

Dark Ages

DARKENING SKY



A SOURCEBOOK FOR THE DARK AGES

Dark Ages

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Matt McFarland. He wrote the introduction to this one. Oh yeah, also the original pitch, outline, all that jazz. He also lost all the original drafts. If he hadn't done that, the authors listed above wouldn't have been able to write. That would have sucked.

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Lastly, Ohio. During this development, I moved from sunny, amazing California to cold, drab Ohio. It's practically the black forest of 1230AD. Super thematic. But needs more castles.



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Lock 2013

Though it was already late morning, the first rays of sun were just starting to illuminate the valley. Soon, the morning sun would be higher in the sky and summer would arrive in Powys Fadog, but even in late spring, the valley lingered in the shadow of the hills and Dinas Bran, the keep of their lord Madog ap Gruffud.

Madog was a fair ruler, neither noted for extreme generosity or outrageous cruelty. He was nominally Christian, though his worship was a matter of duty rather than genuine fervor, and he still respected the old ways. Still, sometimes it seemed to Trefor that the shadow of the cross loomed over their simple valley, an omen of things to come. The old ways were rooted deep in Powys Fadog and would not be easily displaced. However, the servants of the cross were cunning and patient, and had no tolerance for the old ways, no room for any gods but their own.

Father Gethin, Madog's confessor, preached as openly as he dared against Trefor and his fellow Druids, but his poison had fallen on deaf ears, as his lady Isota was a devout follower of the old ways. Much as the old snake might wish to call for the old faith to be put to the sword, that sort of talk would find him tossed out on his ear or worse. While Madog was largely held in high esteem, patience was never counted as one of his virtues.

No, Trefor did not fear Father Gethin. The hounds of the Cross might hound followers of the old ways abroad, but here they were as toothless old curs. But Trefor worried what would come when he was gone. The servants of the Cross had grown in number since he was a boy, so long ago. Madog's father, Gruffyd Maelor, had not been a follower of the Christ. Trefor and his children would be safe from the machinations of Father Gethin and his subordinates, but what of his children's children, and beyond?

But that was enough of that. Worrying about the future wouldn't serve the needs of today, and Trefor had more immediate concerns than the as-yet impotent malice of Father Gethin. He hurriedly finished the remains of last night's stew, cursing the winter chill that still lingered in the cold spring nights and made his joints ache and swell. Then, setting the bowl aside, he took up his walking stick and set out for the grove outside the village.

His knee was worse today and he was sweaty and tired by the time he reached the grove. He collapsed next to the sacred spring, unable to go any farther. As he paused to catch his breath, he found himself longing for his Eluned. Her deft and clever hands always knew how to ease the pain in his knee, and her wisdom as a daughter of Avalon was equal to his own. He wished fervently that she had survived the lung-fever that had taken her over the winter. Never mind the cycle of life. The wisdom of his order held that all things must end, but his life was darker without her in it.

And now, with the spirits in turmoil, whispering of an impending danger they could not name, perhaps the female mysteries which she had been a master of would have been able to pierce the veil as he had not. The agitation of the spirits was even greater today. The sun seemed darker, the beams of light weaker as they streamed through the canopy of leaves. Out of the corners of his eyes, Trefor could see eddies of movement, weaker spirits trying desperately to take form.

From the pouch at his side, the elderly Druid withdrew the leaves of oak, ash, and yew, casting them over the water. After decades of practice, the ritual was a mere formality, but he found it helped calm his mind and settle his thoughts, which was always wise when seeking to deal with the spirits. Speaking the ancient words of power, he closed his eyes, pushing away the material world, and opened them once more to the realm of the spirits.

Immediately, he found himself besieged by such chaos he had never seen in the spirit realm. A host of minor spirits, mostly weak sprites of wood, water, and air, crowded around him. Their shrieks of fright echoed in the small grove, calling for aid and warning of danger. Try though he might, he was not able to use any of his craft to calm them into sense.

SILENCE.

The power of the Word echoed around the clearing like a gong, momentarily knocking the wind out of Trefor. The flighty air sprites gave one last wail and scattered, while the others cowered and were silent. Trefor struggled to his feet, using his walking stick to pull himself up.

Leaves rustled, and out of the underbrush stepped a great white doe. It was easily the size of a cart horse, with hide the color of newly fallen snow and eyes the color of the coldest winter lake. More disconcerting than any of this, however, was the intelligence in those eyes. She radiated power that Trefor could feel like sunlight on skin, and he had no doubt that this was one of the greater powers of the spirit world.

The doe stepped forward, inclining her head regally toward Trefor. His mind reeled as he returned the obeisance as deeply as his old joints would allow.

You come seeking wisdom, and for the many long years of service you have given to our realm as well as your own, you shall have it.

Trefor bowed again, murmuring his thanks.

Usually the spirits he had contact with spoke in riddles and mysteries, but the deer spirit spoke plainly, though it clearly cost her effort to communicate in such limited human terms. ***Time grows short. Now is a time of urgency for both worlds. You must gather your herd and flee to a place of safety. Disaster is coming, and you must seek shelter within the stone.***

"Disaster?" Trefor stammered. "Safety? Where shall we go? And how--"

THERE IS NO TIME! the deer spirit interrupted, pawing the ground impatiently. ***You have duties to your herd as I have duties to mine. Lead your people to the stone and the assistance you require will be granted!***

With that, the great spirit took a massive leap and bounded back into the forest. The Druid stood frozen for a moment, his chest constricted with fear, before he mastered himself and fled the grove as fast as his old legs could carry him.

Trefor panted, gasping for breath against the pain of the cramp in his side, as he staggered back into the village. His good leg ached and trembled with the effort of compensating for his bad one, and he counted himself lucky that, between his limp and the walking stick, he hadn't fallen over a tree root and broken an ankle in his headlong rush back from the grove.

A few of the village children were gathered around the well. Hywel, the oldest of the bunch, set down his buckets and hurried forward to help Trefor sit on the edge of the well. The other children stared, obviously frightened at seeing the usually dignified old man in such a state of disarray. From the looks on their faces, Trefor imagined he must look more than half mad.

"Go!" he rasped. "Fetch everyone here, to me, without delay!" The children stood, frozen in shock. Trefor growled, drawing on the power of the mysteries and summoning his authority as a Druid like a cloak. ***Go!***

The children scattered, taking off at a run, their water buckets forgotten. Trefor sat, shivering as he remembered the look in the deer spirit's eyes as she had delivered her warning. Flee to a place of safety? Shelter within the stone? How could they find shelter within a stone, and what were they to seek safety *from*?

Before long, the children had returned, their families in tow, and Trefor sent them off again to gather the stragglers. "We must flee!" he shouted hoarsely. "Take only what you can carry! We are in grave danger!"

A murmur of protest went up from the villagers. The old man could hear them whispering among themselves that he was old and feeble-minded, but even as they did so, a darkness began to fall over the valley. Raising his hand to shield his eyes, the Druid looked up and saw a black mark on the sun. The black mark started to grow, blotting out the light.

An eclipse. So this was the darkness and chaos that the deer spirit had spoken of!

"Look!" he shouted angrily, thrusting a gnarled finger at the sky. "That is no cloud, nor the shadow of Dinas Bran that falls over us! The spirits that guide us have warned me of this. We must flee!"

"But to where?" one of the women cried out, clutching a small babe to her breast.

Trefor paused, unsure of how to answer, but the sound that pierced the silence made his blood run cold. From the direction of the forest, a chorus of howls arose, like no howls that he had ever heard. They sounded both human and lupine at once.

Suddenly everything seemed to fall into place. Only sturdy walls would keep them safe – walls of stone. "To the keep! Quickly!"

The villagers surged forward, needing no further enticement than the uncanny howling. Two of the young men of the village, Hywel's older brothers, picked up Trefor between them as they ran, each grabbing an arm and hoisting his weight over their broad shoulders. Trefor shivered, too frightened to feel any insult to his pride as the sound of unearthly horns joined the howls and echoed from the hills – a sound both mournful and soul-chilling.

The climb to Dinas Bran was not an easy one, and though fear gave the villagers strength, some of them lagged behind, including Trefor's escorts. He begged them to leave him and save themselves, but his pleas fell on deaf ears, even as the howling grew ever closer.

Ahead of them, Arianrhod and Owain stumbled and fell, seemingly overtaken by fatigue. An older woman screamed and turned back, but the young woman and her brother shuddered and clawed at the ground with hands no longer entirely human.

"Get away from them!" Trefor shouted. "Get away!"

Arianrhod looked at him, her eyes glinting golden. Rage contorted her increasingly lupine features. Owain shuddered and gave an ear-splitting howl and the two of them ran off, back down the hill.

The woman screamed again and turned to follow, but one of her sons seized her roughly by the arm and started dragging her forcibly up the hill. Trefor's escorts passed them quickly, even as the woman's struggles slowed them down. The old Druid wanted to offer words of comfort, but only tears of shame and grief came, running down his cheeks as he prayed to the Horned God to give them all strength.

They reached the keep just as the last sliver of light was extinguished, and Trefor wasn't the only one who gave a cry of relief when he saw the gates of the keep standing open. Some of Madog's men at arms stood ready at the gate with spears in hand, urging them to hurry. Seeing safety near at hand, the tired and frightened villagers managed one final burst of speed, staggering into the safety of the keep.

As soon as the last of them was inside, the armismen hurried to shut and bar the gates, and only then did they dare stop moving. Trefor's escorts, Alec and Cranog he remembered belatedly, set him down gently on a barrel near the gates. They paused, looking torn over whether they should tend the Druid who had delivered them to safety or do their duty to their family. Trefor waved them off. "Go. Take care of your family. I can rest here."

They had arrived not a moment too soon. The sun was now completely occluded, and the howling now came from down in the valley itself. Though he knew it to be late morning, nearly midday, the only light came from hastily lit torches ringing the courtyard. Villagers and guards huddled together against the walls, clinging to the small circles of light as a fragile protection against the darkness.

Babies and children cried, scared by the hurried exodus. The family of Arianrhod and Owain wept and cursed loudly. And all the while, the scene was lit with the orange cast of dim torchlight, giving the entire scene a nightmarish feel. The old Druid knew that he should be among them, offering words of wisdom and comfort, but he had none to give. What could he say to ease the pain of a mother whose children were monsters? Of a sibling who feared the same fate might befall her?

He sat there, shivering and afraid, hardly aware of the woman that broke away from the others to approach him until she spoke. "Father," she said softly, taking his misshapen hand in her own.

"Madlen." Trefor clutched at her hand, hoping for comfort until he saw the fear in her eyes.

"Father, you taught me the dance of the stars. An eclipse, even one this complete, should be a passing thing." Grimly, she pointed to the sky, which was still black as the night of the moon-dark. "So where is the sun?"

"A wise question," came a voice Trefor did not expect. Father Gethin stepped out of the shadows, an expression of dread on his face. He pointed to the captain of the guard, who had stepped into the courtyard from the keep itself, with several armismen accompanying him. "But perhaps of more immediate concern," he said, his voice shaking slightly, "what on God's green earth are they?"

