you had devoted all your attentions to magic. If you had, you would surely be my successor.

Carolta, you wound me. Although we oft agree in council, never once have you stood by my side. Even when the Vann brothers departed, you leapt to their defense, and we have not ceased to argue. Please, upon my death, let this grudge subside.

Dedric, I know you as faithful and pure. And I believe that you would give your very life for your apprentice. My heart is with you, magus.

May your dearest ambition come true. May Luc-Paul exceed you in every way.

Silber's Will

Silber composed this letter two months before he died. He had no logical reason to expect his death at the time, nor did he seem preoccupied by the the prospect. Perhaps he felt some premonition which he did not recognize at the time.



Ad Vis Per Veritas is a small Covenant outside the village of Montrouge, within the Normandy Tribunal. We know it primarily for its ever-renewing source of vis. Though not a direct ally of House Tremere, it shares many of our interests and should be regarded as friendly, at least. This Covenant values peace, tranquility and the goodwill of its surrounding mundanes.

In the distant past, pagan wizards worshipped at the site of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Needle Stone, now the tower of the Covenant, once contained an altar to the heathen god. This deity, A'Fienluh, supposedly served as a defender of the land. Christian doctrine holds that he once belonged to the order of Angels, but lost his rank through pride. Whatever the case, his worship all but ended with the appearance of the True Faith. By the time of Hercules, only a few hedge wizards of the most wicked sort still followed A'Fienluh's call. Rumors say that the most powerful of those priests was, in fact, A'Fienluh himself, posing as a human.

Herculus drove off the last worshippers of A'Fienluh. His saga culminated in a duel of spells atop Needle Stone. From reports gathered at the time, Hercules and the last surviving priest fought a form of Certámen. The priest of A'Fienluh called up the spirits of his dead followers to fight for him. Nevertheless, the priest finally yielded.

After his surrender, the priest spoke these words: 'You have stripped me of temple, people and rank. So it must be. But know ye this, that Needle Stone is an embodiment of Montrouge, and the people therein. When that town vanishes, your vis will die with it. And then

your descendants will have to contend with me once again.'

Herculus insisted that A'Fienluh was a figure of pure myth. He claimed that no spirit by that name ever existed. Nevertheless, he also maintained that if people ever left Montrouge, the vis of Needle Stone would also vanish. Therefore, the magi of the Covenant have always taken care of their neighbors. From our point of view, this means they are mundane allies. Depending on our approach, these commonfolk may become allies of House Tremere as well.

Ad Vis Per Veritas also has a most interesting relationship with the merchants of the House Venenzo. Somewhere in the Covenant's past, it acquired a moderate quantity of gold. I suspect that some magus paid it to the Covenant in return for vis, and left thinking he had gotten quite the better of the deal. Whatever the gold's origin, the magi entrusted it to Venenzo the Venetian. He used it to purchase goods from Byzantium, which he then sold for a profit. Instead of claiming their original gold, the magi of Montrouge merely took a share of the excess. Venenzo then hired another ship and repeated the process. I, for one, suspect that this custom of brokerage and investment will become widespread.

Rest assured that Ad Vis Per Veritas has adequate defenses. They possess a charm called the Warding Lens, which, according to my sources, renders attackers effectively helpless. I, of course, have not seen this Lens in operation. Still, I feel safe in saying that it will protect the

Covenant well against unwary foes.

In short, I think Ad Vis Per Veritas has few complaints against House Tremere, so has few reasons to refuse our hand of friendship.

***Being a Short Chronicle of
Covenant Ad Vis Per Veritas***

Prepared by Leonis of House Tremere. Leonis wrote his report toward the end of House Tremere's dominance in Hermes politics. He intended it primarily as an aid for his master in choosing favorites and enemies among the Covenants. This report provides the characters with information on the history of Ad Vis Per Veritas.





Chapter One: Into the Ruins

Daybreak came in the land of the plague. After an hour's ride, the company encountered its first clearings. Sergeant Bartholomew cantered ahead to scout them, feeling energetic in the cool morning mists. Behind him, he heard the Magus Dundinel speak a warning. "If you find houses — don't look inside." But Bartholomew ignored him.

A small cottage stood at the center of a field. Bartholomew urged his horse up to the hut and examined it. He stepped from the saddle and went completely still. He could hear everything, birds, the faint breeze, and his own group hundreds of yards behind. He liked to scout. He liked to find everything which lay ahead, to see it first and if it was dangerous, to fight it. Bartholomew looked to either side. Then he casually peeked behind the sodden blanket which served the cabane for a door.

Inside, just as the Magus had warned, lay three corpses. A peasant, his wife and a youth whom Bartholomew took to be the couple's son. Bartholomew did not feel especially disturbed. He had seen war. He had seen bodies. The stench seemed worse than he remembered, but he could bear it.

Bartholomew examined the rest of the huts and returned. He reported what he had seen. When the Sergeant mentioned the contents of the hut, Dundinel coughed. "You disobeyed me." Bartholomew made several excuses, but the Magus refused to speak again.

Bartholomew led the company onward, along the wooded trail. The sun came out, and leaves glistened as if polished. The day grew hot. Bartholomew found himself riding alone, ahead of the company.

The Sergeant looked back at his grogs. He pulled slightly on his reins. They slowed their mounts as well,

staying behind him. The hireswords stayed close together, their eyes fixed on the backs of their horses' necks. Suddenly Bartholomew realized why. They feared the plague. And because he had scouted the cabane, they also feared him.

Bartholomew shrugged at the thought. The plague was over. It did not trouble him. He felt miffed at his subordinates' fear. He was perplexed, though. He remembered once seeing the largest grog draw sword and stand before a creature the magi called a drake. Even when the beast spat fire from its jaws, the warrior did not budge. Surely, any warrior brave enough to do that could endure the risk of disease.

Midday came. The company stopped by a small stream. Bartholomew tried to share the noon meal with his warriors, but when he walked into the group, all eating stopped. The tall, brave grog actually tossed his food into the water. Others looked up respectfully.

Bartholomew finally walked aside and ate his own rations under a tree. When he left, he saw one of the grogs spitting on the ground, over and over, sometimes taking a mouthful of water from his flask, and then spewing it out too. First one, then another of his companions did the same.

Bartholomew himself spat a few times. He felt a little light-headed. The Sergeant wandered toward the Magi, clearing his throat as he went. Magus Dundinel, at least, did not shrink from him. He looked at the Magus's craggy face, then at his own hide boots. Somehow, the magus did not seem to welcome any sort of greeting or preamble. Bartholomew spat again, cursed himself for it, and spoke. "Eventually we'll go into this town . . . am I right?"

The Magus drew in the dust with his staff. "In all likelihood."

"We'll have to take our chances with the plague . . .

"We'll have to take our chances with the plague . . . which is over."

"Such lives as ours are never without risk."

Bartholomew spat again. "I thought it was important to see what was in the hut. I thought someone might be alive in there. I thought they might have news. I thought . . . I thought maybe there would be an ambush, with crossbows aimed out the window to catch us as we rode by. It seemed like a good idea to see."

"Was it?"

"Well, now we know that none of those things were there. And I don't think . . . I didn't touch anything inside . . ."

"Good."

"Do you think that if I washed . . . if I burned my clothes? We're at a stream right now."

"No point in it. As you yourself said, we'll all take some risks before we leave this town." The Magus bared his teeth in a smile and nodded forgiveness. Then he turned away.

Bartholomew led the group all afternoon, still alone. At evening, he rode ahead to scout again. As he rounded a corner, his horse shied. It leaned back, threatening to rear. Bartholomew wrestled it into silence with a curse. He gazed down and saw another cluster of bodies ahead, sprawled across the road, arms and legs trailing into the bushes on either side.

Bartholomew looked at the dead peasants. Their colorful garments fell back to reveal flaccid skin. Their eyes gazed at nothing, and their eyeballs shone, as if coated with grease. One of the corpses had been a man-at-arms. To Bartholomew, looking at that body was like looking into a mirror.

The body looked exactly like him.

It had his sandy hair.

It had his green eyes.

It grinned the way he did when he was angry.

It was dead.

The magi found Bartholomew lying by his horse, his knees drawn up under his chin. If not for his shaking, they might have mistaken him for another body.

SUMMARY

When the characters reach the outskirts of Montrouge, they discover a land of the dead. Here folk prey on one another, and group members must ward off numerous dangers, all the while trying to survive lingering contagion. You should shock the characters with the sensations they experience upon entering town. First they witness the death caused by the plague as corrupted bodies lie everywhere. Next the characters witness the destruction the plague has caused indirectly, the depravity of life among the ruins. Within this ruin the group gathers important

knowledge for use in future events, detailed in later Chapters.

Chapter One of the story plays a dual purpose. It covers the group's initial impressions of Montrouge. At the same time, it provides a map key for the region, which remains useful throughout the tale. For ease of reference, this section describes all semi-permanent encounter areas, even those which do not assume their true importance until later in the story. Unless the group takes a very unusual route to Montrouge, it is unlikely to visit the Ceil Lands, or the ruined Covenant right away. However, these areas do exist from the beginning of the tale, and might play a role at any time. Later Chapters describe the events which make these areas important.

Several locales described in Chapter One are actually communities, such as the devastated village and bandit-infested woods. Their write-ups do not attempt to provide details on every individual. Instead, they provide a few sample scenes set in each locale to suggest the mood of those locales, and sometimes describe a detailed incident intended to test the group's reaction to the populous of those areas. No matter which section of the area magi visit first, they have the listed encounters. New personalities and events may spring from these regions in later Chapters.

You should also pay attention to impressions group members form of others in a locale, and should pay attention to relationships characters establish in those locales. The characters may soon find themselves outlawed in Montrouge, but still with a mission that takes them directly into town. The magi therefore need any friends they can make, and you must decide who those people are. By the same token, anyone whom the characters meet may later betray them to the Inquisition.

During Chapter One, people and encounters detailed at a spot remain there until the characters discover them. The group chooses its course to Montrouge and decides how to investigate the outskirts. What they meet depends on the path they choose. Terrorized peasants do not expect the covenfolk, nor do the peasants have any coherent plans regarding magi. As the people of Montrouge become aware of the group, and decide how to deal with the characters, you should begin introducing events from Chapter Two, at times and places where those events are appropriate. Particularly powerful people in Montrouge, like the Baron, the Bishop, Damon, and the bandit Mazain have specific and immediate reactions they take to the characters' presence.

Chapter One ends when the group takes definite action toward restoring order at Montrouge and *Ad Vis Per Veritas*; when they have finished exploring the

town's lands and are prepared to act upon their findings.

For the location of areas described below, refer to the map *Lands Around the Village of Montrouge*.

1. Cabanes of the Dead

Clusters of peasant huts, homes a few miles from the town-proper, stand in these vales. From a distance, one sees only homes and weed-filled pastures running to the forest. The characters may not even know if they are in a part of Montrouge. Once among the buildings, visitors find no people, and no immediate signs of trouble. This part of town is quiet. Quiet except for the hum of flies.

The moment one looks into the buildings, the fate of the peasants becomes clear. When characters enter the different huts, they discover the following things:

- A cloaked figure sits with his back to the door, apparently consulting a roll of parchment. His paper rustles occasionally, but he does not respond to visitors. The moment anyone touches the man, his head falls back and he stares with the jellied eyes of the dead. The plague killed him where he sat. It was a cold draft from the chimney that caused his paper to move.

The parchment is written in Latin. One must pass a Latin roll with an Ease Factor of 6 to decipher it. The document reads, *"In the name of Mary and the Saints, I hereby confer my blessing against disease and against the foul conjurations of the convict Damon Le Mont, who shall die in his crime.*

Ceravantes, Bishop of Montrouge."

This was a letter written by Ceravantes shortly after he arrived at Montrouge. A peasant asked the Bishop for blessing against the plague, and the Bishop gave him a written ward. Of course, the peasant couldn't read, but that didn't matter for the letter failed to save him. When the letter was written Damon Le Mont had already threatened Ceravantes with blackmail, but the Bishop failed to believe the magus would go through with his threats. Ceravantes soon learned otherwise.

Anyone who touches the corpse or parchment must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 12 or contract the plague.

- This house has a dirt floor and thatched roof. It has no internal architecture except a ragged curtain which divides the building into two halves. A roughly built coffin stands at the center of the building, with black wax tapers at either end. The coffin is sized for a child. A brass plaque on it reads, in vulgar, *"Jean, my only son."* Despite the coffin's somewhat crude construction, its making clearly cost more than any peasant family could afford.

Anyone who looks behind the curtain finds the dead child's mourners. They crouch in various postures of death, around a rotting funeral meal.

Those who even open the door of the building must pass Stm rolls with Ease Factors of 12 or contract the plague.

- Characters find this scene when they open a barn. The timber door creaks aside to reveal utter chaos, with straw scattered everywhere and bits of dung hurled against the walls. Cattle sag from their stanchions, where they died of neglect. However, three emaciated plough-horses have broken their tethers and have survived on hay. They charge anyone who opens the door, trying to fight their way outside.

One can catch a horse's rope and calm the animal by passing a Dex + Animal Handling roll with an Ease Factor of 12. If the group lets the horses escape, they run away and eventually break legs or founder.

- The hut contains only the sweet smell of bloated corpses. Strangely, the hut is vacant of corpses (Aramin's beggars stole them for concocting poisons). See area 3 for more details on the beggars.

- Bodies lie frozen in contorted positions here, where they vomited themselves to death on spoiled food.

2. Commons

As travelers approach this field, they hear a low, bestial bellow. Fifteen cattle still graze here, although they have trampled and chewed the grass into a ragged morass. A ferocious bull leads the herd. He attacks anyone who walks into the open.

The owners of these cattle either died or fled, but robbers (see area 4) occasionally snatch a cow for their feasts. Characters may find signs of their thefts. Fresh footprints lead around the edges of the field, and anyone who searches the grass may find a dagger, where someone dropped it after a drunken attempt to fight the bull (Per + Track or Scan roll of 8+ to notice any of these things). Anyone who stays here after dark may meet bandits, who return for more meat.

If you feel the story would be advanced when the characters arrive here (i.e. the characters aren't making any headway), you may have the bandits appear automatically. Otherwise, there is a 30% (three in ten) chance per night that they arrive. Normally, a gang of five bandits appear, not expecting trouble. If the group has fought Mazain's men before, a lone bandit scouts the field from behind the tree line. The bandits do not want to fight here, there's too much open space. Rather, they try to sneak away from any signs of life. If the field looks empty to the scout, he goes into the woods and

finds his four companions, who wait a short distance away from the field. They then quickly kill a cow and leave with it.

See Chapter One, area 4, and Chapter Two for more on Mazain's men and the ways they might deal with meddlesome intruders.

3. The Fens

Trees here rot where they stand, growing out of a watery morass. Pine needles float in pools, and nauseous odors rise from the mud each time one puts his foot down. If the characters can endure the vileness of the swamp, they may discover many things. The fens contain footprints. One also finds discarded rags, soaked in swampwater and the coughings of plague victims. These remains of passage are found on a Per + Track or Scan roll of 6+. Several families of Montrouge abandoned their plague-stricken relatives here, as a form of quarantine.

Anyone who walks down a path into the fens (there are some hunting paths that lead from the main road, shown on the *Lands Around the Village of Montrouge* map, but they are too small to be shown on the map — just improvise their location and record those locations for future reference), encounters a wretched group of plague victims, begging for charity. The certainty of death has driven these beggars to join a mystic brotherhood following Aramin, a magus from the old Covenant. He presents himself as a sort of holy man, and dispenses preparations which slow the plague. Through a combination of fervor, bitterness and desperation to acquire herbs, these beggars commit atrocities at Aramin's command. He uses them to spread the plague.

In later Chapters, the group may wish to meet Aramin. He knows more than any living magus about the Demon in Montrouge. Furthermore, his cult is at war with civilization in general and with other survivors of the Covenant in particular. However, on first encounter, magi may not realize the full significance of the beggars by the road.

Characters' dealings with the beggars are divided into two sections, one covering the beggars, the other dealing with Aramin and his designs.

Beggars on the Road

The group has this encounter simply by walking down a swamp road.

Eyes occasionally appear in the mists. Once the magi penetrate deep into the swamp, a pockmarked man stumbles toward them, wheezing as he comes. More lurch forward from every side until a total of

eight surround the group. These men clearly have the plague. They stretch out their hands for gifts of food.

A lead beggar speaks. *"The Final Day draws near for us both, my brothers. Would you begrudge us alms? For you must give up what you have when you die, willing or no."* He has no tone of desperation in his voice. Those who examine the beggars (Int + Scan roll of 6+) notice that they are not mere derelicts. These men wear clean clothing (by medieval standards) and bear themselves with a certain dignity. They belong to the cult led by Aramin.

Aramin's herbs prolong the lives of these unfortunates. His role as their leader gives them status and a sense of pride, even as they face certain death. Aramin presents himself as a pseudo-prophet and calls himself, the *"Plague's Anointed."* The magus terrifies his followers, and some even suspect him of Demonic practices, but the beggars follow him out of awe, and fear — to leave him is to die.

The beggars make no secret of their leader. If passersby ask questions or show signs of having the plague themselves, the cultists tersely state the facts. *"We follow the one who adds time to our existence. Within the swamp is one who teaches us well."* However, they do not lead anybody to Aramin unless that person shows real interest in joining the cult. If questioned about the nature of their cult, though the plague victims don't directly call it such, the people talk of Faullu (see below).

If attacked or threatened, the beggars look their enemies directly in the eye. They then cough upon their foes. Any victim of this attack must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 12 or contract the plague. Those characters who have already demonstrated a fear of the plague in your game must also make a

| Horses |
|-------------------------------|
| Size +2 |
| Cun -5 Per 0 Stm +3 |
| Cowardly +3 |
| Hooves: 1st +7 Atk +4 Dam +8 |
| Fat 0 Def 0 Soak +7 |
| Body Levels: -1, -3, -5, Dead |

| Bull |
|---|
| Size +2 |
| Cun -3 Per 0 Stm +5 |
| Vicious +5 |
| Gore: 1st +6 Atk +6 Dam +25 |
| Fat +10 Def 0 Soak +13 |
| Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1, -2, -4, Incapacitated |

Bravery roll of 12+. If this roll fails, those characters back away from the spitting plague victims. They cannot approach again for fear of contagion, unless another Bravery roll is successful. There are a total of 15 beggars in the swamp.

The doctrine Aramin teaches his followers causes even magi to shudder. Aramin rejects Christianity and classical paganism alike in favor of Faullu, the God with Iron Hands. (The word Faullu is a perversion of the name A'Fienluh.) Faullu is said to guide people through the Gates of Death, and can hear the whispers of those he pushes forward. At his followers' behest, he, it is said, may drag others through the gate as well. The God also gives the possessions of His victims to His faithful, along with the remaining years of those victims' lives. According to this doctrine, Faullu's followers loot the dead. They also consider themselves entitled to kill. Most of the time, though, they remain meek. They have no special desire to spread their cult, although they do not deny its tenets.

Since everyone stands somewhere along the road to death, Faullu, in theory, is supposed to accept the sacrifices of everyone. However, only those who face imminent demise are likely to follow this morbid spirit. Aramin derived many of his ideas for Faullu from texts on Demonology, but in truth, the "religion" stems mostly from his imagination. He designed it in order to ingratiate himself with the Demon of Montrouge, and thereby regain his friendship with Damon Le Mont. Aramin freely invents new details whenever he desires.

An imaginative group may find a use for these swamp people, if it can cure their plague. (Such salvation may be possible at the end of the story.) Since the plague-cultists have lost their homes and ties to the outside world, they make excellent retainers for a Covenant. Once these wretches are free of the plague, Aramin, and

the fens, characters may recruit them by passing Social Skills rolls with an Ease Factor of 7.

Aramin's Hut

Aramin lives in a stone hut several miles into the fens. From a distance black brush conceals the house itself (Per + Scan roll of 8+ to spot it), and an area of open marsh surrounds Aramin's hut in a two hundred yard radius. During the early stages of the story, Aramin invites visitors into his hut. He has a use for them.

If the group should try to attack Aramin's hut, he meets them with force. If he expects a battle, he can



bombard the characters with *Pilums of Fire* as they cross the fens to his house. This terrain slows advancing attackers to one quarter their normal speed and causes a -2 on Fatigue rolls. In close combat, Aramin knows a number of pernicious curses. His spell *Image From the Wizard Torn* also provides him a measure of protection.

Aramin once enjoyed the position of understudy and chief confidant to Damon le Mont. When Damon fell into A'Fienluh's shadow, the senior magus cast off his underling, to better serve his Demon. Shortly thereafter, Aramin contracted the plague. Currently, Aramin prolongs his life by chewing Bitter Cane, a woody plant imported from the south. That treatment cannot sustain him forever, though. To live, he needs either a more potent herb or some charm valuable enough to buy Damon's friendship again.

Aramin cannot believe that Damon has abandoned him. He still hopes to regain his old master's favor. Therefore, if he thinks he can get the group to help him, he asks the magi to carry Damon a letter. He wants someone to go to the Baron's castle in Montrouge and give a sealed letter to Damon Le Mont, along with a locked coffer. Aramin warns that people at the castle



Imp

Infernal Might 17

Size -1

Int -2

Body Levels: OK, 0, Banished

Fat n/a Def +18 Soak +5

may claim not to know Damon, "but persevere, for in truth they do."

If a group member maintains that he needs more information in order to carry out the errand, Aramin may answer questions about himself or Damon. He knows all the details of Damon's last days in the Covenant, but avoids mentioning anything incriminating. Consequently, he explains that his master was refused leadership of the Covenant, even after "talking" the Bishop out of conducting a full Inquisition, and explain that Damon left the fortress to reside with his nephew. Aramin claims not to know what Damon said to the Bishop, and in truth does not know, but suspects that the Demon had some involvement.

Thus, Aramin presents himself as a young, mistreated magus who wants only to be reunited with his master. In the interim, he is forced to seek shelter in the fens, tricking peasants into following him to avoid persecution by local authorities. Magi may accuse him of breaking Hermetic Code with his activities. Aramin claims to respect the Codes, but also explains that he needs to survive. Aramin's apparent decision therefore reminds the characters of this tale's theme: the conflict between morality and necessity.

After hearing Aramin's story, characters hopefully feel sympathetic toward him. If they offer to carry his message he acts indebted, which he honestly is. He claims that he cannot leave the swamp at present, though, for he must continue to treat his followers to keep them alive. All in all, Aramin may be considered dangerous at first meeting, but may quickly soften the characters' hearts, just as he wants to do.

Should anyone ask about the content of Aramin's letter and coffer, he smiles and says, "that I cannot explain, for it is a private matter between my master and myself. I ask that you not open either out of respect for a fellow magus." Threats do not convince him to reveal more.

The seal of Aramin's letter bears an arcane rune, with a coiling serpent woven among its branches. It is cast of a dark wax, tinted sickly green. If anyone breaks the seal without speaking the password, the scroll bursts into flames and a *Creeping Chasm* opens beneath the reader's feet, as per the *Rego Terram* spell. The password is anything to the effect of "thank you for delivering this letter."

Aramin's letter reads:

Damon Le Mont, Most Potent Magus:

No doubt you need no praise for your spectacular revenge. Yet as a magus, I admire it. As your colleague whom fate tore away, I rejoice in it. As the latest victim of our Covenant's injustices, I celebrate its triumph.

Unfortunately, I also have been stricken with your scourge.

Plague Survivors (15)

These peasants follow Aramin's religion in order to survive. The sincerity of their faith varies, but the more they believe, the more real Aramin's fabrications seem to them. If the group tries to discredit Aramin, these cultists demand to know what better religion the characters can offer. Faullu, at least, keeps them alive. Until the group can unmask the Demon and obtain spells to counter Damon's plague, characters have very little to offer these wretches.

Stm +2

Important Skills

Survival +2

Weapons

Unarmed (but defend selves):

1st 0 Atk 0 Dam 0

Fat +2 Def 0 Soak +2 Enc 0

Do not expect me to plead! Rather, I request that our old alliance be renewed, and entreat you as a brother to lift your curse from me. In token of my sincerity, I offer you this gift: the Token Of The Star. Pray use it well. I have acquired the better part of the assets from our erstwhile Covenant and am eager to share them with my former comrade.

When may our next sorcerous venture begin?

Aramin

The coffer is solid iron, has internal hinges and shuts with a tiny lock. One can pick it by passing a Dex + Pick Locks roll of 15+. If anyone wrests the box open without springing the lock, a puff of foul smoke blasts out. Whoever opens the box must pass a stress roll with a target number of 13, modified by Alertness + Dexterity. If this roll fails, the smoke blinds the opener. Only a spell such as *Free The Accursed Body* can restore the victim's sight (treat as a -5 Flaw). Meanwhile, a five-foot high, electric-blue imp appears at the center of the cloud, snatches the box, its contents and any other loose objects (chosen by you), then flies away on bat wings. The imp flies at 70 paces per Round and vanishes to the nether realms once out of sight. The imp does not stop to fight, but may be the subject of spells and attacks from astonished characters. If the imp is ever destroyed, it is banished to Hell, but takes some of its possessions with it. It does drop the Iron Box as the cargo is too heavy, but can deny the characters anything else that was taken. This theft offers you an ideal opportunity to rob the characters of any possession which is too powerful, or repeatedly causes trouble in your Saga.

Aramin's coffer holds the Token Of The Star, a rosette of beaten silver. It lets a magus exploit the cycle of the sky as a catalyst for magical castings. First, the

magus must study Astrology as an Arcane Knowledge. To use the item, the magus must specify the spell to be used, and must indicate who or what the spell is to be cast on. Then, by gazing into the tarnished folds of the rosette, and by passing an Int + Astrology roll of 10+, the magus may forecast the ideal time for casting the spell. You are advised to choose this time for dramatic purposes, based on your knowledge of events yet to come in the story. Alternatively, though with less dramatic flair, you can roll a ten-sided die to determine how many weeks in the future the casting occurs. A roll of zero indicates that the spell should be cast soon. When one casts a spell at the appropriate time, it has the effect of being cast somewhere with a Magic Aura of +6 (see *Ars Magica*, p.71, for details). The casting character may know the time is right when events occur which you previously indicated as ideal (events seen in an image in the rosette). Or, the character could know the casting time arrives when you tell the player in question that a sensation comes over the character. The Token Of The Star is a 50th Level magic item.

If, on first meeting, the group seems useless to Aramin, he casts subtle curses on them. The magus feels the bitterness of despair, and intends to harm people out of spite. His favored blights include *Perdo Córporum* spells and *Disenchant*. Aramin casts these as victims leave him, or when they are unaware, using soft words and hidden movements when necessary to conceal the magic's origin (see *Ars Magica*, p. 68). Of course, Aramin has the intelligence not to attempt these curses in the presence of other magi. If the characters ever suspect that magic is being used against them, and make accusations against Aramin, he defends himself, referring to a curse in the swamp. He claims that the fens have an inherent magical nature that afflicts its inhabitants with curses, and that the swamp is responsible for the attacks against the characters, not he. Being plagued already, he claims not to care about the swamp's effects on him.

Aramin has assorted booty in his hut, taken from *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. The booty is covered by a magical drape, ten feet by ten feet in size. The drape is invisible and renders all inanimate objects beneath it invisible as well. To find this stack, one must spend five minutes feeling one's way around the room, and must make a Per + Search roll of 6+. Among the items under the drape are magical tomes with scores of five in Arcane Lore, Hermes History and Astrology. Aramin also owns enough of the magical green sealing wax to close and trap two more letters. Some laboratory glassware lies about his hut. Finally, Aramin has one hundred doses of Bitter Cane, each of which can keep a plague victim alive for one month.

4. Marauder Territory

Human vermin follow in the wake of any disaster. As the plague in Montrouge recedes, robbers appear along the town's wooded roads, terrorizing survivors and helping themselves to the possessions of the dead. The forest region of Montrouge contains winding forest paths, beset with ravines and sudden turns — perfect bandit country. With the main road also so close to the forest, bandits cannot resist but strike and recede back into their wooded retreats. The group cannot travel the main road, nor any forest roads, for long without meeting one or more brigands.

Montrouge's robbers have never met a foe who has dared resist them. Much of the time, they prey on corpses. Against the living, they have learned to maim a few and thereby terrorize the rest. These tactics work on peasants. When confronted with brave grogs and deadly sorcery, the typical bandit runs away as soon as his comrades begin to fall. These bandits retreat for no better reason than cowardice but, nevertheless, flight is an effective strategy for keeping the most dangerous fighters alive. Among these brutes, the strong and unscathed manage to get away. The unfit fall behind, where their dying struggles delay any pursuit, saving the others. Unfortunately, brigands who run away return to rob again.

If the group becomes a threat to the bandits, they organize. A leader appears among the robbers, and welds them into a formidable force. Details of this organization appear under *The Rise of Mazain*, in Chapter Two. The bandits choose a leader after the characters defeat them a couple times.

If the characters ever manage to talk to any bandits, they hear assorted tales of desperation. Under interrogation, every robber claims to be the last survivor of a plague family, driven to theft by starvation. These robbers' plight is another reminder of what decisions the characters themselves must eventually make, moralistic or necessary. In many cases, the robbers' tales are true, although others simply discovered the ease of robbing corpses and extended that practice to include live peasants. A few of the best bandits are professionals, having robbed travelers for many years, now advising their new followers.

When the group arrives in Montrouge, forty bandits stalk the region. Of those, fifteen have genuine combat skill. Keep track of the number that the group kills. Once Mazain appears, he makes use of every survivor, plus others that he recruits.

The first few times characters enter bandit territory, the group should experience scenes from the following list. You need not play all these scenes, only the ones that fit a given situation, or suit your tastes.

- A lone robber camouflages himself in a hollow tree near a road. He waits until a group of travelers goes by. As they pass him, he shoots the rearmost from behind with a self bow. Treat this as a Simple Shot (Ease Factor 6) because he has the advantage of surprise and fires at close range from behind. For the same reason, the victim receives no Defense roll. The robber hopes to kill his target and panic the rest of the group. He assumes the others will abandon their companion, allowing him to loot the body.

You may make secret Per + Alertness rolls for the group members, to see if anyone notices the figure crouched within the broken trunk, before he shoots. These checks have an Ease Factor of 10 for a quiet, observant group and 14 for an incautious one. If the rolls fail, the group only recognizes the ambush after it's been staged, whether the archer hits or misses his target. Even after the archer has fired, the characters have to spot him. A Per + Scan roll of 8+ is needed to do so.

Any confusion or failed attempt to find the archer may give him time for extra shots. However, the moment anyone advances on the bandit, he smashes through the rotting tree and runs. When cornered, he fights with an axe.

If the characters confront the bandit before he springs his trap, he answers their questions in a surly voice. The robber calls himself Gast and claims to be stalking a dangerous wolf.

- The trail crosses a marsh of muddy rivulets. Several well-worn logs stretch over the morass, forming makeshift bridges. As the group teeters along these bridges, five men emerge from the woods. All leer with the eyes of drunken men. They carry improvised glaives. As a meeting becomes inevitable, the robbers produce trophies, including human noses and a broach bearing the Eyes and Ears of Covenant Ad Vis Per Veritas. Then one robber wheezes, "*We've waited fer ye, mon cher. Make it worth our while!*"

After the bandits discover how powerful their opponents are, they might like to run away, but the surrounding mud makes that impossible. Furthermore, they have drunk enough homemade liquor to face anybody. If the group refuses to pay the bandits' toll, the men lurch forward, howling, forming a semi-circle around the log path with their halberds. Combatants, including the bandits, who stand in the mud must make a Dex stress roll for every Round of combat. If a roll is less than 6, the combatant falls down and has Def rolls modified by -3 until upright again. Combatants standing on logs must make a similar Dex roll to remain on a log. If a roll fails, that person falls in the mud. Fallen combatants must spend a whole Round getting up again.

Aramin

Description: lank dark hair hangs about Aramin's ears, occasionally falling over his face. Were it not for his glittering black eyes, he would resemble a child more than a magus. His limbs and face appear twisted by the huge buboes which protrude from them. However, the disease shows no signs of reducing his vigor.

Aramin enjoys a true aptitude for magic and has single-mindedly pursued sorcerous power all his life, never developing any sense of honor or compassion. He is not truly wicked or amoral — ideas of morality simply do not occur to him. Accordingly, the magus can make sincere promises and then break them without a second thought. Aramin also feels intensely egocentric and cannot tolerate anyone who seems to out-shine him in any field.

Aramin has no interest in cooperating with the group, except to achieve his own ends. If the characters can cure his plague or help him renew his ties with Damon, he might offer them something in return. However, he shows the group no loyalty thereafter.

Roleplaying Tips: Phrase all your sentences around what you want or what you know. Never let anyone else talk too much about a subject without interjecting your own opinion. Aramin may make up "knowledge" to seem like an expert, and this may cause the characters considerable confusion if they use him as a source of information. However, the magus knows the difference between truth and fiction. He does not mislead characters in such a way as to upset his own plans. He also does not give unnecessary information, true or false, about the plague and his schemes involving Damon Le Mont.

Int +4 Per 0 Str 0 Stm +2 Prs -1

Com -1 Dex +2 Qik +1

Confidence 6

Age 35

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Self-Centered +2/Sympathetic -2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +4

Scribe Latin +4

Magic Theory (potions) +8

Hermes Lore +2

Hermes History +2

Parma Magica (Perdo) +4

Certámen +1

Finesse (Córpozem) +3

Concentration (in pain) +4

Dagger (backstabs) +3

Magical Techniques

Creo 8

Intéllego 5

Muto 8

Perdo 15

Rego 8

Magical Forms

Auram 6

Córpozem 10

Imágonem 8

Vim 15

Spells

Evil Eye

Eyes Of The Cat

Arm Of The Infant

Mists Of Change

Touch Of The Goose Feather

Invocation Of Weariness

Grip Of The Choking Hand

The Wound That Weeps (Mastered)

Pilum of Fire

Incantation Of The Milky Eyes

Twist Of The Tongue (Mastered)

Bane Of The Decrepit Body

Curse Of The Leprous Flesh

Spasms Of The Uncontrolled Hands

Image Of The Inanimate Thing

Discern Own Illusions (Mastered)

Image Of The Past State

Image Phantom

Image From The Wizard Torn

Aura Of Rightful Authority

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +5 Atk +9 Dam +5

Def +1 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0

In their alcoholic stupor, the bandits fight to the death. They feel no pain, and gain a +5 bonus to all Soak rolls. The group may have to hack them apart limb by limb. However, if captured and allowed to become sober, the bandits prove among the most timid of their kind. They agree to anything the characters demand to avoid punishment.

These bandits can lead the characters to a camp of ten others bandits, which lies two miles back in the forest. Until Mazain arrives, the group of bandits has few defenses, particularly because no one has tried to track them down before. If attacked in force, the bandit group probably flees. By searching the camp, the characters find several dressed deer and a collection of loot taken from the dead. The bandits own three

crucifixes of wrought silver, strung on chains of gold. These are heirlooms of the Leufort family. They sell for 50 gold bezants each, but if the group returns the heirlooms to their owners, they make allies of the Leuforts.

• Ten Ordinary Bandits and two Experienced ones attack the characters' camp. Eight of them gather on one side of the encampment. Four others go around the campsite. Per + Alertness rolls of 8+ are needed to recognize the attackers' approach. Two of the four bandits snap twigs and rustle branches, attempting to lure away the night watch. The other two hide, ready to leap from behind at anyone who comes to investigate. If the four noisemakers succeed in drawing off

That Hermes Establish No Religion In Its Name: An Injunction

This passage appeared in *The Spirit of the Code*, written by Carl Jen, a magus of House Tremere. He wrote the book at the end of the Eighth Century, largely as a counterpoint against those magi who wanted the Order of Hermes to seek direct influence in the mundane realm of faith. Many magi credit *The Spirit of the Code* with preventing open war between magi and the Dominion. Others accuse that its "sensible strategies" blunted the ambitions of every House but Tremere. This passage may be used by characters as evidence to accuse Aramin of breaking Hermetic Codes. His response to such accusations is outlined in the main text.

We have heard it alleged that our Order has the potential to become a religion in its own right. In these times, as the Dominion spreads, and the Church oppresses our Order, such words sound more tempting than ever before. Nevertheless, we assert that it is not the business of the Order to establish any sort of religion, nor to confuse our art, Magic, with the Miracles which germinate only from those things termed Divine. Hermes has no business supplanting the true Church. Nor does any magus have the right to call himself a prophet.

We argue this point from a purely pragmatic position. We, the author, are admittedly a believer, but this is not the basis for our argument. The disciples of a Church expect things which Hermes is not able to provide. If we promise such things, our words will turn hollow, and our schemes shall rebound to our woe.

First, we will demonstrate that the Order of Hermes is not a religion of any sort and that therefore, any attempt to portray it as one is the sheerest fraud.

Consider the fundamental concern of religion — the nature of God. The most learned magus may know something of our Lord's methodology but about the Creator Himself, he knows less than the humblest peasant-girl. When we address such matters, we inevitably fall back on tautologies, solophisms and inexplicable prophecies, all of which are anathema to scientific magic. Let us hear one magus with a Hermetic explanation of the Creation!

You have such a theory? Well and good, let us put it to the test. To be accepted as valid, a principle of magic must work under conditions of rigorous experiment. Perform your own Creation! Then, perhaps, we will recognize your special insight into the Holy Mysteries.

Let us now consider the interests of the Order of Hermes. We wish to avoid persecution. We wish to encourage learning and knowledge of the Forms. We wish to preserve the sources of vis. We wish to maintain our privacy and isolation.

In all those fields, the Christian Church is, or should be, our natural ally. At present, the monasteries are the only centers of learning in all of Europe, save, of course, for our Covenants. It is also in the interests of the Church to keep common folk within the Dominion and away from those sources of Faerie and Hermetic power which we cherish. It would be most emphatically ruinous to our privacy for us to declare ourselves priests and accept all humanity as worshippers of some Hermetic false deity.

And as for our first concern, yes, the Church has persecuted us. But, if we declare ourselves a rival to it, think how the clergy will be driven to hate us!

And thus we conclude: Hermes should establish no religion in its name. And if any magi should try, we will interpret it as the gravest blunder, inspired, perhaps, by malicious Demons.

the guards, the other eight try to butcher sleeping characters. If the camp sounds a general alert, all the bandits try to fade away.

- Twelve bandits with self bows surround the characters' camp as stealthily as possible. Five of them are Experienced bandits. Per + Alertness rolls of 8+ are needed for guards to notice the attackers' approach. Sleeping victims need a 12 or better in the roll to wake up before the attack. The attackers try to catch the characters in a crossfire, attempting to inflict as much damage as they can with arrows. If the characters endure the missile attacks, but seem injured and weakened, the less experienced bandits close to fight hand-to-hand. As always, in cases of real trouble, stronger bandits run away.

- Traveling through the forest, the characters' trail passes between two steep banks. Tendrils of mist drift between the trees, over the edges of the banks, hampering characters' vision. If the group passes through the ravine at dusk, a gang bursts out of the foliage ahead of them. Eight men approach, laughing derisively and brandishing swords. All wear hauberks of leather, with metal scales sewn randomly upon the surface (resulting in a Soak of 7, total). With burly arms and laconic expressions, they do indeed look dangerous. These bandits deride potential victims as "striplings" and "puppy-milk." The bandits demand everything the group has. They feel utterly convinced of their ability to win a fight.

Four of them are indeed excellent warriors. As mentioned above, they are the ones most likely to escape battle alive. The others may be less fortunate, since the group does not expect resistance. However, any fugitive who manages to get twenty feet away from his pursuers can vanish into the evening mist.

Depending on how nasty you intend to be, bandits can impose different fates upon defeated characters. Characters who are knocked unconscious or otherwise subdued can be killed by

bandits, or the bandits can leave them alive and take what they want of the characters' possessions. The decision is yours. For the purposes of this story's completion it's advised that defeated characters be left alive, maybe to hunt down their attackers.

Recruiting Bandits

The bandits offer characters few signs of friendship. However, that doesn't mean the characters must exterminate bandits. Rather, the characters might win the bandits fellowship; the warriors make excellent grogs. And, since they're already outlaws from society, bandits remain in the Covenant's service for all their lives. If



the characters try to befriend the bandits, they face three challenges. First, the characters must find a way to befriend people who would normally rob and kill them. Second, the magi must contend with other aspiring leaders, such as Mazain. Finally, the bandits are criminals, with little discipline, no moral, and a grudge against the world. If characters want to organize the bandits, they must inspire the men to fellowship.

It takes a Social Skills roll with an Ease Factor of 10 to command the bandits' attention. The exact skill used in these rolls depends on the approach characters use. Once the brigands are willing to listen, the characters must buy their services with something they want, but cannot simply take. Food, gold, livestock and weapons all make suitable bribes. The simple promise of alliance with powerful magi may be inducement enough if the characters can demonstrate that Hermes has something to offer the bandits. The characters may need to fight the bandits or join them on a raid to prove their prowess. In the latter case, let the characters meet a Provost gang, as described in Chapter Two.

Once characters develop an alliance with the bandits, keep track of what the characters do. Each time they make themselves popular, with a successful raid or disbursement of treasure, the characters gain a point of Bandit Popularity. Bandit Popularity is a score that represents how willing the bandits are to follow the characters, and it keeps tabs on how much support the bandits give the characters. The score also applies as a modifier to all attempts the characters make to lead the bandits. Whenever a raid goes wrong, or the characters demand something unpopular from the bandits, for example, assess the characters a -1 Popularity modifier. Each time the characters try to make the bandits do something, apply the characters' Bandit Popularity score, with the -1 penalty applied to that score, as a modifier to the characters' relevant Social Skills roll.

When Mazain makes his play for power (see Chapter Two), he tries to destroy any rivals to that power. Five Experienced bandits and ten average warriors support him at first. These followers number among the forty bandits that reside in the forest. At first Mazain and his men bide their time, playing on the flaws in the characters' plans, all the while concealing their ambitions, even appearing to support the characters. Thus, if the characters organize the forest's bandits, let the characters think they have all the bandits under their control. Once events turn against the characters, making them unpopular with the bandits, or the characters become weak, Mazain and his followers seize power.