Father Gethin had spoken quietly, but even among the clamor of shouting and crying, the guard captain turned his head unerringly in their direction from across the courtyard. Trefor shivered as he saw the look that the captain and his men gave them. There was something *wrong* with them. Their flesh seemed stretched too tight over their faces, their eyes nothing but dead marbles. And when they smiled, their smiles were fanged horrors.

Chaos erupted. The villagers shrieked and cowered. Some of the armismen who seemed perfectly normal drew sword on their comrades. Others stood by and watched, confused. Behind him, Trefor could hear Father Gethin praying in Latin.

"Well now," the guard captain said, puzzled. "I don't know why you can see us for what we are, but I'm afraid it's a circumstance we can't permit to continue."

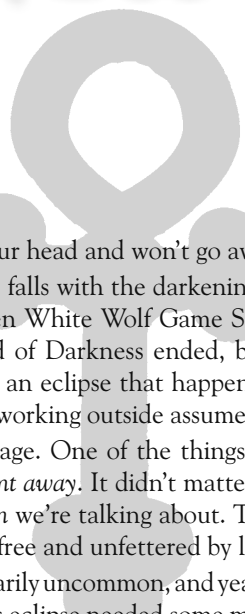
A curious sound caught Trefor's attention and he looked up at the top of the wall behind them, where he could faintly see the outline of the deer spirit. She nodded, then disappeared just as two wolves the size of small ponies appeared where she had been.

"Arianrhod! Owain! Help us!" Trefor screamed.

Without any hesitation, the two wolves jumped down, landing in front of the guard captain and his dark servants. They growled low in their throats, then pounced. Whatever unnatural powers the tainted armismen had possessed, they were no match for the young wolves. The guards were torn apart, crumbling to ash as they fell.



FOREWORD



Sometimes an idea gets into your head and won't go away.

For me, it was “the Oath-Truce falls with the darkening sky.” When I took over the Dark Ages game lines in 2001, back when White Wolf Game Studio was still in Stone Mountain, Georgia and long before the World of Darkness ended, began again and then began *again*, someone showed me a reference to an eclipse that happened in the year AD 1230, in which the sky became so dark that people working outside assumed night had fallen and went to bed.

That was a pretty powerful image. One of the things that appealed to me about it was that it was inescapable. The *sun went away*. It didn't matter if you were a peasant or a king or a werewolf or a mage. That's the *sun* we're talking about. That meant that all the creatures of the night could come out and play, free and unfettered by light and God and reason.

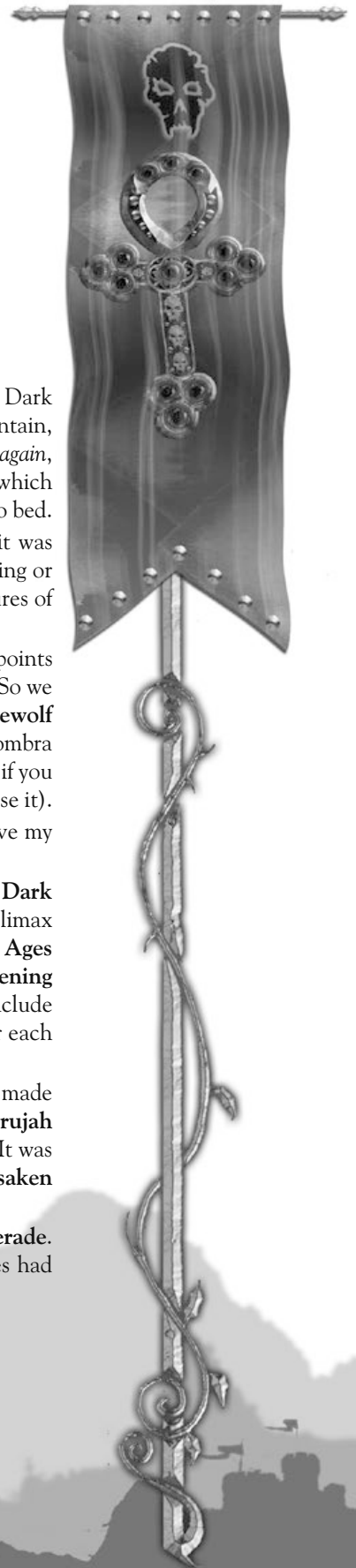
Of course, eclipses aren't necessarily uncommon, and yeah, an eclipse isn't visible at all points simultaneously. That just meant this eclipse needed some magical or occult significance. So we started folding in references to it in **Dark Ages** books. It shows up in **Dark Ages: Werewolf** as a kind of “final prophecy” given to Thomas Skyfire. The Abyss Mysticism of the Lasombra had a power called The Cry that Slays Light that was designed to create that eclipse (and if you read **Dark Ages Clan Novel: Ventrue**, you saw the Abyss Mystic who was supposed to use it).

And, of course, in **Dark Ages: Fae**, we used that phrase, the one that wouldn't leave my brain alone: *The Oath-Truce falls with the darkening sky*.

The whole point of the eclipse was to give chronicles — even the “metaplot” of the **Dark Ages** lines — a turning point. If you had a chronicle going already, the eclipse could be a climax or a “tilt,” something that would change everything. If you were just starting a **Dark Ages** chronicle, the chaos of the eclipse would be a memorable way to kick off the story. **Darkening Sky** was the book of 2004 that I was really looking forward to developing. It was going to include not just stories for each of the game lines, but notes on reworking each of the stories for each of the *other* game lines. It was pretty ambitious.

But before that happened, the metaphorical axe fell. Due to a number of factors that made perfect sense but weren't any fun, the last four planned books for the **Dark Ages** line (**Brujah Chronicle**, **Dark Ages: Italy**, **Hallowed Ground**, and **Darkening Sky**) were cancelled. It was sad, but there it was. Everyone moved on — I worked on the design of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** and **Mage: The Awakening**, and things progressed as they always do.

Then 2011 came around, and with it, the 20th anniversary of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. **Masquerade** and **Requiem** both had audiences, and because the methods of book sales had



changed so much, we could do classic World of Darkness books *and* new World of Darkness books and everyone could get what they want! This, in the publishing business, is called a “win-win.”

I realized, though, after I heard that **Darkening Sky** was going to happen, finally, that I wasn’t the guy who should bring it about.

I had ideas about it, once upon a time. I had a really cool outline, and I had people I knew and whose work I liked lined up to write the five stories. I knew the **Dark Ages** lines backwards and forwards (**Fae** and **Inquisitor** in particular were my favorites), and I was really excited to see what folks produced.

The thing is, though, that it’s been nearly 10 years. I’ve forgotten most of the ideas I had about the book. I’d have to reread **Fae** and **Inquisitor** and the other lines pretty carefully to get back up to speed, and that’s not even considering that I haven’t done anything historical in the interim (and it was never my personal focus anyway). All I really have left is that phrase, knocking about in my head: *The Oath-Truce falls with the darkening sky.*

I don’t know what’s in this book. I’m writing this foreword without having seen the drafts, and only having read Stew’s cryptic comments about making a dungeon crawl for **Werewolf** and a few conversations about **Vampire** and **Fae** that I can’t quite keep straight. I’m not the developer

here. I was just brought on so that I could bring whatever perspective I could to the project.

So here’s my perspective: The sun going out has been a primal, human fear forever. It’s one of the signs of the Apocalypse in the Bible, it’s one of the 10 plagues, and a lot of other mythologies describe the sun being chased or driven across the sky, implying that it could fall or stop or otherwise go away. Yes, we understand eclipses and the peasants of the 13th century probably weren’t so naïve as to see such a phenomenon and think “the End is there!” — but keep in mind we’re in the Dark Medieval here.

Your characters are the monsters that the common people fear. What is the eclipse to *them*? What is their personal darkness? And if the eclipse is, indeed, finality, if it signifies an end or a new beginning (which is, let’s not kid ourselves, usually an end for *someone*), what are those monsters going to do with their last night?

The stories in this book aren’t connected to some larger, overarching metaplot. The context for them runs as deep into the classic World of Darkness mythology as you want to plant it. If you’ve been following along the whole time, waiting for more about the Dark Medieval, or if you’re just now discovering this world, read this book, look up to the darkening sky, and make something awesome happen.

I’m looking forward to doing that myself.





DARKENING SKY

That was Matt McFarland. This is David Hill. You've read all the amazing sentiment that went into this book, and its decade-long legacy. Now I feel pressured to perform.

Welcome to Darkening Sky.

Inside, you're going to find five outstanding stories, one for each of the classic **Dark Ages** game lines; Fae, Inquisitor, Mage, Vampire, and Werewolf. Each is a self-contained story for that game line, but we lead with some content that gives you an idea how you could use that story in another game. Want to run the Werewolf plot in Vampire? Awesome. We've got you covered. They're also presented as standalones, but each has ideas for how to integrate the tale into a greater chronicle. Most importantly, each story is a different angle, a different viewpoint, a different take on this mysterious eclipse on May 14th, 1230 AD.

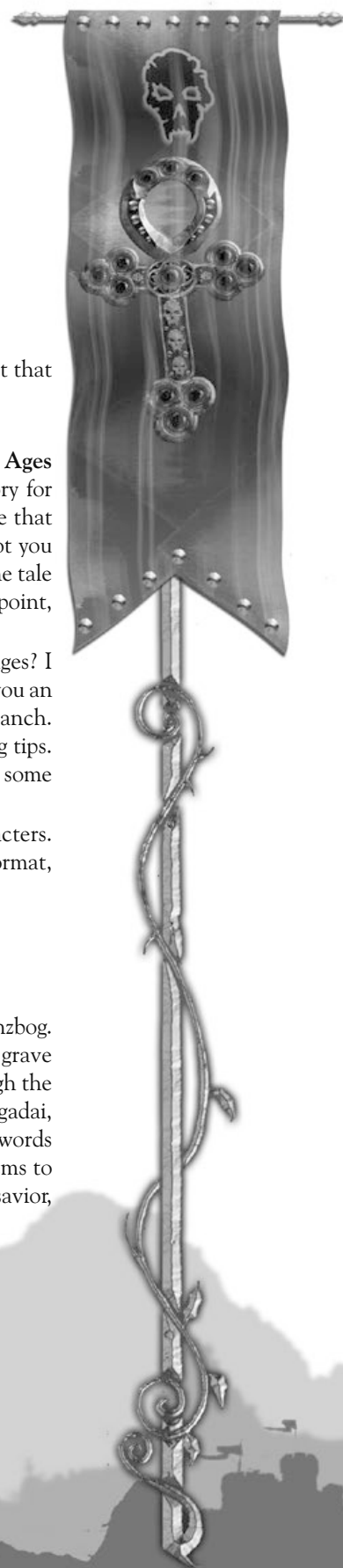
You know how we usually do the "what is this book" material on these first two pages? I think Matt's got most of that covered. Each story features a chronicle map. It should give you an idea of how the story flows by default, and gives some thoughts on how it can shift and branch. Each features a cast of characters, some fully fleshed out, some with just basic roleplaying tips. Then, there's a series of important scenes, and some sample side scenes. We also offer some ideas where you could take the story once it's done.

These take a very "toolkit" approach, giving you scenes, ideas, hooks, and characters. You're the chef that puts those ingredients together. Each chapter has little tweaks in format, we formatted giving authorial authority instead of hard molding five adventures.

So let's jump in. Here's our five stories:

Story One: Werewolf

Beyond doomed Bulgar, cradled by the rivers Volga and Kama, is the Sept of Gray Dahzbog. Here the Silver Fangs and the Shadow Lords put aside their enmity to stand guard over the grave of a forgotten-but-not-dead god, and the pact they forge is a light to lead all Garou through the Prophecies of Shadow. But the Red Talons' omens made no mention of the horse-lord Nogadai, arriving from the east ahead of the Great Eclipse, with offers of peace on his lips and swords of silver at his side. Who is this man who walks without fear among werewolves and seems to know their lands as well as they do? And what role does he play in the coming darkness...savior, as he claims, or instrument of destruction?



Story Two: Fae

As winter winds its way into spring, the Fae prepare again for a war that never truly ended. Rumors abound in Strongholds across the British Isles that one of the Courts has found a weapon no one has ever used before. One that can turn the tide in their favor unquestioningly. No one knows what it is yet, or what it does. But, in the days before the May 14th eclipse that will signal the resumption of hostilities, four of the major players in the Seasonal Courts will watch their needs and desires intertwine, and only a handful of Fae will have the power to stop the coming disaster...or push it to its disastrous zenith.

Story Three: Inquisitor

Chaos has befallen the Italian countryside. As the sky went from day to rosy fingered twilight the people of Italia have changed. They see, or so they claim, all truths. From hamlet to hostel, from castle to chapel, the people are claiming to see things, terrible and wonderful things. To the South, a crowd of angry peasants has a learned and kind monk trapped in his home, intent on killing him. They claim he's a monster, and he most assuredly is, but not the kind of monster they take him for. To the West, a dozen maidens are beating the bushes and pounding on trees demanding the attentions of a fairy prince they claim to have seen, one will win him as her bridegroom even if she has to kill the others off to do so. To the North, it is a standoff between half a town with their eyes open, and the other half trying to protect their once-secret werewolf family from the angry mob. And this is only half the stories. When the eclipse started, eyes were opened, and the veil lifted. Now every man, woman, and child in Italia knows

that monsters are real. You're the only ones that know how to handle it, and it isn't as if the average person is listening to reason on the matter. You're all that stands between the countryside and total chaos. Survive the longest night, if you can.

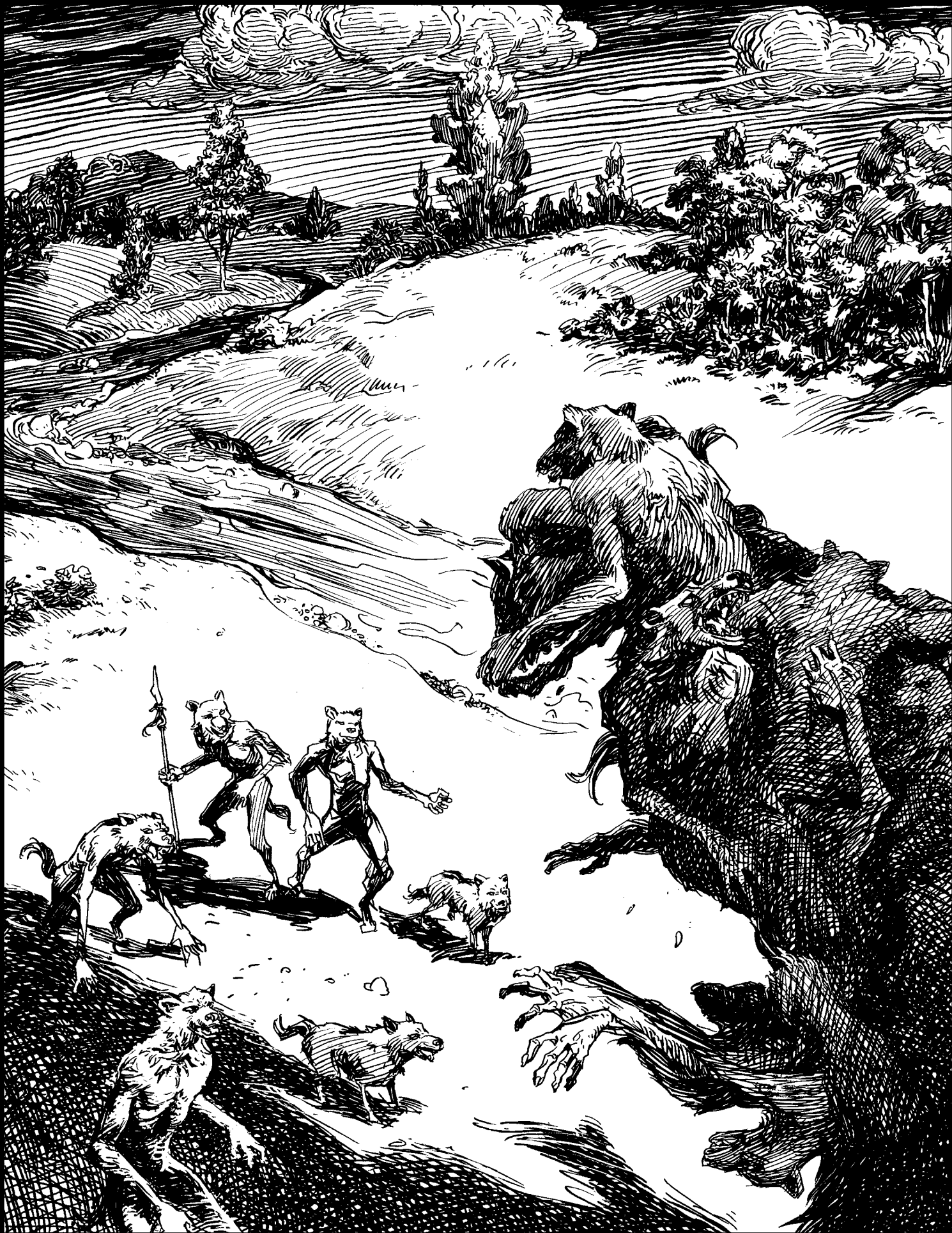
Story Four: Vampire

Under Sevilla sleeps an ancient Visigoth in torpor. Beset by Christian crusaders from the north and political enemies within her own kingdom, the Sultan Gerusha's position is tenuous. She guards this secret for fear it will be used as a weapon unleashed by her enemies. Far more dangerous than her political rivals, however, are those who want only to spread darkness and destruction. They will take advantage of the coming eclipse to loose the powers of darkness and wake the sleeping titan. If Sevilla is to avoid utter destruction, alliances will need to be forged against the awakening of the Visigoth and enmities forgotten, or at least temporarily set aside...

Story Five: Mage

Emperor Frederick II sits in Jerusalem, a city he won through diplomacy, not battle. Holy warriors stalk the streets, suspicious of a bloodless Crusade, and strange pilgrims make their way to the Emperor's palace. Devout or impious, all of them walk with rumors of miracles and curses. They are *magi*, representatives of the diverse Arts of sorcery and wonder-working. Impatient with religion, Frederick would see the face of God himself, and to do it, he needs men and women who would walk the swords' edge between wisdom and heresy. Who else would dare to call the Lord with a spell? Who else could survive the consequences?





Ondreiana locked eyes with Bakr. She was taller than him, especially in Crinos, but the Shadow Lord didn't waver. One of his packmates took a step forward, baring his teeth, but she ignored him. Her pack was here too; she could feel each and every one of them around her. Zhukov, her oldest packmate, was just a step away. No one would get close to her without going through him first, and he wasn't easy to go through.

"You will lose, Ondreiana, and no one will mourn you." Bakr's words were daggers.

She couldn't think of a retort. Just as well, as she couldn't have spoken it in this form anyway. She laid her ears back instead and snarled a slaver-flecked warning into his face. The sound roared in her head, louder and longer than she would have imagined possible. Longer, in fact, than was possible, she realized suddenly.

A shadow fell over them both as the creature that was Dažbog stepped screaming from the Umbra, blocking out the sun. The bane had wrapped itself in the skins of a dozen still-living Garou – their flesh twisting and melting and healing until they were an intermingled whole, even as they still tried to tear themselves free from the unholy mass. Ondreiana recognized at least a few of them. The cacophony of their torment echoed in her head, and sometimes their screams formed words.

To me, my children.

Zhukov yelped and fell to his knees. His hands went to his ears, covering them against the maddening sound, and when that failed, he tore them from his very head. The screaming didn't stop for him though, she could tell; he looked up at her, begging for release, his outstretched hands still clenching tattered chunks of flesh. A moment later, his eyes filled with an oily blackness... and he lunged for her. Her teeth locked onto his neck while his claws tore into her ribs; fire lanced through her chest and she couldn't be sure if the blood she tasted was his, or her own. She held on as they toppled to the ground; twice he tried to bring up a hind leg to gut her, and twice she was able to twist away from the attack. They tumbled across the ground, the world tilting and careening wildly, and in a final desperate gambit she let go of the Crinos and became Hispo. Suddenly she had her footing again, and the advantage. With a swift shake of her shaggy head, her old friend's neck snapped and his head lolled limply between her jaws. She finished the job by tearing it from his body, and then turned to appraise the battlefield.

Bakr al-Aswad lifted himself from the ground as well, his torso a mass of bloody weals and furrows. A pair of Garou lay dead at his feet. In his hand was a gleaming dagger.

Silver, Ondreiana thought, he intended that for me.

"Madam Volkva," Bakr said, his dignity intact despite his breathlessness, "I propose a truce."

Ondreiana nodded grimly.



WEREWOLF

THE EVERGREEN PRISON

INTRODUCTION

Where the Volga meets the Kama, amid the steppes just west of the Ural Mountains, is the nation-state of Volga Bulgaria. It is, perhaps, the most eastward point in all of Europe, depending upon how loosely you define "Europe". Most in the west have never heard of Volga Bulgaria, and those who have pay it little mind. Still, positioned as a crossroad between east and west, with cities rivaling even Baghdad and Constantinople, this northernmost bastion of Islam remains one of the most culturally and economically significant realms in the world. Even so, its true place in history lies in front of it...