If Mazain gets an opportunity, he may even set the characters up to take a fall. He may lead them into an ambush with the Baron's men, or may take them to a

spot still teeming with the plague. Keep in mind, though, that Mazain is intelligent enough not to betray the characters by half-measures. He does not commit open treason until he's sure the act will destroy his enemies.

Give Mazain bandit Popularity points too, just like the characters'. He begins with an automatic +4 on bandit Social rolls. When he deems the time right, he calls on the bandits to abandon the magi and follow him. At that time Mazain's accumulated Popularity points work in his favor. If a contest ever arises for leadership of the bandits, the characters and Mazain make rolls to determine who's in control once and for all. The roll is based on Intrigue, Leadership or Intimidation, which ever is most applicable to the situation. Mazain always uses his Leadership score for control rolls. Control rolls are also modified by the competing candidates' Popularity scores. Whichever side scores highest sways the bandit gang.

In the event that Mazain wins the bandit gang, he immediately attempts a Leadership roll with an Ease Factor of 9. If he succeeds, he convinces the bandits to attack the characters. Characters can attempt the same roll, ordering the bandits to attack Mazain, if they win the contest for influence. Assuming Mazain fails to destroy the group, but survives, he makes further assassination attempts on later occasions. It's also assumed that any of his original bandit followers leave with him if he's driven off by the characters. These bandits aid Mazain's further attempts to kill the characters. Mazain's assassination attempts are staged when the characters are unpopular with the remaining bandits, or when the characters appear weak. If he can kill or drive off most of the characters, Mazain takes command of the bandit gang.

Finally, you should always remember the brigands' outlaw nature. Whenever anyone recognizes bandits in town, the authorities immediately attempt to arrest the criminals. If characters associate with bandits, townsfolk assume they're in league with the brigands and seek to arrest the characters as well. Furthermore, far from trying to shed their criminal status, bandits in town vent the anger of their recent hardships on Montrouge. They brutalize peasants, burn homes and rob for sheer pleasure. To stop any act of savagery, characters must pass a Com + Leadership roll with an Ease Factor of 9. If the characters seem like "spoilsports" to the bandits, be sure to penalize the group one or more points of Bandit Popularity. Known for associating with bandits, whether they stop bandits from attacking townsfolk or not, the characters find they are poorly received by the people of Montrouge. All Social Skills rolls made with those people therefore suffer a -2 penalty.

Though recruiting and controlling bandits may be difficult, the effort certainly has its rewards. A few, like employment as grogs, are detailed above, but bandits can also be mobilized into an effective fighting force, used to aid an effort to destroy the Demon in Montrouge. The bandits might also be recruited to help the characters scout the lands around Montrouge. Or, the bandits could be hired to help clean up the decaying town. And yes, if they otherwise fail to gain an audience with the Baron and Le Mont, the characters can use the bandits to stage an assault on the Baron's castle, and seek out the Demon.

| Bandits (25) |
|---|
| <p>Str +2</p> <p>Important Skills</p> <p>Primary Weapon (usually axe): +4</p> <p>Secondary Weapon (usually short bow) +2</p> <p>Dodge +2</p> <p>Weapons</p> <p>Axe: 1st +6 Atk +6 Dam +18</p> <p>Glaive (Halberd): 1st +9 Atk +3 Dam +21</p> <p>Self bow: Rate +1 Atk +2 Dam +8</p> <p>Def +4 Fat -2 Soak 5 Enc 2</p> |
| Experienced Bandits (15) |
| <p>Str +2 Stm +1 Qik +1</p> <p>Important Skills</p> <p>Primary Weapon (usually axe): +7</p> <p>Secondary Weapon (usually short bow) +4</p> <p>Dodge (forests) +3</p> <p>Weapons</p> <p>Axe: 1st +8 Atk +7 Dam +19</p> <p>Self bow: Rate +2 Atk +6 Dam +8</p> <p>Def +6 Fat -2 Soak 6 Enc 2</p> |

5. *Ad Vis Per Veritas*

To re-establish *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, magi must reclaim the Covenant and the tower that is *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, Needle Stone. When the group approaches the Covenant, it immediately encounters the old curses intended to keep intruders away from *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. After passing those hazards, investigators uncover information on the Covenant's downfall, but

find most rooms stripped and deserted. Those who explore further, into the Covenant's dungeons, walk into a trap.

The lethal threat posed by *Ad Vis Per Veritas* is embodied by the magus Carolta. She is the magus whom Aramin bested, when he searched the Covenant for booty with which to bribe Damon. After her defeat Carolta took shelter in the Covenant's dungeons with a number of grogs. She now resides in those dungeons, and rightly considers the Covenant besieged with foes, ranging from traitorous magi to frenzied peasants to the Baron's soldiery. Thus, Carolta has prepared a final defense beneath the tower, where she and the surviving grogs intend to ambush and kill any invader.

In order to survive Carolta and her grogs rob neighboring peasant farms. Thus, the characters may approach the Covenant with the expectation of encountering thieves there, having heard rumors of various robberies. If the characters learn why Carolta and her followers thieve — to survive — they might spare them. The characters must realize that they might do the same in Carolta's position. Thus, Carolta's activities reflect on this story's theme.

If the group can somehow divine Carolta's nature and make peace with her, they make an ally of an accomplished magus, and may base the restoration of *Ad Vis Per Veritas* on her. If the characters cannot come to terms with or understand Carolta, they may



find themselves locked in deadly battle with those who should have been friends. The Demon of Catastrophes takes an artist's pride in seeding such misfortune.

Outside Ad Vis Per Veritas

Fragments of glass, wood, shredded manuscripts and smashed boxes litter the hill of Ad Vis Per Veritas. The Covenant's main building, the Needle Stone, remains intact, though. Needle Stone is a natural rock tower that appears to be cast from a single piece of ochre-tinged limestone. Wrinkles crisscross its surface like fingerprints. The magi who established Ad Vis Per Veritas carved out their Covenant from the tower's stone. There is no door to the tower itself, and its only windows are tiny portals on the highest story, fifty feet above ground. The ground floor of the Covenant was carved from the widening stone that once formed the base of Needle Stone (see the *Needle Stone* map). Today, the tower seems to stand atop the Covenant's ground level.

The main entrance to the Covenant is a cave at the base of the hill. A set of spiral stairs leads from the cave entrance up to the ground floor of the Covenant proper. There is also a small gateway entrance to the ground level of the Covenant.

The entire area of the Covenant has a Magic Aura of 2.

Whenever the group enters the Covenant, you should roll a ten-sided die. On a result of 1-4, Damon happens to be using the *Summoning The Distant Image* spell to scry over the Covenant. Unless the characters protect themselves with some magic or disguise, he sees them.

Before the main cave entrance to the Covenant stands a small gatehouse (not shown on the Covenant map). In the one-room gatehouse characters find a rumped straw mattress, a full cupboard and a chest full of neatly-arranged scrolls. Someone appears to have been living here recently. These were Detric, the gatekeeper-magus's quarters. Sir Peled arrested him a little while ago. The scrolls in the chest detail an argument in favor of a new interpretation of Aristotle's theory of music. Characters interested in the subject may find the scrolls interesting for aesthetic reasons.

1. The Warding Lens

A gate of thick oak once barred passage to this one-floor, roofed structure, but the gate now lies in pieces. Beyond the gate were the common areas of the Covenant, including stables and grog quarters. They are now deserted. In the midst of these common areas stands a narrow set of spiral stairs that lead up to the levels of Needle Stone, above.

Also in this common area is located the Warding Lens, a glass spheroid which curses intruders. The device is set in the ceiling of the building, like a skylight, away from the roof occupied by the Needle Stone. Apart from defending the Covenant, the Lens focuses light from outside onto the spiral stairway, lighting the first floor of the Covenant. The Lens's defensive effects vary with the needs of the covenfolk, growing more dangerous as enemies approach Ad Vis Per Veritas. In peaceful times, anyone could safely pass into the Covenant simply by speaking its name. Now, with the Covenant's destruction, the Lens blights everyone who enters the building and is exposed to the light that the Lens casts. The Lens can only be deactivated by a command from the Covenant Master.

Anyone who enters the light of the Lens suffers one of the following enchantments:

- A lone intruder's vision may suddenly shift to the back of his scalp. His eyes remain in their normal place, but he can only see backward. At first, the victim sees only hair. Treat him as blind (as per the Flaw) for normal activity. A victim may look at things behind him after shaving his head, but suffers a -5 on any rolls which involve Dexterity, since arms and legs are still designed to work forward. The character must also choose between walking backward, at half speed, or forward, blind.

If this curse strikes a character, you should not give the player a technical description of what's happened. Instead, describe this event as the victim would perceive it, saying, for example, "*Everything goes dark. You see a mass of hangings before you. As you shake your head in bewilderment, you catch a glimpse of the stairs you thought were behind you but then the curtains fall back.*" It may take time for the victim to realize that the "curtains" are his hair and the stairs actually are behind him.

- In a group, the members trade vision randomly. Each member sees out of a different person's eyes. Once again, they may not realize exactly what happens at first. Play out the results, remembering that since the characters are all in the same room, things initially look similar to all of them. When the magic takes effect, victims see the same scene, from different perspectives. They probably think a spell teleported them into new places. Gradually though, victims find themselves unable to see what they look at, and notice that they occasionally "turn and look at things" while remaining perfectly still. If the group splits up, the curse becomes obvious.

Note that it is possible for someone to suffer both curses. If someone who came in alone reenters with others, he sees out of the back of someone else's head. If someone who once entered in a group returns by himself (called the visitor), the person already using the visitor's eyes begins seeing out the visitor's scalp.

These doubly-cursed victims must have each blight removed individually.

Someone whose eyes connect to someone else's brain may cooperate with that person by looking at what the other wants to see. This cooperation allows the other person to perform actions with only a -3 modifier to Dexterity-affected rolls. The penalty doubles to -6 on any stress roll, since rapid action makes it harder for two people to coordinate their activity. It is possible for one victim to recover normal sight while someone else still sees through his eyes. In that event, the latter suffers a smaller penalty on Dex rolls when the two cooperate, because the recovered character can see properly. Under these circumstances, the person who's still cursed suffers a -1 on simple rolls and a -3 when under stress.

Characters coming into the light of the Lens may still resist the effects of altered vision. A stress roll, modified by Int and Stm, of 15+ is needed to do so. Another such roll is allowed once per week if the first fails. If a person resists the Lens's curse while his fellows do not, that person may still become the bearer of another person's vision. A magus may also free someone from the Lens's curse with a *Disenchant* spell, made against 25 *vis* points. Treat the Lens itself as 110th Level magic, should characters try to destroy it.

The curse of the Lens can also be lifted if the Covenant Master commands it so. Tierus was the acting Master, but since he's been killed in the witch-hunt, the Covenant has no standing leader. Thus, the Lens respects the commands of the first of the Covenant's magi who returns to restore order. If the characters befriend Carolta, her word saves them. However, if Carolta is too available to make the Lens's curse a challenge (i.e. she can lift it right away), you can require that Juan or another former magus of Ad Vis Per Veritas lift the curse. Furthermore, though the characters can arrange to lift the Lens's curse from themselves, it does not automatically lift from those peasants who have also been cursed (see area 9 of the *Lands Around the Village of Montrouge* map, below). Those people have to be brought to the Covenant to be saved by the Master in person.

When afflicting the characters with the curse of the Lens, keep in mind game playability. The characters have enough to do in Montrouge without doing it while seeing through each other's eyes. If the Lens's curse bogs down the game, or irritates players to the point that the game is no longer fun, arrange a means for the characters to lift the curse.

2. The Ground Level

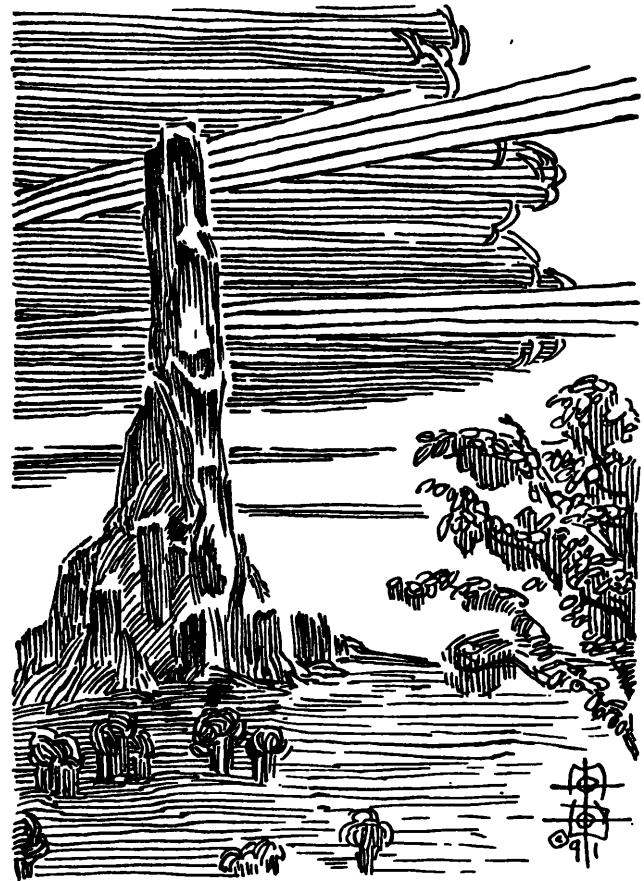
Little remains inside this main level, the common area of Ad Vis Per Veritas. The Covenant's people have died, fled or were arrested, and those who escaped took their Covenant's magical troves with them. Shortly thereafter a mob of peasants looted the com-

pound for herbs against the plague, stealing all mundane valuables. Consequently, grogs' quarters, stables, store rooms and other areas of mundane use on this level have been sacked, leaving them in a shambles. And, since Damon has attacked magi here by casting fiery spells through *Intangible Tunnels*, walls and structures are all scorched. In fact, most rooms are ruined beyond recognition.

Set into one corner of the Covenant's ground level is a set of spiral stairs. They lead down to the caves below the building, where the Covenant's cave entrance is.

3. Quartermaster's Office

Anyone who explores the office of the Quartermaster — the supply Sergeant of the grogs — finds two things: a cabinet of papers and the man's body, among other mundane furnishings and clerical supplies. Most of the scrolls are records about grogs, *consortis* and local contacts. The Quartermaster kept punctilious records of his grogs' merits, demerits, personal secrets, and families. He describes magi with only a few respectful adjectives. Most of his dossiers end with the words, "*Fell to the Plague,*" or simply "*F.T.P.*" According to the lists, which are outdated, the following covenfolk and Covenant relations survived: Detric



(Magus, Gateward), Jean Leufort (Farmer, dwells in Montrouge), Luc-Paul (Apprentice to Dedric), Carolta (Magus), Venenzo (Master Of Accounts, dwells in Montrouge), Valjac (Smith, dwells in Montrouge), and Petre (Miller, dwells in Montrouge).

Many grogs and *consortis* are also noted to have fled, their fate unknown. The list of fugitives includes two magi: Aramin (Probationary), and Damon Le Mont. Naturally, events occurred after the death of the Quartermaster, so the exact fates of the people he lists have change since his recording. The characters at least learn that the Quartermaster's records are reliable till the time of their writing, for the man lies dead at his desk, having died in the midst of maintaining his documents.

Going through the Quartermaster's papers, the characters learn who may be tracked down to rebuild Ad Vis Per Veritas. All they have to do is find those people.

The remainder of the first floor of the Needle Stone was used by grogs as a meeting place and intelligence center. An altar is located toward one side of the floor, where religious services were conducted for the troops.

4. Sanctum Of The Peace

This room was once the library of the Covenant and magi studied their art or did research here. After the flight of the covenfolk most books were taken and after Damon's attacks, those books that remain are burned beyond recognition. Mounted on one wall is a twisted candelabra, carved from some enormous set of antlers, far too large for any mundane stag. If the characters make a successful Hermes Lore roll (9+), they recall having read or heard of the antlers as a landmark in Ad Vis Per Veritas. The horns come from a legendary Irish beast which no man ever saw alive. The horns contain two pawns of *Animál vis*. Carvings on the antler's branches depict the symbols of different schools of magic. The antlers symbolize harmony between magi of many sorts, a blessing which Ad Vis Per Veritas enjoyed until the Demon came.

5. Silber's Beir

This dark room contains a low table of stone. The corpse of Silber Wise Hand lies upon it. A white shroud once covered the body but rats have since tugged at it, revealing one grey, bare foot, which points skyward. Anyone who examines the corpse finds no visible cause of death. This room bears all the trappings of magus's funeral, including brazers and tapestries depicting the history of the Covenant, which imply Silber's contribution to that history. If characters have not researched the history of Ad Vis Per Veritas, they may learn of it from these hangings (Int + Hermes Lore roll of 6+). The tapestries tell the

Covenant's story from its magi's perspective — nothing of A'Fienluh's activities are shown. The hangings depict the Covenant's construction near a small village, its harmonious relations with the villagers, its bounty of *vis*, and its harmony of magi (obviously the tapestries are a little out of date).

Of all the rooms in the Covenant, this one is not in ruins. Invading peasants were too frightened to loot it after they realized a dead magus was present. Damon moved to destroy it with his spells, but couldn't bear to add further insult to that already done to Silber.

6. Laboratories

Laboratories and further libraries occupied this level of Needle Stone, but like the rest of the Covenant, they lie in ruins. Anyone who passes a Hermes Lore check with an Ease Factor of 10 realizes that no peasant looters breached these chambers. Only fires seem to have struck these room. In fact, brass walls in some laboratories bear the scars of enchanted fire, indicating that magical attacks were used to ruin the Covenant.

Runes on the doors also indicate that powerful wards protected these rooms, but the wards were magically dispelled, not set off (Per + Magic Theory roll of 8+ to realize this). Aramin invaded these rooms in search of some prize to bribe Damon Le Mont. He used a *Disenchant* spell to deactivate the wards, and that spell's use now makes it impossible to determine the intended effects of the wards.

One laboratory does contain some unusual equipment. Those items include a spiral candle of aromatic tallow, a vial of dried blood, and a sealed clay vessel. If opened, the clay vessel is seen to hold a mass of brown, putrefying sheep bowel, of the sort used for divinations. Anyone who passes a Int + Occult Lore roll with an Ease Factor of 4+ knows that one uses these instruments to contact Demons. Furthermore, anyone who scores a 6 or higher knows that these instruments are useless unless the Demon has voluntarily contacted the magus first. Anyone who scores a 9 or higher knows that the rotting sheep bowels are used if a Demon wishes to reveal some mortal's secret shame to the person whom he's in contact with.

These foul magical tools were used by Damon in his Demonic works. This is not Damon's old laboratory, though, it's Carolta's. Juan of Quaesitoris brought the items here to show to the other magi when he found them in Damon's quarters. On a Per + Magic Theory roll of 6+, magi realize that the items are not arranged as if having been used, but are arranged as if having been carried to their present resting place. There are no signs on the diabolic tools to indicate that they were Damon's. However, if the characters fail to realize that the items were carried to their present position, and if

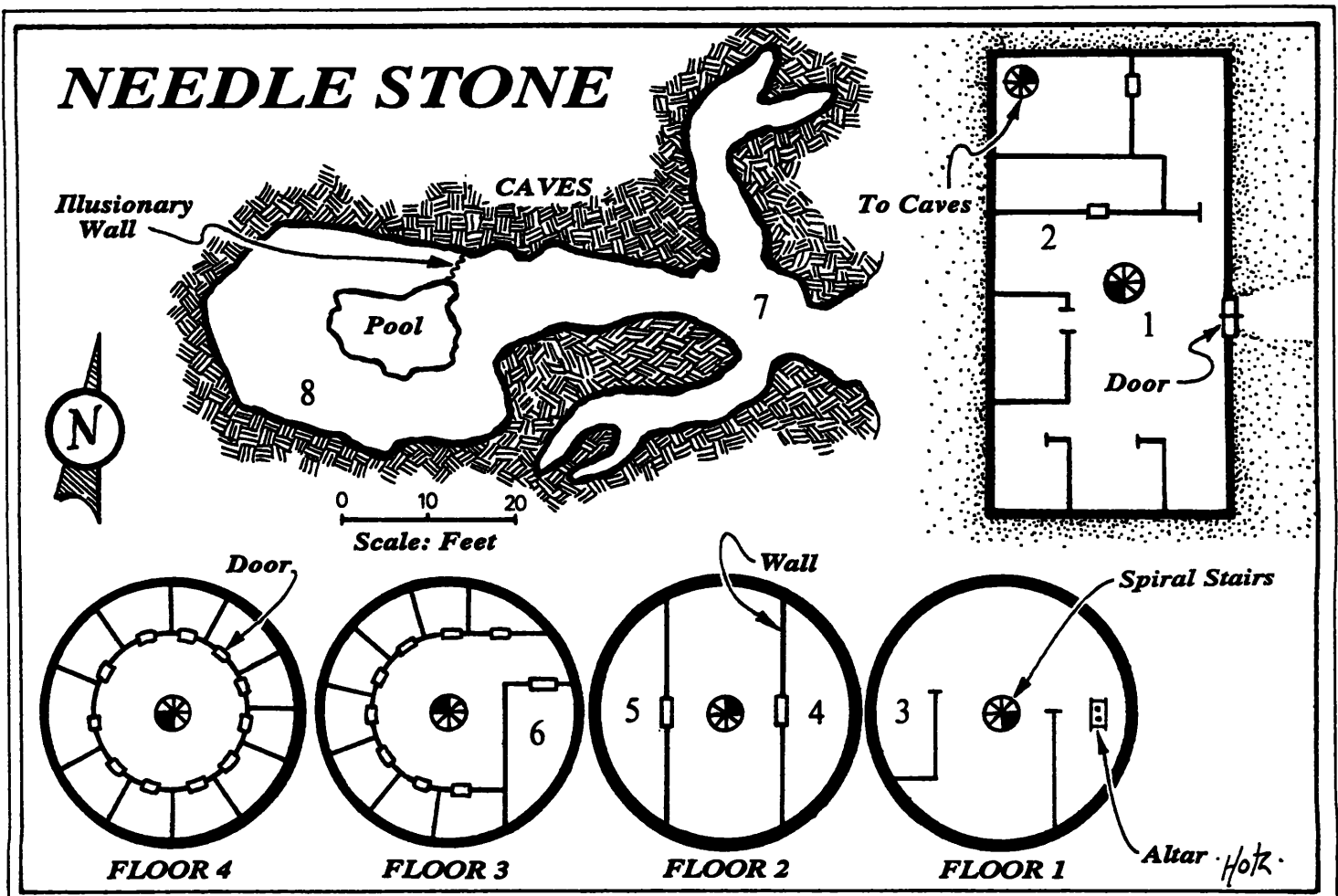
they learn of the connection between Carolta and the tortoise (see below), they may conclude that Carolta is guilty of diabolism. How that conclusion effects relations between Carolta and the characters is up to you and the players.

A live tortoise lives in Carolta's lab, amongst the fragments of what was once an elaborate terrarium. Carolta started to enchant the tortoise as a familiar when she resolved to flee the plague, and had to leave the creature behind. However, she achieved more toward the animal's training than she knows. The turtle now feels betrayed and trusts no human. It has the powers of speech and thought, but stubbornly refuses to talk with two-legged creatures. Characters' familiars might win the tortoise's trust, though. Magi could also probe the creature's memory by casting *Opening The Tome Of An Animal's Mind*.

The tortoise remembers everything that happened, in its experience, at the Covenant in the last year. Naturally, the turtle has been in Carolta's lab all that time, so has knowledge limited to that locale. It doesn't know, for example, where Damon has fled, but has overheard magi's conversations, so may know hearsay about things that have happened. You must decide what the tortoise could practically know. Also keep in mind that the tortoise's mind and memory are not human; it thinks and perceives as an animal, so has its

own mental agenda. For example, while magi consider it important that the tortoise saw Damon cast a spell involving a sheep's bowel, the tortoise considers it more important that a succulent piece of fish was involved in the spell. Thus, the tortoise might not mention the sheep bowel, but goes on and on about the fish.

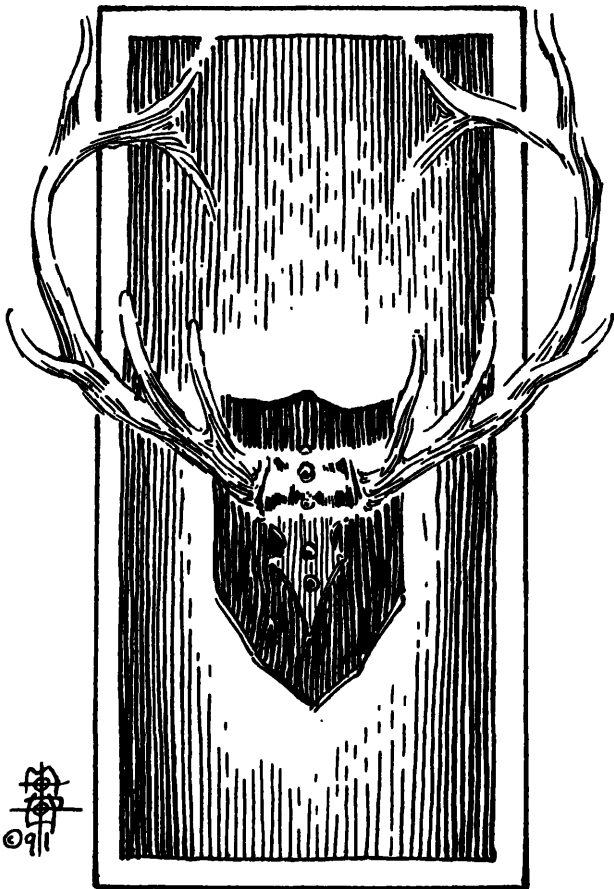
Foremost on the tortoise's mind are the past few plague months. To it those months seem like a swirl of human deaths and flights, overshadowed by the monumental treachery of Carolta, who abandoned it despite months of sorcerous bonding. She vanished on the eve of a full moon, amid noise and fire. The turtle now realizes that he should have suspected something was amiss — his mistress had appeared progressively more nervous each day before her betrayal. In any event, Carolta's abuse left the tortoise in a state of near fatal melancholy. When it recovered, the tortoise realized that Detric, the Gateward, and Carolta, its mistress, still remained in the Covenant. He could hear their strained, frantic voices outside Carolta's Lab. However, "in her immense cruelty," Carolta would not come to him. The tortoise soon realized that Detric went into town and disappeared. Today, the tortoise can sense that "the blackguard vixen" remains nearby, below ground, "refusing" to come to him.



Though the characters may want to take the tortoise along with them, it refuses their company, angry at all humans. Having witnessed the cruelty of humans firsthand, it refuses to expose itself further to their treachery. The tortoise is happiest if left within its shattered home, where it may brood. The only way the tortoise may be convinced to join a character, or even become a magus's familiar, is if that character can demonstrate animal blood within himself. This demonstration might involve shapechanging into a beast, or might simply involve a *Muto Córporum* spell. If the tortoise sees that the character is capable of becoming a beast, he trusts the character, thinking the person better than human. Of course, the tortoise does not explain this bestial requirement to the characters. They must think of it on their own, recognizing the tortoise's hatred of humanity. Also remember that Bjornaer magi cannot have familiars, but the turtle is still willing to be a companion of such a magus.

Any character who takes the tortoise with her by force is constantly hampered by the turtle. It constantly bites and struggles, striving to free itself. A person carrying the struggling turtle suffers a -3 on all skill or magic rolls that require concentration — that includes spell casting!

The fourth floor of Needle Stone is devoted to the chambers of the Covenant's missing magi and more important *custos*. These rooms were stripped by their occupants when those people fled Ad Vis Per Veritas.



Damon's fires have also stricken the floor, destroying all its once valuable contents.

7. The Defenders' Stand

This part of the cave system, beneath Ad Vis Per Veritas, is set far back into those caves, about an hour's travel from the cave entrance and the stairs that offer access from the cave to the Covenant proper. Anyone entering this recessed area of the caves feels a slap of dank, chilly air. Not even torches can make more than a cocoon of light here. According to popular superstition (Int + Folk Ken roll of 4+), this sort of environment breeds the plague, and characters must make Bravery checks against a value of 6 to proceed deeper into the tunnels. There is no genuine danger of disease, though. The real peril in these pits comes from survivors of Ad Vis Per Veritas, Carolta and her grog followers, who have learned to treat all intruders as foes.

Carolta sustains a bit of spontaneous *Intéllego* magic, which allows her to sense the location of invaders by tracking their "ripples" within the Magic Aura of these caverns (which is 5). When alerted, she orders seven of her grogs to meet intruders at the spot where tunnels intersect, indicated on the *Needle Stone* map by the number "7." As strangers reach the intersection, the team of seven grogs pelt them with arrows from the direction of the House of Vis ("8" on the map). The archers place themselves against the walls of the cave, taking partial cover in those craggy surfaces. Fortunately, for the characters, the archers make their first Attack Rolls at -3 due to darkness. After the first attack, Carolta casts *Eyes of the Cat* on her men so they may attack uninhibited.

The first bolts have also been subjected to Carolta's magic. They gleam like blue fireflies. Although the arrows glow only faintly, they seem like powerful lights to those under the effects of *Eyes of the Cat*. With the combined effects of these magicks, Carolta's grogs fire all successive volleys as if in full daylight.

Even if the intruders also use *Eyes of the Cat*, they cannot automatically see Carolta's warriors. The grogs are pressed against the shelter of the cave wall, and each arrow only illuminates a 3 foot radius, which leaves the archers safely cloaked in shadow. The guidelines below show what role visibility plays in this battle.

- Give the intruders a -5 on Attack rolls and two extra Botch rolls if they have no means of seeing.
- Torches or lanterns allow the ambush victims to fight at a mere -1 to Attack rolls, but they give Carolta's warriors a +3 on their Attacks.
- Anyone who uses *Eyes of the Cat* may fight at -2 to Attack Rolls. By throwing glowing arrows back at the archers, characters with cat eyes fight at no penalty at all. Those throwing arrows back, but who lack *Eyes of*

the Cat, still suffer a -2 in their Attack rolls. Throwing arrows back at the archers requires one Round to find an arrow and another to throw it. Taking this action, characters may also expose themselves to further archer attacks. If a glowing arrow is thrown back at the archers, it lands where the character intends on a Dex roll of 7+. Thrown arrows cannot harm the archers as insufficient force lies behind the missile. Of course, if a character has a bow, he may recover glowing arrows to fire back at the ambushers.

The size of the tunnels also hampers victims of this ambush. If the group charges down the tunnel, only the lead character can see his foes as the chargers are forced into single file. If threatened with melee combat, the archers withdraw as slowly as they can, to be backed up by hidden troops (see below). The retreating archers still fire arrows as they go.

The ambushing archers intend to force the characters to seek shelter in the dead end tunnels that branch off the main tunnel. If the characters do so, the archers, their reinforcements, and Carolta approach with the intent of wiping out the trapped invaders. Carolta is chiefly responsible for this task, utilizing powerful *Perdo* spells to destroy the characters. At the moment before this final destructive blow, the characters have an opportunity to reason with the ambushers and attempt to resolve things peaceably. If the characters are alert, they may spot Carolta and recognize her as a lost magus of *Ad Vis Per Veritas* (her tortoise may have described her, *Luc de Jon* may recognize her, or the characters may simply make a calculated guess). If the characters are more prepared for combat than parley, you may have Carolta demand to know the characters' intentions before she strikes at them. If the characters explain that they've come to rebuild the Covenant, or otherwise help its lost magi, Carolta calls off her attack. See below for the results of diplomacy and negotiation.

If the group throws itself into pursuit of the archers, the ambush enters a second phase. Note the illusionary wall in area 8. A permanent *Imágonem* spell has been cast to make it resemble continuous stone. The "wall" feels real to a casual brush but does not impede movement. Once the archers drop back from their ambush, nine grogs hidden behind the illusionary wall spring forward, trapping the characters between the two groups of grogs, the cave wall, and the pool at the center of area 8 (see blow). In close combat, grogs resort to vicious axes. Carolta herself comes with the group hidden behind the illusionary wall. She uses *Image From The Wizard Torn* to protect herself, *Wind of Mundane Silence* to protect her grogs from enemy sorcery, and *Curse of Circe* to best her foes. Note that her specialized version of the *Curse* does not require eye contact.

If Carolta and her grogs defeat the charging characters, she moves to destroy them as above, but may

give them a chance to explain themselves if the characters demonstrated any magical ability. She hopes that magi may at least inform her of events in the outside world, even though she still considers those magi enemies for attacking her. Carolta only sees the characters in a different light if they explain that they've come to help and are only defending themselves.

The characters can also bring combat to a halt at any time if they identify themselves as foreign magi or covenfolk. Frankly, Carolta and her grogs yearn for aid from friendly magi. If the group displays (and illuminates) their Covenant's symbol or declares its identity by other means, Carolta halts the assault. However, if travelers try to produce identification in the heat of battle with grogs alone, the warriors are somewhat slower to realize what's going on. They continue hacking until their victims throw down their weapons. Frenzied warriors may strike a few blows even then.

If the Covenant refugees and characters avert mutual destruction, Carolta offers characters shelter and answers general questions about *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. Unfortunately, the band's paranoia has kept it from learning anything useful about the current events in and around Montrouge, so the refugees aren't of much use there. What's more, the warriors never completely trust the characters. Only their mistress talks freely with the group. In return for information, the refugees beg for food.

Carolta explains that she is the last defender of *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. She also explains that the Covenant's troubles began when *Silber Wise Hand* suddenly died, and when threat of an Inquisition arose. After that problems mounted when *Juan*, the visiting *Quaesitor*, found evidence of diabolism in the Covenant. (She also explains that diabolic evidence was brought forth and shown to the Covenant's magi in her laboratory, during *Juan's* presentation of his discoveries.) However, before *Juan* accused any suspects, the plague struck and most of the Covenant died or fled.

She continues, "*By June, the disasters had left me alone in the Covenant with a magus called Detric, and some grogs. Several times, mobs of peasants tried to ransack the Covenant for herbs, and on several occasions, some broke through. The Warding Lens disposed of them. Detric and I faced a more serious threat, though. An unknown magus bombarded us with spells from afar, and occasionally still does. His fiery blasts appear from nowhere, apparently guided through the magic of the Intangible Tunnel. We tried to divine the identity of our enemy, but he is clever, casting his spells by surprise, then swiftly closing the tunnel.*"

Furthermore, Carolta knows that at least one of the Covenant's magi, *Aramin*, has turned traitor. She cannot even mention him except with tones of outrage. She explains, "*In the first moon of the plague, Aramin sent*

me a notice of Wizard War. A month of the plague's death followed. The next full moon rose, in orange like flame. That very night, Aramin burst into the Covenant to attack, not just me, but the Covenant's hallowed chambers of vis. I advanced to ensorcell him but he stunned me with an eldritch blast."

When Carolta awoke, Aramin was gone. Dedric had driven him from the sanctums. Nevertheless, he had looted the rest of Needle Stone's laboratories, in complete violation of the codes of Wizard War. Carolta felt particularly horrified, since one of the laboratories contained a tortoise which she intended to enchant as a familiar. However, she could not find the little reptile and now assumes that Aramin slew it. Carolta would

Carolta

Description: a freckled woman in her early 40s. Her skin is smooth, but her long brown hair has faded somewhat. Carolta likes quiet, order and moderate behavior. She abhors confrontations and the tension of even a friendly disagreement drives her into rage. When she must fight, she goes to extremes. She seeks to murder Aramin.

If the group mentions Carolta's abandoned tortoise (see area 6), she first feels remorse for being apart from it. This emotion gives way to irritation when she discovers how strong a grudge the creature holds against her. When Carolta learns that the tortoise already has the power of thought and speech, she may want to have it scout the Fens. It only agrees if cajoled by a sympathetic character (i.e. a character who demonstrates bestial blood) who passes a stress Com + Empathy or Animal Ken roll of 10+. Even if convinced to scout around, the tortoise is quite slow, so may prove an ineffective scout anyway.

Even if convinced to work on behalf of the magi, the tortoise does not sufficiently forgive its mistress to become her familiar. At your option, Carolta may give the animal to a character who befriends it (again, a bestial character). If that character is a magus, he or she could enchant the tortoise as a familiar in half the usual time.

Roleplaying Tips: Be friendly, but sensitive, and lapse into silence if anyone even slightly interrupts you. Let strain creep into your voice when you discuss unpleasant people.

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

Confidence 4

Age 42

Personality Traits

Sensitive +2

Brave 0/Cowardly 0

Overreacts +1

Important Skills

Speak Latin +5

Scribe Latin +5

Magic Theory (inventing spells) +7

Hermes Lore +1

Hermes History +1

Parma Magica (Muto) +3

Finesse +2

Certámen 0

Concentration (long periods) +3

Magical Techniques

Creo 5

Intéllego 9

Muto 10

Rego 6

Magical Forms

Animál 6

Aquam 6

Aurum 6

Córporem 14

Herbam 10

Ignem 5

Terram 4

Vim 20

Spells

Opening The Tome Of The Animal's Mind

Tongue of Beasts

Stir The Slumbering Tree

Eyes of the Cat

Tales of the Ashes

Image From the Wizard Torn

Curse Of Circe (This is a customized spell which works by line of sight instead of by eye contact)

Wind of Mundane Silence

The Invisible Eye Revealed

Scales of the Magical Weight

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +2 Atk +5 Dam +1

Def +1 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

like to bring her grievances before a Tribunal, but with the other disasters pressing, she can barely manage to stay alive, let alone travel to a Tribunal.

Carolta knows that, when he still belonged to Ad Vis Per Veritas, Aramin used to visit a secret laboratory in the Fens: *"A week ago, I sent grogs to explore the marsh. They returned hastily, claiming that coughing plague victims still stumbled through the swamp. Everyone knows*

that swamp mists cause disease. So, I cancelled further expeditions until the weather becomes windy and dry, to lift the infectious vapors." In the meantime, she hopes the group will help investigate Aramin and bring him to justice.

"In late June," Carolta continues, "Dedric left the Covenant. He had sent his apprentice Luc-Paul into hiding. Somehow Baronial guards found and arrested Luc and then sent a messenger summoning Dedric to Montrouge, using the apprentice as bait. Dedric rode away with the guards and has not returned."

Dedric always insisted on guarding the Covenant's main gate, if only to keep innocents away from the Warding Lens. When Dedric disappeared, Carolta dispensed with that scruple. Her grogs heartily agreed with her. With the Covenant proper in ruins, the refugees sought sounder housing. The bowels of the Covenant offered secrecy and more reliable physical defense. Thus, they took shelter there. And, the magical attacks on the Covenant have nearly ceased since Carolta and her followers went into hiding.

If the group asks about other survivors, Carolta responds: *"Juan the Quaesitor fled to a hidden sanctum. Luc-Paul, Dedric's young apprentice, may still live somewhere in Montrouge. I have also heard that Venenzo, the Master of Accounts, still runs his mercantile exchange in Montrouge. I implore you to find the merchant, and order him to seize Aramin's accounts."*

Though the characters may have found and allied themselves with Carolta, the magi cannot safely begin their restoration of the Covenant yet. As soon as Carolta shows her face in Ad Vis Per Veritas, Damon resumes his magical attacks, trying to kill her. If he sees the characters with Carolta, he assumes they know of his guilt, as he believes Carolta does. He therefore tries to kill all the magi. The only refuge the characters have from this attack is in the Covenant dungeon, where Ad Vis Per Veritas's natural *vis* counteracts Damon's spells — a sublime capacity for self-defense that the *vis* possesses. If they choose, the characters can make the Covenant's dungeon their base of operations until Damon and A'Fienluh are defeated.

8. House of Vis

The caves under Ad Vis Per Veritas broaden into a long chamber here. A stalagmite within this room serves as the focus for the Gift of Montrouge. The magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas once considered this cave a hallowed spot, which only the most responsible magi could enter. Carolta still intends to defend its integrity. Accordingly, she and her grogs defend the room. If necessary, Carolta and her grogs make their final stand within the chamber (as previously discussed).

The floor of this chamber is crisscrossed with narrow crevices — deep cracks in the stone. Unwitting

Brothers (16)

The surviving grogs of Ad Vis Per Veritas are desperate folk. They have heard that the Bishop and Baron consider them collaborators with witches. If anyone identifies them, the Bishop may order their families killed for association with black magic. Therefore, they keep their identities secret. They wear black cloaks, with masks. Among themselves, the grogs call their group "The Brotherhood of the Cockatrice" because, like the cockatrice of legend, they slay all who see their faces. They hide in the Covenant dungeons and sustain themselves by stealing.

As time passes, the Brothers find their lives as robbers more and more natural. True, they once served Ad Vis Per Veritas. And true, they follow Carolta; she's the only leader they still have. But still, the Brothers have formed an unspoken consensus that they are soldiers of fortune, not defenders of Hermes. If faced with a test of loyalty, they put their own secrecy and profit first.

Str +2

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly +2 (Fierce in battle but terrified of recognition)

Loyal +0

Demoralized +2

Reliable +1

Important Skills

Broadsword (charges) +4

Brawl (close quarters) +3

Self bow (close quarters) +4

Spear (parry) +3

Shield Parry (short weapons) +5

Weapons

Broadsword: 1st +3 Atk +8 Dam +12

Self Bow: Rate 0 Atk +4 Dam +8

Spear: 1st +11 Atk +5 Dam +11

Def (Round Shield) +7 Fat -1 Soak (Full Hard Leather) +5 Enc 1

explorers can plunge into these crevices. Each person in the cave makes a simple Per + Alertness roll against a target number 10 for each minute of exploration. Anyone who fails slips into an irregular cavity 15 feet deep. A d10 of damage is suffered, with Soak applying as usual. The fallen person has almost no space in which to move. Any attempts at spellcasting suffer a -8 modifier. To climb out requires a Dex + Climb roll of 15+. Due to the difficulty of one escaping a crevice on his own, it's more likely that characters up above retrieve their friends. Any means of retrieval used from above are assumed to succeed, taking about a Round to execute.