East of the city of Bolghar, along a minor tributary of the Vyatka River, is the Sept of the Red Cedar. Two hundred years ago, the sept's forefathers fought a horrific battle against a would-be-god turned bane-spirit and bound it to the great Siberian Cedar from which the sept takes its name. Charged with the desperate task of guarding against its escape, even Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords put aside their enmity for the greater good of Gaia. Ever since, the sept has stood as an exemplar of Garou society, but even the greatest mountains erode over time. The spirit world grows dark, Silent Striders tell stories of Black Spiral Dancers upon the steppes, and the Prophecies of Shadow leave everyone ill at ease. Some whisper that the sept has invited doom by being too open to the world around it, and that the only way to further serve Gaia is to withdraw entirely unto themselves. More than a few are uncertain about how to proceed.

In the spring of 1230, just ahead of a great solar eclipse, the Mongol general Qorjin arrives with a hundred seasoned warriors at his back. Qorjin is more than an advance scout, though, and his appearance at this particular moment is no coincidence. He has fought these werewolves before - nine years ago, at the Battle of Samara Bend, where they appeared



THE "REAL" VOLGA BULGARIA, 1230 AD.

Settled in in the 7th century by Bulgarian tribes and converted to Islam in the 10th, Volga Bulgaria was the northernmost Muslim nation in the world at this point in the Middle Ages. Its people are mostly nomadic, known particularly for their craftsmanship, but skilled also as hunters, warriors, scholars, and artists. However, it had many permanent settlements as well that served as waypoints for traders and merchants from all across the world. Indeed, its largest cities - Bolghar and Bilär - had populations of 100,000 or more, and their wealth exceeded the other great economic powers in the world, Baghdad and Constantinople.

Power such as that of Volga Bulgaria seldom goes uncontested. Throughout the early part of the 13th century, their neighbors to the west - the Russian princes of Rostov, Suzdal, Vladimir, and even further away places such as Chernigov and Kiev - harried them mercilessly. The Russians eventually seized and occupied several smaller Bulgar settlements, gaining a fingerhold's worth of influence in the region and breaking the Bulgarian monopoly of the central Volga. The most significant of Russian victories came when, after months of incessant harassment upon Bolghar itself, the Bulgars were forced to relocate their capital northward, to Bilär. Still, the Russians could never fully conquer the kingdom, or even just the city of Bolghar, and Volga Bulgaria remained a powerful and influential, if somewhat overlooked, force in the medieval landscape.

Then, less than a decade ago, the first Mongols arrived not from the east, as one might expect, but from the west. Subutai, Chinghis Khan's most infamous general, had rode up from the south through the Caucasuses and raided for two winters into Russia. Eventually, though, he had to make good a retreat. After routing a combined force of Russians and Cumans at the Battle of Kalka, Subutai entered Volga Bulgaria, where - at least partially influenced by Khan's son Jochi, who wished to add to his father's conquests - a major offensive was launched. But the Volgan Bulgars were surprisingly sturdy and achieved what every other army found impossible: they defeated the Mongols at Samara Bend and sent them homeward, licking their wounds. It was a victory that echoed in every direction, cementing their reputation not just as tradesmen but as a military power. Over the next few years, intermittent raids came from the Russians to the west and the Mongols to the east, but they were not seriously challenged again until 1236, when the real Mongol army would arrive on their doorstep in force. For five years, the Mongols warred against Volga Bulgaria; by the end, eighty percent its population was dead, and all of its major cities razed to the very ground. Bolghar and some of the other settlements were rebuilt and continued to serve as important waypoints on major trading routes, but as Mongolian holdings. Volga Bulgaria ceased to exist.

to aid their Kinfolk - and it's his duty, as appointed by the late Chinghis Khan himself, to prevent another such intervention. On Qorjin's right stands the Stargazer, Pei Ling, who has apprised him of the dire consequences an eclipse can have upon the Garou psyche. To his left is the Uktena, Batuani Seven-Shadows, whose command of the spirit world could save the caern or deliver it into the hands of more suitable caretakers. Are they the salvation the Sept of the Red Cedar is searching for, or the doom they've been warned about?

CROSSOVER

Although intended for Werewolf, *The Evergreen Prison* has much to offer characters of the other lines as well.

VAMPIRE

With the introduction of Caine's children, the focus will likely shift from the wilderness of Volga Bulgaria to

its cities. Both Bilär and Bolghar will serve; they're huge, diverse, and influential, equal to any of the great Islamic cities of the age, with vampire communities to match. As presented throughout, Qorjin's focus is exclusively upon the werewolves, but it doesn't have to be. Cities have big walls, and big walls have always been a tricky obstacle for the horse-lords to negotiate. Having a few allies inside those walls when the Mongol army arrives could make the job a lot easier. It's a brilliant opportunity for younger vampires to latch onto; after all, someone will have to rule these cities for the Khan after their present owners have been dispatched with. There's reason to be wary though; Mongols prize loyalty and have little use for a betrayer, even if the betraying being done is to their enemy. This lesson may have to be learned the hard way, and could put the characters on the wrong side of Qorjin's army just when they think they've figured everything out. In a story like this, the Bey's Hand isn't comprised of werewolves, but of vampires; if you have *Winds From The East*, consider introducing the Anda Bloodline, otherwise use Gangrel. But

keep the Garou as an ace up your sleeve. If the characters can't come to terms with Qorjin, he'll conveniently forget to mention what happens during the eclipse until everyone is neck-deep in frenzying werewolves rampaging through the streets. Have fun!

MAGE

Volga Bularia would make a great location for any cabal to set up camp. Both the Old Faith and Spirit-Talkers have ancient roots in its wild places, and with the coming of Islam, the Ahl-i-Batin have found a home here too. Other mages pass along its trade routes on a regular basis, particularly Valdaerman, though the Order of Hermes also finds its cities quite amenable...the comforts of civilization without the hassle of the Inquisition. When families start disappearing from the steppe, concern sets in. Investigation leads them to Taw Île; they can explore the tunnels themselves and face off against the Black Spiral Dancers, or seek help from others. If they're not careful though, they'll find themselves pinched between Red Cedar Garou, who are feeling a little bit antsy and distrustful at this particular point in time, and Qorjin, who doesn't want his carefully laid plans disrupted by a gang of meddling magic-users. As the situation escalates, and if the cabal can earn their trust, the Garou may come to see the mages as an alternative to Qorjin's peace terms, but they'll still have to be clever to stop an entire Mongol jagun, a hive of Black Spiral Dancers, a number of frenzying ally-werewolves, and possibly a rampaging Dažbog. No one said life was going to be easy, right?

FAE

Dažbog isn't a spirit, but a powerful Firstborn of the Summer Court who's dwelt among the lands of Volga Bulgaria for millennia. The people there have always worshipped Dažbog as a god, an act which pleased it to no end. It even built alliances among the oddly fractious werewolves, delighting in their silly plots to win its favor away from the others. But in the 10th century, the entire kingdom converts to Islam, and Dažbog is enraged by the audacity and insolence of the humans. Summoning all of his power, he sweeps across the steppe towards Bolghar like a wildfire, intent on destroying every living thing in Volga Bulgaria. The werewolves come together, and at great expense manage to bind it to the Red Cedar, where it has languished ever since, waiting for its jailors' attention to lapse so it may finally have its revenge. The Fae of the Summer Court obviously want to free Dažbog, particularly with the looming eclipse signaling the possible end of the Oath-Truce, but the werewolves present a formidable obstacle, as do the machinations of the other Courts. Enter Qorjin seeking to pacify the werewolf threat, representing the Summer Court's best chance yet at overwhelming their enemies. He'll make offers to both sides, looking for one to secure the werewolves' loyalty, or the other

to help him destroy them. In this version, the Bey's Hand is comprised of Fae (Changelings most likely, but possibly Inanimae), some of whom could even be player characters. In fact, this idea works so well you could use it as Dažbog's origin even if you're playing this as straight Werewolf, and the opportunity for mixed parties of Fae and Garou is almost too good to pass up.

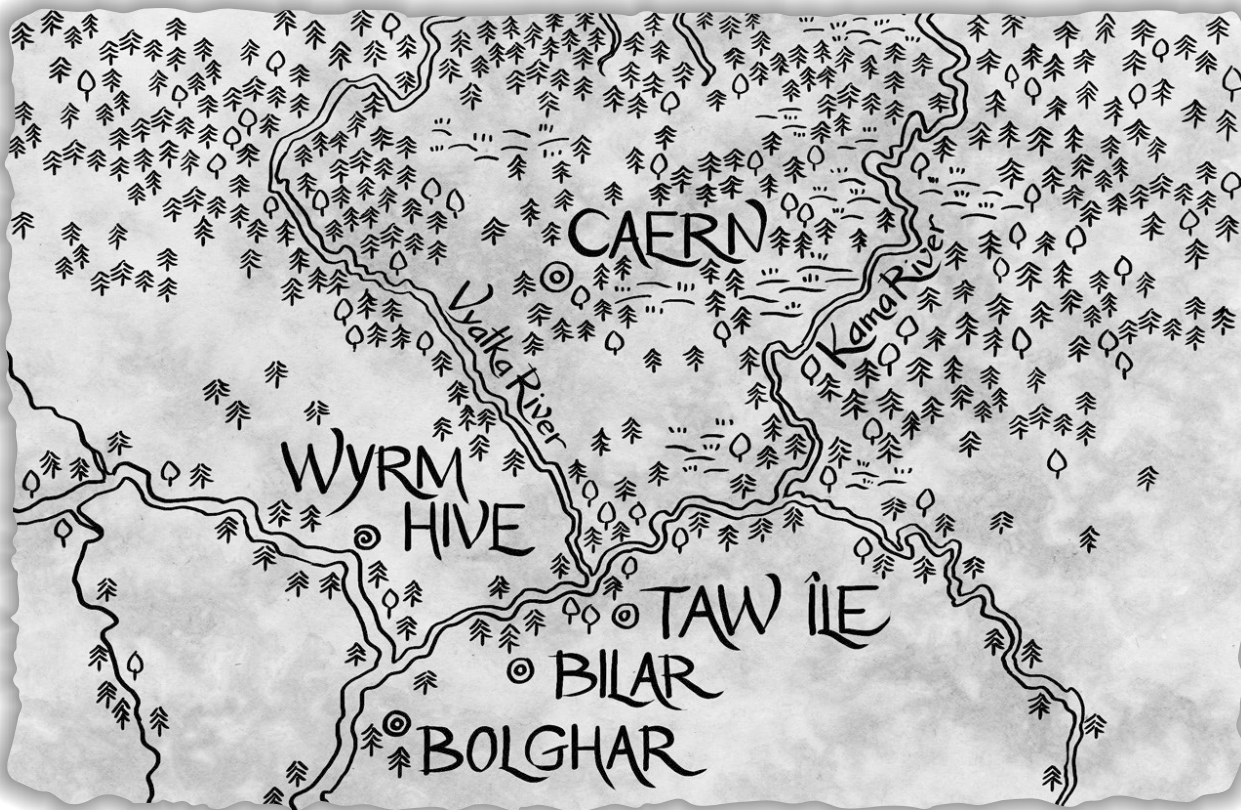
INQUISITOR

The Shadow Inquisition has little influence in Volga Bulgaria, given that the steppe kingdom is well outside the Church's influence, and not even proper "Europe" by most peoples' standards. All the more reason, of course, for a group of adventurous inquisitors (especially young, low-status inquisitors) to take an interest in it. In the west, some mistake the Mongols for Prester John's army returned anew to help retake the Holy Land, while others believe they're the children of Gog and Magog finally returning to destroy Christendom. Discovering the truth is the hook that draws the Inquisitors into the east. Arriving in Bolghar, where vampires and fae operate a little freer, they'll have plenty to keep their hands full. And at some point, they'll discover an honest-to-God pagan deity living on the banks of the Vyatka and sustaining itself on the worship of lycanthropes. There's a possible friend in Qorjin, but if his horsemen-who-never-bathe are the soldiers of Prester John, they've lost their way and will need to be led back to it. For his part, Qorjin will be curious about any westerners he meets. - No doubt they'll have information useful to him, and would certainly be of help destabilizing the local supernatural population, but they're also representatives of European power, making them temporary allies at best. Want an even wilder and more precarious adventure? If Inquisitors don't solve the "Dažbog problem" by the time the eclipse comes, reward their failure with a forty-foot monstrosity laying siege to the city of Bolghar and an epic kaiju battle, Dark Fantastic style.

CHRONICLE MAP

The Evergreen Prison is a story in three acts, focusing on a pivotal moment in time, both for the Sept of the Red Cedar and the people of Volga Bulgaria. Unfortunately for the latter, their fate has already been sealed, but for the Garou, the decisions the players make may still swing the pendulum in one direction or another.

Although aimed squarely at a pack of relatively young Garou, there's no rush to get to the events of Act One. This story and its rather severe consequences hinge on decisions made by the players. These moments will feel bigger and more emotionally fraught if the players and their characters have had time to get to know the sept, to build relationships among the members, and to come to think of



it as their home and family. This is a setting as much as it is an adventure, and there's sessions worth of material to exploit before getting to any of the scenes we've written. An enterprising Storyteller could even step back nine years to the glory days of the sept, giving the new cubs a chance to participate in the Battle of Samara Bend, then watching them grow over the years into leaders before having to face Qorjin again. Alternatively, this is a story into which existing characters can be easily dropped; the Sept of the Red Cedar is well-known and well-respected, and should they issue a call for help, other caerns would send Garou such as they could spare. In any event, if the players' Garou have any amount of Renown under their belts at the start of the story, the Storyteller will likely have to upscale some of the earlier threats (the later ones will be nasty enough, no matter what Rank the characters are).

Act One begins ominously enough: The pack arrives on the outskirts of Taw Île to find the whole village gone dark. Not even smoke from a hearth stains the sky. Investigation leads them to the center of town and the mouth of an enormous hole, from which emanates the sound of muffled sobbing. Inside, the Garou are ambushed by a pack of Black Spiral Dancers, but the tide turns with the arrival of another pack of Garou, strange foreign werewolves the likes of which they've never seen. In the aftermath of the battle, the leader of the new pack, Pei Ling, invites the characters back to their camp. If they accept, they find

themselves in the midst of a Mongol kuriyen and meet Qorjin for the first time. And Qorjin has an offer for them: Make peace with the Mongol Empire and swear loyalty to Ogedei Khan, and they will receive the aid they so badly need against the Black Spiral Dancers. Fail to do so and they will fight their battle alone and be remembered in the future as enemies of the Khan. Regardless of whether the characters actually go back to the Mongol campe or receive Qorjin's offer, Act One ends when they return to the heart of the caern and report their mysterious findings.

Act Two begins with a moot, as the sept gathers to discuss the events of Act One (however much of it they know). The Garou of the sept have a week to figure out what they want to do. The sept is divided as to what course of action is best and the players' pack, by virtue of having had first contact with the Mongols, will play an influential role in the decision-making process.

Also, there's the matter of the Black Spiral Dancers. They've attacked a location within the bawn, and the threat they pose can no longer be ignored. How far have they infiltrated, how dangerous are they, and where is their hive?

On the eve of the eclipse, if no accord has been reached with the Sept of the Red Cedar, Pei Ling will make one last overture, arriving at the heart of the caern itself if necessary. She beseeches the Garou to accept Qorjin's terms of peace, for their own good and for the good of Gaia. Act Two ends on the seventh day, just as a shadow begins to creep across the face of the sun.

Act Three begins with the eclipse of the sun. As its face disappears from view, every Garou faces a threat even worse than the Mongols or the Black Spiral Dancers: their own widespread frenzy. Shortly thereafter, the Black Spiral Dancers arrive in force for a full-on assault against the Heart of the Caern. If the Garou haven't made peace with the Mongols, the Sept of the Red Cedar will most likely fall, although maybe there's still time to come to some agreement...

The battle in the physical Realm is just part of it. The most dangerous threat lies in the Umbra. There the Red Cedar holds Dažbog secure, but if the Black Spiral Dancers can weaken her enough, they can unleash Dažbog upon the world again. Gaia help everyone if that should happen.

The battle at the caern will inform what happens next. Without the assistance of the Mongols, the caern has likely been destroyed and a monstrous fomor unleashed upon the countryside. The Black Spiral Dancer hive still exists as well. Qorjin is willing to give refuge and aid to the surviving sept members if they swear vassalage to the Khan, and can be the key to stopping the Wyrms, but the pack may not trust him, possibly even blaming him for the events that transpired. If the Mongols and Garou are allies and the attack on the caern is repelled, Qorjin will be more than happy to help stage a counterassault on the hive. On the other hand, if the sept has failed to secure Qorjin's trust, the Mongols will ride out to finish them off after the eclipse, when they are at their weakest (although this will likely test the loyalties of Qorjin's werewolf counselors). Act Three ends when the Black Spiral Dancer hive is destroyed and the Mongols dealt with (in whatever way the pack thinks appropriate), or the Garou are defeated.

PERSONALITIES

QORJIN

Background: While history remembers names like Subadei and Jebe, Qorjin's deeds remain blanketed in silence. His present career was launched at the Battle of Samara Bend, where he alone refused to yield before the men-who-became-wolves, creating a diversion that allowed the rest of his arban to withdraw to safety. Upon returning home to Karakorum, he was summoned before Chinghis Khan himself, who impressed upon him a new sacred duty. In the intervening years he has studied the unseen world, learned to use the fears and superstitions of his enemies to his greatest advantage, and brought the creatures of myth to bay before the Mongol Empire. Chinghis Khan is dead now, but Qorjin's task remains the same: Ensure that the next time the Horde marches upon Volga Bulgaria, there is no repeat of Samara Bend.

Image: Qorjin is a sturdy five-and-a-half feet tall. His face is wide and his cheeks scarred from deep gashes meant

PLAYING THE OUTSIDERS

One possible, and very fun, option would be to play this story from the side of the Mongols. Pei Ling has a pack that runs with the Horde, but it would be easy to replace it with one of the players' design. Such a pack would, necessarily, consist of Garou comfortable around men. Warders of Men, Bone Gnawers, and Children of Gaia are all obvious choices. Silent Striders, too, because of their nomadic lifestyle, and Stargazers and Uktena because they may easily share Kinfolk with the Mongols. This also opens up the opportunity for members of the Beast Court to make an appearance, whose relationship with Garou suggests all sorts of interesting drama.

to keep a beard from growing there. Hair hangs loose about his broad shoulders, but the top of his head is shaved clean (save for the traditional forelock). He wears the standard dress of a jagun chief: a blue kalat and a conical cap, lined in fox fur and decorated with gold and silver thread. He carries his silver paitze upon him at all times, the sign of his office. He moves with an assured ease, both in and out of the saddle, and he regards everything around him with a mix of fascination and caution.

Roleplaying Hints: Qorjin is measured, but decisive. He rarely reacts rashly or impulsively; he's contemplated every contingency, so while you may catch him off guard, it's rare to ever truly surprise him. Most times, he knows exactly what needs to be done and does it. It is said he can tell at a glance the strength of a man's resolve, and it's in that fashion he chose his army. He prizes loyalty and duty above all other things, but realizes that others sometimes require different motivations...if he needs you to do something, he will find your motivation. Pei Ling calls him, "the leaf gently dancing at the center of the typhoon." It seems an apt description.

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 4,

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Archery 5 (Quick Reload, Mongolian Archery, Mounted), Crafts 2 (Bowmaking, Fletcher), Etiquette 2, Leadership 5, Linguistics 2, Melee 4, Ride 5, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 5, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Politics 3,

Backgrounds: Resources 3, Allies 5, Contacts 4

Willpower 10

THE BEY'S HAND

The Bey's Hand is a pack of Garou who serve as counselors to Qorjin. Pei Ling is ostensibly the leader, though Batuani is its spiritual heart. Although Pei Ling serves Qorjin (see below), the pack itself is not subject to his command; the relationship is more one of privileged friends than ruler and vassal. Qorjin respects the pack's cultural and spiritual obligations, and in return, the pack has adopted the Horse totem as their own, paying homage to the animal at the center of Mongolian life. There may come a time in the story when The Bey's Hand must choose between helping their fellow Garou or remaining with the jagun; Qorjin will deter only Pei Ling from joining her fellow werewolves, though any others who leave the jagun will forever be ostracized from it.

PEI LING

Background: Unlike many Stargazers, who isolate themselves among the mountaintops to ponder the mysteries of the firmament, Pei Ling always preferred the view from the ground. There, with the endless sky spread out above her, she felt home. She ranged far - sometimes with wolves and sometimes with men, but rarely with her own people - and enjoyed each new lesson the world would teach her. In time, tales of the mysterious "wolf-woman" could be heard from China to Siberia; in one tale, she fed a village with visions from the sky, and in another, she

confounded a monster so thoroughly it died from starvation while puzzling out its own existence. For a whole year, Qorjin followed this trail of tales, until finally they led him to Pei Ling. She had fought Mongols many times, and had expected the same with this one, but instead he offered her a riddle. If she solved it, he vowed, he would serve as her vassal, in whatever capacity she wanted. Until then, though, she would serve as his. She accepted his riddle, and for ten years now has served at his side. Some in camp suggest that she uncovered the answer some time ago, but simply refuses to give it. It isn't true, but Pei Ling isn't letting on.

Image: In Homid form, Pei Ling is a slender woman, a bit on the short side perhaps, with an unnatural shock of pure white hair that she wears loose. In Lupus form, her white fur is streaked with black, a bit like a tiger.

Roleplaying Hints: Pei Ling is inquisitive by nature, a quality which has inspired many of her travels. The sky is the roof over her home; where ever she may be, if she can see the sky above, she feels safe. She's normally friendly and easy to laugh, if a bit aloof, but recently her good demeanor has been undercut by an uncharacteristic edginess. She's become short with people, and often seems strained. She's seen the eclipse approaching, and knows all too well what happens to Garou at a time like that. Qorjin will never allow her to help the local Garou through the coming crisis unless they accept his offer, so her main priority right now is securing their allegiance or solving the riddle that would turn the tables on her lord.