People in combat within this chamber always run the risk of falling into a crevice. Newcomers to the cave may not know the crevices are there when engaged in combat. Those people receive a roll to detect the cracks, as indicated above. For each round of combat, a person must make a Dex + Athletics stress roll of 6+ to avoid falling in. People who do not know about the crevices suffer a -4 modifier to their Dex rolls. Obviously, Carolta and her followers know the fissures are around.

Anyone who receives a double Botch in a roll to avoid crevices falls into the largest of the fissures, which leads 18 feet down, with a ruddy stalactite at its bottom. The fissure is located at the site of the pool on the *Needle Stone* map. Hanging above the fissure is a large stalagmite with water dripping from its point.



That water has formed the stalactite in the crevice. Not only do those falling in the fissure suffer 3d10 in damage, Soak applying normally, but they get soaking wet. And, those people have the same trouble escaping as they would from a smaller crevice.

The stalagmite hanging above the crevice provides the Covenant with its *vis*. Limestone-laden water dripping down its sides produces eighteen pawns of raw *vis* per year. One pawn lies at the bottom now, trapped in the water which is solidifying into the stalactite.

Carolta and her grogs have blankets and other personal possessions in this chamber; it's where they reside. They own little of monetary value, but Carolta keeps a collection of glass instruments and engraved tablets which she and Dedric managed to save from Aramin. Any magus finds the items useful as they make potion manufacture possible at the otherwise ruined Covenant, though the items don't offer any special bonus to Laboratory rolls. The grogs have two sacks of grain and five chickens, stolen from nearby farms. They also have three stolen brass candlesticks smeared with remnants of tallow. Those candlesticks come from a private shrine to the Virgin Mary in Montrouge, and pious people consider the grogs' theft of them a blasphemy. The refugees stole the candlesticks out of necessity, though, so characters may find it difficult to be critical of the act.

Once action and intense drama comes to a finale, magi in this chamber can sense a certain magical potency in the air (Per + Magic Sensitivity roll of 8+). Those that make the roll realize that the magical force originates from the collective spirit of the Covenant, objectified by the pool. Those that make the Per roll may also gain insights into the Covenant's past, present and future. By looking into the chamber's pool, and making a Per + Hermes Lore roll of 12+, a magus receives inspirational notions in his mind. The pool, as heart of the Covenant, delivers these notions in an effort to preserve Ad Vis Per Veritas's future, keeping its *vis* out of A'Fienluh's hands. One of the following notions is delivered with each successful Hermes Lore roll the magi make:

- Ties of blood shelter the plague-bringer.
- The Bishop took his dogma from Rome but his mitre from Mammon. Thus is he enslaved.

After each of these ideas are transmitted once, no more are sent. Tormented of mind with her recent hardships, Carolta has not received either of these notions. If Ad Vis Per Veritas is ever restored, the heart of the Covenant ceases "communicating," but may resume doing so if the Covenant ever nears destruction again.

6. Abbey

No monks have lived at Montrouge for nearly five years, and the abbey now lists to one side in disrepair. It stands atop a stony hillock, its doors boarded shut, with the old fields returning to raspberry bushes. Travelers do see a few footprints though. Occasionally, they also discover the body of a rabbit or groundhog in the weeds, struck by a slingstone (Per + Scan roll of 6+ to spot these things).

Five townspeople from Montrouge hide here from the plague. They follow Christo, a middle-aged farmer. He claims his grandmother once saved a family of twenty from a plague by hiding on a mountain, away from all living things. Christo therefore kills all animals that approach the abbey, considering them sources of infection. He and his followers attempt to hide from humans, hoping intruders consider the place abandoned, and leave. The inhabitants conceal themselves in the abbey's three-story tower. If visitors persist in attempting to enter, Christo shouts "*Begone!*" and follows with a threat to shoot trespassers like rabbits. A few well-placed slingstones follow. He and his followers do not fight to the death, though. If the characters force their way into the abbey, the "plague monks," as the abbey inhabitants call themselves, flee through windows and a hidden passage in the root cellar.

Christo reacts less cautiously to people who identify themselves as foreigners, coming from outside the plague area. Naturally, he wants evidence of their health. If all the characters can expose parts of their body, and show they bear no growths, Christo invites them in. Christo is actually eager to meet magi, who might have herbs that cure the plague. If the group enters the abbey, they find it a cozy wooden dwelling. The abbey smells powerfully of the onion and garlic served at every meal for its supposed medicinal properties. Christo and his followers wear cloth breath masks and often raise a sliced garlic bud to their faces when confronting strangers.

Because of their isolation, the "plague monks" now face a special danger of infection. They have not culled the vulnerable from among them, so if they're exposed to illness, it spreads through the six like wildfire. At the same time, most of the survivors in Montrouge have become immune to the plague, but admire the "plague monks" for having remained healthy throughout the plague. Thus, if any of the "plague monks" suddenly contract the disease, the people of Montrouge panic. They assume that a new, more virulent contagion has struck the town, "*for how else could such healthy folk otherwise fall ill?*" You may decide if the "plague monks" become infected by the plague, depending

Christo

Description: Life in the abbey has robbed Christo of his once ample stomach, but he remains the pleasant gaffer he always was.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak with the emphatic warmth of a grandfather dispensing common sense. Give and take advice freely about whatever subject the characters raise.

Str +1 Dex +1 Prs +2

Personality Traits

Friendly +2/Wary +2

Important Skills

Sling (long distances) +4

Farming +2

Folk Healing +2 (treat as Chirurgy)

Weapons

Sling: Rate +3 Atk +5 Dam +4 Range 100 paces

Def 0 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

upon the exposure those people have to the characters and others from Montrouge.

Christo dares not spare much food, but he tries to treat visiting magi with the hospitality a magus might expect. He can offer them a few boiled onions and some moldy bread. The "plague monks" know some facts, though, that might be of more value to the characters than food:

- "*Just when we needed wizards they left their Covenant and vanished. Their latest leader went straight to town and disappeared there. Another one surrendered to the witch-hunt in order to save his apprentice. He succeeded too, and the apprentice stays at the Inn today.*"

- "*The Bishop may condemn magic for the common folk, but since this plague began, he and the Baron have kept a wizard in their court.*"

- "*A wise man from the old Covenant hid from the plague at Orbonne Pools.*" (See Chapter One, area 8)

- "*The Italian merchant Venenzo has remained free of disease, owing to his long friendship with wizards. He lives in his villa right at the center of town, and keeps as good a table as ever.*"

If the characters can befriend the "plague monks," they make trusted allies. However, if the characters meet the "monks" at one time and return at another, after having been through Montrouge, the "monks" refuse the characters entry into the abbey. Christo fears that while the characters may have been healthy before, they may not be now. Only truly sympathetic or compelling characters can convince the "monks" to offer hospitality twice. You may decide if Christo is

willing to do so based on the relationship the characters and he establish on their first meeting.

Christo's Followers (5)

Weapons

Sling: Rate +3 Atk +5 Dam +4 Range 100 paces
Def 0 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

7. Ceil Lands

This large, uneven farm stands just out of town, carved into a rocky hill. Patches of trees separate the pastures, and a muddy trail leads to the farmhouse on the hill's summit. The home belongs to the Ceils, a well-to-do family of free farmers who have a status almost equal to nobility. An ancestor of the Ceils won this status by saving his Baron's life from a pair of boars during a hunt gone awry. Today, the Ceils pay homage to the current Baron but try to keep their affairs separate from his. They run their farm far more efficiently than the Baron governs his estates, with the result that neither party particularly likes the other.

The magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas always considered Marc Ceil, the master of the house, a farmer they could rely on. Marc provided grain for the Covenant. He also represented Ad Vis Per Veritas among mundane folk and performed errands on the Covenant's behalf. As a free farmer, he considers himself something of an outcast from feudal society, and therefore has few scruples about dealing with magi.

Characters may take a special interest in the farm because the Ceils are prosperous — an unusual condition given recent tragedy. The family flourishes because it managed to shut itself away from the plague. Isolated, the family has even brought in its spring harvest and has planted another crop. Fifteen serf laborers assist the Ceils. Given the family's maintained farming and large work force, the Ceils have a reserve of grain matched only by that of the Baron. Marc Ceil feels no inclination to share his supply with the people of Montrouge, nor does he give up the product of his next harvest. When the group learns of these reserves, it may covet them for its own purposes, or for dispersal among plague victims.

The Ceil household is also of interest to the characters because a group of three magi from House Flambeau half occupies and half defends the estate. They bully and domineer the Ceil family, but they also allow no outsider to take away Ceil possessions, or indeed, to even approach Ceil lands. The characters may encounter these "visiting" magi in any number of ways. Since the Ceils have a valuable supply of grain, the characters may feel inclined to contest the Flam-

beau magi, in order to feed themselves or plague victims. Furthermore, the Ceil children, who see the Flambeau magi as diabolists, may beg the characters for help in disposing of the "bad men."

The three magi came all the way from Stonehenge Tribunal, hoping for a Wizards' March. Their Council suspected magical activity at the root of Ad Vis Per Veritas's destruction; they heard rumor of a rogue magus named Damon Le Mont, who was supposed to have taken in with mundane powers. The magi also expect that Le Mont has well-stocked laboratories worth looting. The intervention of the plague interrupted their hunt, but did not ruin it. It simply forced them to take shelter in a house where the plague had not struck. Although these magi certainly know nothing about microorganisms or sterilization, everyone in House Flambeau has heard that one can purge sources of infection by searing them with "that most robust element." As far as the Flambeau magi are concerned, "sources of infection" include potentially diseased people, like the characters.

The fifteen serfs employed on the Ceil lands live in shacks by the fields. The peasants consider the family eccentric and slightly frightening; they don't consider it proper that commoners should own land like noblemen, and don't see why the Ceils tolerate the Flambeau witches. Nevertheless, the serfs do not wish to leave the Ceils in this time of plague. They therefore try very hard to remain quiet and remain left alone.

Arriving At The Ceils's

When strangers arrive at the farm, Marc Ceil, a clean shaven farmer, emerges. Smoke wafts from the door behind him. He blinks, adjusting his sight, then addresses visitors in a shrill voice. "Begone, we've nothing for you. Keep away with your plague." Then he turns to the house and shouts, "Come quick. Unclean, Unclean!" Unless the characters quickly establish that they are not plague victims, the house's smoke congeals and scintillates through a variety of dusky greens, grays and blues. Then three magi, Curwen, Dan O'Thunder and William Fireheart bombard the intruders with fiery spells.

Despite their readiness to burn strangers, the magi of House Flambeau may welcome fellow magi. However, the characters must first announce themselves as such. The magi want to speak with travelers, especially those who know the ways of Hermes. If the characters identify themselves before the magi attack them, William summons the group to the farmhouse with hearty shouts in both Scottish Gaelic and atrocious German. He brushes past Marc, observing, "That varlet told me to burn ye, my friends." Eventually, the magi end up conversing in Latin, a common language among the learned. Then the members of the House Flambeau

start asking questions. They want to know if the plague is over, where Covenant Ad Vis Per Veritas is and anything about Damon Le Mont.

William, Curwen and Dan gladly join with any group that seeks to revive Ad Vis Per Veritas. However, they do so with the hope that the characters will help them find and defeat Le Mont. Their real intention is to plunder Damon's magical treasures. Generally, these Flambeau companions hinder the characters more than they help, since all three are boisterous, greedy and devoid of subtlety. Anyone who accompanies them on a trip into Montrouge can expect havoc, which may panic the people into starting a witch-hunt. (See Chapter Two, *Sparks at Dawn*, for more details on that possibility.) Furthermore, William Fireheart considers himself the leader of any alliance of magi. His two companions support William's bid for authority. And, until the characters find nearly all the magi of Montrouge, the Flambeau may constitute a majority of any council of magi (if diplomacy is even valued by the characters). Count on the Flambeau demanding a vote. Even if the characters recognize the authority of the Flambeau magi, other magi found in Montrouge, like Carolta, refuse to. This conflict of personalities allows for multitudes of role-playing.

To put an end to William's bid for power, the characters must humiliate the Flambeau magi. For example, the characters might engage the magi in *Certámen*, actual combat, or an argument before other magi of Montrouge. Any contest does the trick. Once soundly defeated and embarrassed, William and his friends are willing to follow another leader.

If the group comes in conflict with the Flambeau magi, characters must overcome more than fiery spells. Members of the Order of Hermes may not fight one another without repercussions. The House Flambeau certainly complains to the characters' Tribunal if anyone attacks their agents. Therefore, the group must give Rico the impression that they have taken decisive action against the Flambeau magi, while avoiding an actual showdown with the three (see below for more details on Rico).

The group may also try to talk the magi into leaving the Ceil estates. Roleplay any negotiation between the group and the magi to its fullest extent. William, Curwen and Dan scoff merrily at moralistic lectures about discretion, justice or the good of Montrouge. However, compelling argument backed by the threat of force may succeed in driving them off (Com + Intimidation roll of 15+). Furthermore, the three abide by the results of *Certámen*, and if the terms of their defeat are banishment, they obey. As an alternative, the group could lead the Flambeau magi away in search of Damon, though, as mentioned elsewhere, the magi prove dangerous companions.

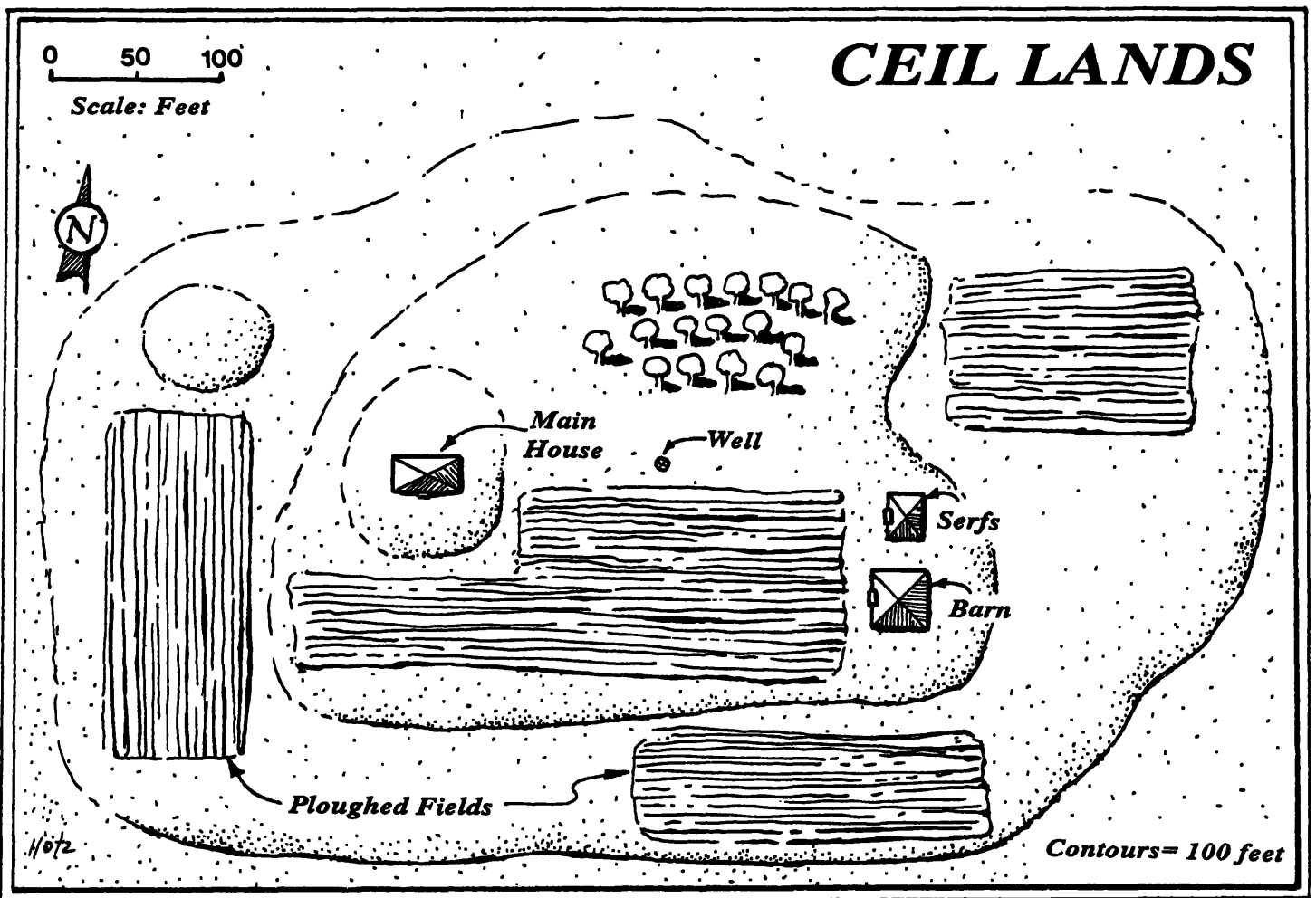
Those who enter the Ceil household (whether by force or with Flambeau invitation) also encounter the family within. Marc Ceil watches the characters with dour suspicion, his arms folded and his eyes relentless. His young daughters, however, surge out to see new visitors. When they see the grim expressions of the adults, they beg, "*Don't hurt us, kind sirs,*" but their eyes betray more curiosity than fear. If treated well, the children quickly tell the characters how nice they are, compared to William, Curwen and Dan.

The Ceil family presents a second hazard to magi who visit the farm. Although the magi of Flambeau protect the family, they also enslave it. Thus, Marc's children have grown to hate the Flambeau, and all magi for that matter. In a bid for freedom, Marc's daughter Marie fled the estate and now begs for outside aid (as described in Chapter Two). Her activities may draw the attention of foreign powers who would only interfere with the characters' efforts at Montrouge. What's more, Rico, Marie's brother, may become an informer for the Inquisition.

When the group spends time in the Ceil house, Rico attempts to contact them. First he tries to corner a lone grog or companion. When he does, he pauses and gives a determined stare. Then he asks for aid. He tells the group about "*blasphemies*" of the magi in the house and requests help in giving the magi "*their rightful due.*"

Rico is desperate to save his family. Unless someone either helps or restrains him, he sneaks away two days after the group's arrival. After escaping the farm, he goes to Montrouge and announces that warlocks have enchanted his family in their home. He denounces not only Curwen, William and Dan, but any character who refused to help him. And, if the characters have ever given Rico the opportunity to eavesdrop on their plans, his shares what he has learned with the local authorities. With word that witches reside on Ceil lands, the mundane authorities renew their witch-hunt with added vigor.

If the characters act on Rico's request, and oust the Flambeau magi, Rico is indebted and expresses his many thanks, maybe even sharing some of the family grain supply (though without his father's permission). If the characters remain on the farm for more than two days following the Flambeau's defeat, Rico becomes wary of the characters as well. He fears they may be no better than the other three magi. Should characters make demands on the family, or bully them in any way during this period, Rico sneaks away and reports the characters to the authorities, as above. What constitutes bullying or demanding in the characters actions is left up to you to determine.



8. ORBONNE POOLS

Round ponds dot the landscape here, some overshadowed by trees, others reflecting the sky. All look natural and innocent enough, although people attuned to such things may sense a tingle in the atmosphere, indicating the presence of sorcery (Per + Magic Sensitivity roll of 6+). The area has a Magic Aura of 1. The region was once a Sanctum of Silber Wise Hand. When the plague came, Juan, the envoy of House Quaesitoris, took refuge here. Characters with Magic Sensitivity may track the source of the area's Aura to the Sanctum with a Per + Skill score roll of 9+.

The pool indicated on the map as "Illusionary Pool" appears identical to the others, except, perhaps, for its utter lack of drainage, which indicates that its limpid surface may soon grow putrid. Several unusual red rocks lie along its sandy edges. This lake is actually a specially-researched 30th Level illusion, cast to conceal the Sanctum of Orbonne Pools. The water looks and feels real, although unnaturally calm. Characters passing the pool may recognize its rather unnatural appearance on a Per + Scan roll of 12+. Any use of Aquam spells in the pool's vicinity also belies its

true nature. Furthermore, the illusion has a limited capacity for responding to events. For example, if anyone throws a rock in, the stone slips beneath the surface with neither splash nor ripple.

The Sanctum's illusionary pool is a powerful spell, but entry to the Sanctum is possible in several ways. The illusion of the pool is vivid enough to convince even a "swimmer" that the pool is real. However, the spell cannot actually kill, and anybody who "drowns" tumbles into the magical hideaway. Even if somebody knows about the illusion, they must get a 6 or higher on a Bravery roll to enter by "committing suicide." Inanimate objects automatically sink into the Sanctum, though, allowing people on land to drop messages for magi there. The members of Ad Vis Per Veritas who know about the Sanctum — Carolta, Tierus and Damon — enter with an enchanted turtle shell, which negates the illusion for anybody touching the shell. The shell is always left by a particular red rock near the water's edge. To find it and recognize its magical significance requires a Per + Magical Sensitivity roll of 8+. Large numbers of people may enter the pool at one time by linking hands and having the leader hold the shell. When stripped of illusion, the Sanctum is actually a small hut in a dry gully. The

Curwen

Description: a squat magus, Curwen has the broad shoulders of a ploughman. He's quite proud of his musculature, and often proves his strength by breaking things or hurting people in "accidents." When faced with a problem, he tries to bludgeon his way past it with fiery spells. Curwen does not truly understand magic, and his fellow magi treat him more like a grog than an equal. He does not perceive this slight, or if he does, it seldom upsets him.

Roleplaying Tips: Threaten force whenever you get a chance and always speak louder than necessary. If anyone asks you for serious advice or magical help, act surprised and baffled. Curwen does not really expect people to take him seriously.

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

Confidence 1

Age 32

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Vain +1/Modest -1

Rash +3/Cautious -3

Important Skills

Speak Latin +1

Magic Theory +2

Parma Magica +1

Certámen +1

Short Spear +1

Magical Techniques

Creo 15

Intéllego 2

Muto 3

Perdo 13

Rego 13

Magical Forms

Animál 1

Córporem 2

Ignem 15

Terram 5

Spells

Heat Of The Searing Forge

Flash of the Scarlet Flames

Pilum Of Fire

Ball of Abysmal Flame

Burst of the Sweeping Flames

Ward Against Heat and Flames

Hornet Fire

Weapons

Short Spear: 1st +8 Atk +4 Dam +6

Def +2 Soak 0 Fat 0 Enc 0

Marc Ceil

Description: a tidy, intelligent man who considers himself slightly more noble than the typical peasant farmer. The Ceil family is lucky enough to own its own land, and Marc wants to live independently on it, even if that means accepting help from the three magi. He shuns contact with authority because both the Bishop and Baron disapprove of landed commoners. Marc is therefore angry with Rico if the boy reports to local officials, but doesn't go out of his way to help the characters for that would give the Baron the right to revoke Marc's lands.

Roleplaying Tips: Make it clear that you are both a farmer and a gentleman. Snap at people and act a little defensive, especially if anyone asks questions about your property.

Str +1 Int +1

Confidence 1

Age 39

Personality Traits

Jealous of Status +2/Humble -1

Important Skills

Farming +2

Speak Latin 1

Weapons

Axe (treat as battle axe): 1st +4 Atk +2

Dam +13

Def +2 Soak 0 Fat 0 Enc 0

Laborers (15)

Stm +2

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Weapons

Noncombatant

building has a roof of heavy thatching to protect it from "sinking" objects. One can leave the Sanctum without interference from the illusion.

Characters may seek out Silber's Sanctum for many reasons. They may want to investigate matters behind the magus's death, may have heard rumor that Juan took shelter there (maybe Carolta's tortoise overheard Dedric make such a supposition), or maybe Carolta suggests the group travel there to acquire more magical tools with which to rebuild Ad Vis Per Veritas.

Regardless of why the characters travel to the Sanctum, they soon learn the importance of what's to be learned there. Juan has seen the signs of a Demon in Montrouge. He also knows that Silber Wise Hand died by an unknown killer and rightly suspects a connection to the Demon. The existence of the plague confirms his conviction that something evil is at work against the Covenant. In order to protect himself from the evil Juan disguises himself, even from those who seem to be his friends. He dresses in tattered brown robes, with bits of bird-nest behind one ear. When strangers find him, he performs a rather stilted imitation of a religious hermit. If asked why he resides in the Sanctum, "the hermit" explains that he sought to drown himself for fear of the plague, and discovered the hut. He continues, "the good Lord did save me, and showed me the truth of His Divine will. He has a purpose for me here, and I await His command. After all, I am but a pious, holy man. Sworn to

live in simplicity, aye, sworn. Free of care, days devoted to prayer." As for the laboratory tools and refereneces kept in the Sanctum, "the hermit" claims to have no knowledge, and leaves them alone "for fear o' affending the Lord."

Juan receives the group warmly. He wants to believe that they are honest, benevolent envoys of another Covenant. He truly wants them to succeed in restoring Ad Vis Per Veritas and Montrouge. If the group tells Juan of its mission, he offers to accompany them. However, he maintains his facade.

As he grows to trust the group, Juan contributes his own thoughts about the danger in Montrouge. Naturally, he remains "in character" as a hermit. He worries constantly about Demons, and makes intimations that someone from Ad Vis Per Veritas is in league with it. Juan also mentions that, "A Devil by itself is not a danger. It's when mortals do a Devil's bidding that one must fear."

Dan O'Thunder

Description: a tall man, with a red beard and coal-black eyes. Dan wears a black cloak with scarlet trim and cultivates an aura of the occult. Many have mistaken him for a diabolist, given his eerie remarks and preoccupation with fire. Dan is actually no more sinister than any member of the House Flambeau, and though he has few scruples, he is not especially cruel. The magus fancies his quirks to be most seductive, and the isolation of life in a Covenant makes him cling to that hope with fervor. When outside the laboratories, Dan compulsively tests his hypothesis by making advances at women.

Roleplaying Tips: Allude to Lucifer and infernal fires whenever possible. Wink at females.

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

Confidence 1

Age 40

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -2

Unprincipled +2/Moral -3

Spooky +2/Reassuring -3

Lecherous +2/Restrained -2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +3

Scribe Latin +1

Magic Theory +1

Hermes Lore +1

Hermes History +1

Parma Magica (Ignem) +3

Certámen (Ignem) +5

Finesse 0

Concentration +1

Magical Techniques

Creo 10

Muto 3

Perdo 6

Rego 6

Magical Forms

Córporem 4

Ignem 15

Imágonem 13

Terram 4

Vim 6

Spells

Creeping Oil

Parching Wind

Disguise Of The New Visage

Phantasmal Fire

Illusion Of Cool Flames

The Captive Voice

Pilum Of Fire

Ball Of Abysmal Flame

Vision Of Heat's Fire

Prison Of Flames

Ward Against Heat and Flames

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +2 Atk +5 Dam +2

Def +1 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

If characters ask how "the hermit" knows so much about Ad Vis Per Veritas and Demons, he claims to be blessed with Divine insight.

If the characters suspect or know that Juan is at Orbonne pools, and address the hermit as "Juan," the magus gives up his facade and demands to know what business the characters have in the Sanctum, and in Montrouge. If they claim to be the Covenant's saviors, Juan has them swear to their good intentions on the

Order itself. Afterward he joins them in their travels, but if the characters refuse the oath, Juan travels with them to ensure that they do not break the Hermetic Code, using magic to inform his brethren of Quaesitoris of the characters' actions. If the characters still intend to break the Code (i.e. to sack Ad Vis Per Veritas), they must somehow distract Juan or otherwise render him incapable of reporting back to his House. Juan first tries to talk the characters out of breaking the Code,

William Fireheart

Description: a skinny, calculating magus, William leads this contingent of the House Flambeau. His Covenant leaders expect him to bring back something precious, and he does not intend to disappoint them. William spends much of his time lost in calculations, breaking his thought only to give orders. His skin has a dark pallor which could be the result of filth, or just his natural coloration.

William takes care of the band's important possessions, notably food, mounts and money. His purse holds fifty English silver pennies, and a golden torch pendant containing one rook of Ignem vis. He keeps the band's five horses in the Ceils's barn. The magi also have several deerskin packages of provisions in the farmhouse cellar and can feed both themselves and the Ceils for three more days. After that, William marshals the Ceils and his companions for a hunt. Officially, this is poaching, but under current local conditions there is no chance of the Baron catching them.

Roleplaying Tips: Busy yourself with other things whenever somebody else is talking and only make eye contact when giving an order. Channel all conversations toward the topic of finding Damon Le Mont, and robbing him with a minimum of danger.

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

Confidence 2

Age 51

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Domineering +3/Democratic -3

Practical +2/Whimsical -2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +3

Scribe Latin +2

Speak German +0

Magic Theory (enchancing items) +4

Hermes Lore (Wizard Marches) +3

Hermes History (rogue magi) +3

Parma Magica (Creo) +3

Certámen +2

Concentration +2

Finesse +1

Magical Techniques

Creo 10

Intéllego 10

Muto 12

Perdo 5

Rego 16

Magical Forms

Córporem 4

Ignem 15

Terram 4

Mentem 13

Vim 6

Spells

Bind Wound

The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch

Despair Of The Quivering Manacles

Pilum Of Fire

Arc Of Fiery Ribbons

Circle Of Encompassing Flames

The Many-Hued Conflagration

Ward Against Heat And Flames

Burst Of The Sweeping Flames

Return Of Mental Lucidity

Frosty Breath Of The Spoken Lie

Enchantment Of Detachment

Eye Of The Eons

The Invisible Eye Revealed

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +1 Atk +5 Dam 0

Def +1 Soak -1 Fat 0 Enc 0

using threats of punishment. If the characters persist with their actions, Juan calls a Wizards' March against the characters. Furthermore, if the characters take Juan's oath with the intent of breaking it later, the characters effectively outlaw themselves from the Order when they act. Again, Juan tries to talk the characters out of any such action. But, if the characters persist,

and if Juan is allowed to live and report the characters' indiscretion, he again arranges a Wizards' March against the group. The possibility of Wizards' March is left for you to develop after Black Death is complete, and may be the source of many new stories, or even a new direction for your Saga. Let's hope, though, that

Rico Ceil

Description: a pensively handsome youth, with locks of ink-black hair curling over his forehead. Rico has reached an age to brood about honor, duty and God. To him the visit of the magi seems a test from Heaven. He's ready to embark on a crusade against sorcery and welcomes any role in that crusade, either leader or follower. Rico never trusts a magus. It is possible that he might befriend grogs or companions, assuming that they are honest but "misguided."

Rico does not dare confront magi by himself. However, if people belittle his prejudices, he may burst out at magi, asking them if they are aware that their arts are forbidden by the Scripture. Characters may respond as they choose. If Rico gets a chance to berate the magi of House Flambeau, a genuine conflict may erupt. Those magi respond to him with mockery. "*Scripture now,*" Curwen says, "*Books, I understand, can be burned.*" Rico glances at his "supporters" (the characters), then retorts, "*Sir, you are blasphemous.*"

Unless the group extracts Rico from this situation, the Flambeau magi may burn him. This naturally outrages the other Ceils, who demand atonement. Your troupe could roleplay this affair in many ways. If the characters do not quickly silence the outraged Ceils, the affair could lead to a general Inquisition. However, by helping the family rid itself of the Flambeau magi, the group may win the clan to its side and gain access to Ceil grain.

Rico suspects witchcraft everywhere and senses a moral duty to warn others of evil. He spends hours mulling over the reasons behind the plague and is certain that the Lord is punishing Montrouge for having dealings with wizards. And, after overhearing the conversations of Curwen, Rico has concluded that Damon Le Mont is the greatest of the evils that the Lord despises, since he is "*notorious, even among his infamous kind.*" Rico's assumption is purely a lucky guess, and he presents it merely as a hypothesis.

Roleplaying Tips: Fix people with a searching, soulful gaze and speak in earnest. Rico always wants to do the right thing, even if it involves self-sacrifice — especially if it involves self-sacrifice. He expects the same of others.

Per +2 Prs +1 Com +1

Confidence 2

Age 20

Personality Traits

Brave +3/Cowardly -2

Quixotic +2/Worldly -2

Pious +2/Irreverent -3

Important Skills

Short sword +1

Farming +2

Shield Parry +2

Weapons

Short sword: 1st +5 Atk +5 Dam +5

Def (Round Shield) +5 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

Daughters (4)

Marc Ceil has four young daughters, in addition to his first-borne, Marie. Their names are Bonny, Cynthe, Ann and Jeanne and they range in age from five to sixteen. He trained them to show proper modesty and courtesy to guests, and they must also help him with farm work — they are not allowed to act silly or helpless. The girls fear and dislike the three members of House Flambeau, and also fear the newly arrived magi unless the characters somehow prove their good intentions. All the girls fear for their older sister Marie. They are extremely grateful if the group has met and fed her. (If the characters meet and help Marie after meeting the family, future visits to the Ceils are much more hospitable.) If the group helps the Ceils at any time, the girls may befriend the characters. And, Jeanne, the eldest, may volunteer to guide group around Montrouge.

Int +1

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Important Skills

Farming +2

Weapons

Noncombatants

the characters are sincere in their intent to restore Ad Vis Per Veritas.

Juan can serve several roles in your story. He knows a great deal of what happened in Montrouge and suspects more. If the characters are wise, they listen to "the hermit" and learn all they need to locate the evil in Montrouge. You can use Juan to give hints or to route the tale toward productive encounters. Given his disguise, he never claims to have special knowledge of Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi, but his "ideas" prove remarkably accurate. He might also use his

spells to subtly help the group. However, while serving as a benefactor, Juan also monitors the group's behavior, trying to judge first whether it somehow belongs to a Demonic conspiracy and second whether its members live up to the ideals of Hermes.

If Juan accompanies the group, he keeps careful track of each character's actions. Later, he reports them to the Quaesitors. Those who follow the laws of Hermes conscientiously receive an honorarium of one rook raw *vis*. If Juan sees anyone blatantly defy the Code, he marks that person for a reprimand or minor

Juan of Quaesitoris

Description: a sallow magus, with clean-shaven jowls and shoulder-length black hair. Juan upholds the Code Of Hermes devoutly, although he does not like to administer punishment. He prefers to settle disputes through compromise instead of adjudication. When unsure of himself, he prefers to hide and gather more information. He is not a coward, though, and his caution has saved him from many rash decisions.

Juan has the Gentle Gift. This allows him to masquerade as a mundane quite successfully. Even magi cannot sense his true nature except through probing spells.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak softly, and do not judge anyone unless formally pronouncing a decree of House Quaesitoris. Take pity on anyone ostracized or outcast by others.

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

Confidence 3

Age 48

Personality Traits

Brave 0/Cowardly 0

The Gentle Gift

Compassionate +2/Judgmental +2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +5

Scribe Latin +5

Magic Theory +2

Hermes Lore +2

Hermes History (Order insurrections) +3

Parma Magica (Intéllego) +3

Certámen 0

Finesse +1

Concentration +1

Magical Techniques

Creo 15

Intéllego 13

Muto 4

Rego 6

Magical Forms

Animál 6

Aurum 3

Córporem 14

Herbam 10

Mentem 15

Vim 10

Spells

Deluge of Rushing and Dashing

Bind Wound

The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch

Restoration Of The Defiled Body

The Severed Limb Made Whole

Whispers Through The Black Gate

Tracing The Trail of Death's Stench

Eye Of The Sage

Gift Of The Frog's Legs

Rise Of The Feathery Body

Intuition Of The Forest

Hunt For The Wild Herb

Converse With Plants And Trees

Shriek Of The Impending Shafts

Panic Of The Trembling Heart

Frosty Breath Of The Spoken Lie

Posing The Silent Question

Thoughts Within Babble

Scales of the Magical Weight

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +2 Atk +5 Dam +3

Def +1 Fat 0 Soak +1 Enc 0

punishment. Repeated breaks of the Code result in more harsh punishments (i.e. Wizards' March).

Though he prefers to remain in disguise, Juan shucks off his costume when danger arises. If the characters find themselves in combat with some imposing force, like Aramin, Damon or the 'Demon, Juan reveals his true self and comes to their rescue. Juan also reveals his true identity if the characters and the Flambeau magi at the Ceils's enter a confrontation in his presence. He seeks to put an immediate halt to the confrontation, and charges the instigator of the conflict with crimes against the Order. To resolve the fight he orders the characters to work with the Flambeau magi, or orders the Flambeau magi to leave Montrouge, whichever causes less disturbance at the time. If the Flambeau magi ever reveal their intention to plunder Ad Vis Per Veritas, Juan orders them back to Stonehenge Tribunal to await a Wizards' March. Characters can be a part of this March, providing evidence. The March could certainly be the basis of yet another story.

After revealing his true identity, Juan remains with the characters to ensure that further activities are conducted according to Hermetic Code. If the characters have been true to the Code throughout their travels with "the hermit," Juan works to help the characters after he has revealed his true self. If, by the end of the story, Juan has not revealed his true identity, he does so in the aftermath, either rewarding or condemning the characters for their previous actions.

Juan also preserves the remnants of the Ad Vis Per Veritas's library, having fled the Covenant with the books. These books can be used while the characters are at Silber's Sanctum, or can be collected as part of Ad Vis Per Veritas's restoration. The books' topics and respective knowledge scores are: Creo +12, Intéllego +13, Animál +20, Mentem +7, Córporem +10, Perdo +5, Rego +14, Hermes History +3, Humanities +2, Medicine +3, Occult Lore +3.

Juan's twofold role of secret benefactor also provides any First Mate with an entertaining role.

9. Montrouge

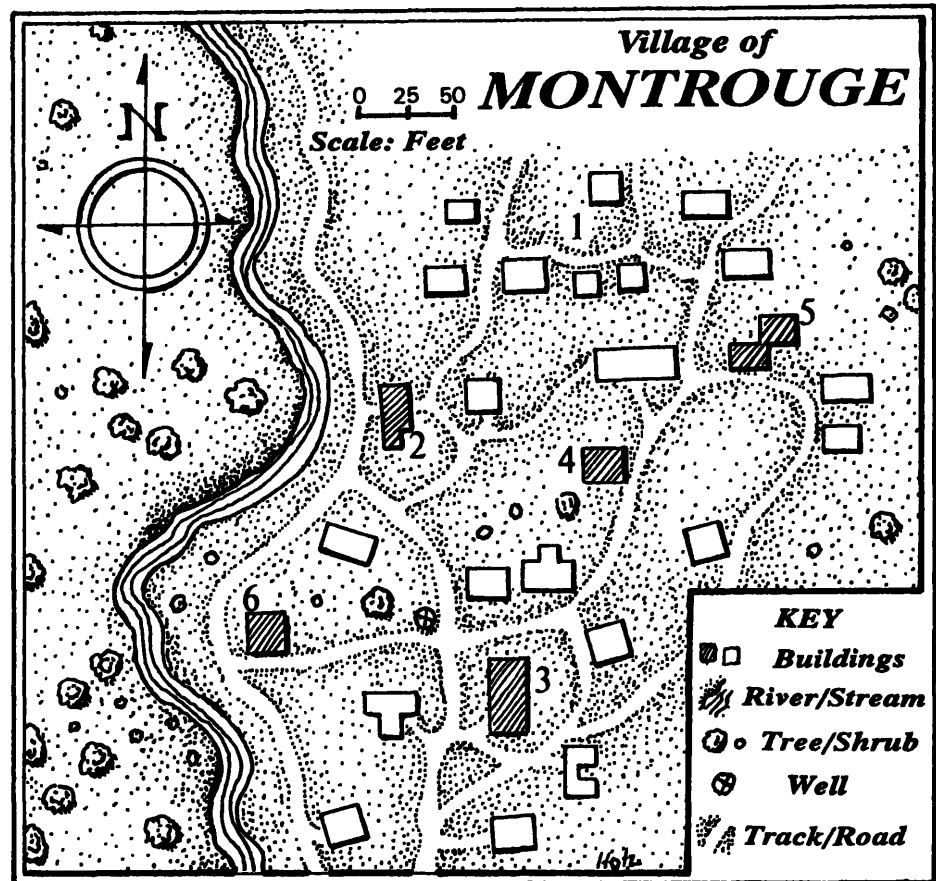
As one approaches the main town of Montrouge one passes a few lonely huts. Tall grasses mix with crops in the fields, and fences lie in disrepair. Nevertheless, the group sees signs of activity: smoke rises from the occasional chimney, and people have nailed timber over the doors

and windows of their homes. As the characters pass, they nearly trample a shriveled corpse. It lacks the rosy pallor that marks victims of the plague. The man died from the blows of a cudgel, landed by those afraid of infection.

Eventually, the characters' path leads into the village itself. Cabanes cluster in knots, streets randomly threading among them. Smells of smoke and mildew hang in the air, combined with the omnipresent scent of death. The houses remain boarded up but an occasional pedestrian passes, covering his face, scurrying away from any encounter.

The people of the region barricade themselves in their houses. They trust nobody, and seldom dare venture outside. Their fields lie untended. Eventually, the group must win these peoples' trust, ensure their safety and convince them to resume normal lives. Otherwise, the villagers will die and there will be no hope to restore the Covenant without the food and aid those people provide. At present, only the Church, the Smithy and the Red Crow Inn still open their doors to strangers, and the characters may seek help at those places. However, the organization of the townsfolk belongs to Chapters yet to come.

A total of one hundred houses stand in clusters throughout Montrouge. In and around the houses, 740



corpses go unattended. As they rot in the summer heat, bodies breed vermin and spread fresh disease. Eventually, the magi must find and inter the bodies, but this job requires more workers than the group's number. Furthermore, when an outsider touches a body, he or she risks contracting the plague. Characters must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 12 to stay healthy. The group must organize corpse-squads among the local peasantry if they intend to cope with the carnage left by the plague. That task of cleaning up the bodies is described in Chapter Two.

The following section describes the town using the *Village of Montrouge* map and its key. The section concludes with a list of rumors that characters might hear in town once they find someone to talk to. Some parts of the town, such as the Inn, contain full encounters. Others, such as the Church and Peasant Houses, do not contain immediate dangers for the characters, but dangers soon develop. Regardless of their dangers, each of the locales described in this section becomes important in Chapter Two as the characters seek to fulfill their goals in Montrouge: making con-

tacts, building support and finding helpers for important tasks.

1. Peasant Houses

Peasant houses and huts stand everywhere. Many still contain the remnants of families, and the group can try to meet some of the people who live within. However, the plague colors every encounter in Montrouge. Folk draw away from other people and speak to outsiders only in monosyllables or in inane remarks. Peasants' faces hang drawn and humorless. The cause for their pain appears at every corner, where the dead lie untended.

No one allows a stranger into his home. Most households keep huge, misshapen mongrels that attack prowlers. Only an exceptionally persuasive guest can charm his way past both dog and master, to keep the peasants from driving him out. Still, one might win a way into a hut with clever roleplaying and a successful stress roll against target number 14 using Prs + Folk Ken, Prs + Charm, Prs + Guile, Prs + Sing or suitable spells.

Typical peasants wholeheartedly believe the Bishop's teachings on sorcery. Those that doubt that all magi serve Demons feel that they must be the most zealous of all in their persecution of magi, to themselves avoid accusations of witchcraft. Thus, unless otherwise mentioned, the folk of Montrouge report any sign of magi. *Sparks at Dawn*, in Chapter Two, describes the forces sent to arrest anyone the peasants report.

Each different cluster of huts has a different family affiliation. Each household has its own peculiarities, and the prominent families of Montrouge are described below. You can use the below descriptions as general guides to roleplaying the sort of people characters meet in different parts of the town. Feel free to locate the homes of these families wherever in town you like.

Amongst the townsfolk are noteworthy people that assume an active role in the characters' activities; they are not simply quiet like most peasants. These "special" peasants are Jean Leufort, Bernadotte Aboir and Pere Ceil (their profiles are listed below). They may become contacts for or minor enemies of the characters, depending on circumstances and the personalities of either party. Characters should encounter these people whenever the group actively seeks out someone to deal with. To that end, locate these "special" peasants in town wherever they are needed at any given moment.

The characters might also walk into peasant huts at random. If they do, have them find things from the lists that follow. Use whichever of these entries that you like; don't feel obliged to use them all.

Bonne Leufort

Description: heavy, but tempered by a life of work, Bonne Leufort seems quite capable. Her unremarkable face acquires a ruddy tinge when she exerts herself. The people of Montrouge know Dame Leufort for her stubborn resolve and common sense, so listen to her if she supports the characters. The shock of plague and banditry have recently driven Bonne to an uncharacteristic desperation, but if the group proves amicable despite her fears, she gradually returns to her old, stable self.

Roleplaying Tips: In Bonne's initial frenzy and fear of the characters, Bonne gasps sentence fragments expressing her grievances against the intruders. "*Comin' here again . . . You wolves . . . killin' three doesn't satisfy you, that it?*" Once calm, Bonne becomes implacable in a grandmotherly way, giving advice. She punctuates her sentences with sighs and often uses the expression, "*Mercy me.*"

Str +1 Stm +1 Dex +1

Confidence 1

Age 42

Weapons

Axe: 1st +4 Atk +3 Dam +13

Def 0 Fat 0 Soak +1 Enc 0

Daughters

Noncombatants

• A footstep sounds behind the characters. When they turn, the group members see a masked man, dressed all in black, advancing quietly along the street. He is Marc Oullette, the collector of corpses. If left undisturbed, he proceeds with his work: finding bodies, patting them down for salvageable possessions and then dragging them away. The section titled *Monger of Death* provides more information on Oullette.

• The door to one hut swings open. A corpse lies on the floor, frozen in a spider-like crouch.

• Heavy log barriers cover the windows of this sturdy house. The door stands nailed shut, although one can force it open by passing a Str roll with an Ease Factor of 6. Inside, one discovers Bonne Leufort, a terrified peasant woman who survived the plague. She presses herself beside the doorway, preparing to sink an axe into the skull of whomever comes through. Local bandits killed her husband and two of her children. She naturally assumes that the group consists of yet more brigands.

The characters could easily kill Bonne, but may suffer casualties themselves; they must advance through the narrow doorway one at a time, under her axe. Keep in mind that the characters are not in Montrouge to murder householders. They're here to help survivors, and should expect that some folk are on edge, so may be defensive at first. If they are prepared for the contingency of attack, characters can guard against Bonne and reason with her (Com + Social Talents roll of 8+).

Once calmed, Bonne can help the characters win the trust of the local peasants, but her trust must be won. To gain Bonne's lasting aid, the characters must convince her of their goodwill; the group must present some token of its intentions, such as a simple gift or effective speech. You should resolve this encounter by roleplaying. When unsure of how Bonne reacts to the group's efforts, have the troupe attempt further Com and Social Talent rolls with a target number of 7. If the rolls succeed, Bonne is willing to act as the characters' representative amongst the townsfolk, or at least spreads good word of their intentions. If the characters' rolls repeatedly fail or the first botches, Bonne demands that the characters leave her home. She then reports what she believes are the visitors' intentions to the Baron's Provosts when they next ride into town.

Bonne doesn't live in her house alone. Her two skinny daughters huddle in a scooped-out root cellar under the floorboards. One must pass a Per + Alertness roll with an Ease Factor of 8 to realize they are there. If the group kills Bonne Leufort, the girls see the whole thing. Unless the characters find and kill them too, the girls cower in their hiding place until the group leaves. Then, the girls run away and spread the story of the characters' brutality throughout Montrouge.

On the other hand, if the group manages to win Bonne's confidence, the girls emerge when they see that their mother is no longer frightened. They hide behind their mother's skirts, laying eyes on magi for the first time in their lives.

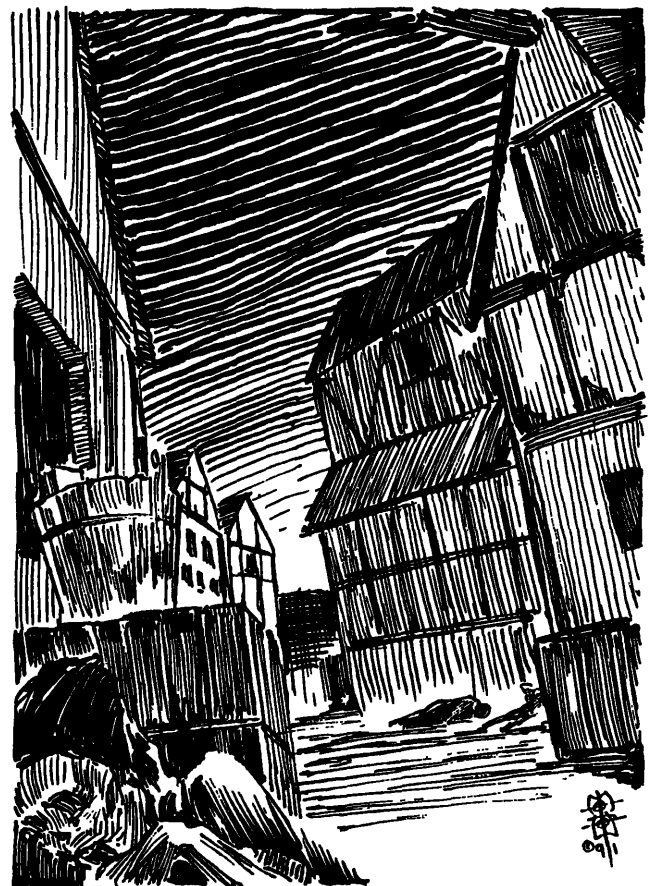
• The hut contains only the sweet smell of bloated corpses. Nobody can find the bodies themselves.

• Bodies lie frozen in contortions here, where they vomited themselves to death on spoiled food.

Families of Montrouge

The following list summarizes local households and lore. Use politics among the families to complicate the plot whenever you can. Family rivalry should only rarely lead to actual combat. However, every suggestion the group makes in organizing the reconstruction of the town instigates a quarrel between clans. If the group steadfastly ignores local intrigue, they either infuriate everyone or gain a reputation for true objectivity and honor. Both possibilities are equally likely. Consider the players' roleplaying and decide whether their characters seem base or righteous. Then put yourself in the position of the peasants and decide the same thing.

The description of each family includes a patriarch or other leader who can make decisions for the household.



• **Abendroth**, 120 survivors. Once one of Montrouge's largest families, the Abendroths lost most of their members to the plague. Survivors humbly accept their fate as the will of God. The Abendroths obey Grandfather Jon, an intensely pious man rumored to be over 80 years old.

• **Aboir**, 95 survivors. The Aboirs have a reputation for hard work and loyalty to the Baron. Their patriarch, Brandeis Aboir, wants to make it clear that he still serves Franc d'Montrouge, whatever course others follow.

• **Baun**, 100 survivors. The Baun family fostered more than its share of indigents. Now, its numbers substantially reduced, the survivors could live reasonably comfortably on the possessions of their relatives. Gerald Baun, the eldest member, wants to parlay his current state into permanent wealth.

• **Bellegarde**, 50 survivors. People have always whispered that the Bellegarde family suffers a dreadful curse. The fact that most of its members contracted the plague but still live only adds to such tales — they live to endure the plague's torment. Anna Bellegarde, the current matriarch of the family, bears horrible scars from her buboes. Many suspect that she is a witch. She furiously denies the accusation, and uses every opportunity she gets to speak against the "real" witches . . . in the Order of Hermes.

• **Ceil**, 90 survivors. The Ceils belong to a higher class than the rest of Montrouge's peasantry. Their ancestors received a grant of land from a long-dead Baron, making them quasi-nobility. Marc Ceil, the family head, rules a private fiefdom just outside town. See Chapter One, area 7 for details. The less exalted farmers resent Marc.

• **Coore**, 90 survivors. A family of dubious reputation, the Coores produce more than their share of shirkers and sneaks. Jonas Coore, the family head, sees no hope of overcoming such allegations. Instead, he wishes to establish relations with somebody powerful, such as the characters, in an effort to improve his family's standing regardless of local prejudice. However, if the group fails to reward Coore's friendship, he may later offer his aid to the bandit Mazain.

• **Deidre**, 50 survivors. This is an unobtrusive family, noted for its conformity to society. Its patriarch, Rudol Deidre, tries to accommodate anyone who seems to wield power in Montrouge.

• **Fitz**, 60 survivors. Fitz boys pride themselves on being the toughest youths in Montrouge. The plague left these roughnecks in complete charge of the family and one, Rudolf Fitz, has pushed his way to supremacy over the others. The Fitzes can work diligently when required. However, they brawl and bully at any

opportunity. The Fitzes have a long-standing enmity with the Leuforts.

• **Fournier**, 120 survivors. One can identify members of the Fournier household by their domed brows and thick wits. Most people attribute these family traits to inbreeding. Han Fournier, the family patriarch, seems as slow as the rest but is actually quite shrewd. He uses his reputation for stupidity as a ploy to put others at ease, while he schemes to improve the status of his family.

• **Hahn**, 90 survivors. Over half the members of the Hahn family took vows of poverty, chastity and prayer in hopes of escaping the plague. Now, 45 of the survivors must honor those oaths. When the group tries to organize Montrouge, they find the Hahns tractable, but preoccupied with religious duties. A woman named Jasmine speaks for the Hahn family. Although she has no official religious status, she would like to become the prioress of a convent.

• **Kelleher**, 100 survivors. The Kelleher family apparently has some Norse blood, since many of its members have blonde hair and fair features. A dignified peasant grandfather named Cuthbert leads them. The Kellehers never cooperate with Nadeus, owing to an unpunished murder which took place several centuries ago.

• **Leufort**, 40 survivors. The Leufort family contains several free farmers as well as peasantry. That makes them haughty, and rather unpopular. Leuforts often come to blows with the Fitzes and have humiliated the latter on several occasions. A woman named Nadine Leufort is currently the eldest member of the family and is responsible for its preservation.

• **Nadeau**, 90 survivors. The people of the Nadeau family live close together in the eastern half of town. During the plague, they carefully tended to family members who grew ill and paid the price. Almost three quarters of the Nadeaus died. Now nearly all the members of the household are in mourning. A young peasant man named Jacque Nadeau inherited the family leadership.

• **Oullette**, 110 survivors. People always respected the Oullettes as one of the more well-to-do peasant families. Several of their sons became priests. Now, after the plague, the Oullettes seem to lack nothing. Their members have plenty of food and other commodities and most of them seem relatively unruffled by all the recent deaths. Marc Oullette serves as the town's plague-undertaker and now controls the family.

• **Reis**, 100 survivors. The house Reis traditionally produced servants for the Baron's household. Those who live in the village have had no contact with their relatives inside for months. A woman named Marg-

aret serves as matriarch for the clan. She considers her family somewhat loftier than the other peasant households and wants little to do with any families but the Leuforts, Ceils or Oulettes.

• **Wasgatt, 95 survivors.** The Wasgatts live on the edge of town. People treat them almost as outsiders. Bernard Wasgatt, the patriarch, accuses both the Oulettes and Bellegardes of witchcraft. He does not cooperate with either family.

Peasant Encounters

Jean Leufort, Farmer

Description: a gaunt, bright-eyed peasant, Jean owns a fortune by peasant standards. The deaths in his extended family left him holding as much land as some knights. Jean also owns two draft horses, although he usually rides his beloved donkey Bungle. Unfortunately, he does not have a freeman's status, and as the sole member of his family, must perform all his household's corvee labor alone. Jean struggles to keep what he has and find a way to use it properly.

The first time Jean meets the group, he shies away from them and refuses to speak. As soon as he gets away, he reports the characters to Brother Triemus (see entry 7 in this town key). Hours after his aborted encounter with the group, Jean returns smiling, eager to entertain the characters at his hut and participate in their schemes. He intends to report everything he learns. However, impressive wizardry or bribes of over 20 deniers may reverse his loyalties. If he finds the characters suitably awe-inspiring, he sides with them.

Roleplaying Tips: Neither cowardly nor greedy by nature, Jean's empty wealth makes him both. This contradiction leaves him incapable of sincerity. He conceals every thought with a weak smile, always trying to extract himself from his latest peril. Jean is easily awed by displays of power, and works hard to side with the group seeming strongest at any given moment.

Personality Traits

Cautious +1/Brave -1

Confidence 2 (when on Church orders)

Age 34

Weapons

Noncombatant

Bernadotte Aboir, Peasant Widow

Description: large-boned and nervous, this woman cannot rid her memory of the plague, feeling for the death of every man, woman, and child. She blames the Covenant for the contagion and has nothing but praise for the Bishop's attempts to "restore the laws of God and man." Nevertheless, if the group approaches her carefully, it cannot find another peasant as helpful as

Bernadotte. If they say compassionate things, demonstrating pain at the town's many deaths, characters are invited to stay in Bernadotte's hut. She also helps arrange private meetings between the characters and other people of Montrouge. She even conceals the group in her son's haystack if they need to hide. However, to maintain Bernadotte's friendship, the characters must endure her constant sorrow and are expected to show the same emotion. If characters ever demonstrate callousness toward the town and its plight, Bernadotte becomes offended and refuses further aid. As long as the characters are sympathetic toward Bernadotte's torment, she cannot comprehend the possibility that her guests might actually have committed crimes. If the Bishop accuses them of anything, she claims that some mistake must have been made.

Bernadotte also knows Justinian, one of the Baron's Provosts (see *The Baron's Provosts* in Chapter Two). Justinian rides to town with the other officials to forage food for the Baron. Twice has he sneaked away from his group to visit Bernadotte. He brings her news of the palace, and can take messages into the Baron's castle. If the group makes friends with Bernadotte they may gain access to Justinian. However, any information he transfers must also go through Bernadotte, who colors it according to the imagination of an old peasant woman; mere innuendo becomes scandalous, and magic becomes a tool of evil.

Bernadotte has memorized all available information on the "abominations," or Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi. She knows that an informer to the Bishop has named three living magi: "one missing, one at Orbonne Pools and one, a woman, who leads a band of cutthroats somewhere on the Great Road" (note that errors in this information result from poor communication). She also knows that "Sir Peled caught a fourth wizard. Before the execution, the witch passed some message to a boy in the crowd, who escaped with it. Word has it he's hiding at the Red Crow Inn." Bernadotte has also heard that the informer denounced the merchant Venenzo, whom Bernadotte always despised for his lavish living. For some reason, though, the Bishop has not ordered an arrest. Bernadotte thinks that Venenzo has "gone into hiding in his house," possibly planning to escape through some sorcery.

Roleplaying Tips: Punctuate your speech with, "Believe me" and "Keep this in mind." Frequently lapse into listing "the poor little people" who died in the plague, detailing how they suffered.

Noncombatant

Pere Ceil, Peasant

Description: always sighing and drooping his head, Pere gives the impression that he endures terrible suffering. Actually, he lives well for a peasant, although his riches keep him busy. Pere owns three

iron plows and six oxen. He tills the fields of all those peasants who cannot till their own, accepting a fee in return, of which half goes to the Baron. The group may meet Pere traveling between farms with his beasts. He is willing to talk with characters, since he always welcomes an excuse not to work.

Pere knows all the commoners in town, and can give the group a thumbnail sketch of anyone for a coin or two. If offered a further bribe, he introduces the characters to people. If any members of the group treat Pere impolitely, he develops a dislike for them. In the event of an Inquisition (see Chapter Two, *Sparks at Dawn*) the farmer is quite willing to report a magus, either for revenge, or to protect himself from accusations of fraternization with magi.

Pere's Uncle, Marc Ceil, lives on a hill outside Montrouge (as previously discussed). Pere has not heard from Marc since the plague began and wants news badly. The Ceil family has strong bonds, and its members do anything to help one another. If Pere learns about the magi from House Flambeau he strives to get those magi executed. He even helps the characters do so. After they save the Ceils, or on word that the characters have already helped his family against the Flambeau, Pere offers the characters his services. He is adept at acquiring provisions and can outfit the characters with any supplies they might need, even in this time of shortage.

When encountered outdoors, Pere has two of his oxen and either a wagon or plow. He carries a heavy quarterstaff at all times, for directing his oxen and warding off robbers. The peasant wears a wide gray cloak with five deniers in the lining.

Roleplaying Tips: Grumble and groan but, above all, socialize. Get to know as many people as you can and use knowledge acquired for personal gain. Pere always has an opinion about his acquaintances, usually bad.

Str +1 Stm +1 Prs -1 Com +1

Confidence 3

Age 19

Important Skills

Folk Ken (rousing) +3

Farming +1

Animal Handling +1

Club +2

Club Parry (slashes) +3

Weapons

Club: 1st +4 Atk +5 Dam +6

Def +5 Fat 0 Soak +1 Enc 0

Typical Peasant

Stm +2

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Weapons

Unarmed (but can fight): 1st 0 Atk 0 Dam +2

Def +3 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0

Guard Dogs (one per house)

Every household keeps one of these yellow or tan mutts. Each dog has missing toes, severed to keep them from chasing the Baron's game. This prevents the beasts from running faster than two paces per combat Round.

Size -2

Cun -1 Per +4 Stm -1

Loyal +4

Bite: 1st +3 Atk +5 Dam 0

Tackle: 1st +3 Atk +4 Tackle 0

Fat +3 Def +3 Soak -1

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

2. Smithy

Dust and smoke float about this smithy, while metallic blows ring from within. Valjac, the smith, works here. He is an esteemed servitor of the Baron, but he also finds time to run his shop for public trade. He once served Ad Vis Per Veritas as well. A Baronial seal ornamented with twists of wrought iron advertise Valjac's profession. Anyone who passes a Per + Hermes Lore roll with an Ease Factor of 6 notices the stylized eyes and ears worked into the design.

Valjac amiably receives characters. If they want to talk about magic, he complies, and hammers on a half-finished plough blade to frustrate eavesdroppers. Valjac greatly misses the Covenant. He notes, "*We had no plague while the magi prospered.*"

The smith blames Bishop Ceravantes for the disasters in Montrouge. He knows that the Bishop purchased his mitre from the Tuscan Simonists. The smith also knows of Damon's successful blackmail, though doesn't know how Damon blackmailed Ceravantes. Valjac learned this information because, as a servitor of both Ad Vis Per Veritas and the Baron, he led magi to their appointments in the palace. He also traveled with Damon on the expedition to threaten Ceravantes.

In Valjac's eyes, Ceravantes is, "*a scoundrel, a tool of Satan. Hermes must bring that false Bishop to heel before he can strike again.*" With this thought in mind, he eagerly

offers what information he has and encourages the group to use it against the Bishop.

Valjac always quarrelled with Venenzo, the "oily moneybagger" who supplied the Covenant with exotic goods. Valjac explains that during the plague, Venenzo "shut himself up the first day, thinking, as usual, of his own hide." The smith half suspects that Venenzo fell ill and died. "He hasn't shown himself for weeks, not even to peep out the shutters."

No matter how or where the group meets Valjac, his wife Marti is somewhere nearby. Marti participates in all her husband's conversations, and both she and Valjac become indignant if anyone suggests that she leave. The smith's wife makes it her role to temper everything Valjac says. She dreads the day when someone will accuse him of conspiring with magi. Therefore, whenever he says something about the Covenant or magi to the group, Marti interjects. She says something like, "Not that we know that, mercy me." And, if Valjac encourages relations with the characters, Marti worries that someone will accuse her husband of letting warlocks hide in their home. To deflect such disaster, she tells Brother Triemus everything the group says. She further assures him that her husband only talks with the strangers "out of terror for their powers." Thus, characters find an ally in Valjac, but he may not seem so shortly, as things told him in confidence reach Triemus. Naturally, Valjac is enraged at his wife if he learns she has been treasonous.

Valjac's shop contains metalworking equipment, two unfinished ploughs, a bastard sword, a ring mail cuirass and several hundred horseshoes. The couple's kitchen holds an expensive array of spices, and both Valjac and his wife have expensive wardrobes, though the environment of the smithy prevents either from wearing them. An iron box buried beneath the forge contains 50 silver deniers.

Valjac, Smith

Description: calloused and sooty from his work, Valjac has the visage of a beleaguered captive. Actually, by the standards of Montrouge, he is a rich man. He does not behave like one, though, and follows the teachings of the Albigensian heretics, who preach against worldly possessions. Open to such new ways of thought, Valjac was prepared to work for Ad Vis Per Veritas's magi, whom more simple peasants dared not approach.

Roleplaying Tips: Valjac bellows when he speaks, used to the din of the forge. He becomes almost hysterical when speaking about religion, and about piety in particular, and hates the Bishop passionately.

Str +2 Dex +1

Confidence 0

Age 58

Personality Traits

Fervent +2/Pragmatic -2

Important Skills

Church Lore +2

Magic Sensitivity +1

Blacksmithing (tools) +3

Hammer +2

Weapons

Hammer (Treat as Mace): 1st +4 Atk +6

Dam +8

Def 0 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

Marti

Description: Marti sits down whenever possible, her matronly frame resplendent in its comfort. She spends most of her time keeping Valjac from squandering his fortune, and tries to downplay his ties to the local Covenant. The woman rescued her husband's savings from the "hermits" who wanted donations. She also resists her husband's religious quibbles against purchasing them both decent clothes and decent food. Furthermore, she has driven off the faeries that Valjac's work for the Covenant attracted. Having accomplished these feats, the prospect of a struggle with visiting magi does not faze Marti.

Note that the woman does not have any personal grudge against the characters. If a group member talks with Marti personally, reassuring her that the group does not want a donation, and will do its utmost not to involve her in a scandal, she may treat the characters respectably. Given these considerations, she does not go to Brother Triemus. Instead, she may even help the characters. Although Marti knows no unusual information, she has a keen, practical mind and may give useful advice to anyone who poses a problem to her. She also has cultivated a reputation as a stable, wholesome citizen, and can vouch for the characters if someone accuses them of lawlessness.

Roleplaying Tips: Marti has learned not to interrupt every single time her husband says something foolish. Instead, she places her hand to her cheek and sighs.

Int +2 Per +3

Confidence 3

Age 56

Personality Traits

Sensible +1/Flghty -2

Weapons

Noncombatant

3. House Of Venenzo, Merchant At Large

Venenzo's sturdy villa stands over the town like a miniature castle. Bright paint decorates its trim, and a silver-plated knocker hangs from its oak doors. Anyone who passes a Per + Scan roll with a target number of 6 notices two eyes and two ears filigreed on the plate that the rapper swings against. Though the house belonged to Venenzo, the merchant who supported Ad Vis Per Veritas, it now has other occupants.

Venenzo survived the plague by sealing himself in his house. However, he knew too much for Damon Le Mont to leave alive. Toward that end, the magus sought a group of palace knights who seemed amenable to his wishes. He pressured the Baron into having them arrest Venenzo in secret. This presented little difficulty. In the midst of the plague, nobody cared to notice a few noises at the foreign merchant's house. Then Damon swiftly planned a secret trial for witchcraft. By blackmailing Bishop Ceravantes, he arranged Venenzo's execution. Finally, making the most of his scheme, he sent the knights back to Venenzo's estate. They wait there now, ready to ambush any "witches" who come in search of their friend the merchant.

The doors of the house are sealed. Curtains and shutters cover the windows from inside and out. However, footsteps occasionally sound inside (Per + Alertness roll of 8+ to hear), and anyone who knocks hears someone inside say "Welcome . . . please come in" in a completely emotionless tone. Upon entering, the visitor sees the paneled hall of a city merchant, but no people. Stairs lead up, and two doors lead into other parts of the villa. Once the visitor advances away from the entry, the two doors fly open, and three armored men dash out of each (Per + Alertness roll of 12+ to detect the ambush). The first warrior to reach the characters leaps in front of the outside door and jams the latch shut. Then they all attempt to overpower the visitors.

Since this may well become the scene of the battle, the map *Venenzo's Mansion* depicts the interior of the house. The warriors have cleared furniture from their paths and scattered it to the sides of the vestibule. They know the house well, and if anyone flees into the other rooms, the guards go by the quickest route to cut them off.

Damon Le Mont also has a hand in any battle at the house as he's helped arrange it. He has items from the

house that allow him to see its interior through *Summoning the Distant Images*. Using that spell, he can cast *Opening The Intangible Tunnel* and bombard the group with spells. Using this tactic, Damon tries to neutralize magi and crumble the group's ability to resist. However, Le Mont uses his magic with caution. He does not open the *Tunnel* until the knights have their victims well engaged, and he closes it at once if the group begins directing powerful spells at him.

This encounter can take place even if the group has previously formed a friendly relationship with the Baron. Damon Le Mont, not Franc d'Montrouge, stands behind the knights' attack. Although the Baron ordered these soldiers to guard the house, the men have seen enough of the Baron's powers to know where true power lies. Only until the group thoroughly discredits Damon Le Mont do any guards follow the Baron exclusively.

If they manage to subdue the group, the warriors bind their captives with cord and smuggle them to a nearby alley, through a concealed passage behind the altar (Per + Scan or Search roll of 12+ to find from outside). From there, they take prisoners to the Baron's dungeon. At Damon's urging, the Bishop and Baron try such prisoners for witchcraft. See *Sparks at Dawn* for details.

If the knights are defeated, survivors resolve to reveal nothing of their mission. However, characters

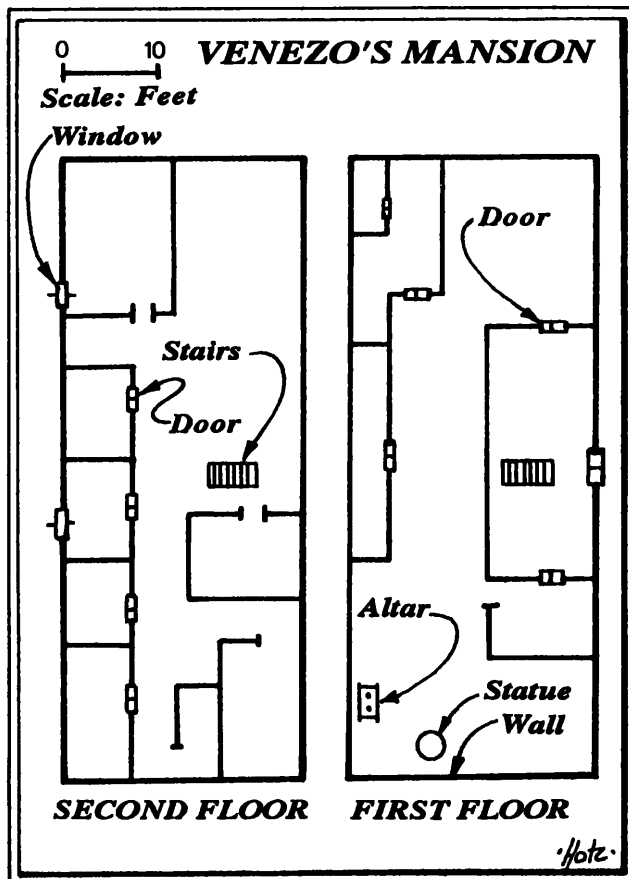


can interrogate them and use spells to get information. Interrogators must make a Prs + Intimidation roll of 12+ to learn that the Baron sent the warriors. If the roll is 15+, the characters learn that Damon Le Mont really sent them. Subtract 2 from any Ease Factor that involves torture. The knights don't know what Le Mont's full intentions are, though. If, at this point in the story, you don't want the characters learning that Damon Le Mont is behind events in Montrouge, he can destroy surviving knights. He opens his *Tunnel* and kills the knights with fiery spells. Characters learn nothing from corpses.

4. Red Crow Inn

The Red Crow Inn stands open for business, but has no customers. The plague does not encourage either travelers nor social gatherings, and the rumor that Vilris accepts plague victims as guests further diminishes his patronage. The innkeeper does indeed take in whoever knocks on his door. He offers his finest rooms to rich and poor alike, at practically no charge.

At the inn, the characters discover a tidy common room with oak rafters. The bedrooms have straw mattresses and whitewashed walls. Vilris gladly talks with the group and since he has no other guests, offers them his undivided attention. The innkeeper freely discusses the rumors of Montrouge, all the while gesturing with an empty flagon.



Baron's Knights (6)

These men have knightly blood but act more like simple thugs. When Baron d'Montrouge ordered them to arrest Venenozo and the merchant's associates, the knights did not ask for further explanation. They could see that it was really Damon Le Mont who wanted Venenozo captured. Regardless of who gives the orders, the knights enjoy their assignment and look forward to assaulting more witches. The knights also live well from Venenozo's larder, and garner bits of gold and silver from his furnishings. They therefore carry out the entrapment plan with gusto.

The soldiers live in the anterooms on either side of the entry hall. These offer the best position for their ambush. If not disturbed, the knights maintain their vigil until they receive further orders.

Str +2 Dex +1 Qik +1

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Important Skills

Bastard Sword +2

Dodge (thrusts) +3

Cudgel +1

Weapons

Bastard Sword: 1st +3 Atk +6 Dam +14

Cudgel: 1st +4 Atk +5 Dam +6

Def +1 Fat -3 Soak (Hauberk Chain) +12

Enc +3

Plague hangs in the air of the Inn. Anyone who enters the building must pass a Stm roll of 5+ to avoid infection. Those who eat or sleep here must pass a Stm roll of 12+. Note that characters cannot immediately identify the Inn as a source of infection. You should either make their Stm rolls in secret or delay them until the group appears to have thoroughly infected itself elsewhere (i.e. a few hours after the characters leave the inn).

Vilris infects his guests on purpose and robs the bodies of the dead. The fear of disease does not bother him, since he caught the plague months ago. The innkeeper survives by chewing Aramin's herbs. He belongs to Aramin's cult of the Death-god and saves corpses for offerings to his deity.

Vilris's odious career has grown particularly lucrative of late, since he has forced an apprentice magi under his power. He has offered shelter to Luc-Paul, a novice at Ad Vis Per Veritas. In return for shelter, the frightened adept agrees to assist in Vilris's plots. He has little actual magic, but can

perform supernatural feats of persuasion with song. Luc-Paul uses his talents to lull victims into dying at the Inn. He serves only out of terror, though, and tries to secretly beg other magi for help. He uses the lyrics of his songs to make such pleas.

The Innkeeper uses Luc-Paul whenever his guests prepare to leave. He beckons them back, saying that he has an exquisite musician at his Inn, and that they must not leave without hearing him. *"Oh, the melody is true enchantment. It's like the very angels, conducting you to your reward."* If the group refuses to listen, Vilris stamps his foot, and Luc-Paul begins to play. His song does indeed touch the heart, and characters must pass a Stm or appropriate Personality roll of 8+ or remain to hear the entire song.

Luc-Paul designs his music to make guests feel tired, cozy and at home in the Inn. If the characters fail another Stm or Personality roll, they spend the night with Vilris. The innkeeper intends for Luc-Paul to continue such music until the guests succumb to disease. If, after three nights (one roll per day is allowed to resist Luc-Paul's music), the victims show no sign of illness, Vilris either allows them to leave (if they look dangerous) or tries to murder them. Vilris can usually tell who poses a threat, and recognizes the danger posed by magi.

Luc-Paul does not dare disobey the Innkeeper's orders. However, he hates his master's practices and yearns to escape them. Therefore, he sings the following song, hoping that people will recognize that he is the song's main character, and that he is in need of rescue. He sings the lyrics only occasionally, interspersing them between long melodies.

Vilris suspects what Luc-Paul has in mind, but does not think the boy can succeed. He doubts if the boy has enough courage for an escape, and doesn't think anyone will heed the plea. Furthermore, Vilris believes that Luc-Paul's song is far more subtle than it actually is. The Innkeeper hums under his breath while the boy sings, to keep himself from falling under any enchantment.

Luc-Paul identifies his song as, *"The Lay of the Traitor."*

Any character who passes a Latin roll with an Ease Factor of 4+ can translate the conclusion as, *"This is my story."* Vilris, fortunately, cannot speak Latin.

Ultimately, Luc-Paul hopes not only to escape Vilris but to atone for his crimes. He feels guilt for not dying with his master, but also for causing the deaths of innocent people at the inn. No priest can relieve his guilt, since he sins, not against the Church, but against the Order. As his crimes have been ones of magic, he hopes to right them through magic, exacting revenge against Vilris, the Baron and the Bishop.

Luc-Paul has had visions predicting that visitors from another Covenant will help him. Once he's freed

by the group, Luc-Paul demands an immediate quest for revenge. He sees no value in further caution or subtlety. He wants to destroy Bishop Ceravantes now. Luc-Paul actively campaigns for his goals by pleading, trying to recruit friends among the characters, and by using his enchanting music.

Even though Luc-Paul considers himself sinful, characters may feel otherwise. He was commanded by Dedric to flee persecution, and only does Vilris's bidding in order to survive. He therefore acts out of necessity, in defiance of his morales. Characters face the same kinds of decisions in this story. However, if the characters gain the fellowship of Luc-Paul, and make choices of necessity over morality, like his, he reprimands them for behaving as he did. Whether Luc-Paul leaves the characters based on their actions is up to you, based on the heinousness of those actions.

No matter how touching the group finds Luc-Paul's hardships, the characters need to suppress knowledge of the boy's suffering. His tale could easily cause riots and panic in Montrouge. If people learn that the young magus, or any magus for that matter, has been spreading the plague, they call for the deaths of all wizards. Still, the characters undoubtedly want Vilris punished for his crimes, but they must do so secretly. If that punishment is made public, the characters must provide a plausible explanation for it. After all, the people of

Luc-Paul's Song

*When I sang, my songs were sad
I was doomed to obey my master
A simple apprentice, nothing more
Striving to always learn faster
Oh how I wished to run away
To flee from the school and the rod
Oh how I wish I had listened the
Ear to my master and heart to my God
For a day came when my foes pressed me near
And brandished the sword and the mace
And then I betrayed my master, dear
And offered them him in my place
Oh, the guilt, the shame,
I repent ten thousand times over!
I begged to join my sage in death
found him on the killing ground
But he ordered me to flee
And to obey him I was bound.
For seven long years I had wanted to run
And at last I took to my heels
But freedom I have nary found
I suffer and sweat for my meals
Freedom I have nary found
Nay, now I serve another
No student, but a simple slave
Compelled to harm my own brother.
Haec est historia mea.*

action in some way, the townsfolk turn against them, and the Inquisition soon begins. If the characters make an excuse for harming Vilris, you must determine whether the people believe it. Characters must make a Com + Charisma roll of 12+, modified by their Popularity (see below). Wise characters play on the people's paranoia and expose Vilris for the plague carrier he really is. If the characters fail miserably in their effort to justify Vilris's punishment, the people may cry witch-hunt. A moderate failure (one of 1-3 points) may simply result in further strained relations with townsfolk (subsequent Social Skills rolls suffer a -1 penalty). The exact outcome of the situation is left to you and the decisions of your troupe.

Luc-Paul

Description: Luc-Paul looks almost comical in the company of magi, with his skinny frame and childish stare. However, he has the knowledge and mannerisms of an adult, if not a magus. Those who hear his music find him hypnotic, almost numbing.

For most of his life, Luc-Paul could not bring himself to disobey a forceful order. This led only to disaster, as he first allowed his master Dedic to be executed and then became the bait in a plague-monger's deathtrap. Now, he tries to change his ways by refusing to accept even friendly advice. The group therefore finds the boy difficult to manage.

Despite his song, Luc-Paul always loved Dedic like a father and never wanted to run away. And, despite his residence in the inn, Luc-Paul has not yet contracted the plague.

Roleplaying Tips: Luc-Paul speaks in a deep voice, but has the uncontrolled emotions of a youth. His imagination runs toward the gothic, and he urges magi to use their most dangerous magic against Ceravantes, including necromancy and spells to summon Infernal powers. The idea of conjuring Dedic's spirit also fascinates him. These fantasies present a serious danger to the group, for under the influence of Luc-Paul's music, magi may actually attempt the spells he suggests. If anyone rejects Luc-Paul's ideas too sharply, he threatens to commit suicide and return as a ghost *"forever to sing in your dreams."*

Int +1 Prs -2 Com +3

Confidence 0

Age 12

Personality Traits

Brave -1/Cowardly +3

Leader-3/Follower +3

Morbid +2/Cheerful -1

Important Skills

Enchanting Music (sadness) +7

Visions +1

Magic Sensitivity +1

Magic Theory 0

Speak Latin +3

Weapons

Noncombatant

Vilris, Innkeeper

Description: Vilris looks drawn and has a short beard. The innkeeper wears clean, respectable clothing of green wool breeches and a brown cap. He possesses boundless energy and is always smiling, gesturing and pacing about. One can scarcely see the plague-induced bulges along his whiskered throat and underarms.

Vilris always had a streak of cruelty. When his wife contracted the plague, he did not hesitate to abandon her in the Fens. On that trip, the Innkeeper encountered Aramin and learned the details of the magus's cult. Later, when Vilris himself contracted the plague, he sought Aramin again. To save his life, he offered the cult his services as a robber of the dead. Warped by the horror of it all, Vilris quickly came to enjoy his new assignment.

If anyone accuses the Innkeeper of his crimes, he gapes in shock and claims complete innocence. It's nearly impossible to prove otherwise. Except for a few forgotten cases, he has allowed his victims to die naturally of the plague. It would be almost impossible to prove that he planned those deaths. After all, Vilris himself lives at the Inn. Everyone must assume that if he considered it infected, he would hardly dare stay there. Remember that nobody knows of Vilris's condition.

Anyone who looks for signs of disease on Vilris must pass a Per + Medicine roll with an Ease Factor of 9. Success indicates that the examiner notices the buboes. Anyone who strips Vilris and probes his throat for buboes finds them automatically. Vilris does not willingly consent to any examination.

Vilris owns enough Bitter Cane to keep himself alive for six weeks. Aramin willingly gives him more. The Innkeeper hides this lifesaving herbs among carrots in the inn cupboards.

Roleplaying Tips: Do not allow people to sit and think — that gives them time to outwit your plans. Offer drinks and make conversation. Order Luc-Paul to play. Vilris responds to other people's talk with mere nods and "uh-huh."

Vilris has a somewhat shallow mind and a coarse sense of humor. Thus, he shows no emotion over deaths and other tragedies. He also makes no secret of the fact that plague does not frighten him, though he does not boast, and never reveals the reasons behind his courage.

Stm +2

Confidence 2

Age 36

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Gregarious +1

Important Skills

Short Sword +2

Short Sword Parry +1

Weapons

Short Sword: 1st +4 Atk +6 Dam +6

Def +3 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0

5. Monger of Death

This black house stands across town from the church. A high fence surrounds its back. Beyond the house stands the town cemetery (to the east of the town, but not shown on the *Village of Montrouge* map), with rows of headstones rolling across the meadow. The house belongs to Marc Oulette, the undertaker. Marc often lingers near his house, dressed in the black robes and peaked hood of a plague undertaker. People call him the "plague-monger." They do not realize how appropriate a title that is.

Marc Oulette belongs to Aramin's cult of the dead. He has the plague himself and depends on Aramin's herbs to survive. The undertaker uses his position in town to rob the thousands of corpses that dot Montrouge. At a later point in this story, he even tries to spread the plague.

When the group meets Marc, he shows no sign of his intentions. Rather, the group finds him quite cooperative and eager to help rebuild the town. The group may well consult the man for help in disposing of corpses. If not, the undertaker quietly introduces himself and asks to help restore the town. Marc Oulette does what the group asks him and respectfully consults with characters about forthcoming threats to Montrouge. For much of the tale, he may serve as the group's assistant and guide. He hopes that such cooperation will allow him to go on stealing from the dead.

Marc Oulette

Description: a barrel-chested man with a pot belly. Marc's black robes give him the look of a headsman. Marc's profession exposed him to the most awful sights in Montrouge. Gradually, he grew numb to the death of others, while becoming all the more conscious of his own mortality. When struck with the plague himself, he became desperate. By the time he met Aramin, he was ready to do anything to save his life. Marc's present career in the cult not only keeps him alive but helps him overcome his horror of the plague.

Marc seems quite stable and even wise. As one of the town's honored citizens, he commands respect throughout the region. He also knows all about the agricultural and sanitary requirements of Montrouge and can advise the group on ways of saving the town.

Marc has not fought many battles. However, in extreme circumstances, he might wield his pick as a weapon.