Breed: Homid

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Stargazer

Physical: Strength 2 (3/6/5/4), Dexterity 4 (5/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Primal Urge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 2, Etiquette 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Enigmas 5, Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Pure Breed 2

Gifts: (1) Perfect Balance, Persuasion, Resist Pain, Student and Teacher, (2) Eye of the Storm, Strength of Purpose, Heaven's Vault, (3) Calm the Savage Beast, Clarity of Vision, Mouse Step (4) Bury the Wolf

Rank 4

Rage 3, Gnosis 4, Willpower 7

Renown: Glory 4, Honor 9, Wisdom 6

Rites: (Minor) Prayer for the Prey, (Mystic) Rite of the Silken Cloth

BATUANI SEVEN-SHADOWS

Background: Batuani Seven Shadows is one of the first Uktena to travel east with the Ogedei Khan's army. She chose to do so not out of loyalty to the Khan, but out of simple necessity. Each generation of her family had traveled west, starting with her grandparents, who rode the waves to Siberia from the Aleutians. She was already far from her home when she first met Qorjin, and Pei Ling outed her as Garou to this strange human. Rather than threatening or blackmailing her, Qorjin asked her to come with him — he played to her fears that his army might unleash ancient banes and be unable to stop them rampaging across the world once again. Batuani conceded that it was her duty to help, but she's more interested in finding out about the Garou to the west and their strange customs. She acts as a moderate voice on Qorjin's council of beys, wanting to help local Garou rather than ignoring them or using them as tools. At the same time, she's conflicted about requiring the werewolves to pledge allegiance to the Khan; doing so involves lifting the Veil more than she's happy with.

Image: To Western eyes, it's hard to tell the difference between Batuani's Aleutian heritage and the Mongols, though her skin is a shade darker and her features less

rounded. She wears her long black hair in a single braid, and bears intricate tattoos around her left eye. In Lupus form, her fur is a deep red-brown.

Roleplaying Hints: Batuani is quiet and reserved, far happier when given time to observe and prepare rather than leaping in head-first. She often surprises people with the sheer volume of spirit lore at her recall, but she knows better than to speak too freely of what she knows. Aware that she is probably the best placed to re-bind Dažbog, she wants to remain with the Sept of the Red Cedar. She's also one of the few people Qorjin trusts who speaks Bulgarian, though she pretends to know less than she does.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Uktena

Physical: Strength 2 (3/6/5/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 4, Primal Urge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Archery 2, Crafts 2, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Performance 3, Ride 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Hearth Wisdom 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Ancestors 2, Pure Breed 3, Resources 1

Gifts: (1) Master of Fire, Sense Magic, Smell of Man, Spirit Speech; (2) Command Spirit, Speech of the World, Spirit of the Bird; (3) Expel Spirit, Invisibility

Rank 3

Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Willpower 6

Renown: Glory 3, Honor 1, Wisdom 8

Rites: (Accord) Rite of Cleansing, Rite of Contrition; (Caern) Rite of the Opened Bridge; (Mystic) Rite of Binding, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of Summoning

NIGHTFLIT

Nightflit knows how to run, and how to stay hidden. In many ways, that's all he's ever known. Born under the half moon at a sept on the Aral Sea, he is the bastard child of a Silver Fang mother. His mother fled with her metis child to save him from a brutal death, but she didn't buy him much time. She looked after the boy as best she could, bringing him north until she found a sept of Bone Gnawers. In some ways, the boy's deformity was a blessing: his skin blistered and blackened in sunlight, so they had to travel at night.

Aware that he could never have Falcon's blessing, Nightflit chose to honor the sept and tribe who accepted him and petitioned Rat for the right to join the Bone Gnawers. He could see a slight pang of shame in his mother's eyes that night, but he did not flinch. He would repay the sept's kindness. That the Bone Gnawers are more accepting of Garou who must dress in rags and bandages to shield their skin from the sun was an added benefit.

Three years later, the Mongols came, the army of Ogedei Khan. One of the warlord's lieutenants marched straight to the sept with a group of men and women. Nightflit could smell the Garou among their number. This man, Qorjin, spoke of many great things. All he needed to ensure that the sept had his protection was a single Garou to ride with him, a token of his good faith. Nightflit volunteered before anyone else could speak. He joined the Bey's Hand, where he acts as a translator and a stoic lookout.

RUNNING PRINCE

If you listen to his stories, Running Prince has traveled everywhere. He's been to the Pure Lands and spoken with tribes many have never heard of. He's met with the Kucha Ekundu in Africa, sought the counsel of Stargazers in the Himalayas, fought alongside the Beast Courts, and knows many Fera personally.

Running Prince is also a compulsive liar. He's not malicious, but he invents stories of his adventures before joining the Bey's Hand because he thinks the truth is too boring. The Ragabash was born in Russia, to a wolf pack with no real heritage. Found by a court of Silver Fangs, a visiting Silent Strider offered to take the young lupus under his wing as the cub did not have the blood of Falcon's children in his veins. His mentor told Running Prince the values of staying reserved, of watching before deciding to act, and of never staying in one place for too long.

His travels have been confined to Northern and Eastern Europe, and some parts of Asia. It was during one of these wanders east that he forgot himself and changed form in front of a human. That human, Qorjin, offered him the chance to see more of the world, and to be a part of something more. Running Prince now acts as a guide to the Bey's Hand, though they take his stories with a pinch of salt.

The Sept of The Red Cedar Voice-of-Thunder

Background: Voice of Thunder has lived at the Sept of the Red Cedar for as long as anyone can remember. An Elder in age as well as rank, he is one of the oldest living Garou in all of Europe. He pledged to uphold Bakr and Ondreiana's

example, and has fought hard to keep the Sept as open as possible. While some have doubted his commitment due to his tribe's reputation, Voice-of-Thunder has remained resolute. The recent schism at the sept bothers him. He can't understand why anyone would willingly close off the sept from Garou society. Yes, the Red Talons vex him as ever. Yes, the tribes trade jibes and fight and scheme, but that's important in its own way. If they have a place where every Garou can treat one another like siblings — with the inherent rivalry and violence that results — then they will bond and act as siblings when a threat arrives from without.

Image: In Lupus form, Voice-of-Thunder is a broad, stocky wolf with jet black fur. His left foreleg bears a messy scar, but he does not allow it to slow him. When he takes Homid form, he is a large, powerfully-built Bulgarian man. Deep lines mark his face and his left arm has a messy scar. Some make the mistake of thinking he's past his prime, but he's still able to demonstrate the strength in his arm and the sharp edge of his tongue.

Roleplaying Hints: You're old. You don't really know how old, that's not important, but you know that you've seen four generations after yours go through their First Change. They come to you for counsel and you give it as best you can, based on what you have learned and all you have seen. A small part of you wants to leave the sept and rest at last. That part of you is weakness, and you shall never give in to it. When you become weak, when your mind addles and your body fails, that's when you will leave the sept. Not now. Not when it's so close to falling apart.

Breed: Lupus

Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Shadow Lord

Physical: Strength 4 (5/8/7/6), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 5 (7/8/8/7)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Primal Urge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Melee 3, Performance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 2

Knowledge: Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Ancestors 1, Pure Breed 4, Resources 2

Gifts: (1) Aura of Confidence, Beast Speech, Heightened Senses; (2) Distractions, Luna's Armor, Scent of Sight; (3) Devil's Child, Eye of the Asp, Raven's Curse; (4) Beast Life, Dolorous Stroke; (5) Call for Vengeance, Shadow Pack

Rank 5

Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Willpower 8

Renown: Glory 9, Honor 6, Wisdom 9

SEPT MEMBERS

The Sept of the Red Cedar has perhaps thirty Garou present at any one time, from most tribes—only the Fianna and Red Talons do not have much of a presence. When septmates throw themselves into battle against Storyteller characters, the Storyteller can use the traits presented here to gauge how effective each combatant is. Don't play out the fight with dice and rules, as it's nowhere near as interesting for the players.

Attributes: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6), Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2), Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Animal Ken 2, Archery 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Melee 2, Primal Urge 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Rituals 2

Gifts: Three Level One, three Level Two, one or two Level Three Gifts

Rank: 3

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6

BLACK SPIRAL DANCERS SISTER WORM

Background: Sister Worm doesn't like the open air. She was born in the Hive, and its tunnels feel as natural to her as grass and trees do to other people. She knows every step to take to avoid triggering a trap. Her brother fell to his death in a pit of silver spikes. He was an idiot. Sister Worm is smart. She learned to talk to the spirits of worms and vermin, all creatures happy underground. The Wyrms wants her to live underground, to burrow and slither beneath the surface and surprise its foes. Now, it tells her of a great spirit working. It tells her of a favored child, held in bondage by the hated Gaians. Sister Worm must set it free.

Image: Sister Worm is an albino, with stark white skin and pink eyes. She's somewhere between slender and malnourished, and dresses in whatever rags she can find. Her hands and feet are caked in dirt and blood. She smiles a lot, often at the most inappropriate times. Sister Worm eats worms and grubs, and when she opens her mouth they sometimes fall from her jaws. In her Lupus form, her albinism shows through in her pure white fur and wild red eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: You know what the worms want. They speak to you. The Wyrms speaks to you through them. It tells you things, whispers truths in your dreams and crawls in your belly with every mouthful. You're a crafty fanatic, just waiting for your chance to become exalted

in the Wyrms's eyes. If the others would listen they would know you as the Wyrms's prophet.

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancer

Physical: Strength 1 (2/5/4/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (4/5/5/4)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Primal Urge 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Melee 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Rituals 4

Backgrounds: Ancestors 3, Kinfolk 1, Pure Breed 2

Gifts: (1) Bane Protector, Shed, Shroud, Spirit Speech; (2) Command Spirit, Ears of the Bat, Sight from Beyond; (3) Mental Speech, Pulse of the Invisible

Rank: 3

Rage 3, Gnosis 8, Willpower 5

Renown: Glory 3, Honor 2, Wisdom 7

Rites: (Accord) Rite of the Wilderness; (Caern) Badger's Burrow; (Mystic) Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of Summoning

BLACK SPIRAL DANCERS

Players will fight off a number of Black Spiral Dancers throughout the course of the story. While the Wyrms has driven many of them mad, they remain capable of rational thought and tactical decisions. If the pack encounters a number of Black Spirals from the Hive, give them names and personalities. Have them run from the fight, so that they can come back as a greater pain in the ass later. The traits provided here are for a veteran Black Spiral.

Attributes: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5), Charisma 2, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2), Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Ken 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Expression 2, Melee 3, Primal Urge 3, Survival 2, Rituals 2

Gifts: (1) Heightened Senses or Master of Fire, Resist Pain, Shroud; (2) Curse of Hatred or Stare-down, Blissful Ignorance or Spirit of the Fray, Howl of the Banshee; (3) Devil's Child or Eyes of the Cat, Foaming Fury or Pataiga

Rank: 3

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 6

VOIDSNAKES

Used as guards and shock troops by the Black Spiral Dancers of Volga Bulgaria, Voidsnakes are the result of possession by a particularly nasty bane. Most started life as large dogs or wolves, twisted into a serpentine form by the bane within. Rumor has it that some started life as Kinfolk or kidnapped humans, forced to become a mindless servant of the Wyrn.