Roleplaying Tips: Marc's illness gives him a slight cough. He often uses this hack to open a conversation. Marc holds his tongue most of the time, speaking only when he has truly useful advice. He uses a deep, authoritative voice.

Str +1 Stm +2

Confidence 2

Age 46

Personality Traits

Cowardly +1

Fatherly +1

Important Skills

Grave digging +1

Weapons

Pick: 1st +3 Atk +2 Dam +9

Def 0 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0

Peasant Militia (5)

Stm +2

Important Skills

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Weapons

Long Spear: 1st +8 Atk +2 Dam +6

Def +3 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0.5

A clutter of semi-valuable items fills Marc's home. He steals these things from corpses. Among other booty, Oullette owns a gold-hilted sword in the roman style, a pearl brooch and a chest of Asian silks. The sword comes from the Valjacs. The brooch once belonged to a Fitz. A Leufort once owned the chest of silks. These items each fetch over 200 deniers if one can find a buyer. They have inestimable value to their rightful owners.

Marc owns enough doses of Bitter Cane to keep himself alive for one month.

6. Church

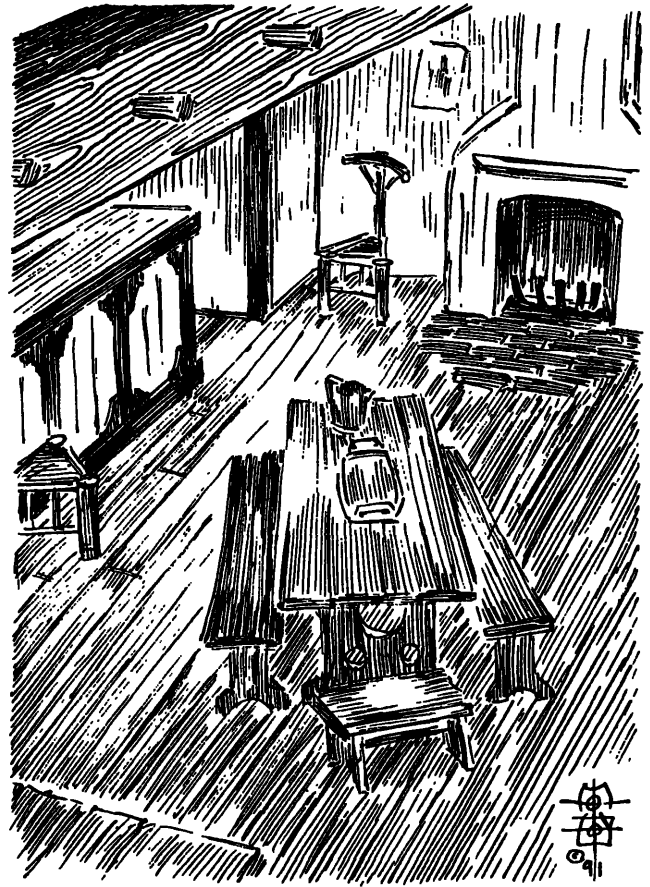
This stone structure is not tall, but its elegant workmanship makes it outshine every other structure in town. Carved cherubs and stained glass decorate the exterior. However, the massive doors open on a room which resembles the camp of some defeated army. Ragged peasants sprawl on blankets in random clusters, leaving only the altar sanctuary unoccupied. These serfs broke into Needle Stone at Ad Vis Per Veritas and suffered the curse of its Warding Lens. Five militiamen with long spears watch over the scene. They ensure that the curse victims remain in the church so that their "plague" is not spread. Anyone who enters the Church sets off a hubub which brings Brother Triemus out of his quarters. The group cannot talk to anyone here without being overheard.

The group may come to the church for a variety of reasons. They may wish to speak with the unfortunates who emerged cursed from Needle Stone. They may also hope that the Brother can get them audiences with Bishop Ceravantes. Or, the characters may come here in the hands of a peasant mob, seized as witches.

Brother Triemus

Description: black-robed and emaciated, Brother Triemus casts the silhouette of a yellowed skeleton. He is an honest Churchman and obeys the Bishop totally, but his loyalties lie with the Church, not with Ceravantes. Triemus sincerely wishes to help the people of Montrouge, his flock. Furthermore, he knows that not all magi serve the Devil. If the characters request his help on a humanitarian errand, he may well assist them.

Brother Triemus serves as a liaison to the Baron's castle. Due to his connection with the Church and the Bishop, the guards allow him in, even in time of plague. He converses with the Bishop roughly once a week and can carry messages to and from the characters. When the group has sufficient stature to visit the Baron, Brother Triemus may make their introduction. The monk can also rescue victims of witch-hunts, giving them sanctuary in the church until someone presents real



evidence of the characters' guilt or evil. However, Triemus is no ally of the Covenant. When a magus commits some questionable act, Triemus readily assists the Inquisition.

Brother Triemus knows the Bishop has some secret. On several occasions Ceravantes has approached Triemus in tears and a hairshirt, and stumbled into a confession, only to withdraw at the last moment to resume the arrogance of a Bishop. Furthermore, the monk notes that Ceravantes has demonstrated several sudden changes of heart. In one he unexpectedly postponed the investigation of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Triemus guesses that somebody is blackmailing the Bishop. Lacking a better suspect, he accuses the Baron.

Naturally, Triemus keeps his knowledge concealed. Nevertheless, he may tell the group of his fears, if the characters seem truly dedicated to the restoration of Montrouge. Triemus might also give the group a warning before they set out for the castle, explaining that they cannot rely on the Bishop for everything. He might further reveal the Bishop's near-confessions to a particularly pious character. You must decide whether the group wins Triemus's trust.

Roleplaying Tips: Triemus speaks mildly, gives lavish benedictions and acts truly hurt if people speak harshly to him. None of this keeps him from discharging his duties, though, however grim they may be.

Int +1 Per +1 Prs -2

Confidence 1

Age 54

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly -2

Dedicated (Church) +3

Compassionate (villagers) +2

Cooperative +1

Important Skills

Ecclesiastical Knowledge +2

Speak Latin +2

Scribe Latin +1

Weapons

Noncombatant

Afflicted Peasants (23)

These wretches were cursed by the Warding Lens and now see through the backs of one another's heads. This affliction is worse than blindness — what the people see confuses them more than blindness could, and it puts a dire fear of the Devil in them, for who else could have committed such evil? Certain that Infernal powers are behind their curse, the peasants are equally convinced that the Covenant's magi, and all magi for that matter, are in league with the Devil.

Since these curse victims live on Brother Triemus's charity, they always try to please Churchmen. This fact, combined with their understandable hatred for magi, means that at least one of the peasants testifies against any magus on trial. A magus who lifts the peasants' curse might receive dog-like affection from most of them, but a few peasants remain bitter, and are eager to gain notoriety by sending a magus to the pyre.

Relieved of their curse, the peasants can direct the group to Needle Stone. If asked about the Covenant, a peasant from the company tells the following tale:

"T was a perilous journey into that foul keep, like a trip through the Mouth of Hell. We smashed the door and went in. Once inside, we found an awful place, full of stone and rubble. Smelled of plague too, it did, as if the witches' herbs had failed them. That's when the curse hit.

"A great glass hung from the ceiling, which smote us with devilish rays. Yet some of us made it farther. We found books and tools, glass baubles and the bones of unearthly beasts. Everyone was smashing and burning and searching, but we never found herbs. Nobody found anything alive, except for a turtle.

"We did discover caves under the Covenant. I shunned them, but some of us decided to go inside. The fools! Not a one returned."

These peasants can fight if cured but have no special weapon skills.

Rumors and Information

Whenever characters talk to people in Montrouge, they may learn useful information. Keep this in mind whenever the group meets a stranger. The capacity to confer information and rumors is what makes the family heads and typical Storyguide characters of this Chapter truly interesting. When the characters trouble to talk with ordinary people, they receive these rumors as reward.

Note that this section presents rumors as a list, not a random table. You should not simply dispense the rumors. Instead, pay attention to what characters say to their contacts and introduce legends that pertain to that conversation. Also feel free to accelerate the story of Black Death by introducing useful information at dramatic moments, information that directs characters to a person or locale key to your tale.

- *"The merchant Venenzo, he had dealings with wizards. Whatever happened to the old Covenant, he had a hand in it."*

- *"Venzno locked himself into his house when the plague began. He still won't show himself for any money. Wise man. Shows he has some sense."*

- *"Keep away from the Red Crow Inn! Vilris, the Innkeeper, harbors victims of the plague. That may be a bit of Christian goodness, but it's too charitable for his health, and yours."*

- *"The Baron himself has wizard's blood and keeps sorcerers in his court."*

- *"Marc Oullette, the undertaker, keeps visiting the Inn through the back door. It makes sense, considering the number who must have died in the rooms."*

- *"There's a necromancer in the Fens, I tell you. He feeds on plague corpses, and uses the bones for his sorcery."*

- [This remark is made in reference to some passing peasant.] *"Him? He's a hard, hard man. When his brother took sick, he abandoned the boy in the Fens to die. It's an awful thing, but it's how he survives."*

- *"A group of plague monks live in the old Abbey out of town. They have herbs that prevent the plague, but only for those close to God."*



- *"The wizards had herbs that could heal the plague. A group of peasants stormed their Covenant to get some, but the sorcerers struck them down with some curse. The survivors live in the Church now."*

- *"The wizards? Bah! I've seen how they treat their own. I saw their poor little 'prentice, wandering the streets like a beggar, with the Provosts hunting witches and the plague in the air. I'd have helped him, but for the illness. Vilris, the innkeeper, bless him, actually took the poor boy in."*

- *"There're strange things out by Orbonne Pools. The real center of the sorcerers' power lies there." Whoever knows this rumor can direct the group to Orbonne Pools.*

- *"Valjac the smith will talk like the wind in autumn — and every word he breathes is a blasphemy. He hates the Bishop, hates the Church, hates the merchants and loves the wizards who brought the plague upon us."*

- *"The Ceils survived the plague by signing a pact with Infernal powers. They have a fiery spirit on their farm now, which consumes those who dare disturb them."*

- *"The magicians didn't vanish. They just gave up calling themselves wizards and started robbing people on the highways. Probably most of them never had any real powers at all."*

- *"There's someone still 'live at that house o' wizards. I heards word that the people livin' near it have been robbed — lost chickens and some holy treasures."*

- *"There're witches out there, you know. And they want to bring back the plague."*

- *"The Baron is a prisoner in his own castle, held by a Demon."*

- *"Wizards may not all worship the Dark One. But, just before this plague began, the sorcerers of the Covenant uncovered a diabolist among them. You tell me there's not a connection!"*

- *"A gentle hermit lives at Orbonne Pools, atoning for the sins of the town. When he completes his pennance, the plague will vanish entirely."*

- *"Misfortune is a punishment from God. The plague came to Montrouge because of the Bishop's sins. I can't tell you what he did, but folk say he has some awful things to atone for."*

Options

The following ideas are story possibilities that you may incorporate into your telling of Black Death. Feel free to utilize or discard them at your convenience. Remember that players always do things unannounced. You never know when



characters may set up the development of one of these possibilities.

- Damon Le Mont has a collection of objects from important places around Montrouge. Among the places he's stolen from are the Church, the Inn, the Smithy, Venenzo's house and, of course, Ad Vis Per Veritas. He uses his stolen items to spy on these places with his *Summoning The Distant Images* spell. From time to time, he may find himself looking at the group. Decide when he does, based on events underway in your game; Le Mont always tends to be looking when characters are uncovering something incriminating about him. Pay close attention to what the characters say while he listens. At very least, Damon's spying allows him to display an uncanny familiarity with the characters when he eventually meets them. At the very most, Damon's spying keeps him apprised of the characters' progress in their pursuit of him.

If, at any time, the characters say something to indicate that there are magi among them, Damon begins plotting to destroy the characters. He fears that magi will be able to restore Ad Vis Per Veritas and learn of his sins against the Order. Damon may shower the characters with destructive magic by means of the spell *Opening The Intangible Tunnel*. If this seems too dangerous or difficult, he waits until the group establishes contact with the Baron's castle. Then he accuses characters of witchcraft.

- Hunting anywhere in the Montrouge region constitutes poaching, a crime punishable by hanging. Under the current circumstances, the law goes unenforced, but if the characters hunt game, peasants resent the visitors' liberties. This resentment causes the group a -1 penalty on subsequent Social Skills rolls, or Popularity (see below). Anyone with a special grudge against the group might even report the characters' defiance of the law to the Provosts, when the Provosts return to Montrouge (see Chapter Two).





Chapter Two: Up From The Ashes

It was decided that the grogs, not the Magi, would talk to the peasants: "Our enemy is panic," Magus Dundinel said, "and simple folk, like animals, fear magi." As Dundinel commanded, the Magus's guards went into the town, and spoke with whomever would talk to them. They told the people that the plague was over. That it was safe to plant the summer crop. That it was safe to meet in public. That it was safe to for people to live together again. As days went by, and nothing awful took place, their messages began to have effect.

Then Sergeant Bartholomew died.

Balzac informed Dundinel of the death just before dawn. He roused the old Magus with a gentle shake, then withdrew and bowed deeply. His voice sounded more tense than saddened. He gave a quick, clinical description of the Sergeant's pallor, soiled bedclothes and fetid odor.

Dundinel did not think the symptoms sounded like plague. He suspected flux brought on by bad water. Nevertheless, he did not think his theories would be easy to explain. Not before a mob of terrified, illiterate peasants. Dundinel reflected that he faced the classic problem of a murderer. What could one do with a troublesome corpse?

Dundinel turned to Balzac. "Where is the body? Has anything been done, anyone been told?"

"No sir. Poor Bartholomew is lying in bed where we found him. We told you first of all." The grog lowered his head in sorrow, but had a certain gleam in his eye. "Have I done well, Lord Magus?"

"Well indeed. Cover him up . . . and bury him in secret. Do not say anything to anyone."

"As you wish." Balzac looked up at Dundinel, and took a deliberate step backward. "I go to obey your commands."

"I understand, Balzac." Dundinel looked at the grog. He noted the man's shallow, rapid breath and glances of appraisal, anxiety and . . . anticipation. "You want something, Balzac?"

"Only to serve you well." Balzac probed the Magus with his eyes. Then he smiled and bowed.

For a moment, Dundinel clenched his fist. A surge of anger passed through him, anger at the plague, anger at Bartholomew's death, anger at this importunate grog. Then it passed. Balzac continued to back out of the room, each step slower than the last. Whatever happened, he clearly intended to obey his orders, to the best of his ability. He had earned the right to be ambitious. Dundinel raised a hand for Balzac to stop. "One moment Balzac . . . From this moment on, you may consider yourself my Sergeant."

"Thank you! And now I go, Lord Magus." Balzac turned and hurried to fetch the undertaker.

"One more thing, Sergeant."

"Yes, Lord."

"It will not be long before we need to give the people of this town a leader. It cannot be me — they will never trust a Magus. Therefore, I will have to appoint someone else. I think you should give the matter some thought."

"Don't think I haven't, my Lord."

SUMMARY

Chapter Two covers picking up the pieces of the Covenant, *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, within the turbulent environment of Montrouge. Now that the characters have traveled around and know the condition of the town, they can start looking for the covenfolk, can put an end to old feuds, and can re-enter the fortress of Needle Stone. However, as the characters act, their enemies respond; the Demon has tentacles throughout the town.

Chapter Two consists of two parts. The section, *What Is To Be Done*, covers tasks the group must accomplish, and gives general guidelines for resolving them. The second section, *Events*, lists things that interfere with the characters' work. Put together, these parts move toward the story's climax.

In this Chapter, you must weave tasks and events into an exciting whole. By themselves, the goals listed under *What Is To Be Done* are simple. Those tasks serve another function, though. They provide a context for *Events*, and when goals are combined with the difficulty of events, the characters realize they have monumental problems before them. For example, the Inquisition is dangerous enough, but when it coincides with an unavoidable trip to town, it becomes traumatizing, and the characters must come to terms with the Inquisition.

Chapter Two also marks the rise in power of A'Fienluh and Montrouge's mundane authorities. As time passes and the characters interact with the townsfolk, the influence of the Demon grows stronger. And, the more experience A'Fienluh has with the characters, the more effectively he can assault them. Furthermore, as the immediate effects of the plague fade, the local authorities gain more power. However, they too fall under the influence of the Demon. Chapter Two ends when the Demon's efforts and assaults undermine the characters' reconstruction efforts. To restore *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, the characters must confront A'Fienluh once and for all. That final conflict, against the Demon and Damon Le Mont, takes place in the Baron's castle, as outlined in Chapter Three.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

This section consists of a breakdown of goals and tasks the characters must perform in their reconstruction of Montrouge and *Ad Vis Per Veritas*. Most of these tasks should seem obvious to the characters. However, if the characters overlook some critical necessity, you can have a Storyguide character point out the oversight, or that person can even assume the task if the characters are already overworked. The charac-

ters undoubtedly appreciate any help they can get. As the group works on restoration projects, you should use the maps and personalities of Chapter One to determine what the characters encounter, and whom the characters meet, or meet again. You should also record the results of events and encounters from Chapter One, including the conditions under which they occur, and the results that develop from them. Those results determine the course of *Events* yet to come in Chapter Two.

Gather the Flock

To restore *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, the characters have to find people to populate it. Some of the Covenant's former *custos* still live in town. Most of the surviving magi, on the other hand, are in hiding. As the characters discover these people, they move closer to rebuilding the Covenant, but also learn more of the events that led to Montrouge's destruction, and learn the exact nature of the enemy they still face.

The characters' search for refugee magi takes you back to Chapter One, as the group is forced to carefully search the wilderness surrounding Montrouge. Characters may also prowl through the ruins of *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, or look for the lost *Quaesitor* by Orbonne Pools. Furthermore, they can look for Aramin in the Fens, or follow the trail of Luc-Paul.

Characters may also search Montrouge for information on the missing magi. Certain villagers have useful information, and local folklore abounds with revelations about the magi, some factual and some fictional.

The characters are not the only ones looking for refugees of *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, though. Local authorities hunt magi as part of an Inquisition. Pay attention to the amount of information the characters reveal to villagers, as well as to the amount of information characters learn in their investigations. When the witch-hunt begins in earnest, peasants recall what the characters asked of them. Not only might the characters' curiosity be used as evidence against them (whether circumstantial or not), but the characters' enquiries can be used by the Baron's guards to track the characters down. For example, the characters may have asked the miller for directions to Orbonne Pools. Acquiring this information, the authorities learn where the characters have disappeared to. See *Sparks at Dawn* for complete information on the Inquisition.

For greatest chances of success in rebuilding *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, the characters should include or gain the alliance of about four magi (though that number is not mandatory). These magi not only help locate other missing magi and covenfolk, but help reorganize the

Covenant. Luc-Paul may fill one magus position, if someone arranges to develop his talents. The characters also need a staff of about ten servitors and craftsmen per magus involved in the Covenant's reconstruction. Those people work to restore the mundane functions of life that a Covenant relies on to survive. Villagers can be employed as these helpers, and villagers can be a source of the provisions and supplies the "new" Covenant needs. Basically, covenfolk may be found in the following areas:

- Carolta: Ad Vis Per Veritas (Chapter One, area 5)
- Juan: Orbonne Pools (Chapter One, area 8)
- Valjac: Smithy, in Montrouge (Chapter One, area 9)
- William, Curwen, and Dan: Ceil lands (Chapter One, area 7)
- Aramin and peasant servitors: Aramin's Hut (Chapter One, area 3)
- Luc-Paul: Red Crow Inn, in Montrouge (Chapter One, area 9)
- Bandits (potential grogs): Marauder Territory (Chapter One, area 4)

Once the characters locate magi from Ad Vis Per Veritas, they realize those magi are caught in a web of enmities spun by the Demon. Aramin and Carolta seek each other's lives. Luc-Paul helps a hated death-worshipper spread the plague. Juan the Quaesitor shelters his craft and lives in disguise, hiding from the hated Inquisition. And Damon, afraid of his sins being discovered, is responsible for the entire destruction of Montrouge. To gain the aid of some of these magi, the characters must resolve their disputes or alleviate their apprehensions. The tasks required to do so vary with each magus.

The characters need not win over everyone on the above list, nor need they win the respect of all Montrouge's residents. In fact, some magi and townsfolk may become the enemies of the characters. At the same time, the characters may find allies in the most unlikely of places. Wise characters try to befriend peasants, guards and others wherever they go. Those people become potential candidates for covenfolk. The *custos* available for a new Covenant depend only on the logic of your story.

Reconstructing the Covenant and town involves a lot of work, more so than a single group of people can accomplish. Accordingly, the characters may break up to perform their duties. While some members of the group search for missing magi from the local Covenant, other members may remain in Montrouge to help organize its reconstruction. The group may opt to leave its magi leaders in town. Thus, the troupe has a chance to play characters that sometimes might receive short shrift, as grogs and minor companions

venture into the secret places surrounding Montrouge. At the same time, magi must deal with the townsfolk. There's no telling what paranoid peasants might spring on the magi. Conversely, the group may leave its weaker members in charge of Montrouge, or it may appoint trusted Storyguide characters as regents. The organization of the reconstruction is left to the players.

Each option in the separation of the characters has interesting ramifications. You must flesh out these possibilities depending on the circumstances of your story. Peasants who serve one charismatic character may feel less inclined to follow a substitute. And regents, left in control of the town by the characters, may pursue their own interests at the expense of the general good. For example, a leader picked from one family might collect most of the grain harvested, and keep it in his household's possession. Finally, if no characters stay in Montrouge, any events you planned for them there may occur in the group's absence. Who knows what the results may be? The peasants are outraged that the characters abandoned them when some new tragedy strikes.

Clear the Covenant

Before Ad Vis Per Veritas can be restored, the characters must enter, or reenter, the Covenant building and make it safe for magi to return on a permanent basis. Though such a task bears some resemblance to



the classic “dungeon crawl,” you should not allow it to be treated as such. Rather than fight any opponent who comes along, the characters must locate and communicate with the Covenant’s inhabitants: Carolta and her grogs. Those people may be invaluable members of the revived Covenant, but aren’t any help if they’re killed.

The incursion into Ad Vis Per Veritas also brings characters in contact with Damon Le Mont. Damon watches the building with his spells. If the chance arises, he even casts *Opening the Intangible Tunnel* and attacks the characters there. Depending on how the characters react, this attack can amount to a baffling danger (if characters can’t find the source of the attacks), or can rocket the story to its conclusion (if the characters track the attacks to Le Mont).

Public Support

To perform many of its activities, the magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas need acquiescence from the people of Montrouge. In the past the townsfolk provided services, information and goods that the Covenant needed to survive, hence the good relations the magi maintained with the mundanes. Now that the characters seek to restore Ad Vis Per Veritas, they must renew those relations. Good relations can be established if the characters recruit new servitors and covenfolk from Montrouge itself; by helping the Covenant, the villagers help themselves. If the characters manage to make themselves extremely popular, they might even be able to mitigate the Inquisition, and other threats to the Covenant that lurk in Montrouge.

To determine whether characters become locally popular, keep track of events that make the magi beloved or despised. Those events determine a Public Support factor, which goes up by one or two points each time the characters do something popular, or drops when the characters shock or harm simple folk. These modifiers apply to subsequent relations that characters have with mundane folk. Your judgement determines when these modifiers are imposed and applied. Some sample modifiers are listed below:

- Character saves a life: +2
- Characters expose or apprehend a bandit or villain of some kind: +1
- Characters befriend a locally influential person, such as Brother Triemus, Bonne Leufort or Bernadotte: +2
- Generally pious, kindly behavior: +1
- Generally unpleasant behavior: -1
- Characters offend a popular person, such as Brother Triemus, Bonne or Bernadotte: -2
- Characters kill an innocent person: -4

- Characters at open war with the Baron or the Church: -1

- Characters frighten peasants with blatant magic: -3

Public Support factors come into play when the characters interact with townsfolk, when the characters appeal to the town for some sort of action, or when the characters’ enemies call on townspeople to hunt the characters down. In the last case, peasants refuse to hunt down popular characters, but are quick to join the hunt against hated characters. Details on the hunt appear under *Events*. Overall, magi who make friends in the town can find many uses for the peasantry. Whenever public interactions are undertaken by the characters, their current Public Support value modifies any rolls made. These rolls are usually based on Communication and Social Talents, but may apply to any roll you deem appropriate. Also remember that the characters’ Public Support score is constantly changing based on what they do. Accordingly, you should constantly reevaluate the group’s score. Keep in mind, though, that the score only changes if characters’ actions become public knowledge. If an act, whether malicious or honorable, is covered up, it has no bearing on Public Support.

If the characters decide to appeal to large numbers of peasants, the characters must first decide how word of their good intentions can be spread. Peasants cannot read posters and leaflets. Towncriers and door-to-door solicitors might reach the people, but whoever mingles with the people runs the risk of revealing himself as a magus, or magical ally, to friend and foe.

Once the characters embark on a public appeal, they must negotiate with individual Storyguide characters; the characters have to win the villagers over. You may resolve the effectiveness of each appeal by requesting a Social Skills test, modified by the characters’ Public Support rating. The test made depends on the skills the characters use, with difficulty ratings determined based on the results the characters seek. If characters themselves address the people, Com + Charisma rolls might be required. If the characters have local agents work for them, those agents win the villagers over with successful Com + Folk Ken rolls.

The following list shows some things the characters might want peasants to do, and also shows Ease Factors for convincing villagers to comply:

- Tolerate and support Ad Vis Per Veritas: 10
- Clean up plague-ridden corpses: 12
- Provide volunteers to work as servants or guards in the Covenant: 12 (a maximum of 50 volunteers come)
- Stop a riot: 20
- Openly defy the Baron or Bishop: 25

The difficulty ratings of other requests may be determined by you based on the scores listed here.

Events

As the characters strive to rebuild Montrouge, they must contend with the following developments. The description of each Event shows the general circumstances that cause it to occur. With a knowledge of those circumstances, you may activate an event when characters bring those circumstances about. In the act of introducing Events, let enough time pass between each to let the characters appreciate the full magnitude of each. At the same time, though, keep the Events frequent enough to keep the group from relaxing. Occasionally you may want to rearrange the timing of Events to particularly worry the characters. This might be accomplished, not by spacing Events over time, but by staging two or more at the same time, forcing characters to juggle all at once. The choice of timing is left to you and your particular style of storytelling. Ideally, you should build problem upon problem until the story draws to a climax. Ultimately, the group

must meet the source of all its problems, within the Baron's palace.

As a final note, the last Event in this section, *Outlaws*, occurs if the Baron identifies characters as magi, bandits or rivals to his power. He then outlaws them and hunts them down.

Event #1: The Baron's Provosts

Each morning, the Baron's Provosts sweep through Montrouge. They come to scout the countryside and to find uncontaminated sources of food for the castle. Provost patrols gallop down the road from the castle and rush through town as swiftly as possible. The riders wear gloves and linen masks to ward off the plague. If people block their path, they ride them down. Peasants have learned to expect and avoid the Provosts.

When the Provosts pass an untouched field, they stop to strip it. They do not dare steal from fields where farmers have worked, for fear of the plague. The men harvest the food themselves and stuff it into saddlebags. If anyone approaches, for any purpose, they fire arrows to warn the person away. The Provosts dare



not meet a possible carrier of the plague. If asked to justify their pillaging, the Provosts point out that they are foraging on behalf of the Baron and would normally take much more grain, legally, in taxes — a hint that they should be left alone or more harmful measures will be taken.

Sooner or later, the Provosts and the group meet. Most characters probably react with hostility toward masked strangers who steal from the fields of innocent farmers. Such a decision seems further justified if the Provosts shoot at characters to warn them away. If the group asks questions about the “marauders,” Montrouge’s peasants identify the men as Provosts, but remain stony-faced, refusing to either condone or rail against the pseudo-robbers. The group must make up its own mind whether to fight the Provosts or leave them alone.

When characters speak with the Provosts, an ill-considered statement could prove disastrous. The patrols listen closely for slurs against the Baron’s authority. They also notice any hints that magi are involved in local activities. If the Provosts discover either possibility, they report same to the Baron. In the case of a slur against the Baron, he orders the characters arrested. In the case of magi in town, the Baron (Damon, really) arranges an Inquisition (see below). In an arrest attempt, staged the morning after the Baron gives the order, the Provosts ride into town under the pretence of collecting more food. However, they suddenly turn from their usual agenda and seek to round up the people who slurred against the Baron. If the characters go into hiding, the townsfolk may betray them, depending on the characters’ popularity.

If the Baron believes magi are in town, or if the characters go into hiding and the Provosts cannot find them, Inquisition soon arrives in Montrouge (in a couple days, letting the characters snoop around before they are persecuted). Calling an Inquisition, the Baron takes the official position of assuming that dark powers are at work and that townsfolk are in league with the witches. In actuality, Damon wants the magi hunted down.

Finally, if slurring characters or magi relent to the Provosts when they come to collect the foreigners, the characters are taken to the castle, where they meet the Baron and Damon. The results of that meeting are up to the troupe and you.

Anyone who attacks the Baron’s Provosts becomes an outlaw. More Provosts come to arrest such people, and if a criminal has made enemies in town, those people use the opportunity to get revenge. For full details on how the Baron hunts a fugitive, see the Event *Sparks at Dawn*. If the Baron catches those who assault his officers, he sentences them to death. Escaping death is not an easy affair. Prisoners are visited by Ceravantes, though, and may appeal to him for a

pardon, depending on how sympathetic toward the town the characters present themselves.

If the group avoids an initial battle with the Provosts, it may have later, less violent, meetings with the Provosts. For three days after the characters’ first meeting with the Provosts, the Provosts fail to ride back through town. They fear the characters may be carriers of new plague and wait to see what effects the characters have on those peasants who survived the first plague. The Provosts’ delayed return gives the characters an opportunity to scout around Montrouge without too much interference from mundane authorities.

On the fourth day following their meeting with the characters, the Provosts resume their old ways. They ride from the castle in the morning to collect food. The demand for food in the castle has become too great to resist any longer. Determining that no new plague has arisen, the Provosts also round up peasants for work details. Furthermore, the Provosts begin questioning anyone, including the characters, who does something

Provosts (20 total)

The Provosts treat everyone with brusque hostility. Some have a trace of kindness, but their job encourages them to think of commoners as lazy and dishonest. Characters with an air of nobility may actually command some respect from these trustees (Prs + Charisma roll of 8+). The Provosts usually run from obvious magi and report them to the Baron and Bishop.

Provosts carry clubs for clouting disrespectful serfs and broadswords in case of more fierce opponents. They also have self bows, primarily for driving away plague victims.

Str +1

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Authoritarian +1/Understanding -1

Important Skills

Riding +1

Club +1

Broadsword +1

Broadsword Parry +1

Self bow +1

Weapon

Club: 1st +3 Atk +4 Dam +5

Broadsword: 1st +4 Atk +5 Dam +8

Self bow: Rate +3 Atk +1 Dam +8

Def +4 Fat 0

Soak (Hard Leather Cuirass) +2 Enc 0

noteworthy. It's up to you to decide what constitutes "noteworthy." Essentially, the Provosts want to ensure that no one, particularly the characters, are making trouble. If the characters remain polite and seem law-abiding, the Provosts tolerate them. Indeed, the Provosts may think well of characters who are particularly friendly or helpful. Thus, Provosts may even introduce characters to the Baron.

Event #2: Mass Hysteria

This event can occur at any time. Any new case, or apparent new case, of the plague may cause a panic. Other reasons for mass hysteria include mysterious deaths and dramatic uses of magic. Recognized Churchmen can also stir up riots against those they brand diabolists, by passing Com + Folk Ken rolls of 8+.

When mass hysteria breaks out, people temporarily forget their fear of crowds in a frenzy to lynch some symbol of their fear. As a prelude to chaos, bunches of people form among village huts. They then converge into a shouting mob. The rioters attack the nearest available enemy. They choose magi in preference to all other scapegoats.

Roll a d10 (simple die) and multiply the result by 5. That number of peasants attacks the target of a riot. Though only those people actually fight, nearly everyone in town mobs around the combatants, shouting, and making it difficult for rescuers to get in and victims to escape (two successful Str + Brawl rolls of 12+ to do either). Successive rolls, in an effort to get two successes, are allowed. For each roll attempted, after the first, that does not succeed, a cumulative -1 modifier is applied to subsequent rolls. Once a second successful entry or escape roll is made, the character gets through the crowd. If a character wading through a crowd ever draws a weapon, his rolls to move receive a +3 modifier as people try to scatter in fear. Characters caught in a rioting crowd suffer 1d10+5 damage per Round, Defense rolls not applying. Soak rolls still operate, though. If someone kills the leaders of a riot, the crowds stampede away, trampling d10 (simple die) villagers to death. Any character caught in a stampeding crowd must pass a Str + Brawl roll of value 7 to avoid being trampled. Trampling causes d10+10 damage. Victims of a trample may attempt Soak rolls as usual, but Defense rolls do not apply.

If a character cannot escape a rioting crowd, and is knocked unconscious, he is quickly killed unless someone comes to his rescue. If you prefer that characters not die in such an ignoble way, rioters may drop the body once the character is unconscious, and move on to another target. Or, seeing the body of their victim apparently lifeless, the townsfolk may collect their reason and scatter for fear of reprisal for their act.

If the Inquisition has not begun before mass hysteria breaks out, the Inquisition shortly follows.

Event #3: Plague After Plague

Innumerable bodies go untended in Montrouge. They sprawl on streets and float in wells. Dead serfs lie in fields and dead householders rot in their beds. Rats eat bodies, and drag human remains throughout town. The smell of death permeates everything. Describe these horrors to the players in every sensual way possible; the dead smell terribly and are sickening to the eye. Characters might even taste the infection of the dead in the air.

Someone must clean up these bodies or risk a whole series of fresh epidemics. For every five days that corpses go ungathered, you should roll a simple die. On a result of 1, typhus breaks out. On a roll of 2, dysentery sweeps the town. On a higher roll, no further disease spreads, for now. . .

Typhus begins as a headache, and progresses to a fever accompanied by a burning rash. Each outbreak kills 5% of the surviving peasants and renders 20% of them unable to work for three weeks. During a typhus outbreak, all characters must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 7. Anyone who fails the roll contracts the disease and must attempt five more Stm rolls with an Ease Factor of 9, rolled every other day. On a failed roll, a Fatigue Level is lost. On a Botch, a victim dies. Lost Fatigue Levels return after two weeks. Physicians have no effective treatments for typhus, but at your option, a healer can prevent death caused by a Botched roll by passing an Int + Medicine check with an Ease Factor of 9.

Dysentery causes severe abdominal distress. An outbreak kills only 1% of the surviving peasants but it leaves 40% of them unable to work for one week. During a dysentery outbreak, all characters must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 9. Anyone who fails contracts the disease and must attempt four more Stm rolls with an Ease Factor of 9, rolled once per day. On a failed roll, a character loses a Fatigue Level. Lost Fatigue returns after one week. Anyone under a physician's care (i.e. a character with Medicine skill) adds the physician's skill score to his rolls to resist the loss of Fatigue Levels.

For the sake of the story, don't have both diseases afflict a character — one disease should be enough to contend with.

In order to clean up the bodies, the characters may appeal to the townsfolk for help; there are too many bodies around for the characters to tend to themselves. This is a request that the group's Public Support score has a bearing on. To determine whether the characters convince the townsfolk to help, refer to *What is to be Done*, above. The town's efforts require ten days of

work if the characters insist on burying the bodies, or three days if the characters allow cremation. Burning bodies, of course, defies the dictates of the Church, and opens the characters to charges of *"manifest contempt for the remains of the departed."* Such Church accusations impose a -2 penalty to the characters' Public Support score during the Inquisition.

Characters cleaning up the bodies risk contracting the plague; lice carrying the disease still linger around the bodies. Anyone who has lived through the plague in Montrouge may handle corpses without fear. Others must pass *Stm* rolls, made once per day during exposure to the bodies, with an Ease Factor of 12 to avoid contracting the disease. Given this danger, characters are wise not to work with bodies themselves. However, those who are not obviously magi, nobility, or otherwise elite arouse considerable anger by demanding that peasants do the work while those folk do not. Such a demand imposes a -1 modifier on all future Social Skills rolls made by those "common" folk who do not work. It's not that the peasants want characters to risk the plague, they simply have no idea why the bodies have no effect on them while they supposedly do to the foreigners. Perhaps the group can explain the nature of contagion to one person, but certainly not to a crowd. Characters who try to explain the origins of disease to a crowd are simply jeered off their soapbox (-5 to all speech skill rolls). The crowd cannot be illuminated on the origins of disease because its members are too firmly entrenched in their own beliefs on the origins of the plague. Those ideas range from infernal activity to foul vapors. Characters who pass an *Int + Folk Ken* roll of 6+ realize that attempts at peasant education are useless.

Attempts to clean up the bodies not only bring characters in contact with disease and ignorant crowds, but may also bring the characters in contact with the "death-monger," Marc Oullette. He gladly joins any effort to clean up the corpses, having done that work in the past. Anyone who watches the undertaker may catch

him pilfering from the dead, and collecting relics for Aramin's rituals. A *Per + Scan* or *Alertness* (if a character is specifically watching) roll of 8+ is needed to do so. If Oullette can't convince the characters to let him go, claiming that he needs to steal to eat, he admits he's been stealing and lets the characters reclaim all his prizes. However, Marc never reveals his connection to Aramin. He also tries to stay in the characters' good graces, to get revenge later (as described below).

If the characters do nothing about the bodies, the Baron orders corpses buried four days into the story. His Provosts demand that the characters participate. The characters can hire Marc Oullette, for ten silver



deniers, to do their share of the work. If characters refuse to help dispose of the bodies, they not only incur resentment from locals (-2 to Public Support), but are branded outlaws. See the Event *Outlaws*, below, to determine what happens to such characters.

Event #4: The Rise of Mazain

Mazain, the newly risen of Montrouge's bandits, serves the same function among the bandits that the group serves in Montrouge and Ad Vis Per Veritas. In both cases, a society finds itself faced with extinction and turns to a leader. Thus, Mazain and the characters have a similar mission, but different motives. So, where they might become allies, they are more likely to become enemies.

The first time any robbers attack the characters (back in Chapter One, area 4), only a few participate and they show little skill. However, after the bandits suffer a couple decisive defeats, they realize they need a leader. Mazain thus comes to power. You may determine the exact timing of his rise, maximizing drama in the characters' relations with the bandits.

The characters may learn of Mazain's rise to power the day after his inauguration. Peasants find the corpses of three bandits hanging from a roadside tree. The dead men were Mazain's competitors for power; he accepts no dissent. By the end of the day, peasants are already whispering of an outlaw hero, a former knight of the castle, named Mazain, who styles himself a champion of the common folk.

The characters can encounter Mazain and his followers in any number of ways. If the characters spend any significant amount of time in the woods, they come into contact with Montrouge's bandit gang, as bandit scouts quickly ferret the characters out. Montrouge's bandits and their leader do not willingly share their forest shelter. If the characters take to the woods in hopes of avoiding the Inquisition, they must face these new foes. The characters might, in restoring order at Montrouge and Ad Vis Per Veritas, hunt the bandits down. Hunting the bandits doesn't necessarily mean the characters intend to kill them. The characters could hunt them to arrange terms for the bandits to abandon the forests, maybe with the promise of protection from the rebuilt Covenant. Or, the characters could hunt the bandits, intending to offer them positions as covenfolk at Ad Vis Per Veritas. The nature of the bandits' hunt is determined by the characters' needs.

Mazain, on the other hand, has no tolerance for magi in his forest, and hunts them down as soon as he learns they are about. Even if Mazain doesn't know the characters are magi, he hunts them down simply to be rid of them. By this time in the story Mazain probably knows that the characters are in Montrouge to rebuild.

He perceives that intention a threat to his bid for power and local control. Thus, he attacks the characters to further his own ends.

The rise of Mazain has three major effects on the combat ability of Montrouge's bandits. First, under Mazain's direction, ten of the surviving Ordinary Bandits improve their tactics enough to become Experienced Bandits. Second, Mazain draws new recruits. He gets a Com + Leadership roll. Multiply the result by three to determine the number of Ordinary Bandits he recruits. Finally, Mazain introduces organization and skill into the bandits' fighting strategy. Thus, when Mazain stages an attack, he may rely on the skilled resources of an entire band of men. When you arrange an attack on the characters by the bandits, use all the strategy and tactics you can conceive of. Assume Mazain knows information about the characters that only you could know; his scouts keep him fully apprised of events in the forest.

When Mazain learns the characters are in the forest, he launches a guerilla campaign to destroy them. His men may not defeat the characters, but Mazain himself undoubtedly uses enough caution and craft to survive for the rest of the story. You should not launch Mazain's raids in a blinding series, forcing characters to defeat him outright, or succumb to his will. Instead, keep Mazain in the background, organizing select bandit attacks. Have him emerge when the characters are weakening from bandit attacks, or have him appear when drama demands.

Mazain considers intelligence the most important aspect of strategy. Whether traveling, resting in camp, staking out an ambush site, or attacking a target, Mazain first employs scouts. He usually has four lookouts, one ahead of his gang, one behind, and one to each flank. The scouts travel about five hundred feet away from the main body of men. They communicate with each other and the bandit gang through a series of bird calls. A short trill means a weak enemy has been encountered (half the size or smaller than the bandit gang, with no recognizable magi or warriors). In this events, one-third of the gang charges forward to attack, while two other groups move around the flanks to surround their opponents. The scouts use a series of three long peeps to indicate a stronger foe. Upon receiving this alert, the gang slips away as quietly as possible.

Before launching an all-out attack, Mazain's men prepare a rally point about half a mile from their target. They dig a string of foot-sized holes around the perimeter of their rally point, with sharp stakes planted at the bottom of each hole. Any stranger who crosses this perimeter must make a Per + Scan roll of 8+ or step into a pit. These traps do 1d10+5 damage. One may Soak against the damage normally, but armor does not count. In addition, a victim must make a second Soak

roll. If it fails, the stake impales the victim's foot, rooting the person on the spot. Removing the stake requires an hour of work and a Dex roll of 7+. Anyone who has Chirurgy may add his score to the roll. If the roll fails, the victim takes another 1d10+5 damage, with no chance to Soak. The same damage is suffered if the victim simply yanks his foot free.

Also note that the bandits know where their pits are and can usually avoid them. However, if a bandit ever Botches a roll in combat, he slips into a pit. The same may occur to characters who suffer Botches.

The bandits need twelve man-hours of work to trap an area with these pits. If they are short of time, they may reuse an old rally point, but still take care not to become predictable.

Mazain's men attack swiftly, take what they want, and withdraw to their rally point. Anyone who chases them runs the risk of stepping into pits. When devising bandit attacks, make a rough sketch of the rally point so you know when characters risk crossing the area's trapped boundary.

Mazain on the Run

Mazain's technique of defense resembles his technique of attack: evasive. He tries to avoid battle. To prevent the characters from attacking him, Mazain keeps his bandits moving. They camp in a different



spot every night, and ring their camp with scouts and spike traps.

If Mazain's troops somehow find themselves confronted by a stiff opponent, they attempt a fighting withdrawal. They then regroup at their closest trapped rally point. If it becomes clear that their opponents cannot be defeated, the gang disperses. Fugitives flee in all directions.

Mazain knows the woods and knows how to avoid trackers. Whenever he begins a march, whether to move his camp, launch an attack, or leave the site of a raid, he sends decoys in different directions to confuse trackers. To find the right trail, anyone who wishes to follow the bandits to their meeting place must make a Per + Tracking roll of 12+. A roll of 6+ is then needed to follow that trail. If Mazain's scouts report trackers, Mazain has his men cross a stream, forcing pursuers to attempt another Tracking roll, this time with a difficulty rating of 12.

If the characters make repeated attempts to follow Mazain's men through the woods, the bandits build a false camp in a clearing. The "camp" is surrounded by a fifty foot wide perimeter. Within the camp is a crowded mass of lean-tos, made from dry brush. Pit traps encircle and pervade the huts (use the same rolls discussed above to avoid them). Bandits also hide in the trees at all sides. When the characters enter the "camp," Mazain and a handful of archers fire blazing arrows into the lean-tos, setting them afire. As if the pit traps don't make it hard enough for the characters to escape, bandits in trees shoot at the characters. If any characters manage to escape the "camp," a small group of bandits closes for hand-to-hand combat.

When truly cornered, Mazain resorts to magic. He owns an enchanted shield that once belonged to a Captain of Grogs at Ad Vis Per Veritas. Mazain normally keeps the shield covered with a black hide. When he reveals it, its power is obvious. The painted metal shield bears a twisted version of Ad Vis Per Veritas's heraldic symbol, its eyes squeezed shut and its ears plugged. The symbol seeds confusion amongst any foe, causing opponents to shut their eyes. The shield also creates the illusionary sound of boots rushing up from behind an opponent. This distraction gives Mazain the opportunity to flee, or attack.

In game terms, those who look at the shield must make an Int + Magic Sensitivity or Premonitions roll of 13+, or shut their eyes for d10 (simple die) Rounds. When the shield is uncovered, all characters probably look unless a player explicitly states otherwise. The shield's illusionary sounds can be "seen through" with magical spells and Magical Resistance rolls. The shield can function only once a day. It has 20 Magic Points (add that score to the shield's chance to penetrate magi's Magic Resistance rolls). If any magus has done

research into Ad Vis Per Veritas, he recalls (on a Hermes History roll of 9+) that the Covenant called the shield "Carlos's Medusa." If magi haven't done research, they may still know of the shield on a similar roll of 15+.

If captured, Mazain does what his captors demand. He makes no craven pleas for mercy, but also has no cause to sacrifice his life for. If the characters are defeated by Mazain and his men, but only barely, Mazain risks no further confrontations and has his men flee, leaving any surviving characters to the forest's will. If Mazain and his followers easily defeat the characters, the characters are taken prisoner. Mazain wants information about events in Montrouge, and about any intention the Baron has to hunt him down. While held prisoner, the characters have an opportunity to make deals with Mazain. The Bandit King isn't foolish, and if made a lucrative offer that will promote him to local power, he accepts. See *Negotiating with Mazain* for all the possibilities of diplomacy.

Negotiating with Mazain

After the fall of Ad Vis Per Veritas, Mazain caught one of the Covenant's Captains of Grogs wandering through the forest, having fled from disaster. Mazain interrogated the grog and killed him, taking the Captain's shield. Having gained inside information into the fate of Ad Vis Per Veritas, Mazain knows a great deal about the predicaments of Ad Vis Per Veritas and Montrouge. Characters who see the true face of Mazain's shield realize that he bears some connection to the Covenant and may seek him out as a source of information. It is indeed tricky to make an ally out of Mazain, but not impossible.

Characters may try to negotiate with the Bandit King. If word spreads that the group wishes to speak with Mazain, his spies inform him of the fact. Unless the characters make some sort of arrangement to meet the bandit, he sends one of his less competent bandits as a messenger. If the group attacks the envoy, Mazain waits until the characters are next in the forest, and launches a retributive strike. Mazain's agents also publicly spread word of the characters' treachery. This causes the characters a -1 on all future Public Support rolls. (Being the people's "protector," Mazain is regarded as a hero.)

Mazain agrees to parley but only on his terms. He demands that a negotiator meet him alone, on the log paths of the Fens (See *Marauder Territory* in Chapter One). Mazain does come by himself, but his men hide in the surrounding woods, and scouts watch the area. These woodsmen appear only if the group tries to harm Mazain. Anyone searching for a hidden bandit must make a Per + Search roll of 10+.

Mazain wants one thing. He intends to take credit for saving Montrouge and thereby win lands and peerage from the Baron. His goals are not diametri-

cally opposed to those of the group, however, as he is disinterested in the salvation of Ad Vis Per Veritas. If the characters agree to Mazain's terms, they must announce to the people of Montrouge that their reconstruction efforts have been at the order of Mazain, and that he is truly responsible for their salvation. Already perceiving Mazain as a folk hero, the townsfolk accept the characters' announcement at face value.

In return for this parcel of power, Mazain considers whatever demands the characters have. If the characters want information on Ad Vis Per Veritas, Mazain provides it. Likewise, if the characters want bandits as covenfolk, some are offered. Whether the characters can control Mazain's followers is another story (see Chapter One for the difficulty of doing so). If the characters had previously led the bandits, the bandits may be willing to follow the characters again.

Roleplay Mazain as adroitly as you can. If characters won't give him the power he wants, he requests food, money weapons and freedom to recruit. If the group has ever captured any of his men, Mazain negotiates for their safe return. And, if the group makes concessions, Mazain reciprocates. Mazain is leery of any grand alliance with the group, though. However, if the characters give him everything he wants, he has no reason to keep fighting them.

Also keep in mind that Mazain is clever and wily. If he can get what he wants from the characters without fulfilling his side of the bargain, he does so. Furthermore, he never fulfills a bargain that leaves him vulnerable.

If the group declares Mazain a legitimate defender of the town, the Baron recognizes Mazain as such. After all, Mazain has a popular following among the townsfolk (all surviving members of the Fitz and Deidre families become his followers), so is a force that the Baron cannot simply dispatch. Thus, Mazain assumes the standing (but not the title) of a noble. Having put Mazain in his present position of power, the characters may now have a partner who is too powerful for their tastes. Mazain certainly figures prominently in any future Covenant activities, after Ad Vis Per Veritas has been rebuilt.

Event #5: Marie's Distress

This Event begins as a plea for help and can lead to a ticklish confrontation. However, if the group manages it well, they gain information about various dangers and mysteries around Montrouge. The Event could also add a new complication to the Bishop's witch-hunt, which began along with the plague and may resume in earnest now that the characters are in town. This Event may take place whenever the characters are free to investigate new developments in Montrouge's corruption. If the characters have already visited the Ceil estate and have dealt with the

Mazain

Description: a wiry man, with crooked teeth. Mazain has spent his life robbing travelers. Years ago he was a knight under Baron d'Montrouge, and lived in the Baron's castle. However, when he became involved with one of the Baron's favored maids, and made her pregnant, Mazain was banished from the castle. In order to survive without enduring the drudgery of common peasant life, Mazain took to the woods and adopted a bandit's lifestyle. Hard experiences along the road have made him wily. Today, the plague gives him a supply of new recruits, and he intends to use them efficiently, to gain power.

Mazain does not consider himself different from a knight or king's general. He is a leader of warriors who simply happens to lack lands and title. Now, he hopes to win status beyond that of an outlaw. He is, of course, simply trying to build support when he talks about the defense of commoners — he feels no particular love for the people. However, he is no more insincere in his claims to devotion than the average feudal lord, so can't really be faulted.

When Mazain ambushed Ad Vis Per Veritas's grog Captain, he learned that a Demon had come to Montrouge and that a magus named Damon had made a bid for power in the Covenant. From that, Mazain surmises that Damon summoned the Demon and that the two now keep the Baron under their control. Mazain also knows of Aramin's sanctum in the Fens. If he learns that the characters include magi, he assumes that they have connections to the Demon as well, but doesn't act against them outright. He prefers to use them to further his own ends, and may even learn of their good intentions when the characters plot to defeat A'Fienluh.

Roleplaying Tips: Gaze intently at whomever you speak with. Let others talk, while you consider where they fit into your plans. Use a gruff voice and do not waste words. Mazain has few actual morals, and upholds only those principles of honor he considers necessary in a ruler.

Str +3 Stm +1 Qik +2 Per +1

Confidence 3

Age 33

Personality Traits

Brave +3/Cowardly -1

Honorable 0

Self-Serving +2

Reliable -1

Important Skills

Tracking (woodlands) +4

Stealth +2

Survival (woods) +1

Alertness (ambushes) +3

Broadsword (forest fighting) +7

Self bow (forest shooting) +4

Dodge (charges) +3

Weapons

Broadsword: 1st +12 Atk +11 Dam +16

Self bow: Rate +5 Atk +5 Dam +8

Def +6 Fat -2 Soak +6 Enc 3

Mazain's Bandits

For the profiles of Mazain's Ordinary and Experienced bandits, refer to Chapter One, area 4. Mazain recruits his followers from the bandits already occupying the forests, and from Montrouge.

Mazain's Scouts

These are members of the bandit gang, picked for their skills at woodcraft.

Str +2 Stm +1 Qik +1 Per +3

Important Skills

Tracking +2

Stealth +2

Survival (woods) +1

Alertness (ambushes) +3

Scan (keeping watch) +3

Search +1

Primary Weapon (usually axe): (forest fighting) +5

Secondary Weapon (usually self bow): (forest shooting) +4

Dodge (mounted attacks) +3

Weapons

Axe: 1st +6 Atk +5 Dam +17

Self bow: Rate +2 Atk +9 Dam +8

Def +6 Fat -3 Soak 6 Enc 4



Flambeau magi residing there, this Event may be used to introduce characters to the dark ways of Marc Oullette. Otherwise, this Event inspires the characters to visit the Ceil family, but with full knowledge of the magical threat therein.

Marie's Distress begins when Bernadotte leads an emaciated woman through town. The girl is Marie Ceil, daughter of Marc Ceil (see Chapter One), a minor vassal of the Baron. The Ceils shut themselves into their estate when the plague began, and rumors say they have some magical ward against disease. Marie does not discuss her family in public. However, she has obviously gone hungry, and her darting eyes reveal her fear.

Bernadotte leads her companion by the arm, straight to the group. Under the peasant woman's eye, Marie swallows, hangs her head and then meets a character's gaze. Then she finds her courage. She tells the following story in a firm voice:

"One month ago, at the height of the plague, a trio of witchy men approached my family's house and demanded hospitality. The men were murder-eyed, and obsessed with fire. The tallest one terrorized me with remarks that made me fear, not just for my honor, but for my soul! Me and my brother Rico agreed that I had to flee."

Marie Ceil

Description: a comely young woman, with an oval face and light-brown hair which borders on blonde. Marie has blue eyes and slightly crooked teeth. This girl was content and capable on her father's farm. She knows the area of Montrouge well, though never paid much attention to the Covenant.

Marie is devoutly loyal to her family and seeks to protect their honor as much as her own. She is therefore willing to report the characters to the local authorities if she feels they endanger her family. She only refrains from doing so if the characters rid her home of the three Flambeau, and if they reunite her with her kin. However, if the characters ever appear to be in league with those intruders, Marie is sure to betray the characters. And, if the characters think Marie hates the Flambeau magi, she tells them that her brother hates them even more.

Marie does not have the plague.

Marie Ceil Statistics

Roleplaying Tips: First, concentrate on getting food for yourself and help for your family. Unless you have a firm reason to oppose something, nod your head in acquiescence. Express displeasure by tightening your mouth and sighing. Marie can foresee the consequences of rash action, but does nothing to counteract that action unless she feels certain she must. Nevertheless, she approaches tasks with dedication.

Int +1 Per +1

Confidence 1

Age 19

Personality Traits

Practical +1

Cautious +1

Loyal (to family) +2

Weapons

Unarmed (but will fight): 1st +0 Atk +0
Dam +0

Def +4 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc 0

Marie went into hiding in the woods and in the houses of the dead, but has recently sought refuge with Bernadotte to escape starvation. Once with the old peasant woman, Marie learned of the group and learned of any of the brave deeds characters have performed for Montrouge. Marie now begs the group to "bring justice to these evil sorcerers." Then she adds that the group must "move swift and quiet." After all, the magi still have her family within their power and might easily use them as hostages. For the characters' reception at the Ceil estate, see Chapter One.

As a final note to this affair, Marie has information pertinent to the Event *Hands of Death*. While in hiding, she passed through numerous houses of the dead. Although horribly tempted, she did not steal food from them. Nevertheless, Marie saw people who did. She also watched from the forest while Oullette carried valuables from a plague-victim's house. With this information, the characters now realize that there is more to the gruesome Marc Oullette than first meets the eye.

Event #6: Hands of Death

Aramin, Damon Le Mont's old apprentice, has the same reasons for wanting Ad Vis Per Veritas destroyed as his old master. That way he can cover up his own sins against the Order, as well as those of Damon, and hopefully receive the thanks and renewed companionship of his old master. Once Aramin or his underlings, Marc Oullette and Vilris the Innkeeper,

learn that the characters pose a threat to the Covenant's destruction, Aramin has his agents try and infect the characters with the plague. Of course, if the characters have already agreed to carry Aramin's message to Damon, you may disregard the development outlined here.

When Aramin resolves to destroy the characters, Marc Oullette, the town's undertaker, starts visiting the group. He feigns an interest in anatomy and scientific medicine (by medieval standards). After the characters meet Marie, they may have reason to suspect Marc of sinister intentions. However, they have no proof to support Marie's accusations, so Oullette should have no problem becoming "friendly" with the characters. (In fact, the characters may encourage such relations so they may more closely investigate the man.) After the characters become used to Oullette, or he's simply been around a while, the "plague-monger" tries to destroy the group by infecting them. Marc has the plague himself so need not fear further infection. Thus, he does not hesitate to handle objects that are plague ridden, objects that may destroy the characters.

To destroy the group, Aramin concocts a jelly from the lungs of plague-stricken corpses, and gives that jelly to Marc. The undertaker then dips his hands in the foul brew and visits the group's dwelling once more. While there, he attempts to poison commonly-used objects. He cannot merely infect items by touch. Rather, according to the rites of Faullu, Aramin's "god," he must mark objects with a mystic oval, traced in plague-jelly. You may wish to make secret Per + Alertness rolls for the characters, with an Ease Factor of 12. Anyone who passes a roll notices Oullette drawing the symbol.

Whatever this plague-monger contaminates becomes infectious. Due to the use of the ritual symbol, even those who enjoy immunity to the plague may fall to this contagion. Anybody who uses a polluted object must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 8 to avoid the plague. You may wish to let players make these rolls themselves. However, the characters should not necessarily know exactly what circumstances led to their infection. Therefore, you should not request rolls immediately after characters touch infectious objects. Rather, have all victims attempt Stm checks a few hours, in game time, later.

To figure out what's happened to them, the group must consider possible means of infection. If the group has avoided sources of infection and few other people visit their dwelling, they may guess the culprit by a process of elimination. A characters might also remember odd behavior from Oullette when he was last in the characters' dwelling, and may recall Marie's allegations against Oullette. Divinatory magic may

also reveal the objects which caused the infection, or even the poisoner himself.

When the group strikes against Oullette, they find themselves matched against the magus Aramin. It's not easy to make Oullette finger Aramin as an accomplice, though. Oullette has religious devotion to steel his will against the characters' interrogations and threats. Thus, to make Oullette talk, characters must get a Prs + Intimidation roll of 12+. If Oullette's tortured, another roll with a +4 modifier is allowed. Otherwise, characters must use spells to determine that Aramin is behind Oullette's scheme. Furthermore, if the characters kill Oullette, they must justify the action for the townsfolk, who considered Oullette a respectable citizen. Accusations that Oullette infected the characters fail to hold water with the people. After all, they reason, if Oullette had the plague, how could he have lived as long as he did? If, however, the characters can in any way convince the people of Montrouge that Marc was spreading the plague, mass hysteria (see above) results, and the Inquisition, if it hasn't already begun, gets underway.

If characters claim to have killed Oullette because he was robbing the dead, the people accept their reasoning, particularly if Marie Ceil backs the group up, and if the group can uncover treasures stolen and kept in Oullette's house. If you ever need to decide whether the people are convinced by the characters' explanations, have the players make Com + Social Talent rolls (based on whichever skill the characters use) against a value of 8.

As in the encounter with magi of House Flambeau, at the Ceil estates, any conflict between the characters and Aramin raises the political problem of magi fighting magi. Once again, according to the theme of this story, the characters must decide what is more important, the necessities of restoring and preserving *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, or the desire to follow one's own morality. There is no correct answer and the characters' decision, either way, may haunt their minds and spirits for a long time to come.

If any good comes from a conflict with Aramin, the characters get a chance to learn about Damon Le Mont from his former apprentice. The characters must defeat or negotiate with Aramin to gain this information. For the most part Aramin is resistant to attempts to get information out of him. Prs + Interrogation rolls are needed against a value of 15, modified by +5 if torture is used. If Aramin is thoroughly defeated, though, having just been trounced in *Certámen* for example, he acquiesces to the characters' demands for news on Damon, for Aramin gives up hope of being reunited with his former master. In fact, he decides that if he cannot be with his master, the Demon can't be either, and betrays what he knows about Damon and A'Fienluh. Learning about Damon's crimes through

Aramin, the characters are propelled into events at the Baron's castle, discussed in Chapter Three.

As the characters now realize that they must face a Demon and another magus, they may decide they need all the help they can get. If asked to, Aramin agrees to help the characters fight Damon, only to slip away at the first opportunity. If the characters hold a defeated Aramin prisoner, but overlook any way of escape, he flees the lands of Montrouge. Aramin is determined not to be tried for his crimes against the Order, and does anything to escape capture.

If Aramin is victorious over the characters in any conflict, he takes them to the Baron's castle as an offering to Damon and the Baron. In return he officially asks for refuge from the Inquisition, claiming to have forsaken his magical ways, and offers the characters as a token of his good faith. In reality, Aramin offers the characters to Le Mont as a gift, hoping for a reunion between the two. Damon can't resist such a gift, and accepts Aramin (curing him of the plague). The characters are then put on trial as witches, but as in the main story presented in this book, Ceravantes may come to their aid. The characters may also make a bid for freedom at any time during the transaction between Aramin and Damon. Aramin's defeat over the characters is a plot possibility that could lead in many different directions. All you need do is understand Aramin and Damon's motives and you are prepared for any contingency that the players may come up with.



Event #7: Sparks at Dawn

After the plague passes, the peasants search for a scapegoat on which to blame its destruction. More than that, they want to destroy that scapegoat to ensure that the horror does not return. Meanwhile, the nobility, controlled by Damon Le Mont, wants to root surviving magi from their town, fearing that the magi's mysterious practices might renew the plague. Therefore, civilization does not return gently to Montrouge. Order comes back in the form of the Inquisition.

This Event takes place when two conditions are met. First, at least three days must have passed since the characters' arrival in Montrouge. Before that time the Baron's men have not yet returned to town in earnest, so do not yet know that old magi are still lurking around, and that new ones have arrived. Furthermore, after three days of investigation, the characters should know a number of people in and around Montrouge, and may look to them for support or betrayal in the Inquisition. If, after three days in Montrouge, the characters have not met many people and do not yet know much about the town, delay the Inquisition until the characters are a little more acquainted with the local situation.

Second, the Inquisition occurs after some incident generates witch hysteria. Such an event is left to you to interpret and label. A public display of magic, for example, is sure to bring down charges of witchcraft.

The characters themselves may also unintentionally generate sufficient pretext for an Inquisition. Improper handling of certain Storyguide characters, like Rico Ceil, can result in the group's condemnation. Marie's appearance in town is also fuel for hysteria. Her story of evil wizards tormenting her family drives the villagers into a witch-hunting frenzy. If the characters want to avoid such chaos, they must keep Marie's story quiet. And, perversely enough, characters can condemn themselves simply by catching the plague. People already believe that the plague is the work of the Devil. If the characters, naturally suspect of diabolism, catch the plague, their tie to the Devil seems clear.

A witch-hunt can also develop from active forces beyond the characters' control. If Damon Le Mont finds the group with his scrying devices, or some character offends a powerful noble or holy person (e.g. the Baron or Bishop), a manufactured witch-hunt may arise. Moreover, if anything patently magical threatens the town, the panicked peasants may demand an Inquisition. Either of Aramin's cult or the magi at the Ceils can bring about such a disaster.

Thus, though characters may try to maintain the calm, villagers inevitably break into a tirade, resulting in a full-blown Inquisition. The characters may not be able to stop the impending Inquisition, but they are at least able to foresee it. Peasant-organized lynching,

wild tales and impromptu exorcisms precede a witch-hunt (Per + Folk Ken roll of 8+ to recognize these signs as the forerunners of Inquisition). Characters might even be faced with mobs of peasants, organized by enemies the characters have made. These peasant mobs are easily frightened, though, so unless they're led by some authoritative body, like the Bishop, the people pose little threat to characters who demonstrate any power (i.e. magic or skill at arms). Of course, vulnerable characters like grogs and companions, caught on their own, might still fall to mobs that form premature to the Inquisition. Such victimized characters have to be rescued by their comrades, before they're lynched.

When the Inquisition begins in earnest, the Bishop rides into town on his white horse, escorted by a retainer of twenty men-at-arms (treat as Provosts). With his mitre and staff in hand, the Bishop carries an air of loftiness which Montrouge has not seen since before the plague. At the center of the town the Bishop denounces the plague as the "*work of sorcery*", brought on by "*a blasphemous attempt to ape the arts of God.*" To the common folk the Bishop is wise, holy, and gifted with the authority of the Church. The assembled peasants therefore cheer wildly at the Bishop's speech, taking heart that their suffering might soon be put to an end. At this point, most friendships established between peasants and characters are forgotten by the townsfolk.

During an Inquisition magi and all their associates are outlawed, as detailed in *Outlaws*, below. Almost all peasants grow wary of the characters, and each other for that matter. No one is to be trusted. If you feel at all sorry for the characters, or if they are having trouble searching for the real source of Montrouge's plight, some villagers may remain loyal. These people realize the characters are not responsible for the plague and work to help the characters. Their efforts are constrained, though, for any demonstrated hint of fellowship with the characters may mean their certain death.

Generally, no one in Montrouge knows who might be a witch, and no one knows who might denounce whom. The Inquisition ends hospitality more surely than the plague did. Sadly, the surest way to avoid suspicion is to denounce magi one's self, and only the most courageous refuse to act as informers. Thus, former friends of the characters can become their greatest enemies.

However the Inquisition gets its first victims, it always wants more. People constantly make accusations against one another. You should randomly pick two or three Storyguide characters as scapegoats that the townsfolk agree are witches. Choose people whom the characters know to be innocent. Whether or not the characters believe the charges, for they are just as

human and just as prone to hysteria as the townsfolk, is up to the characters. The apparently random accusations made against innocent townsfolk create an atmosphere of paranoia, and demonstrate the true injustice of the Inquisition. Whether characters move to rescue unjustly charged people is up to them. A rescue attempt condemns the characters as witches, and if the characters are caught, they too are tried in short order.

The witch-hunters arrest known magi wherever they can find them. For every Storyguide character who saw a magus cast a spell, the magus in question must pass a Prs + Charisma roll with an Ease Factor of 9. The roll reflects the degree of fondness with which the Storyguide character remembers the magus. The roll should also be modified based on previous relations the magus and the peasant have had, that modifier determined by you. If the roll fails, the witness reports the magus as a witch. Magi who fear this fate may make personal appeals to people who know them. With such pleas you may allow characters to warm the hearts of their friends, eliminating the danger of public accusation. Of course, such efforts require Com + Charisma rolls, with modifiers based on how friendly the character and villager in question once were. Difficulty ratings vary, again based on the degree of that former friendship, but 12 might be an average.

Even if Storyguide characters decide not to voluntarily turn the group in, they may find that they have no choice. When castle factions suspect that certain Storyguide characters know something that would incriminate enemies, arrangements are made to have those peasants arrested. Provosts may threaten peasants with the rack, but dare not actually torture innocents unless the whole court concurs. Whether tortured or not, most peasants tell what they know. Characters must pass Prs + Charisma rolls with Ease Factors of 16 to keep witnesses from talking under interrogation.

Thus, characters may try to preserve a high public opinion of themselves, and hope that the people of Montrouge protect them. However, that hope is unlikely as people are easily scared, and often harbor secret resentments. Without the assured support of the people, the characters must rely on themselves to survive the Inquisition.

Event #8: Outlaws

The characters may be branded outlaws during the Inquisition, or may be branded simply for opposing the Baron's Provosts at any time. During the Inquisition, or any manhunt, the Baron and Bishop dispatch a select team to collar witches and political foes. Sir Peled, the Baron's Bailiff, heads this force. Poul de Franc, the Bishop's special assistant, accompanies him. The two have holy items that help them overcome even the powers of magi.

Sir Peled likes to use the following tactic for conducting an arrest. He finds out where his victim spends the night and then arrives there before dawn with Poul and twenty Provosts. Five Provosts spread out to watch back exits. Ten more go with Peled to knock on the front gate. Poul and the five remaining provosts stay mounted nearby, ready to intervene in any battle or ready to ride for help.

If suspects manage to escape Sir Peled's trap, they become fugitives. Except as specifically noted in the text or by you, nobody in Montrouge harbors an accused witch. The Bailiff hunts suspects relentlessly, and the Baron fully commits his men-at-arms to the pursuit.

If you like, Mazain could even join the hunt for the characters. He considers the Inquisition a perfect chance to demonstrate his loyalty to the Baron and his devotion to the town. Mazain's tracking skills make him a dangerous opponent in the woods, and if the characters take shelter there, he tracks them down. See *The Rise of Mazain* for the tactics the bandit uses in his hunt. If Mazain captures the characters, he may turn them over to the Baron and his men. Or, the characters could barter for their freedom as discussed in *The Rise of Mazain*. However, now that the characters are outlaws in Montrouge, they have far less to offer the Bandit King than they do when free men. In fact, turning the characters over to the Baron, Mazain can fulfill his desire of acquiring noble standing, so the characters have to offer him a lot to be set free. If Mazain turns the characters over to the authorities, his followers disappear just before the authorities arrive (offering a brief moment for escape). When the Baron's men arrive, Mazain reveals himself and proclaims himself the magi's captor. He is therefore allowed to accompany the Provosts and captured characters back to the Baron's castle; this turn of events wipes clean the black spot on Mazain's past.

Remember that Mazain's involvement in the Inquisition is merely a story option that you may implement. If the characters are having trouble enough dealing with the Inquisition, and the hunt for Montrouge's evil, you might allow them to seek fairly safe shelter in the woods. As before, Mazain discovers the characters' presence and tracks them down, but may not help persecute them. Rather, he may let them stay in the forest in return for some prize. In fact, if the characters explain that there's social standing to be won by defeating Damon and the Demon, Mazain may even help the characters against the villains. However, the characters must first convince Mazain of Damon's evil (Com + appropriate Social Talent roll of 10+), or must buy the bandit's services (a lot of silver, or assurances of power in the future).

Whether the Provosts and witch-hunters capture the characters with Mazain's help or not, the characters are taken back to the castle. Once there, they are imprisoned to await trial. During their incarceration

the characters may seek escape, but also find assistance in Bishop Ceravantes (see below).

Obviously there's a lot that outlawed characters can do to avoid capture, more than can be outlined in this book. Essentially, you must play things by ear. If the characters have a lot of help, either from loyal villagers or from other magi around Montrouge, they may escape capture. In that case, someone else from Montrouge is tried for witchcraft, just to save face. The characters may learn of their replacement and move to save him. The characters may even give themselves up in the hopes that they may be taken before the Baron and Damon Le Mont, thereby getting an opportunity to level charges against or investigate the corrupt magus. Ultimately, if the characters want to get to the source of Montrouge's evil, they have to face Le Mont. That means getting into the Baron's castle, of which there are innumerable methods.

Prisoners

The fate of characters taken prisoner depends on friends and enemies they have in the castle. Consult

Chapter Three for details on the people there. The following section describes the typical witch trial. If the group looks beyond saving its own members, those members may notice the motivations behind the trial; the trial may become a confrontation between the characters and the real diabolists of Montrouge.

According to usual procedure, accused witches go before the Bishop. The Church, as an Institution of Mercy, has no power to harm them. Rather, the Bishop listens to prisoners' tales. He decides whether the accused have offended the Church, and whether they can truly repent. If the Bishop chooses, he may pardon them. Otherwise, he surrenders the accused to the "Secular Arm," or the Baron. The Baron extracts confessions by whatever means he sees fit, and then sends convicted magi to the flames.

The Bishop visits prisoners one day after their arrest and explains the laws in a somber voice. Afterward, inmates may plead their case. Bishop Ceravantes places his chin in his hand and listens. He is an educated man, who knows the difference between a magus and a witch. Ceravantes has no desire to send an innocent to the pyre.



The Bishop may become a worthwhile friend of any prisoners who have the sense to respectfully proclaim their innocence. Depending on how talkative and receptive the characters are, Ceravantes may discuss recent affairs with his prisoners (Com + Charisma roll of 6+ to get him talking). He wants to hear the real story of Ad Vis Per Veritas and, in turn, may mention things which interest the characters. In the course of conversation, he may discuss the coming of the plague to Montrouge, and the subsequent arrival of Damon Le Mont at the palace. Convinced that the characters are innocent, Ceravantes as much as promises to see them released, but cannot do so himself.

Even though the Bishop seems an ally, he appears to turn into an enemy again when next met. Ceravantes remains vulnerable to blackmail, and A'Fienluh wants the characters to burn. After a threat from Damon Le Mont, the Bishop transfers his prisoners to the Secular Arm. If the characters protest, Ceravantes looks solemnly to the ground, and mumbles "It's out of my hands." Intéllego magic used on Ceravantes reveals the truth of his blackmailing. If the characters haven't already spoken with Valjac, the smith, or Triemus, the monk, they may somehow do so now, and those men explain their suspicions that the Bishop is a victim of blackmail. Learning that the Bishop is being blackmailed, the characters may still talk him into defying Le Mont (Com + Charisma roll of 12+). For details on Ceravantes' defiance of Damon, see Chapter Three.

The Baron is not as conscientiousness as the Bishop. Unless the characters offer him compelling reason to do otherwise, he orders them executed. The Bishop does not need much proof for a conviction, though someone must present evidence of some sort to secure a conviction. If there's no concrete evidence to be leveled against the characters, the Baron sets them free. That doesn't mean the Baron doesn't look for evidence, though. The beginning of this Event describes several possible grounds for execution, and the Baron's guards use interrogation to extract information to ensure an execution. However, the guards do not waste time with prolonged torture unless they think the victims know something vital to the peril of Montrouge.

The Baron, above all, wants to expunge black magic from his lands. If the characters offer information on the Demon or other magi, the Baron questions them in person. Should the prisoners grow reticent, he mentions the rack in a tone of desperation, and proceeds to use it. However, if the characters makes accusations against Damon, and produce evidence that you consider sufficiently coherent, the Baron may believe them (Com + Social Talents roll of 10+) — he never really trusted his Uncle. If the character's accusations against Damon fall on deaf ears (a failed roll), the witch burning proceeds. Convinced that Damon is responsible for the town's suffering, the Baron secretly releases the

characters to allow them to deal with the magus. The characters now place themselves in direct confrontation with Damon and his Demon.

Options

The following are story developments that you may incorporate into your Saga if events are slow (ya, right), or if the characters need outside help.

- The tension of Montrouge's disasters and Inquisition establishes the grounds for full-scale family feuds. The Fitzes and the Leuforts have something approximating one already, and it may heat up. Given provocation, such as unjustified accusations of witchcraft, many households could turn on one another.

A feud begins with a few family murders. The characters and authorities may consider the killings the work of bandits, or even a diabolic cult (after all, someone evil must be responsible for the hardships of the town). The real nature of the problem soon becomes apparent, though, as assassinations turn into familial raids and clashes. The plague decimated most households, but cousins and uncles gradually band together to bolster family numbers, in the name of family honor. If the characters somehow incite a feud, whether intentionally or unintentionally, people expect



Sir Peled

Description: a bulky man with a prematurely white beard, Sir Peled has long experience with bandits and shiftless peasants, but dreads trying supernatural criminals. When confronted with magi, he overuses ceremony and speech, hoping to sound authoritative. Peled is an officious man, who lectures captives about the gravity of their crimes. No extraneous concerns can distract the Bailiff from his duty to the Baron and Bishop. He obeys both without question.

Sir Peled carries six pairs of manacles and a ten-foot chain with which to link prisoners together. He rides a large, serviceable horse. The Bailiff's saddlebags contain provisions for two days, a one-hundred foot length of rope, a riding crop and two rosaries. The last items surround Sir Peled with a Divine Aura of 5, which acts against the spell casting efforts of magi. The Aura protects Sir Peled alone.

Roleplaying Tips: Sir Peled is used to overpowering common criminals with ease. When his usual tactics fail, the Bailiff flounders, trying to recover his accustomed power. The more bizarre a situation becomes, the more stubbornly Sir Peled attempts to resolve it the conventional, proper way.

Per -2 Int 0 Str +3 Stm +4 Prs +1

Dex +1 Qik +2

Confidence 2

Age 29

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Dictatorial +2/Tolerant -2

Stodgy +1/Casual -1

Conventional +2/Innovative -2

Important Skills

Bastard Sword (bashing) +7

Shield Parry (charges) +4

Cudgel (fleeing targets) +3

Weapons

Sword: 1st +13 Atk +11 Dam +20

Cudgel: 1st +7 Atk +7 Dam +9

Def (Round Shield) +7 Fat 0 Soak (Scale Cuirass) +9 Enc 0

Poul deFranc

Description: wiry, dark and quick, Poul has the restlessness of a young child. Despite his carefree demeanor, he serves the Bishop well, taking an unselfish, professional pride in boosting his master to greatness. The fact that the Bishop owes his mitre to the Tuscan Simonists does not bother Poul. It does bother him that the magi of Ad Vis Per Veritas have learned that secret. Fearing that the magi would use that information against his master, Poul developed a hatred for the wizards. In partaking of the Inquisition, Poul now exacts his revenge on magi and strives to protect the Bishop. Poul doesn't know much about Damon Le Mont, but senses that the man is "a regular weasel, with something to gain from this affair."

Poul owns an iron ring containing threads from the robe of Saint Thomas the Doubter. Though the relic is a sign of incomplete faith, it gives Poul extraordinary powers to resist the influence and wiles of magi and diabolists. The ring protects Poul with a Divine Aura of 8, effective only against spells cast to influence the wearer's mind (i.e. many Mentem and Imágonem spells). As the ring bears the power of a religious doubter, nobody with True Faith can benefit from its protection, and anyone with that Virtue who wears the ring loses all hope of ever finding True Faith again.

Roleplaying Tips: Poul speaks frankly, never hesitating to address unpleasant topics. He jokes constantly but takes his duties seriously, and does anything to accomplish them.

Int +2 Per +2 Qik +1 Dex +1

Confidence 2

Age 26

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly -1

Eager Servitor +3/Shirker -2

Mischievous +2/Dour -2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +2

Scribe Latin +2

Church Lore (heretics) +3

Church Knowledge +2

Broadsword +2

Broadsword Parry (wild attacks) +3

Weapons

Broadsword: 1st +5 Atk +7 Dam +8

Def +6 Soak (Leather Cuirass) +1 Fat -1 Enc +1

them to participate and may accuse them of cowardice or treachery if they refuse.

During the Inquisition, feuding families take some of the pressure off the characters. While they might want to hunt outlaws, the authorities must first quell local fighting. Given some breathing space, the characters gain time to plan, or even flee Montrouge for good. Resourceful characters may even use the feuds to clear their sullied name. If the characters can somehow arrange for peace without the use of spells, they may receive the gratitude of local officials and the public. Whether this kind of pardon is possible is your decision; characters have to appear as virtual messiahs if they intend to lift their charges through good deeds alone.

- A neighboring Baron notices the state of affairs in Montrouge. First he sends food and aid, as is his Christian duty. If the situation seems ripe, though, he sends soldiers to guard the town's grain. Eventually, he imposes large claims on Baron Franc d'Montrouge. The two nobles may come to war.

Characters could take either side, or try to remain neutral and protect the common folk. To win the people's gratitude the magi need only keep the people of Montrouge prosperous; the people don't care who rules. A sufficiently prestigious group of magi can even impose a peace upon the Barons, dividing power in such a way as to retain influence over both.

Whatever results from a Baronial war, Damon Le Mont and A'Fienluh maneuver to maintain their position in the new Montrouge. Regardless of what mundane faction takes control, Le Mont gains influence over it with the help of Demonic powers.

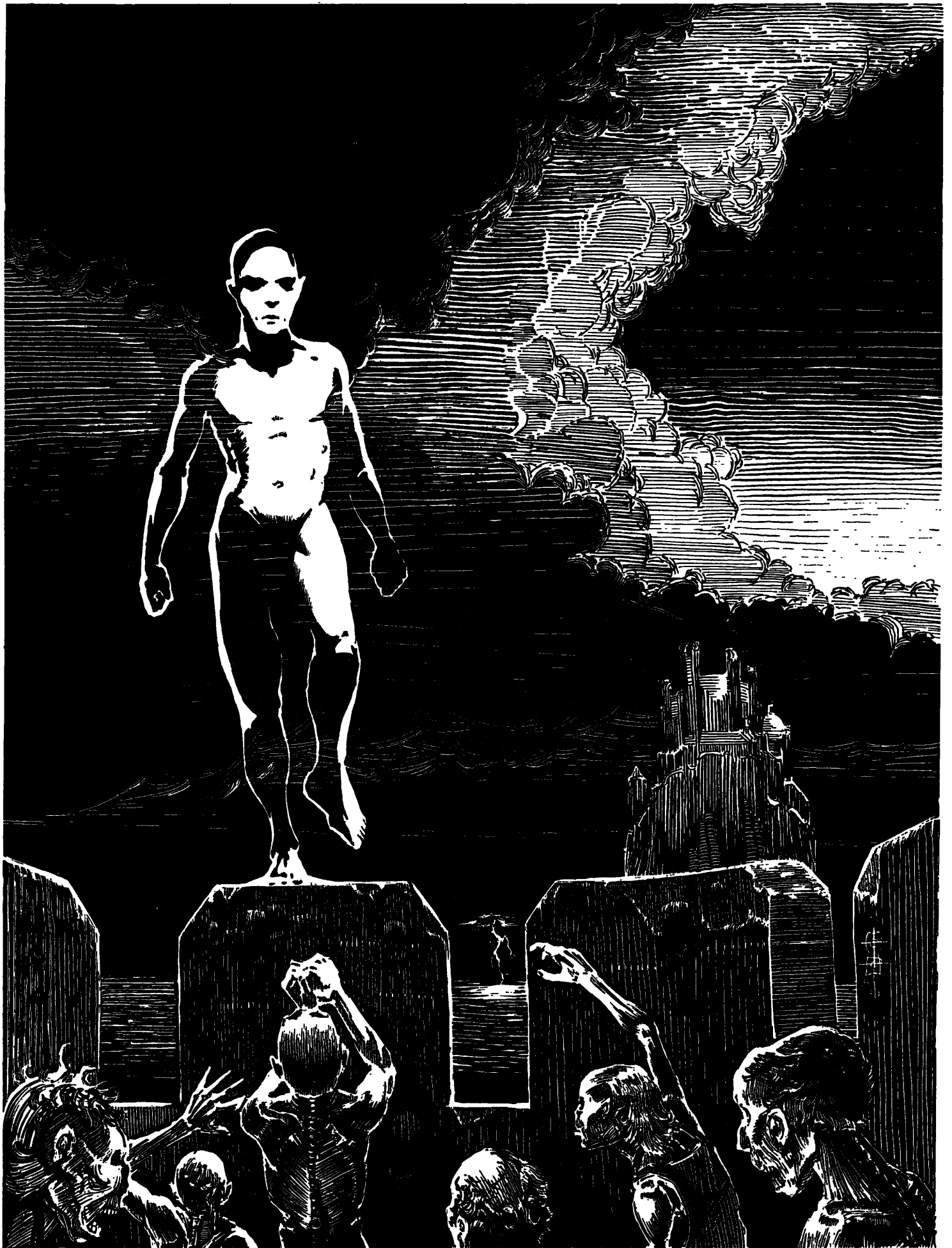
If the war occurs during the Inquisition, the characters can choose sides based on their needs at the time. If they support the Baron and Le Mont, the characters can claim a pardon from their charges, particularly if the characters are largely responsible for any victory the Baron and Le Mont win. Ideally, the characters may pose as a single force that keeps the invading Baron at bay. Thus, if the characters discontinue their



protection of d'Montrouge, the Baron may lose the war. With such influence, the characters may have their charges dropped and may restore Ad Vis Per Veritas. If a scapegoat is still needed for the plague, the foreign Baron could be accused of bringing about the curse as a prelude to war.