Voidsnakes look like green-gray snakes about six feet long and four inches across. Their heads have no eyes or sensory apparatus, just five barbed teeth. These jaws can open wide enough to close around a man's head, connected by a web of flesh. Inside the mouth is a pool of black ichor that drips from each tooth, evaporating before it hits the ground. Should they ever fall in battle, the ichor consumes them from within in a matter of seconds.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Attack: Bite (Strength + 2, aggravated), Grapple (Strength + 2, lethal)

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -3, -3, -5, Dead

Powers: Immunity to the Delerium, Voidmaw

- **Voidmaw** – The pitch-black ichor of the Voidsnakes melts flesh and stone with equal ease, turning it to a black slurry. Voidsnakes can tunnel through rock as quickly as they can walk. Anyone bitten by one takes two levels of aggravated damage per turn for three turns, as the ichor dissolves skin and bone.

QORJIN'S BAGHATUR

It was Chinghis Khan's great insight that every Mongol is a warrior to be reckoned with; the life they are born into - hunting, fighting, horsemanship, and archery - made them that way. But Qorjin's soldiers are special, every single one of them chosen for a very specific quality they embody: immunity to the Delirium. Given the task before them, anything less would be unacceptable. Each and every warrior in the jagun bears the title of *baghatur*; even the least of them is a hero among his people.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Animal Ken 3 (horses), Archery 5 (Mongolian Archery, Mounted, Quick Reload), Crafts 2 (Bow, Fletcher), Melee 3, Ride 5, Stealth 2, Survival 4, Hearth Wisdom 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine, 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Resources 1, Mentor 2, Contacts 2

Willpower: 3

Combat: Qorjin's soldiers will always prefer to attack from horseback, and at range if they can. They carry at least two bows with them - laminated yak horn long and short bows (see below) -, as well as three quivers of sixty arrows a piece (with a variety of arrows available to them, see below). They are highly specialized in mounted archery and never suffer penalty for using bows while riding. They'll use the Quick Reload maneuver every turn. If it comes to melee, most will have a shortsword and a dagger. In Qorjin's jagun the dagger is always forged of silver, and half a dozen of the arrows sport similar arrowheads. Every soldier has with him at least one spare pony, if not more, and can perform ostentatious feats of horsemanship, such as shifting from pony to the next mid-gallop. They're often accompanied by war-trained dogs, who serve both to warn them of the presence of enemies and as useful fighting companions.

Special: All of Qorjin's soldiers are immune to the Delirium for one reason or another. Many are Kinfolk, others are willful enough to shake off its most harmful effects, and some may even have other supernatural "gifts" that gird them against the enemy.

MONGOLIAN PONIES

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Wits 3

Willpower 3, Health Levels OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Trample or kick for six dice (bashing), bite for three (lethal)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2

Move: 15 Control Rating 2 (for Mongols) or 4 (everyone else)

MONGOLIAN ARMAMENTS

Mongolian Longbow: Damage STR+1L, Range 300 yards Conceal N, Min. Str. 4, Notes: 1 turn to reload; unless wielder has the Mongolian Archer specialty, this functions as a normal longbow.

Mongolian Shortbow: Damage STR+1L, Range 150 yards, Conceal L, Min. Str. 2, Notes: 1 turn to reload; unless wielder has the Mongolian Archer specialty, this functions as a normal shortbow.

Arrow, Armor-piercing: One less damage, but reduces Soak bonus from armor by two.

Arrow, Explosive: Two less damage, but everyone within five feet (including the target) takes one level of aggravated damage.

Arrow, Incendiary: One less damage, but if target doesn't Soak all damage, they take one aggravated damage each turn until they extinguish the flame.

Arrow, Whistling: One less damage, but excellent for signaling danger to allies.

Mongolian Thumb-lock Ring: An archer with the Mongolian Archery specialty may use this thumb ring to reload a bow more quickly. With the thumb ring, only one success is needed on the Quick Reload maneuver.

The “Typical” Mongol Soldier

There was no “typical” Mongol because the Mongols weren’t one people. The Horde was comprised of Mongols, Naimans, Merkits, Keraites, and Tatars, just to name a few of the tribes Chinghis Khan subsumed under his banner.

The standard uniform was a blue or brown *kalat* belted at the waist. In the winter, the *kalat* was lined and edged with fur. Over this was a coat of armor: mail for the heavy cavalry, lamellar, a quilted *kalat*, or none at all for the light cavalry. Against their skin they wore a shirt of silk; enemy arrows that pierced armor would be surrounded by the silk, thus allowing the arrow to be removed without risk of further injury. Atop their heads they wore either domed helmets or caps of felt and fur.

The Mongol soldier’s primary weapon is the bow made of yak horn, bamboo, and sinew, glued together and compressed until it becomes a single piece. A trained soldier can fire and reload his bow as a single action - even when riding at a full gallop - by use of the Mongolian thumb-lock technique (utilizing a small stop ring on the thumb to draw the bow), ensuring his aim by releasing the shot only when all four of his pony’s hooves are off the ground.

A Mongol child learns to ride at the age of three, and from that point forward is never far from his mount. The Mongolian pony is the key to the Horde’s life, cultural, and military supremacy, and as such it is afforded all the respect of a trusted companion on the battlefield. It is forbidden to lead a horse by a bit, and when a soldier dies, his favorite mount usually joins him so they may ride together in the beyond. The typical Mongol always has several mounts with him, so that he may ride continuously without much need for rest or delay.

Mongol soldiers seldom bathed, unless it rained; they simply saw no need for it. This is perhaps a contributing factor to westerners’ great underestimation of them as simple and uncivilized. That, of course, was a huge mistake.

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Originally a powerful spirit-servant of Helios himself, Bulgarian settlers mistook the manifest spirit for Dažbog, the sun-god. When the Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords went to war over the spirit, each wanting the spirit’s blessing for themselves, the Wyrms’ influence crept in. The bane Dažbog is immensely powerful, but trapped by the Red Cedar. Should the Red Cedar fall, Dažbog’s wrath will be unleashed upon the world once again.

Rage 10, Gnosis 9, Willpower 7, Essence 80

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Blighted Touch, Corruption, Materialize

MONGOL VOCABULARY

For more information about the Mongols in the World of Darkness, see *Winds from the East*.

arban: A military unit comprised of ten soldiers.

baghatur: A Mongol honorific; “hero,” “valiant warrior,” roughly equivalent to “knight.”

ger: A felt tent.

kalat: A Mongolian tunic, of sorts, worn under armor.

kuriyen: A circle of ger; a Mongol encampment.

jagun: A military unit comprised of ten arbans.

paitze: A tablet carried by Mongol leaders to signify their rank.

SCENES

ACT ONE

The first act introduces the main threat to the Sept of the Red Cedar, and some unlikely allies, which paves the way for a very hard decision. The moon is gibbous for the entirety of this Act, making Rage rolls to frenzy difficulty 5.

A VILLAGE ABANDONED

Bites-at-Flies has never felt at home in the Sept of the Red Cedar. It’s nice, but it never felt like home. It’s too empty, unlike the streets and buildings and fires of Taw Île, which feels to him like a bustling metropolis. Some nights he sleeps unseen between two buildings, but when it gets cold he breaks into the forge and beds down by the fire. Taw Île is his home. But something’s wrong.

It started three days ago, when a local farmer’s family vanished. One night they had a fire burning in their hearth, the next, nothing. Nobody knew what had happened. The next night, another farm lay empty. Without a pack to back him up, Bites-at-Flies decided to bring reinforcements to work out what’s going on. He ran to the Sept of the Red Cedar, and there he finds the players’ pack and urges them to help him.

Play up how outclassed he feels. Bites-at-Flies knows how to kill, but not what could make entire families vanish. He’s massively out of his depth. Some characters will want to help the Bone Gnawer out of a sense of altruism or a desire to solve the mystery. Others might require a more concrete reason. The town is the hub of human society,



and likely the place characters have any human Allies, Contacts, or Kinfolk. Garou who feel no love for humans, including the Red Talons, might want to take a look just to make sure the monkeys are really dead.

When Bites-at-Flies returns to the town with the pack in tow, play up the eerie feeling. It's late evening, a time when people should be gathered as families. Instead, the town is dark. From a distance, it looks like a mass of pointed timbers rising into the sky. No smoke rises from the hearths and the werewolves cannot see any sign of life — no fires, and no candles. As the Garou approach, they see that someone has set up a palisade against some kind of enemy, but it hasn't worked. Walking further into town, Bites-at-Flies starts to panic. Something's scuffed the streets, but a cursory investigation shows no sign of a struggle. The people appear to have discarded their weapons on the ground without bloodying their foes. The other streets show much the same, just signs of people being dragged to the center of town.

Dead in the center of Taw Ile is a mound of earth surrounding a huge hole, as though made by some gargantuan mole. The pack can hear someone sobbing within, the cries of a frightened child desperate for his parents. The hole is quite dark, and large enough for three

or four people to climb down. Anyone dropping a candle or torch down the hole can see it's maybe thirty feet down and wider at the base, though they cannot see whoever is crying.

Unless restrained by one of the pack, Bites-at-Flies will run into the hole as soon as he hears the crying child. Anyone following will walk into the same trap, while those intent on remaining outside will hear only his screams. Sister Worm, a Black Spiral Dancer, is waiting at the bottom of the hole. Her plaintive cries, aided by her Gifts, are the bait she hopes will lure the Garou into an ambush.

The base of the hole opens into a roughly circular cavern about 15 feet across. Sister Worm is the only person visible at first. She'll wait for any other Garou to descend into the cavern, then signal the attack. Her packmates (one for each member of the players' pack), hiding in smaller tunnels in Lupus form, will burst forth to ambush the werewolves. If the pack has used Sense Wurm or similar Gifts, they know enough to be on edge and won't be surprised, but they'll still have to face a tough fight.

Though the cavern is open enough to move, the Black Spiral Dancers are used to moving underground and probably outrank the pack. If things go too easy, consider adding some Voidworms. If the fight turns against the pack,

they'll receive assistance from an unlikely corner, either as a response to a cry for help, or just drawn to the sounds of battle. Narrate the advantage provided by having four extra Garou helping out, rather than trying to add an extra four combatants to the fight scene.

The Black Spirals will flee when they see that they're outclassed, collapsing the tunnels of dirt and rock behind them.

FIRST CONTACT

If the pack needed help fighting the Black Spiral Dancers, this scene happens while they're still in the cavern, or once they've climbed out. Otherwise, they encounter the newcomer Garou upon leaving the pit — the other Garou drawn to the sounds of battle.