With such a scapegoat, the peasants' enmity for the characters cools and the characters may restore Ad Vis Per Veritas. A third option involves making the foreign Baron an ally of the characters. He comes to their rescue, protecting them from Inquisition long enough to let the group discover the real source of Montrouge's suffering.







Chapter Three: Castle Under Siege

Balzac, Sergeant of the Groggs, strode calmly beneath the portcullis. He stood erect during the ritual of purification and then proceeded into the keep. The Baron's guards formed a line for him to walk past, as if for a dignitary. Balzac noted this with satisfaction, but kept his eyes firmly ahead, as if he could not see the honor guard.

The castle gates slammed shut. Balzac had come alone. The magus Dundinel had not even given him advice in this matter of diplomacy. Balzac welcomed the independence and the challenge. Just as Dundinel had said long ago, the matter of Montrouge depended not on magi but on grogs.

Haze filled the Great Hall. The air reeked of burnt meat, damp stone and unwashed bodies, the odor of any castle. The hearth-fire crackled, and the servants moved about in their colorful frocks. The Baron himself stood by a throne with several advisors, all dressed in gray surcoats of a fine cloth. They looked down upon Balzac.

Balzac knelt at once. However, upon seeing a gesture to rise, he wasted no time in standing up. "You sent for me, my lord of Montrouge."

"So I did." The Baron glanced at the somber advisor next to him. "You are Balzac? I hear you are a very mighty man."

"I am he." Balzac paused. He saw no need to respond to the compliment.

"You are the one who slew the brigand Mazain?"

"I am."

"You are the one who ventured into the ruins of Needle Stone and returned unscathed?"

"Yes."

"My Provosts say the common folk of my lands do as you say."

Balzac met the Baron's eyes. "Do they?"

"Yes, that is what they say. Do you realize the sort of position that puts us both in?"

"I think I do." Balzac's heart raced. He could see himself straight between glory and the abyss. "But lord, I am not ambitious."

At that, the advisor spoke. "No?"

"No. I merely accomplished what had to be done." Balzac noted that the advisor resembled the Baron. Both had the same hooked nose and the same shade of light-brown hair.

The advisor spoke again. "So you are also the one who drove off the sorcerers at the Ceils?"

"Yes . . . with the help of my companions."

"Tricky business, fighting wizards." The advisor's eyes gleamed. "What manner of companions did you have?"

Balzac said nothing.

The Baron tucked his thumbs under his sword-belt. He exchanged smiles with the advisor. "The Bishop Ceravantes has declared sorcery a tool of the Devil and enchanters heretics. He has charged us with destroying them. Therefore, I have to be interested in such affairs. What more can you tell me?"

"I . . . almost nothing, my lord."

The Baron conferred with his advisor. Then the Lord of Montrouge spoke again. "You have defeated bandits nobody else dared fight. You have heralded the end of the plague. The peasants obey you as if you were a lord. You have explored the ruins at Needle Stone. My Uncle here suggests that these are the works of a wizard of Hermes. Is he correct?"

Balzac looked at the floor. He shook. "I cannot answer that. I am only a servitor."



SUMMARY

The Baron rules from a small, nearly impregnable castle, built of smooth gray stone (see the map *Lands Around the Village of Montrouge* for the castle's exact location). The castle's outer, circular wall is lined with rounded tower bastions, providing archery and watch platforms. The building stands on a knoll overlooking a wide natural amphitheater, where the Baron holds tournaments, festivals and executions.

The Baron and his court have cut themselves off from dying Montrouge, shutting themselves into the central castle. For the first stages of this story, the group scarcely encounters the official lords of the town. However, as the characters' influence grows, they cannot afford to ignore the castle, nor can the castlefolk overlook them. Perhaps the characters win admission to the old keep. Or, perhaps, the Baron drags them there by force, in a witch-hunt. In either case, Montrouge's rescuers find themselves in a precarious position with the old rulers of the town.

During their encounters with the castlefolk, the characters get their final chance to garner information about Montrouge and its inhabitants. As the characters make impressions on the castlefolk, those people, whether consciously or unconsciously, choose up sides for the final battle between the magi and the Demon. Among the people the characters encounter, they get a

chance to meet the Bishop, the Baron and Damon Le Mont himself. The characters could win the former two to their side, making action against Damon possible. But, a misstep could turn the castle leaders against the characters, into devoted servants of the Demon.

The Baron's castle is where Damon lives, with his nephew. As Damon lives there, the castle also serves as the Demon's stronghold, so is the site for this story's climactic struggle. Hidden in the castle's uppermost level, behind a facade of drab, unimportant rooms, the Demon has a nest of rooms, magically protected by Damon Le Mont. At some point in the battle against the characters, A'Fienluh unleashes his sinner slaves upon the group. When that battle occurs, the Demon takes refuge in the rooms at the top of the castle.

For the most part, the castle is gloomy and stagnant, calcified under its heartless Baron, compromised Bishop, reclusive court magus, and hidden Demon. The fact that the plague keeps castle inhabitants shut in does not brighten its atmosphere. The group should find its initial forays into the castle frustrating, whether they have official invitation into the fortress, or are sneaking around. If they get in at all, characters find few friends and few opportunities to learn information or get at Damon. The dour servants know little of what intrigue goes on at the castle, and are virtually ignorant of events outside the castle walls. The castle's isolation and solemnity are products of the efforts of Baron Franc d'Montrouge. He has labored to insulate himself from the crises of Montrouge in order to protect himself and to avoid bother. The castle physically manifests d'Montrouge's success at isolation.

Only when the group makes its final drive against Damon and A'Fienluh does the castle stir to life. It is then the characters and the Demon slash through the apathy of the palace, woe to those who stand in their way.

Knocking At The Gate

Before the characters can be invited into the castle for an audience with the Baron, they must have won some celebrity in nearby Montrouge. Baron Franc d'Montrouge does not like to deal with strangers, and the peril of the plague only heightens his desire to turn visitors away. The celebrity that characters must have won to be received by d'Montrouge should consist of a fabulous feat that the Baron cannot ignore. Such a feat might include the defeat of Mazain and his bandits, the banishment of the magi from the Ceil estates, or a massive reorganization of the town of Montrouge.

It's Brother Triemus and the Baron's Provosts who bring news to the castle from the outside world. When the group actually requests the right to enter the

castle, characters must negotiate with the Baron through some intermediary. With the help of Triemus or the Provosts, the group can gain the attention of Franc d'Montrouge and negotiate for an audience. In accepting a meeting with the characters, you must assume the position of Franc d'Montrouge. You respond most favorably to an impeccably polite request, one which bears the merest suggestion of threat. If a request is too brutal or undignified, refuse it outright. If successive requests become tiresome, refuse to even consider another.

Castle Defenses

If the group tries to sneak into the castle, or do anything untoward once they arrive, they face an organized force of guards. They must also contend with two hundred and ten servants, servitors and retainers. Nothing can be truly private in this crowd. Most servants know each other, at least vaguely, which means that if characters want to sneak in disguised as castlefolk, they must pick particular people to impersonate. Each disguised person must pass a Com + Acting (stress roll), with a target number of 6, to fool servants and guards.

Armed troops stand watch throughout the fortress. Three guards also stand atop each of the many towers that line the castle's outer wall. Ladders and, where necessary, trap doors, allow these guards to retreat into the castle. Other guards stand watch wherever doorways lead into the castle and keep, and watch over special rooms within the castle's walls. Otherwise, simply place a guard wherever the characters hope there won't be one.

Shouts or loud noises at one station bring sentries from all the others. Assume that these defenders hustle at 20 paces (yards) per Round, since they know the castle well. The men-at-arms fight with grim professionalism, hiding behind furniture, sealing off escape routes, and attacking from both ends of a corridor. If a magus threatens to defeat the guards with magic, Poul (see Chapter Two) enters the fight, armed with his hatred for spellcasters.

Servants may interrupt any battles that develop in the castle. In each Round of combat, roll a die. On a roll of 1 or 2, a panicking lackey scrambles through a fight, dropping his or her tray or broom in passing. This intrusion undoubtedly blocks missile fire or disrupts magic (with exact results determined by you based on the circumstances). On a roll of 9 or 10, a plucky servant decides to help defend the castle. He (or she) charges the group with a heavy candlestick (1st +2 Atk +3 Dam +2). Depending on how entertaining or nasty you want a fight in the castle to be, servant interruptions could be humorous or deadly.

If the characters become locked in combat within the castle, Damon is quickly alerted to any danger. He

sends his groom, Don Berrigar, to linger near the fight and report on its progress (Per + Scan roll of 8+ to spot him during a fight). If castle guards seem likely to overcome the magi, Damon and A'Fienluh become involved. They hope to ensure that the affair turns into a decisive fight in which the group is utterly destroyed.

Damon joins battle by casting spells through an *Intangible Tunnel*. Thus, he remains in his chambers on the top floor of the castle. If the characters detect the tunnel and begin casting spells back, Don Berrigar is ordered to distract the characters so Damon may strike without danger. If possible, Berrigar stabs a magus in the back. If not, he runs up babbling about a dragon to create a diversion. In the latter case, if the group defeats its foes, Berrigar claims to have been a victim of a "treacherous delusion." Should the characters defeat the castle guards, or should Berrigar's distractions fail to protect Damon, Damon closes his tunnel and sends A'Fienluh to confront the characters (see *Wrath of the Demon* for details).

Inside The Castle

Having obtained access to the Baron's castle, the group meets its various inhabitants, lowly and powerful, and may negotiate with them. Characters must use their reputation of earlier Chapters to win the support of powerful castle inhabitants. These powerful people are met in a completely variable order, dependent upon what course of action the characters choose to pursue. Arranging for audiences with Barons and Bishops takes time, though, and that's one commodity the characters don't have. If Montrouge and its Covenant are to be rebuilt, the building must happen soon before the Demon's influence can cause further destruction. Damon also conspires to have the characters arrested. If the characters are to defeat him, they must

Men-At-Arms (Total of 98)

Str +2 Int -1

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly -2

Important Skills

Light Crossbow (shooting down on targets) +5

Short Spear (charges) +3

Shield Parry (thrusts) +4

Weapons

Light Crossbow: Rate -3 Atk +4 Dam +4
Range 200 paces

Spear: 1st +9 Atk +6 Dam +10

Def (Round Shield) +7 Fat -1 Soak (Full Hard Leather) +6 Enc 1

do so before Damon develops a following strong enough to interfere with the characters' efforts. So, not only must the characters be fast about the defeat of Damon, but they must do it by navigating the very place where Damon and the forces of authority reside. And, no matter how cleverly the characters manipulate those within the castle, they must still face the Demon.

The will of A'Fienluh saved the castlefolk from the plague, and his presence still lingers over the castle. Thus, castlefolk follow an austere routine. The inhabitants fear others lest their fragile existence be endangered, and don't dare venture beyond the castle walls. A visitor may sense the castle's air of suffocation and brooding fear (Int + Alertness roll of 6+).

Folk rise at dawn and quietly go about their day's work. Servants shuffle about, seldom speaking except to curse the pigs in the bailey. The Bishop remains in his chapel, receiving those who seek solace. Baron Franc d'Montrouge spends dreary days holding court in the Great Hall. At times, his Uncle Damon advises him, while at others, the Baron consults with his Provosts about the situation in the lands outside. Meals occur, and for them servants heat stews or gruel in iron cauldrons. Meals are meagre, though, as the Baron must rob his own lands for food.

Over time, fortress life dulls the wits. When roleplaying the people of the castle, remember that they bear the fortress's grim mentality. To the castle's inhabitants, walls and traditions mean safety, while aberrations court disaster. People do everything in a prescribed way, from serving meals to making beds. When confronted with the unexpected, they have no idea how to respond, and react with fear if they react at all. The group's questions, tales and warnings of danger outside only confuse and frighten these people.

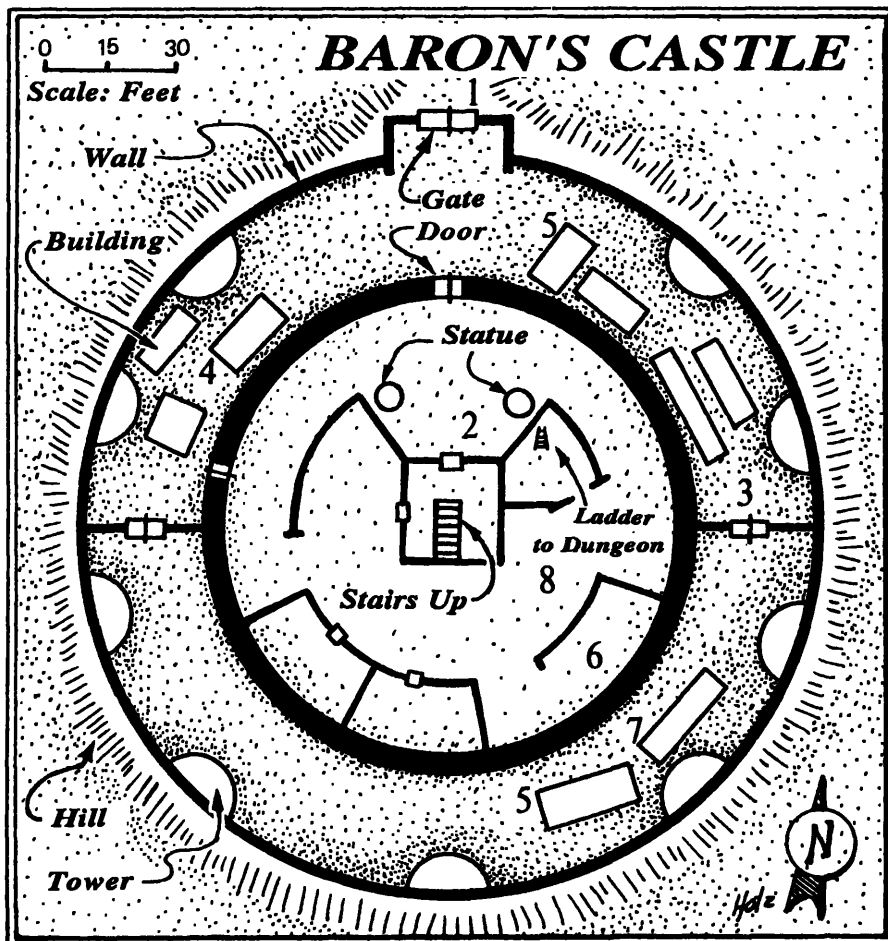
Common Folk

The two hundred and ten servants of this castle have pinched faces and gray skin. They get little to eat and live in constant fear. The people treat dignitaries with respect, but cannot conceive of fraternizing with their betters. These "betters" includes anyone the Baron considers influential enough to allow into his stronghold. In any event, the servants do not trust outsiders. Accordingly, the group is hard pressed to find a fountain of gossip.

The servants answer innocuous questions politely. They also guide guests around the castle and introduce noteworthy people. When discussing the Baron, servants usually remember to praise him for his justice and piety. If a servant has a complaint, it's only that the Baron lacks the energy to actually enforce his decisions. For example, the servants were promised food days ago but the Baron has yet to produce. The Bishop receives less admiration, but no accusations. Castlefolk describe Damon as an Uncle of the Baron's. It's also said that he arrived in early Spring. Nobody wants to say much more about him.

If the group asks questions about the occult, people blanch and fall silent. The servants discuss the topic only if the group presents a particularly soothing image. If you feel unsure whether the characters succeed or not, allow a Com + Folk Ken roll with an Ease Factor of 12. Anyone who manages to lead the servants into this perilous subject is introduced to Dame Eileen, a round-figured washerwoman. All the servants agree that she is "wise in such matters."

Eileen is pleased if people ask her opinion on the occult, but is careful not to say anything that might incriminate herself of witchcraft. If the group reassures her that it has good intentions, she states the obvious: that



some supernatural influence protects the palace from the plague. She does not believe the Bishop has such powers. Instead, she feels the Baron has made some accommodation with a power beyond human knowledge. Eileen also believes that the Baron doesn't have the skills to make such a bargain on his own, so received help. Naturally, she suspects the accomplice is the Baron's Uncle. Eileen knows that Damon has performed "long chants" within his suite.

Any attempt to press the common folk for too much information may lead to disaster. These simple folk find their immunity to disease almost as frightening as the plague itself. The word "witch" lies beneath the surface of every conversation, and if the group arouses suspicions, people call for an Inquisition, as described in Chapter Two. Damon and the Demon spur such a witch-hunt on, for their own reasons.

Castle Layout

This map key outlines where the group can find important places, and provides terrain for the final battle with A'Fienluh. Descriptions on roleplaying the major encounters within the castle appear below.

1. Main Gate

Corpses slump here and there against the outer stone walls of the castle. They don't show signs of plague, though. During the plague, desperate peasants sought refuge in the castle, but the guards shot them down. Banners can be seen flying above the castle walls, bearing the Baron's coat of arms and that of his guest, the Bishop. Hanging beneath the banners, stretched above the castle gate, is a white streamer that bears crude drawings of saints. According to certain superstitions, such a streamer helps ward off plague.

One enters the castle through black iron gates, their axes riveted to the castle's stone. Within the gateway is a low passage that passes under three portcullises. In times of danger, these portcullises are dropped. Eight men-at-arms stand at the gateway, two at each portcullis and two within the main gate. To enter the gateway, one must state one's business and surrender all weapons. Then, a man-at-arms sprinkles holy water at the guests, to wash away the plague. Having little faith in his own charm, the man opens the gate and directs the group inward, from a distance, gesturing with a gloved hand.

If pressed in battle, these guards can retreat into the gateway and drop the portcullises behind them. Once within the gateway they can fire crossbows through slits on either side of the door. Of course, this strategy also traps the guards within the castle gate-

way. Statistics for the men-at-arms appear under *Castle Defenses*, above.

2. Great Hall

All castle business, from feasts to Baronial audiences, take place in this impressive chamber. Smoke-stained beams support the high ceiling and at either end of the hall, ten-foot high wooden statues support the Baron's coat-of-arms, alongside the mitre of a Bishop. Although servants pass through constantly, one can usually find a private corner in this enormous chamber, and the Baron considers the room safe for sensitive conversations.

3. Barracks

The Baron's ninety-eight men-at-arms and petty-knights dwell here. They sleep on rough gray blankets, which lie in uneven rows. Five warriors are in this room at any given time. Statistics appear under *Castle Defenses*, above.

4. Stables

The sounds and odors of the stable fill the courtyard. Baron d'Montrouge owns twenty spirited war horses and expects his servants to cherish them.

If the characters bring horses to the castle, they find a fairly aristocratic woman supervising the stable-boys. Don Berrigar, the Equerry, spends his time in court. His wife, Theresa, therefore manages the stable in Berrigar's absence. If this peculiarity prompts the group to ask questions, they may learn a little about Don Berrigar and Damon Le Mont. Theresa is eternally angry that she must work while her husband "lounges" about the castle. If asked where her husband is, Theresa answers, "O, he's gallivanting around somewhere with his high-borne friends, the Baron and that magician of his."

Servants and Retainers (210)

From pig-boys to the seneschal, all members of the Baron's staff feel lucky to have their positions. Compared to a lifetime in the fields, castle work seems paradise. Servants do light work, have local prestige, and even the poorest among them gets a bag of coppers at Yule. No servant does anything to jeopardize his position, nor does anyone tolerate an insult to the Baron.

Stm +2

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly +1

Weapons

Unarmed (but can fight): 1st 0 Atk 0 Soak 0

Def +3 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc

Theresa Berrigar

Description: firm-jawed and capable from years of doing her husband's work, Theresa runs the stables well. She loves her husband but his habit of lurking in the Great Hall, while she does the stable work, annoys her. Theresa talks with castle guests freely, and although she treats the matter of witchcraft with due circumspection, she does not shy away from it. Before the plague, the Berrigars made no secret of their friendship with magi in Ad Vis Per Veritas. Theresa sees no point in concealing it now. If asked which magus her husband knew, Theresa answers that he usually met an *"unpopular one. A relative of the Baron, as I recall."* This man now lives at the castle and calls himself Damon Le Mont. Damon used to be stingy with his books, but since the plague he has lent Don Berrigar a great number of tomes (in order to secure Berrigar's loyalty).

Roleplaying Tips: Theresa speaks in a deep voice for a woman and feels at ease in any company. She chats and exchanges grumbles with anyone who seems to want to do the same.

Str +2

Confidence 2

Age 24

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly -1

Talkative +2

Practical +2

Important Skills

Animal Handling (horses) +5

Unarmed (but can fight): 1st 0 Atk 0 Dam +2

Def 0 Fat 0 Soak 0 Enc -2

The Berrigars live in a solid house within the castle courtyard (which you can locate wherever you please). The house contains elegant furniture and a case of books, many from Araby. The texts have a Humanities value of +2 and a Medicine value of +1. Some of them bear the Eyes and Ears of Ad Vis Per Veritas while others bear the same symbol, but symbols that have been poorly scratched out.

5. Courtyard

One can barely force one's way between the workshops and barns which crowd this courtyard. The din of work fills the yard, as castle craftsmen try to perform work usually done by artisans in town.

6. Servants' Wing

Castle servants live in these rooms, sleeping on the floor and storing possessions in corners.

7. Storerooms

These bins and outbuildings hold the Baron's reserves of food. They stand near-empty, after the winter and the plague. Nevertheless, Baron Franc d'Montrouge himself has large amounts of edible food.

8. Central Tower

A hulking tower rises from the heart of the keep. As the castle's strongest point, it holds the sparsely elegant chambers of the Bishop and the Baron.

9. Ladies Chambers

The stench of aromatic spices fills these rooms. Many believe that perfumes and scented herbs ward off the miasmas that cause the plague, and therefore, the palace women adorn their rooms with scores of perfumed baubles. They fear contagion with good reason, since several dozen of women live in close company here. They spend their time on wooden benches, spinning and weaving.

10. Dungeons

The basements under this tower contain one large cell, the main body of the dungeons, for disruptive servants. Three adjoining chambers can hold individual prisoners. Each smaller cell contains a bed frame and water bucket, in the anticipation of noble prisoners. The peasants' cell stands absolutely barren. Baron Franc d'Montrouge has no prisoners when the group arrives. He uses cells only to hold captives while preparing some more direct punishment.

The dungeon area also contains a fully-equipped torture chamber. A palace guard named Tomas lives within, serving as executioner. He keeps his instruments in good repair. Treat Tomas as any other guard for the purpose of statistics.

11. Chapel

The Baron has only a small chapel. When he received the Bishop, he hurriedly made up for his church's size by decorating the chamber with precious things. A golden crucifix hangs above the altar, intricate frescoes cover the walls and candlesticks have an overlay of gold.

12. Bishop's Chambers

Baron Franc d'Montrouge spared no expense on his illustrious guest. Two guards are posted outside the Bishop's door. They wear white surcoats bearing the image of a crooked staff. The floor of the Bishop's quarters is made of bluish marble tiles.

13. Baronial Chambers

The Baron lives in a set of sparse rooms, with clean gray hangings over stone walls. Since the Baron receives his guests in the Great Hall, strangers have

little excuse for being here. Servants and guards report trespassers in the Baronial suite.

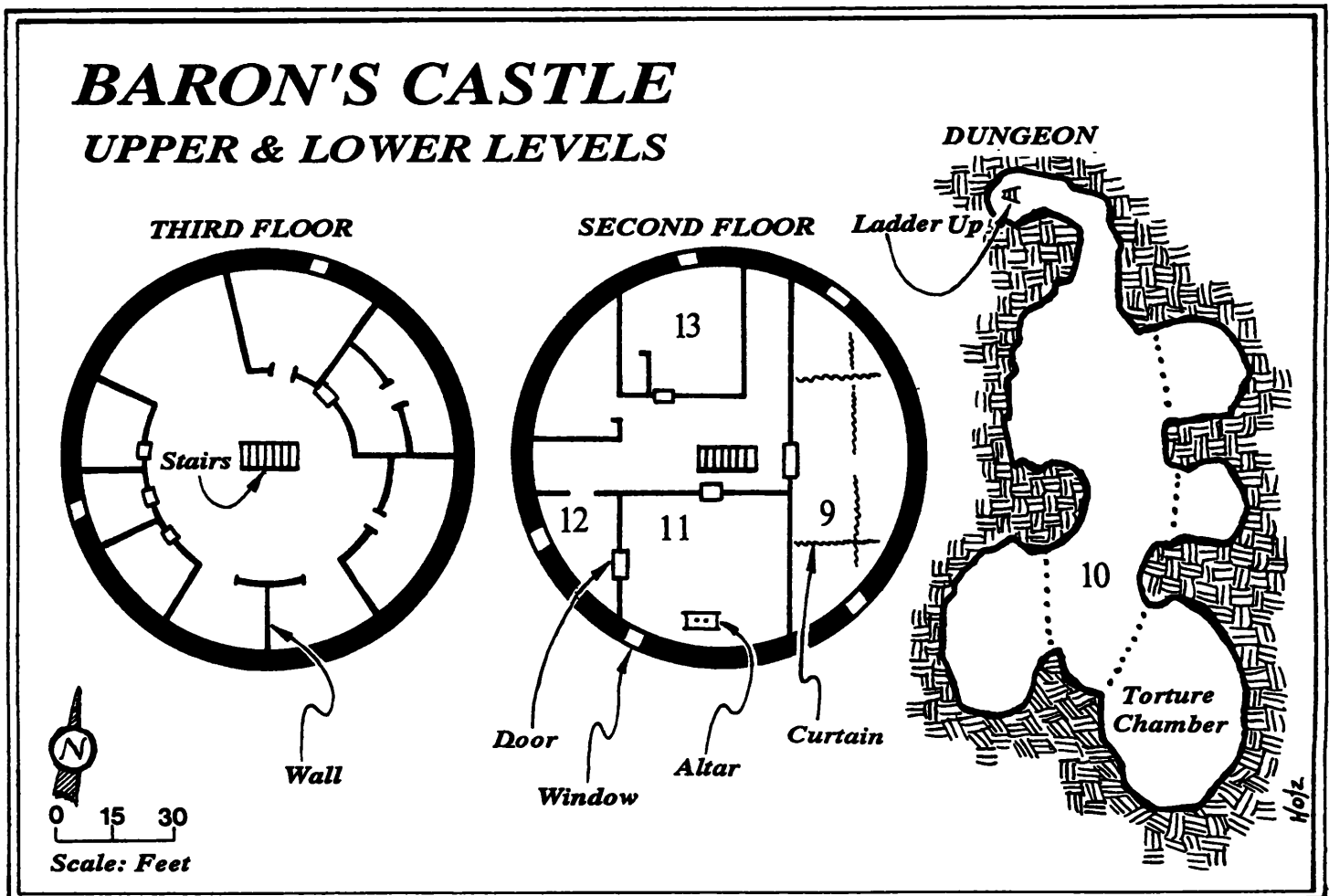
The Third Floor

Damon Le Mont dwells in the highest level of the Baron's tower. With his influence during the plague, he managed to garner the whole floor to himself. The magus has converted the floor into a sanctum for himself and the Demon. Drapes of black gauze block the windows. Damon keeps his furniture in odd jumbles, with bookcases in the center of rooms, chairs facing walls and tables jutting against one another at odd angles. A few pale tapers cast an eerie glow. No palace folk have entered Le Mont's chambers since the plague began.

The Demon A'Fienluh shares these rooms with Damon. The shadowy being shambles about the apartments, having no permanent location. A'Fienluh must hide himself, until the time comes for him to appear, when he may claim Montrouge as his own, or when he must deal with the characters. A'Fienluh's

Demonic power does not currently encompass true invisibility, but he does have a preternatural ability to get out of the way before anybody sees more than a glimpse of him. If spying characters enter these chambers, they may barely see A'Fienluh (Per + Scan or Search roll of 15+ to do so). However, they do hear him rushing away, knocking things over as he goes.

Three magical defenses protect Damon's abode. The entire area lies under an *Aegis Of The Hearth* cast at 30th Level. Damon has cast a *Waiting Spell* on the top of the stairs that lead to his sanctum. Anyone who climbs these stairs (save Damon himself, the Demon, or anyone in physical contact with either) becomes subject to *Confusion of the Insane Vibrations*. In anticipation of that spell being set off, Damon casts *Discern Own Illusions* on himself each morning. Damon has also cast *Waiting Spells* on each doorway on the castle's third floor. The first person to pass through each door suffers *Confusion of the Numbed Will*. Again, the spell is cast such that it doesn't affect Damon, the Demon, or anyone in contact with either.



Bishop Ceravantes

Description: the Bishop is nearly bald, with shining brown eyes and a severe jaw set in consternation. Traces of white hair rim his ears. He feels strong religious sentiments, but his pride compels him to the center of any great activity. That same egotism may drive him to suicide when he faces personal ruin.

Roleplaying Tips: Ceravantes presents himself as worldly and accommodating. He makes it a point to sound informed about whatever seems to interest his guests and can adopt the jargon of a magus, a warrior or a cleric. The Bishop acknowledges other peoples' points with swift nods.

Stm +1 Int +1 Per +1 Prs +1 Com +2

Confidence 2

Age 66

Personality Traits

Brave -1/Cowardly +2

Proud +2/Humble -2

Important Skills

Speak Latin +2

Scribe Latin +1

Scribe French +1

Courtly Grace (giving advice) +3

Ecclesiastical Knowledge (heresies) +3

Intrigue (Church) +3

Diplomacy +2

Dagger (surprise attacks) +3

Dagger Parry +2

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +4 Atk +7 Dam +5

Def +3 Fat 0 Soak +1 Enc 0

Damon owns a gold-embossed sword worth 500 silver deniers, but it's useless in combat, and owns a fine tapestry showing Noah in his ark, which is worth 400 silver deniers. He also has a pot of stolen lamb stew in his room, along with three barrels of water and another holding wine.

Damon's chambers contain the following books: texts on Hermes Lore, Hermes History, Magic Theory and Church Lore all with Knowledge Ratings of +7 each, a tome containing all spells listed in the boxed text on Damon, and an Arabic folio on Chirurgy with a Knowledge Rating of +10. Damon keeps a collection of loose scrolls in a huge chest of leather, reinforced by iron. These scrolls have the following Knowledge Ratings: Intéllego 17; Córpozem 13; Perdo 16; Vim 10; Herbam 12; Rego 20 and Animál 15. Damon also keeps his personal notes in the box. The notes have Knowl-

edge Ratings equal to Damon's own proficiency in each Technique and Form.

A chest of drawers by Damon's bed holds 500 gold sou, 20 coins from ancient Rome that together hold 10 pawns of Intéllego *vis*, a rosy crystal which holds a rook (10 pawns) of Terram *vis*, a flint with one pawn of Ignem *vis*, and a hammer holding two rooks (20 pawns) of Creo *vis*. He also has finely crafted wire tools that confer a +3 bonus on all Laboratory rolls.

Furthermore, Damon possesses a codex of folded paper entitled *Manual Of Mortal Illness*. The book contains a Knowledge rating of +10 on methods of spreading disease, and includes the spell *Curse Of The Unported Plague*. Damon wrote notations into the margins, describing exactly how he destroyed Montrouge. The book can therefore be used as evidence to convict Damon of his mortal and Hermetic sins.

The *Manual of Mortal Illness* also describes means of reversing its incantations. It contains the formula for a 30th Level Creo Córpozem spell which cures the plague of Montrouge. This spell applies only to plagues created by the spells in other parts of the tome, though. The reversal spell has no effect on natural diseases.

Damon wears a pendant shaped like a leaden ear. It matches the pendant belonging to Don Berrigar. Anyone who wears one pendant can hear words whispered into another, no matter how far apart the two devices are. These instruments transmit only words which someone deliberately speaks into the sculpted ear. They do not pick up extraneous noises from the surrounding area. Each ear has a Magic Level of 20.

The Castle Leaders

This section describes the castle notables and how they respond when the characters encounter them.

Audience with the Bishop

Bishop Ceravantes feels duty bound to all the members of his flock. The Churchman lacks the authority to invite strangers into the castle, but he does not turn away any who seek him. He actively seeks the introduction of characters who have tried to revive the town. The Bishop wants to talk with them, offer opinions and establish himself a role in the rebuilding. He seems informed and pragmatic about such matters, although somewhat detached from the day-to-day governing of the town. Whenever the group makes a rational suggestion to him, he agrees in principle.

Ceravantes honestly admires the group's efforts in Montrouge. He offers whatever aid the characters seek. However, if characters meet Ceravantes the day after he promises his aid, they find him almost speech-

less with depression. He does not actually reveal his treachery, but whenever the group speaks to him, he tries to hint that he may not help them. He concludes, "Perhaps I am not allowed to be among your friends." The Bishop does not explain more.

Ceravantes is not a free man. Damon Le Mont knows his terrible secret, that he purchased his Bishop's mitre from the infamous Tuscan Simonists. The Bishop knows that Montrouge's unforgiving Baron would never overlook such a crime. If Franc d'Montrouge ever learned of the Bishop's illegitimacy, he would undoubtedly arrest the Bishop. The Church would then strip him of his robes, at the least, and the Baron would have him branded a fraud. Such humiliation would leave Ceravantes ruined, and worse, would shatter his pride.

Faced with this alternative to Damon's blackmailing, the Bishop does what Damon commands. When the group contacts Ceravantes, he tries to lead them into revealing as much of their plans and acquired knowledge as he can. As soon as the parties depart from each other, Ceravantes reports this newly acquired information to his secret master. Two days later, at Damon's orders, Ceravantes denounces the magi as witches. See *Sparks at Dawn*, above, for notes on what happens next.

Anybody who spies on the Bishop by stealth or sorcery can watch him go to the chambers of Damon Le Mont. There, they hear him grovel before his master, while the magus responds with whispered threats: "How is your investment, Lord Bishop? Is it paying a good dividend?" Onlookers may also detect another presence in the room (Per + Alertness roll of 10+). A'Fienluh oversees the entire proceedings, perched upon Damon's pedestal in the form of a dog-sized rat.

If the characters learn of Ceravantes's simony, they too may put the Bishop in an untenable position. The characters can learn of his simony from Carolta, Valjac or Aramin, to name a few. One can obtain equally condemning information by eavesdropping on Ceravantes's visit to Damon. Thus, the characters can blackmail Ceravantes too. Furthermore, if the characters apply any magical or physical force on the Bishop that keeps him from obeying Damon, Ceravantes blurts out his shame and the truth behind his blackmailing. Under circumstances like these, Ceravantes has no way to preserve his secret. After making such an admission, his shame drives him to attempt suicide, and if he succeeds, the Demon claims his soul.

Roleplay the Bishop's self-destruction as follows: when confronted with his crimes, Ceravantes gives a wry laugh, confesses his guilt and agrees to whatever the group requests. If they insist on taking him away at once, he requests a moment in his chambers to

remove his ceremonial robes. If the group wants to accompany him, he does not object. Once inside, he hurls himself through his window, and automatically dies when he hits the stones below. To save him, someone must win the First Strike in a Round of combat and then successfully grapple Ceravantes. Unless the group specifically claims to be watching for a suicide attempt, Ceravantes gains a +4 bonus on his First Strike roll, due to surprise. (Characters observing Ceravantes after his confession may realize he's suicidal on a Int + Empathy roll of 9+.) If characters make a grab for Ceravantes, the Bishop doesn't put up much of a fight, broken of will.

Should his first suicide plan fail, Ceravantes continues trying to kill himself by the most effective means he can find. He has no desire to live as a branded faker, a walking example of dishonesty. To stop the Bishop's suicide, the group must resolve Ceravantes's dilemma by destroying A'Fienluh and by burying Ceravantes's secret forever. If the group diligently seeks these goals, Ceravantes regains hope. However, if the characters continue using his past to manipulate him, Ceravantes despairs and continues his search for death. (There's also the option of having Ceravantes gain resolve from the characters' support, resulting in his assistance in their plans — see *Options* at the end of this Chapter for more details.)



Audience with the Baron

At different points in this story, the group may need aid or recognition from the Lord of Montrouge. The Baron cares about the characters in proportion to their power. If the characters have rallied peasants and captured bandits, he allows them to visit whenever they wish. If the group seems insignificant, he does not waste time with them.

Baron Franc d'Montrouge has little personal regard for those beneath him, but also holds to the belief that a lord owes protection to his peasants. Therefore, he does not refuse to aid Montrouge. However, he would prefer to insulate himself from the town's troubles. He certainly wants to keep the plague from his palace, but even if the town's misery involved something other than contagion, he would prefer to assume that local problems would solve themselves. The disasters of peasants hardly seem real to him anyway. The characters win reach the Baron's ear by promising to help his town. After all, the help of outsiders would insulate him from local upset. The Baron is particularly interested in having outsiders destroy Mazain's gang.

The Baron receives guests in his Great Hall and listens impassively to them, while leading them in a random pace about the chamber. Damon Le Mont follows in the background, his hands clasped before him. The magus seldom speaks, but Baron Franc d'Montrouge occasionally cuts his eyes to Damon, seeking an opinion. Damon seldom offers one, at least in the presence of the group.

If the group asks for a private audience, Damon grows angry but concedes to be sent away. He then relies on a spy to learn what the group has to say. Don Berrigar, the palace Equerry, serves as Damon's agent, and is also an agent of the Baron. The man spends his time loitering about the Great Hall and the castle's upper chambers. He can unobtrusively spy on the group no matter where it chooses to go. If the characters check to ensure that they are not being spied on, treat their search as a contest of the characters' Scan score against that of Berrigar's Stealth.

Berrigar reports his information to Damon, using the magical charm that allows him to whisper in the magus's ear at any time (see *Damon's Suite* for more details). In spying on the group he can also whisper information to Damon, suggesting opportunities for spells cast via *Opening The Intangible Tunnel*.

Don Berrigar is also an advisor to the Baron and may be involved in any audience between the characters and the Baron. In such conversations, Berrigar does not shy away from the group. Rather, Don Berrigar argues against the group's suggestions, on Damon's behalf, trying to keep the Baron from providing aid to the group's efforts in Montrouge. However,

he does try to appear unbiased in his arguments, striving not to reveal his fealty to Damon. Berrigar also accuses the group of plotting against the Baron. Thus, Berrigar can prove a tremendous thorn in the characters' side.

In appearing before the Baron, the characters have to be careful of how they present themselves. Franc d'Montrouge despises sorcery and feels contempt for all wizards. He blames magi, even those from other territories, for the plague and for the mysterious assaults which preceded it (particularly, that made against Silber Wise Hand). However, where Damon is concerned, the Baron makes one exception to his convictions, partly because Damon is his Uncle and partly because Damon's spells preserved the castle during the plague. And, recognizing his Uncle's power, Franc seldom ignores Damon's advice.

Still, the Baron does not fully trust Damon. Thus, the Baron may actually listen to an accusation made against the magus. After all, the Baron is, in the end, a just man. If the group tells something approximating Damon's true story, producing witnesses and physical evidence to support their words, Franc d'Montrouge believes them. Testimony from Aramin almost certainly dooms Le Mont, and the *Manual of Mortal Illness*, from Damon's chambers, demonstrates that he summoned the plague. Damon, meanwhile, lurks nearby, scoffing at the group's points in tones of increasing desperation.

Ultimately, you must decide whether the group's evidence can overcome the Baron's inclination to side with his own kin. To resolve particularly troublesome points, one can call for Social Skills rolls of Com + Charisma or Com + Guile from the characters, as appropriate. The Ease Factor is 10. Should the characters denounce Damon and fail to back their claims, the Baron immediately charges them with witchcraft.

A'Fienluh can tell when his cause is lost, and the characters will be freed, long before the Baron consciously makes a decision against Damon. The Demon warns his magus servitor, and Damon Le Mont uses the warning to slip out of the Great Hall and return to his own chambers. Remember that at the time of Damon's "escape," the Baron has not yet made up his mind about Damon's guilt. Thus, he forbids anyone from pursuing, interfering with or otherwise laying hands on Damon until a decision is made. To heighten players' anxiety after the departure of Damon from the Great Hall, you should prolong the characters' session with the Baron for some time. That way players will be squirming, wondering at the many evils Damon prepares for them. Meanwhile, Damon does just that. He arranges a final defense in his chambers. You must now proceed to the final battle, in *Wrath of the Demon*.

Baron Franc d'Montrouge

Description: a smooth, arrogant man with wisps of black beard. He wears a dark cape and felt hat, usually over armor. His wife died in childbirth five years ago, leaving him quite cold toward people and their emotions. The Baron regards the plague with only superficial horror, since none of his castlefolk contracted it. His heart is hard, and he devotes most of his thought to abstract political concerns.

Roleplaying Tips: The Baron considers himself a true nobleman, with a duty to uphold tradition, but also with a right to power. He resents any encroachment on his influence by magi and Bishops alike. If the characters play on his fears of rivalry, the Baron takes them seriously, believing any mutinous plots they reveal or fabricate. Ultimately, the Baron's authority means nothing to him if it's divested from chivalry — he reigns with honor. He also feels deep loyalty toward family, Church and peasants. When playing the Baron, speak in a slow, strident monotone.

Int +1 Str +2 Prs +3 Dex +2

Confidence 3

Age 32

Personality Traits

Brave +1/Cowardly -1

Jealous of Power +1

Principled +1

Isolationist +1

Important Skills

Riding +2

Courtly Grace (etiquette) +3

Shield +1

Lance +2

Mace +2

Weapons

Lance: 1st +7 Atk +6 Dam +12

Mace: 1st +2 Atk +7 Dam +9

Def (Kite Shield) +6 Fat +2

Soak (Plate Cuirass) +10 Enc 2

Don Berrigar, Groom

Description: quick-eyed and literate, Don Berrigar has a blacksmith's arms from shoeing horses. He wears a mustache and goatee. Since a nobleman's might depends on horseflesh, Don wields incredible influence in court. He finds his role as advisor more stimulating than caring for horses, the latter a role that became second nature to him years ago.

Don Berrigar met Damon Le Mont long before Montrouge's current turmoil. The two shared an interest in Saracen lore and became close friends. Now that Damon needs Berrigar's services, the Equerry is glad to comply, especially since one never knows when a magus's gratitude might prove invaluable.

Damon gave Berrigar a small leaden pendant shaped like an ear. When Berrigar whispers into it, Damon LeMont can hear his words through an identical pendant, no matter how much distance separates them. Berrigar can describe what he sees well enough to guide Damon's *Opening The Intangible Tunnel* spell. Damon may also speak back to Berrigar with his instrument.

Roleplaying Tips: Characters are most likely to meet Berrigar when they negotiate with the Baron. The Groom does not confront them. He may even pretend to agree with what the characters say, but not for long, as he only does so to point out flaws in their arguments. Use Berrigar to show the group where it needs to gather more evidence. When portraying Berrigar, cock your head with interest while other people speak. He listens like a snake lies coiled, ready to strike.

Int +3 Str +3 Stm +2 Dex +1

Confidence 2

Age 32

Personality Traits

Brave 0/Cowardly 0

Intellectual +1/Prosaic -1

Important Skills

Animal Handling (horses) +4

Courtly Grace (advice) +3

Stealth (palace chambers) +5

Short Sword +2

Short Sword Parry (thrusts) +3

Weapons

Short Sword: 1st +4 Atk +7 Dam +9

Def +5 Fat 0 Soak +3 Enc 0

Meeting With Damon

At the castle, the group finds itself face to face with the magus who brought the plague upon Montrouge. Damon Le Mont has a suite in the palace and attends the group's audiences with the Baron. Damon intends to shun strangers until he can accuse them of witchcraft and destroy them from afar. Therefore, he usually refuses personal contact with characters. However, he dares not let the Baron discover his true history. If the group ever alludes to his past, Damon suggests that the characters meet him in his private chambers. In making this invitation Damon's eyebrows bristle, and he whispers the suggestion almost as a threat. Damon convinces the Baron to sanction such a meeting by suggesting that he can relieve the Baron of the burdensome problems presented by the characters. If the characters intend to find evidence to incriminate Damon, and intend to defeat him, they should accept his offer. Otherwise, the characters must conduct their duties through intermediaries like the Baron, over whom they have no direct control. If the characters are hesitant to accept Damon's private invitation, you might point out the bureaucratic alternative to the players.

If the group fights with Damon in the Great Hall, A'Fienluh waits to defend his servant in Damon's chambers. When engaged in combat, Damon tries to withdraw into his rooms, where his readied spells and the Demon can have their effects. See *The Baron's Castle* maps for the layout of Damon's chambers. In all probability, palace guards defend their Lord's Uncle. Intervening guards at least offer Damon the opportunity to retreat to his chambers, unless the characters manage to grab and hold him (note that castle guards do not follow into Damon's chambers, afraid of what magic lies within).

An outright attack in the Great Hall is one of the many ways in which the group can fight its final battle. However, such an attack is the least prudent of ways to confront Damon, for if Damon cannot be proven in league with Demons, the Baron declares war against the characters. Such an eventuality is left for you to develop fully, as it's one of many contingencies that cannot be contained within the limited pages of this book. Let's hope that characters are at least wise enough to have strong evidence against Damon before they attack him outright. You should also point out the importance of such information before the characters prepare to go off half cocked.

If he gets away from attacking characters and returns to his chambers, or while awaiting battle in his chambers, Damon prepares his spells. He uses *Wizard's Sidestep* to protect himself and creates a pack of wolves (with a personal version of *Phantasmal Animals*) to surround the group and cause confusion. With *Creo*

Animál, he also produces ten real wolves to hold grogs back and to finish off dying opponents. Once these spells are cast, he and his wolves pounce. Damon strikes to kill, using *Ignem* and *Perdo* magic.

If the characters are defeated by Damon but escape, Damon immediately contacts the Bishop and mobilizes Montrouge to arrest the fugitives for witchcraft. Now the characters have the town's authorities after them, and must still prove Damon a diabolist. If the characters are ever able to get in contact with the Baron again, they can request that he look for Damon's *Manual of Mortal Illness*. (If you're not completely heartless, let one of the characters have seen the book while fighting Damon, and let that character have realized it's proof of Damon's evil.) The Baron looks for or demands that the book be produced because he still doesn't entirely trust Damon, and wants to review all the facts. Commanded to produce the book, Damon panics and moves to kill the Baron and everyone else who endangers him. Thus, he proclaims his own guilt.

In your game, the group may instinctively attack Damon Le Mont. A duel of magi makes an exciting climax to this story, and death is a fitting reward for Damon's murders. However, in *Ars Magica*, characters need not limit themselves to the obvious. Damon Le Mont is no madman. If offered sympathy and sanctuary he might become a powerful ally of the group's Covenant. Of course, engaging a hostile magus in parley can be more perilous than a simple assault. Most grogs assuredly think so. In verbal confrontation, Damon turns the characters' words against them whenever possible, trying to prove them guilty of Montrouge's hardships. Only if offered sanctuary with the characters' Covenant, and given some token of the group's sincerity, like the destruction of Montrouge, is Damon willing to join the characters. Above all, Damon wants to assure his own life. His deeds in Montrouge assure him the suffering of a Wizards' March, and the characters must protect him from a March to win his loyalty. Of course, the magi of House Flambeau (see *Ceil Lands*, encounter 8, Chapter One) and the surviving magi of *Ad Vis Per Veritas* refuse to condone an alliance with Le Mont.

The Demon is another who cannot brook an accommodation between the group and Damon Le Mont. If that possibility arises, A'Fienluh appears behind Damon and smites the group with *Pilums of Fire*. From the group's perspective, a dark form seems to loom up from behind Damon, as if Damon has secretly cast some spell. That spell then seems to result in a fiery attack. A'Fienluh intends for the characters to blame Damon for the assault, and respond with an attack of their own. When it appears that Damon will be defeated, A'Fienluh makes his true presence known and fights all the magi, including Damon, hoping to destroy Damon. If Damon survives and the Demon is

defeated, the characters may choose to continue their alliance with Damon, or may turn him in to the Hermetic authorities. If he learns he is to be turned over, Damon attacks the characters and attempts to flee Montrouge.

Once the characters and A'Fienluh become at odds, proceed to *Wrath of the Demon*.

Wrath of the Demon

Eventually, the characters and A'Fienluh must meet. Perhaps the group perceives the true enemy of Montrouge, and attacks the Demon within the palace. Perhaps the characters make such progress in Montrouge that the Demon cannot afford further patience. In either case, the group finds itself fighting a Demon, who, depending on earlier events and encounters, may indirectly control all of Montrouge. Those who have committed sins in an effort to survive the plague become A'Fienluh's slaves. When faced by the characters in the story's final, climactic, fight, A'Fienluh summons those slaves to destroy the characters.

When A'Fienluh appears before his foes, he speaks: "*This land was trusted into my care, Those who chose to survive have chosen to serve me.*" He feels proud of the destruction he's caused in Montrouge, and is proud of the number of souls he's accumulated in the effort. He does not hesitate to brag about his achievements. The Demon wants his opponents to realize the utter ruin of their hopes before he destroys them.

In their efforts to rebuild Montrouge, the characters may feel they effectively resisted the influence of the Demon. They may have, for example, stayed true to their morals and avoided harmful acts of necessity, or they may have sought penitence from Triemus or Ceravantes for any sins, preserving their souls. Thus, the characters might not be susceptible to A'Fienluh's control. However, as A'Fienluh boasts, the grim necessities of the plague have forced many others to compromise with the Hells, whether consciously or not. Each encounter of this story involves people driven or tempted to infamous acts. Those who linger in their sins must aid the Demon when he summons them.

A'Fienluh can command those who committed crimes on his behalf and did not repent. He can call such servants across any distance, using his Demonic power. At this point in the tale, you should evaluate the incidents of **Black Death**, and decide which townsfolk still linger in the Demon's servitude. Those who gave up their follies and helped to rebuild the town have escaped A'Fienluh's yoke. However, people who persist in villainy cannot resist the Demon's call.

Those whom the group killed must also appear to aid A'Fienluh, in the form of ghosts.

A'Fienluh's servants converge on the group as fast as transportation allows, wherever the characters are located. If the characters face A'Fienluh in the Baron's castle, for example, those slaves converge on the castle. True, castle guards try to stop them, and may actually kill a few, but some slaves can get in to deal with the characters. You must decide exactly which slaves get into the castle, and how. Maybe some of the slaves, like Triemus, have influence in the castle and can negotiate their way in, or can simply walk through the gates, welcomed. While slaves approach, the Demon Sequesters himself and Le Mont within Damon's palace suite (assuming A'Fienluh has time to do so — the characters may be right on Damon's tail when the magus returns to his chambers, or Damon may never make it to his chambers, in which case A'Fienluh Sequesters himself in Damon's quarters). Sequestration prevents the group from fighting A'Fienluh at once, and buys time for the Demon's allies to arrive. See A'Fienluh's profile for ways in which characters can overcome his Sequestration.

A'Fienluh's tactics depend on the people under his command. He would like to have the people and ghosts of the town fight the magi while he remains safely in isolation. If that's not possible, though, A'Fienluh attacks the characters personally.

The following list shows Storyguide characters who may serve the Demon, and the conditions under which they must do so. Feel free to introduce any other servants you consider appropriate. If the characters would have terrible trouble defeating A'Fienluh, and a horde of his servants, you can limit the number of servants that answer the Demon's call. In fact, if necessary to the story's resolution, he may summon none, leaving the characters to fight the Demon and Damon, still two formidable foes.

- Damon has previously offered A'Fienluh the most help, and is the most likely to continue as the Demon's servant. The magus can support the Demon with powerful spells, possibly cast from afar by means of *Opening the Intangible Tunnel*. Damon also controls a suite in the palace, protected by a variety of spells. The Demon uses Damon's chamber as a redoubt, from which to direct his other servants in battle against the group.

Unless the group convinces Damon to surrender his *Manual of Mortal Illness* and leave Montrouge under the characters' care, assume that Damon serves the Demon.

Even if Le Mont turns against A'Fienluh, the Demon tries to hold Damon's chambers. In this event, Damon insists that the group refrain from using destructive magic against the Demon, for fear of losing his books.

Damon Le Mont

Description: a sallow man, whose brooding eyes gaze from unkept hair. The magus's lean features give him an obvious air of power, and, indeed, he is the most capable magus of Ad Vis Per Veritas. Damon makes no attempt to practice courtesy or compassion, since he considers those virtues suitable only for weak men. He considers rudeness his personal prerogative, and bursts into fury if anyone dares insult him.

Despite his coarse personality, Damon does have allies. His quick wit and awe-inspiring presence bring him devoted followers, and if those people can discuss scholarly matters intelligently, he treats them well. The magus also has a special interest in the lore of the Saracens. Damon's most useful follower at present is the Baron's Equerry, Don Berrigar, who is also interested in Saracen lore.

Damon also has a devoted follower in Aramin, the young magus at the Fens (see Chapter One). Damon dares not trust Aramin for he fears Aramin knows his secret, but feels a kinship with the young magus. If the group brings Aramin's message to Le Mont, Damon actually thanks them, albeit in a strained tone. (Actually, his thanks is a password to neutralize the letter's magical seal.) Aramin's careful flattery wins Le Mont favor. After reading the message, Damon commands the characters to bring Aramin before him. He then cures Aramin's plague, and the two become accomplices again. The alliance of the two magi can be either a triumph or a disaster for the characters, depending on how other negotiations proceed. It may seal a bargain in which Damon allows Ad Vis Per Veritas to re-organize, or it may give Damon enough strength to finally exterminate the magi and the characters. Neither Aramin nor Damon feels any compunction about betraying the characters.

Roleplaying Tips: Damon speaks in a cheerfully arrogant tone and does not permit others to contradict him. When someone tells him something, he corrects their errors, and when people disagree with him, he tries to make them look foolish. Damon may occasionally say self-incriminating things in order to appear more knowledgeable than those around him. In this way, he may fill in whatever gaps remain in the group's knowledge of his history.

Damon omits courtesy words and scratches himself vigorously while other people speak. If someone demonstrates real cleverness, Damon expresses his heartfelt admiration. Damon can sometimes choke his temper when negotiating

with dangerous foes, but his boorish mannerisms have become involuntary habits.

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

Confidence 4

Age 47

Personality Traits

Brave +2/Cowardly +2

Jealous +2

Humble -2

Egotistical +1

Compassionate -2

Bad Temper +2

Self-Controlled +1

Important Skills

Entrancement (intellectual) +5

Dodge (rear attacks) +6

Second Sight +2

Dagger (surprise attacks) +4

Speak Latin +3

Scribe Latin +3

Magic Theory (inventing spells) +3

Hermes Lore +2

Hermes History (tomes) +3

Parma Magica (Imágonem) +4

Certámen (Perdo) +5

Finesse +3

Concentration (hurried) +3

Magical Techniques

Creo 15

Intéllego 15

Muto 10

Perdo 20

Rego 16

Magical Forms

Animál 19

Córporem 10

Herbam 10

Ignem 15

Imágonem 30

Mentem 15

Vim 35

Spells

Creo Animal (Wolf)

Mastering the Unruly Beast

Damon Le Mont

Tongue of the Beasts

Confusion of the Numbed Will

Aegis of the Hearth

Phantasmal Animal (This is a customized version of the spell. It creates phantom wolves that can dart around a battle as if attacking. They weave in and out among the magically conjured wolves that Damon summons, to confuse fighters. Due to its special effects, this is a Level 25 spell.)

Waiting Spell

Summoning the Distant Images

Opening the Intangible Tunnel

Confusion of the Insane Vibrations

The Invisible Eye Revealed

Disenchant

Wind of Mundane Silence

Pilum of Fire

Arc of Fiery Ribbons

Ball of Abysmal Flame

Curse of the Unportended Plague (and a Companion spell which cures any plague he inflicts in one victim. Level 30.)

Grip Of The Choking Hand

Weapons

Dagger: 1st +7 Atk +10 Dam +6

Def +8 Fat 0 Soak +2 Enc 0



The Demon also attempts to assume control of the defensive spells that Damon has planted throughout his sanctum. Since Le Mont cast those enchantments under A'Fienluh's influence, the fiend has a claim to their operation. Unless Damon can beat A'Fienluh in a contest of Finesse vs. Demon Might, A'Fienluh gains control of the spells. The spells then take effect against anyone who enters the sanctum, including Damon himself.

- Bishop Cervantes has worked for Damon out of shame and fear. Unless the characters led him out of Damon's service (see *Options*, below), he must serve A'Fienluh now. If Cervantes successfully committed suicide, his spirit comes to help A'Fienluh, and his spirit is a particularly dangerous foe.

- If the magi of House Flambeau slaughtered innocents of Montrouge, those magi must serve the Demon.

- Carolta and her grogs kill mercilessly to protect their identities. If the characters allowed such a possibility to occur, and did not make amends for any unfortunate deaths, Carolta and her grogs answer the Demon's call. They are commanded to enter town, sneak up on the group using as much stealth as possible, and attack.

- Aramin willfully and his cultists unwittingly, serve the Demon, so are all sinners. Unless the group offered the cultists a way to escape the plague and their corrupt way of life, the cultists heed A'Fienluh's call. Regardless of alternative lifestyles offered him, Aramin definitely answers A'Fienluh's call, having wantonly sinned under the conditions of the plague.

If and when the cultists arrive, A'Fienluh uses them to disrupt the group's plans of battle. In this climactic last fight, A'Fienluh's power increases the infectiousness of the cultists' disease to the point where anyone who is touched by them risks the plague. Those who suffer a hit must pass a Stm roll with a Target Number of 8 to remain healthy. The cultists' favored tactic is to intervene themselves between the characters and the Demon's other slaves, challenging the group to hack them down.

- Also keep in mind that characters who abused their power in Montrouge, or who committed sinful acts in order to achieve some end in this story, no matter how noble, might become subject to A'Fienluh's will as well. If the characters would have real trouble stopping the Demon should some of them be subject to his control, you can exempt the characters from A'Fienluh's commands. Maybe he doesn't choose to control sinful characters because he wants all the characters destroyed, and can have people from Montrouge do so. Characters who are taken over by the Demon can be played by you, or more enjoyably, by their players, who may use all their knowledge to defeat their former allies.

A'Fienluh does not mind if the group kills his slaves. After all, those that die add to his collection of souls. Each person that the characters kill in this climactic battle give A'Fienluh an additional point of Infernal Might, making him more powerful. Those who serve him and survive can still repent and find salvation, though. They may make amends for their sins and go to the Promised Land upon their natural deaths.

In trying to get to A'Fienluh and Damon, the characters may fight the Demon's servants, killing many people who are essentially innocent, save for their susceptibility to Infernal devices. To many characters these killings may seem distasteful or even immoral. Fortunately, there are ways other than death to free the Demon's servants. If a legitimate Churchman (e.g. Triemus), a character with True Faith or Faith Points, or Ceravantes with renewed vigor (see *Options*, below) blesses or officially pronounces forgiveness upon the servants, they regain their own free will. Furthermore, magi who cast a spontaneous ReVi spell of Level 30 may counteract the Demon's control over his servants, denying a renewal of that control as well.

As a last combat stratagem, A'Fienluh usually remains in his Sequestered realm throughout the characters' fight with his slaves. However, if the characters are handily defeating the slaves, A'Fienluh activates the *Waiting Spells* in Damon's suite (if that's where the characters are fighting the slaves), as previously discussed. Furthermore, if Damon is with A'Fienluh in Sequestration, the magus casts spells at the characters by *Opening the Intangible Tunnel*. Regardless of how the Demon takes part in the characters' battle with the slaves, A'Fienluh's Demonic power allows him to know everything that takes place in the fight, no matter where he hides. Thus, if the characters defeat the Demon's slaves, A'Fienluh waits till the characters enter Damon's suit, and returns to the mortal world to face the characters personally.

To ultimately defeat the Demon, the characters must invade Damon's suite and banish A'Fienluh to the Hells. At that point, his control over his servants withers away. Those people are left to face the inner torment of their sins, for they remember everything they've done, and freely confess to their faults. Thus, characters who defend themselves against possessed townsfolk are not held responsible for any injury or death they cause. If characters are among those under the Demon's control, their players should be encouraged to roleplay the anguish the characters feel, having attacked and maybe killed friends.

There are some who do not stop fighting when the Demon is banished, though. Damon and Aramin know they have no hope for salvation after being in league with the Demon, so continue to fight to the

death. If they defeat the characters, the magi flee Montrouge together, maybe to be met by the players at another time. . .

It's possible that in the end, the characters could be defeated by A'Fienluh and Damon. In that case the characters are not killed outright. Rather, Damon claims that the characters were the evil ones, and that they sought to make him seem the root of Montrouge's hardships. Casting blame from himself, Damon therefore renews the town's witch-hunt and arranges for the characters to be tried once and for all. A'Fienluh also wants the characters tried for he wants to incite the townsfolk to further sins, increasing his wealth of corrupted souls. Imprisoned, maybe for a second time, the characters may devise any means of escape. If they have genuine difficulty escaping on their own, the characters could still receive help from a former friend in Montrouge. For example, Valjac, the smith, might break them out, finally disgusted with horrible treatment the characters have endured. Or, magi from Ad Vis Per Veritas might snatch the characters from prison, hoping to help the characters make another strike against the Demon. The possibilities in this situation are left up to you and your players.

Bishop Lemure

Spirit Might 15

Powers:

Anathema, ReVi 30, 1 point — As a Lemure the Bishop, once a holy man, can blasphemy against God with such passion and corruption that the mortal souls of all those within hearing are torn. Everyone within earshot of the Anathema must make a Stm + Church Lore + Church Knowledge roll. Those with True Faith may add double that trait's Rating to their roll, and to the rolls of those within earshot of the character (the character is assumed to denounce the spirit's blasphemy, stealing his fellows' faith).

If a victim of an Anathema rolls a 5 or lower, he finds himself drawn toward the power of darkness, compelled to join the Lemure against the other characters. That character remains within the Lemure's power until the Lemure is banished, or until it can be silenced through magic.

Those who score from 6 to 12 temporarily resist the effects of the spirit's tirade, but are mortified by the spirit's contemptuousness and feel bound to destroy it. These victims must therefore fight the Lemure until it's destroyed and can only do otherwise by making a Stm roll of 8+. Though a character may not follow the Christian faith, he is still compelled to put the Lemure

down, horrified by its perversion. Even if the Lemure is magically silenced, its obsessed attackers must continue their assault.

Those who score a 12 or more in their attempt to resist the spirit's Anathema suffer no ill effects upon hearing it. The characters realize that the spirit's words are a shallow attempt to corrupt with a blatant show of Infernal power.

Description: The sins of the Bishop, a man of God, are a greater burden than other mortals'. Bishop Ceravantes's Lemure resembles those described above, but bears twisted facial features, wrought by the Bishop's sins.

Options

The following options present different courses of action that characters can take, and present alternative stories that you can incorporate into the main story should characters need help, should events slow down, or should a diversion be needed.

- Intentionally or not, the group gives Bishop Ceravantes a dose of courage. Instead of succumbing to threats and committing suicide, as the text describes, Ceravantes admits to his illegitimacy as a Bishop, but still finds strength in the Lord. Surprisingly, he even manifests that strength as he virtually glows with a heavenly light. With the Bishop on their side, the characters can follow many interesting story paths.

If the group befriends Bishop Ceravantes, they can channel his anger toward their foes. For example, they might use him to launch a campaign against Damon Le Mont. The Bishop can accuse Damon of diabolism. Then he and the characters have to convince the Baron of their accusations before the Demon can destroy them. Naturally, Damon reveals Ceravantes as a fraud, but no one can deny that the Bishop has recently developed some Divine authority. Thus, the Baron dares not have his Bishop tried. In fact, the Baron and his men almost certainly believe evidence against Damon if the Bishop backs it. Even if Franc d'Montrouge somehow ends up siding with the Demon, his guards still follow the Holy authority of the Bishop.

- As a complete alternative to events previously described in this supplement, Damon may negotiate an agreement with the characters, avoiding a confrontation between the two parties. Granted, Damon is clearly guilty of events behind the tragedy of Montrouge, but he offers his accumulated knowledge to the characters and is willing

Lemures

Spirit Might 5

Description: Those who succumb to A'Fienluh's corruption cannot escape serving him through simple death. He can call their phantoms back to serve him. These ghosts display the same features they had while alive, but their flesh is pale, and crimson flames lick their faces. In combat, they use whatever weapon they wielded in life, at their old level of ability. They cannot cause physical damage, but anyone who would ordinarily suffer a wound at a Lemure's hands must pass a Bravery or other appropriate Personality roll with an Ease Factor of 8 or flee in terror for one Round.

Normal weapons do not affect a Lemure, but magical and iron ones do. For a Lemure's profile, use that which the person had in life (note that the Lemure cannot use the powers and abilities that his living self could). If all Body Levels are lost, the Lemure dissipates, driven to Hell. Magi can also banish Lemures with spontaneous ReVi spells of Level 25+.



A'Fienluh

Description: once a guardian spirit of the land, A'Fienluh succumbed to the temptation of Infernal power and joined the ranks of Demonkind. In doing so, he lost his Divine status, and as a new initiate of Hell, lost control of his former lands. His territory became a home for humanity, and people built the town of Montrouge over his old domain. Magi also appropriated his source of *vis*, and built Ad Vis Per Veritas over the sacred cave where A'Fienluh once ruled. A'Fienluh's possessions were not forever lost, though. The Prince of Darkness promised that A'Fienluh could someday recover his possessions. To do that, he had only to capture the souls of those who occupied his former lands.

A'Fienluh lacks the fair form and subtlety needed to win souls by seduction. Instead, he must attack his foes by assaulting their society, putting them in a position where they must choose between evil and death. Therefore, unlike many Demons, he often finds himself compelled to slay vast numbers of innocents to achieve his ends. He enjoys that sort of thing, though.

Roleplaying Tips: During a climactic confrontation with the characters, A'Fienluh bellows with deep, hearty laughter, reveling in the revenge he plans to have against those who have turned from him. He also alludes to the amicable being who's helping him restore his former glory: *"This Lucifer of yours is a very helpful fellow. His efforts have helped me destroy this town and reclaim my lands. Maybe after you are destroyed he and I will rule together."* A'Fienluh appreciates Lucifer's help in conquering Montrouge, but hasn't yet realized that the Devil undoubtedly has evil plans of his own.

Infernal Might 40

Size 0

Angry +3

Vengeful +3

Compassionate -3

Int +3 Str +2 Dex +1 Qik +2

Spear: 1st +9 Atk +8 Dam +15

Fat n/a Def +14 Soak (equals current Infernal Might)

Body Levels: 0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Banished

Spirit Form Powers

Until A'Fienluh regains control of Montrouge, he forfeits his spirit powers. If he actually does drive mortals from the town, he gains the ability to control both weather and wildlife within ten miles of Needle Stone.

Physical Form

A'Fienluh looks like a wraith. Sometimes he wears a cloak, and sometimes his clothes are merely shadow and mist. Upon close examination, the fiend has distinct facial features, including a full nose, and deep-set eyes. However, the Demon's "skin" appears to be mere shadow-stuff, and all his features are a uniform dark gray.

Physical Form Powers

Hide, PeIm 15, 1 point — A'Fienluh cannot actually render himself invisible, but he can always disappear if he has even the slightest obstacle to hide behind (Per + Scan or Search roll of 15+ to spot him). His attempts to hide usually make noise. Therefore, even if his enemies cannot spot him, they know something is present, but cannot be sure of what, or where.

Mental Contact, CrIn 15, 0 points — Once A'Fienluh can manipulate some victim into committing sin, he can communicate with that person from afar. The Demon can see through that person's eyes at will, and exchange whatever messages he desires. Mental contact costs no Infernal Points, but does require A'Fienluh's concentration. This power has unlimited range. To escape Mental Contact with A'Fienluh, one must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor equal to half A'Fienluh's current Infernal Might. Here, Stm represents willpower more than physical endurance. One may add the Divine Aura rating of one's location to this roll, along with the rating of any holy item one possesses.

Summons, ReIn 30, 0 points — Those who voluntarily commit sins as a result of A'Fienluh's plots owe the Demon a single service. To demand it, A'Fienluh must make Mental Contact, as described above. After receiving this command, the recipient must obey until A'Fienluh is banished or destroyed. Death does not release one from A'Fienluh's command. Anyone who owes A'Fienluh a service, but dies, must perform the errand as a Lemure (see below).

Sequestration, ReVi 40, varies — This power snatches a portion of the earthly world into the realm of Demonkind, thereby cutting it off from unwanted disturbance. A'Fienluh can Sequester an area equal to ten square feet for every five Infernal Points he spends on the power. The effect lasts for two minutes per Infernal Point expended. In this story, A'Fienluh uses Sequestration to isolate himself and Damon within Damon's suite during the final battle. This act gains enough time for the Demon's other allies to arrive.

A'Fienluh Continued...

Those who try to enter the Sequestered area usually find themselves stopped by an invisible wall. Only those with True Faith or Faith Points may enter the Sequestered realm, but to do so means solitary combat with the Demon and Damon. Furthermore, anyone bearing any item with a Divine Aura rating of 4 or more may pass through the wall, as may those in physical contact with the object's bearer. Spells can only be cast into the Sequestered region via the spell *Opening the Intangible Tunnel*. However, the Sequestered area has an Infernal Aura of 6, which interferes with all Hermetic spells cast into the area. Furthermore, if Damon is in the Sequestered area, he recognizes the *Tunnel* and may cast spells back at the characters.

Absorb Souls, PeMe 20, 0 points — The Prince of Darkness allows A'Fienluh to feed on the souls he corrupts. If anyone commits evil as a result of the Demon's plots and then dies unrepentant, A'Fienluh immediately gains one point of Infernal Might, permanently.

Slay, PeCo 40, 10 points — By concentrating his power, A'Fienluh can cause the hideous death of a mortal. A'Fienluh must arrange to be alone with his target. If he can touch a victim with no other mortal to witness the incident, the target must pass an *Stm* roll of 15+ or collapse, drained of life. A'Fienluh uses this power for assassinations.

Pilum of Fire, CrIg 20, 2 points — In simple combat, A'Fienluh can hurl bolts of flame. Treat this ability as the spell of the same name.

to become their ally. Thus, working together, the characters and the magus may find a scapegoat for the plague and may profit from each other. Damon is even willing to help restore *Ad Vis Per Veritas* and share its wealth of *vis* with the characters and their Covenant — a tempting offer.

One of Damon's terms in this unholy alliance is that Montrouge be destroyed. He claims that is the only way to stop the spread of the plague, ensuring a safe future for the rebuilt Covenant. The town's destruction also means A'Fienluh gets the souls he desires.

Even if Montrouge is destroyed, the characters must contend with the problem of stocking the rebuilt *Ad Vis Per Veritas* with magi. Aramin certainly joins, and Carolta can be convinced to, blackmailed with her crimes as a refugee from the ruined Covenant. If necessary, the characters could even join.

Working with Damon, and establishing a corrupt *Ad Vis Per Veritas*, the characters must certainly be unscrupulous. No one said characters in *Ars Magica* had to be good, though. Whether the characters' alliance with Damon lasts is another question. He is in league with Demonic powers, and A'Fienluh cannot claim his lands until Montrouge is turned completely to evil. Thus, Damon may one day turn on the characters, eliminating all who show any morality or scruples. If he succeeds, the Covenant and its surrounding lands lay in the ruins of evil and A'Fienluh finally claims his own.

CONCLUSION

In many fantasy tales, heroes struggle to prevent some apocalypse. In *Black Death*, the great cataclysm has already occurred. And yet, Montrouge has enough resilience to survive even the plague. It's the aftermath of the story that decides the town's fate, as those who live through the disease scramble for the resources to continue their lives. New leaders also emerge, and old feuds develop into wars.

No veil covers the threats posed to Montrouge. The plague is anything but subtle — bodies lie everywhere in Montrouge. Likewise, Baron Franc d'Montrouge declares the witch-hunt by public proclamation. Even the Demon himself takes no fair disguise. And Damon, A'Fienluh's mortal agent, does little to fully hide his dark nature. Evil is everywhere, and acts overtly.

In this time of hardship, though evil is easy to recognize, even good people find they cannot resist it. With the exception of the Demon himself, *Black Death* contains few actual villains. Most people of Montrouge perform sinful acts in order to live. Aramin's worshippers of death, perhaps, are evil, but even they commit their crimes only to survive. But, whether evil or not, townsfolk and the dangers they pose are made no less severe, nor any less capricious. For example, Bishop Ceravantes, an honest priest, conducts a bogus witch-hunt on a diabolist's behalf. And, the Ceils, who want only to live in peace, invite a trio of dangerous magi into Montrouge. Even respectable people cannot be taken for granted when survival is at stake.

As townsfolk do, the characters might seek the sanctuary from danger that evil offers. After all, it's only human to be selfish and self-serving — evil — when given an alternative of death. For example, the frustrations of this tale may tempt the characters to enslave farmers like cattle, or murder the troublesome officials of the castle. However, with courage, the group can resist the temptation of bending others to

their will. Characters may risk their own lives in the process of persevering, and in so doing remind Montrouge how civilized folk behave. Thus, when this tale ends, the group should have unraveled A'Fienluh's evil schemes. And, with luck, they may ruin those schemes and dispatch the Demon. Doing so, the characters may sculpt a new order in Montrouge, with new leaders and new standards of justice.

The theme of this story deals with the perseverance of morality during a time of strife, when society is destroyed and must be rebuilt. The conclusion of this story may examine more than personal morality, though, exploring the very nature of community and justice. Do the characters restore the Baron as he was, despite his intransigence? Do the characters rehabilitate those who committed crimes, or destroy them, and how far does their justice or mercy extend? Does Damon deserve the same punishment as Aramin? What about those who serve either unwillingly, such as the Bishop? Does the group base such decisions on moral principles, feudal law or simple expediency? These are the decisions the characters must make at the finale of this story. In making them, the characters learn about community, justice, and themselves.

AFTERMATH STORIES

Though *Black Death* tells a large, involved story, its potential to tell tales does not end with the defeat of the Demon. You could use *Black Death* to introduce a number of secondary stories. Characters may find that after eliminating the threat to Ad Vis Per Veritas, they must locate magi and assistants to repopulate it. They may even wish to bring candidates from their own Covenant, leading to politics at home. Or, the characters may seek candidates abroad, leading to new, exciting journeys.

Characters might also seek old members of the Montrouge Covenant. Ad Vis Per Veritas has a number of expatriate members, who left the Covenant years before the plague. For example, a pair of magi known as the Vann Brothers found the rule of Silber Wise Hand intolerable and left Montrouge. The House of Venenzo also has many merchants who might appreciate a position in Montrouge. Seeking these people out and convincing them to return to Montrouge might be a task fraught with danger.

Furthermore, depending on the state of affairs in the characters' Covenant, characters may wish to make Ad Vis Per Veritas their own. The Covenant offers an excellent chance for magi, who began their magical careers in a large Covenant, to establish a magical circle of their own. Establishing a new Covenant can involve dozens of stories, particularly as the group acquires everything their new home needs. Negotia-

tions with local powers, searches for rare resources, trade with Venenzo's merchants, and diplomacy with nearby Covenants are all necessities to be dealt with.

The group might even invite the three Flambeau magi to join the characters' old Covenant, or the new one at Montrouge. The three welcome a position in a new Covenant, as long as it gives them an opportunity to use and develop their power. If given a chance to flex their magical muscle, they are content to let others govern. True, the three are brusque and irresponsible, but they are also experienced and soon prove themselves valuable in any fight that develops — maybe within the Covenant itself. . .

After events at Montrouge seem to quiet, the characters may also have to cope with an expanded Inquisition. If the Bishop dies, or if A'Fienluh enslaves him, the Church certainly sends more investigators to Montrouge. They conduct an efficient search for the culprits. These Inquisitors almost certainly treat magi as diabolists. Equipped with relics that blunt magic, and equipped with the zealous support of the mundane populace, these Churchmen present a formidable foe.

And, if Baron Franc d'Montrouge dies during the characters' activities in Montrouge, a struggle for his seat may ensue. He has three sons in fosterage at other courts, all of whom could return to claim his lands. The eldest hates magi. He blames Ad Vis Per Veritas for his father's demise. The younger two treat magi with more tolerance, but one is a wastrel, with numerous debts and scandals abroad. The other always defied his elders, so to temper the boy, the Baron forced him to take vows as a friar. Any of the brothers would like to rule Montrouge. Who knows how they would receive the characters? Regardless of who comes to power, though, the characters must deal with him. But, maybe the characters could have some influence over who is chosen. . .

Thus, there are many directions in which *Black Death* can lead the characters, or the characters can lead *Black Death*. Just because the characters dispatch Damon and rebuild Montrouge does not mean that the setting disappears forever. Characters' actions in town can have unlimited repercussions on Montrouge's structure and people, repercussion that may come back to haunt the characters.

REWARD

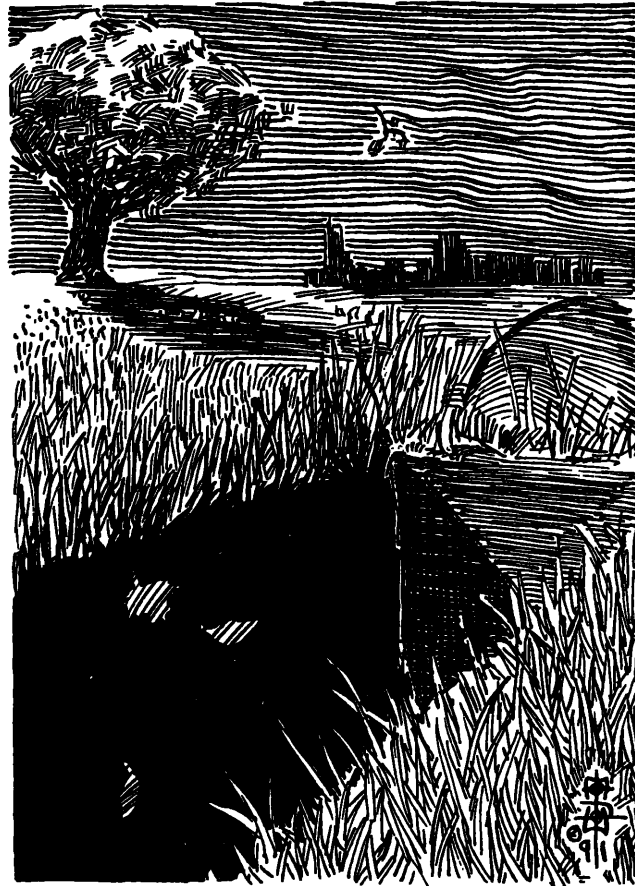
Finally, some mercenary soul in the group, a grog no doubt, will ask about his reward for deeds done. The characters certainly receive prestige among other magi, particularly if they overcome a Demon, rescue a Covenant, restore a town, and recover a valuable source of *vis*. The characters and their Covenant therefore

gain a reputation for heroics in the Order as a whole (value 2). And, magi re-established at Ad Vs Per Veritas, certainly thank their rescuers. They offer an annual stipend of *vis*, bestowed upon the characters' Covenant. This reward may only amount to only one or two pawns a year, but the characters can depend on it for the rest of their careers. That is, of course, unless something threatens Montrouge again. . .

Juan the Quaesitor may also arrange for other rewards, if he believes the group does an exemplary job of observing the Codes of Hermes. Juan's reward is described on Chapter One, area 8. A Quaesitor's gratitude has other advantages too. The group may later receive favorable consideration at Tribunals, or may receive special help against illegal maneuvers by rival magi. In essence, the characters' Covenant gains a reputation as devoutly loyal to Hermes (value 3), known among all members of House Quaesitoris.

What's more, the House of Venenzo can provide monetary rewards to those who help Ad Vis Per Veritas. Most of the family's investment capital comes from the magi of Montrouge, and the family values stability at Ad Vis Per Veritas. When Ad Vis Per Veritas is restored, the family sends a new representative to Montrouge. When he finds out who restored the Covenant he reports same to his family head. In gratitude, the House Venenzo sends its benefactors a coffer holding nine filigreed dinner plates of pure gold, each worth 100 livre.

If these rewards aren't sufficient to compensate for the characters' losses in restoring Ad Vis Per Veritas, they may receive further rewards. There's much magic and information to be garnered and learned from the ruins of the Covenant. If the characters don't help themselves to these resources, they may be bestowed upon the characters by the new inhabitants of Ad Vis Per Veritas.



Appendix: Plague

Plague is an infectious disease which causes glandular swelling, fever, delirium and convulsions. It can strike the lymph glands (bubonic plague) or the lungs (pneumatic plague). Roughly 40% of all victims survive the buboes, but the pneumatic plague always causes rapid death. Although the characters in *Mythic Europe* don't know it, the plague commonly spreads to man from rodents, via the rats' fleas. But, in *Ars Magica*, you may have the infection spread through fleas, magic or foul mists.

Damon's spell unleashes a special plague, modified by the will of A'Fienluh. It has all the symptoms and appearances of a natural disease. However, the Demon plans its means of transmission to wreak maximum damage upon Montrouge's society. Thus, the disease spreads from person to person, through touch, respiration and parasites. Still, Damon may select any individual he wishes to cure or render immune. With that power he manages to purchase his place in the Baron's palace by protecting its inhabitants from certain death. And, because of the Demon's modifications, Damon does not fear the effects of his own spell.

By the time of this story's telling, the plague has run its course. The most susceptible people have died. The rest have enough natural immunity to avoid death. Those who have not exposed themselves to the plague, however, still face risk. Specific encounters mention likely sources of infection and the chances of characters contracting the disease. For game purposes, the effects of the contracted plague take place in stages. At each a victim attempts die rolls to determine whether the disease progresses, proves fatal, or alleviates.

Generally speaking, upon encountering a source of plague, one must attempt an Infection die roll. Anyone who fails this roll contracts the plague. The exact Ease Factors and modifiers applied depend on situational circumstances. In this story, refer to the specific encounter for the chances of infection. As a rule of thumb, one can avoid contracting the plague on a Stm roll of 12+.

Once infected, one must attempt a second Stm roll, with an Ease Factor of 6. This roll represents the development of the infection. If this second roll succeeds, the disease regresses into its less deadly, bubonic variety. Otherwise, it settles in the lungs, as pneumatic plague. Pneumatic plague kills its victims in 1-10 hours, unless some cure is applied.

Characters with bubonic plague develop fever, convulsions, swollen glands and discolored blotches on the skin. They lose one Body Level per day. The disease also forces its victim to make all Stm-, Str-, Qik- and Dex-based rolls with a -3 modifier. Everyone who sees a plague bearer immediately recognizes his condition and may respond according to his nature and fears.

Each day, a victim of Bubonic plague may attempt a Stm roll against the disease. The Ease Factor equals 12. If the roll succeeds, the victim begins to recover. He or she regains lost Body Levels at the normal rate. The Characteristic-based penalties last until all Body Levels lost to the plague are recovered.

Characters who contract Pneumatic plague are certain to die, unless some magical or unusual cure is applied. Since these characters' lives are so limited, it's suggested that they not be penalized with Characteristic penalties or Body Level loses. Without such penalties, a character with Pneumatic plague at least gets to live his last day with vitality, and may die in glory.

Medieval physicians had no effective treatment for plague. However, you might allow arcane healers to give victims bonuses of up to +4, or a modifier based on a skill used, on victims' recovery rolls. This bonus reflects effective precautionary measures taken or treatments used against illness. Such arcane arts might include Alchemy, Healing, herbalism, prayer from one with True Faith or Faith Points, or even Chirurgy if you're feeling particularly generous.

Magi can also use spells to try and counteract the plague, but as the disease of this story is magically induced, those spells need be fairly powerful and exhausting. Each day, magi must cast ReCo spells of at least Level 20 to protect themselves and their fellows. Assume that one casting protects ten people. Each casting also requires the expenditure of one pawn of *Córporem vis*, and immediately inflicts the loss of one short term Fatigue Level. If you're feeling nasty, that Fatigue loss could be long term instead.

Also keep in mind that Damon's *Manual of Mortal Illness* contains spells that allow magi to cure the plague that strikes in this story. The book's spells do not work against other, natural diseases, though.