These new werewolves, who call themselves the Bey's Hand, speak only in the Garou tongue — Nightflit knows Slavic, and Batuani Seven-Shadows can use Speech of the World to make herself understood. Pei Ling is adamant that the Bey's Hand wants to talk rather than to fight. Bites-at-Flies, if he survived, wants nothing to do with the newcomers, instead trying to find the entrance to one of the tunnels to go after his friends. Hearing this, Pei Ling offers her pack's assistance in the search if (and only if) the pack agrees to meet with her *jagun*. If they question what that means, Running Prince will translate the word as 'sept'.

Pei Ling, Batuani Seven-Shadows, and Nightflit are all from tribes with no real presence in Europe during the time, and the pack will probably have questions for them. They will answer to their best of their ability, but won't talk too much about the kuriyen or Qorjin unless the pack accepts their invitation.

Try to downplay the tension in this scene; it should contrast the paranoia and brutal combat of the previous scene. The Bey's Hand want to help, whether that's meeting with the Sept of the Red Cedar, following the pack and Bites-at-Flies into the depths of the Hive, or escorting the Garou to the Mongol kuriyen, but they'll only help if the characters accept her invitation. If not, Pei Ling will nod slightly sadly and leave with her pack.

At this point, the pack's got plenty of options: they can go after the people of Taw Ile, with or without the Bey's Hand; see the description of the Hive below. They can return to their sept, again with or without the newcomers. Or they can travel to the Mongol kuriyen, either as the guests of the Bey's Hand or by following them from afar.

CHASE

If the pack gives chase after the Black Spiral Dancers (with or without help from the Bey's Hand), a couple of minutes' digging will uncover one of the tunnels leading from the main cavern. It's large enough for a Garou in Hispo or a crouching human, and once through the initial covering

of dirt, scuffs and drag-marks show that the villagers weren't conscious when moved further into the Hive.

The tunnel network is twisting and labyrinthine (see The Hive, below, for a full description). If they follow the signs of the villagers' passing and don't make too much noise, the pack will follow newly-made tunnels to a rough-hewn chamber that looks new compared to the rest of the Hive. It's not a pretty sight.

The entire room stinks of drying blood and excrement. It's clear that the Black Spiral Dancers fell upon the townspeople in an orgy of violence, rending and tearing with all their might. But for all that, the results show a disturbing amount of organization. Here, a cairn of human heads, lifeless eyes staring into the chamber, lips sewn together and their right eyes all missing. There, a great sigil made of fresh bones, some with scraps of meat still clinging to them. If looked at from just the right angle, piles of intestines on the floor resolve into disturbing glyphs. The very top of the chamber has a chimney open to the air above, through which the Garou can just see the glow of the moon.

When entering the chamber, any Garou must immediately roll Rage to check for frenzy. Anyone who remains able to think clearly can make a Perception + Rituals roll (difficulty 8). A success indicates that the whole room is a focus for incredible malice, turning the Wurm's power into an assault on Luna herself. Five or more successes suggest that the rite might have something to do with turning the sun and moon from the world. The pack can still disrupt some of the power in the chamber, though it takes care and precision rather than raw violence. Discharging the Wurm-tainted power requires an extended Intelligence + Rituals roll (difficulty 8), requiring ten successes in total. Each roll takes five minutes, during which the denizens of the Hive may come looking. Success has no obvious benefit now, but will help a lot in Act Three.

Whether the Garou explore further, and what they encounter, is up to the Storyteller. Assuming the pack doesn't decide to launch a suicidal attack against an entire Hive of Black Spiral Dancers, fomori, and who knows what else, they can leave the same way they entered. Come sunrise, the Black Spiral Dancer ritemaster will complete the ritual and seal off the chamber for good.

SNIFFING AROUND / THE OFFER

This scene can take place at several points, and follows a looser structure to wrap up the events of the previous scene.

If the characters try to follow the Bey's Hand without accepting their invitation, they can; Pei Ling's pack make no special attempts to cover their tracks. If the characters botch or otherwise give their game away, Pei Ling will double back to talk to them, asking if they're willing to take her up on the invitation. Even if they protest otherwise, the

act of going to the kuriyen is accepting the invitation in Qorjin's eyes. The Bey's Hand believe that his offer is the best thing going for the Sept of the Red Cedar, and that they have nothing to hide if the Garou come sneaking around.

If they're undiscovered, the pack can observe the kuriyen (detailed below) and make up their own mind about the incomers. It's up to them if they meet with Qorjin as a result of what they see, or return to their sept.

Qorjin, and by extension the Mongols in the kuriyen, are excellent hosts. Accepting his invitation puts the entire kuriyen at the pack's disposal. Qorjin wines and dines the pack for several days if they'll let him. He honestly believes that the pack will come around to his point of view. He's not trying to bribe them; he sees the pack as honored guests, and he believes in extending every courtesy.

The Bey's Hand will show them around and help them acclimatize, translating for them if necessary. Only after a few days of entertaining the pack will Qorjin present his offer: he wants the Sept of the Red Cedar to pledge vassalage to Ogedei Khan, initially through Qorjin as his representative. If they do, the Bey's Hand — and if necessary the entire Mongol army — will help the sept against the Black Spiral Dancers, and will direct the incoming horde to avoid the sept and its lands.

He appreciates that the pack cannot answer his offer on their own. He will suggest they take his offer back to the sept to make their decision, and should they return he is happy to treat them as the sept's ambassadors — and as such, he will again show them all the hospitality he can.

Checking In

When the pack returns to the sept, the elders want to know what happened at Taw Ile. If they didn't go after the townsfolk, some will understand; it's not worth a pack throwing their life away assaulting a Hive. Others want to know why the pack did nothing to save their friends and Kinfolk. If they did, the magnitude of the Black Spiral Dancers' slaughter will incense many at the sept, but they don't know that the Spirals have sacrificed them to fuel dark magics.

Talk then turns to the newcomers — the Bey's Hand. This part of the scene will play out very differently depending on whether Pei Ling's pack accompanied the characters to the sept. If so, Pei Ling will insist on speaking to the sept's elders. Claiming that a great darkness looms over the land, she wants to offer an alliance between the sept and her *jagun*. If they agree, the sept will have to pledge allegiance not just to Qorjin, but to Ogedei Khan. If they do not, she will inform the sept that during the darkness, they must fight their enemies alone. If the pack meets Qorjin, he will make them the same offer, but asks that they talk to their sept before answering.

The presence of a Mongol army is a cause for concern, as are the strange Garou who ride with them. Faced with a

lot of questions (even if they haven't heard from Qorjin or Pei Ling), the sept elders call a moot to work out what to do.

Act Two

The second act of the story focuses around issues of trust and self-reliance. It's focused more on social interaction than the first act, and its results will have serious repercussions. The moon starts as gibbous but becomes full on day five, two days before the eclipse.

The Moot

The elders of the Sept of the Red Cedar call a moot to discuss the presence of the strangers — not just the new Garou, but Qorjin and his army. Depending on the pack's actions in Act One, the sept may be relatively well-informed, or making its decision without knowing some important facts. The Moot's called for the night after the pack investigates the disappearance at Taw Ile.

How the moot plays out depends on what the characters know and what they suspect. If they turned down Pei Ling's offer, they only know about the disappearances at Taw Ile and the sudden presence of newcomers, including Mongols. Many among the Sept of the Red Cedar don't like the idea of making an overture to a Mongol army. They remember the Battle of Samara Bend, and want little more than to make the ground black with Mongol blood. Any number of human soldiers is no match for thirty Garou, even if they do have a pack of foreigners helping. The pack is told to scout out the kuriyen, either in the open or stealthily. If they discover that the Mongols have silver weapons, the sept's thirst for battle abates some, though it does make them less likely to trust Pei Ling and Qorjin.

If they accepted Pei Ling's offer and spoke to Qorjin, the moot becomes a debate about how to respond. Some Garou want nothing to do with the Mongols. Others don't want to turn down a powerful ally if all they have to do is swear an allegiance that will likely never be called upon. The sept elders ask the pack to find out more about Qorjin and his offer, as they've had contact with the Bey's Hand already.

By virtue of being the first point of contact, Qorjin has chosen the pack to be the Sept's ambassadors to the kuriyen, as long as they don't attack anyone or act deceitfully — a loose standard that he's willing to apply as and when it suits. He asks that they speak to the Bey's Hand, who seem very informed about the sept.

Finally, if the Bey's Hand accompanied the pack to the sept, the elders permit them to speak. Pei Ling and Batuani Seven-Shadows explain the benefits of accepting Qorjin's offer of alliance, bringing allies against the Black Spiral Dancers and stability to the region. The foreign pack has done its research. They know about Dažbog, but they also know that an attack on the Red Cedar would free the

insane bane. Batuani Seven-Shadows might know Uktena secrets to either bring the spirit back to the Wyld or bind it securely, freeing the Caern's totem from its duty.

The Garou have seven days from the moot to work out what to do next.

What the pack does next very much depends on what happened at the moot. If the sept wants more information, either by asking or by scouting, they'll send the pack to the kuriyen (see "Kuriyen," below). If they want to respond to Qorjin's offer, the elders will send the pack to speak to him ("The Deal/No Deal"). If they instead launch an all-out assault, the pack must participate ("What's Mine is Mine"). On their own initiative, the pack might return to Taw Île in hopes of discovering more ("Back to the Pit"). And at some point when leaving or arriving back at the Sept of the Red Cedar, they'll discover a worrying truth ("Ambush!").

BACK TO THE PIT

The burrows beneath Taw Île concern the sept's elders. The sept's known about the Black Spiral Dancers, but beyond a few brief clashes, they've not yet been able to root the Wyrmspawn out of their hive. The thought of tainted Garou tunneling all the way to Taw Île is worrying, and the pack might want to press on into the Hive, especially if they haven't yet discovered what happened to the townsfolk.

After the rite, the Black Spiral Dancers closed off the tunnels leading from the hole in the town back to the Hive proper, leaving just a few Voidworms as a surprise for anyone investigating. The ritual chamber (see "Chase" in Act One) is also closed off, but opens without too much effort. The stink of Wyrms-taint and foul magic suffuses the air, but by now the pack can do nothing about it.

Ambush!

The pack might be leaving the sept for another destination or returning from the outside world to a place they feel safe. Whatever the case, they're about to suffer a nasty surprise. When they're well within the sept's bawn, a pack of Black Spiral Dancers bursts from the ground around them and wastes no time attacking the pack.

It's a hard-fought battle, but one that the pack can win, especially if they think and work as a team. If the Black Spiral Dancers have the upper hand, another pack from the Sept of the Red Cedar might be drawn by the sounds of battle, providing welcome reinforcements. As with the battle under Taw Île, narrate the effects of extra Garou rather than rolling dice for Storyteller characters fighting other Storyteller characters.

The point of this fight isn't to kill the pack, but to warn them. The Black Spiral Dancers have tunneled beneath the Kama River and can strike deep into the sept's bawn without warning. The loose earth that the Black Spirals moved through

collapses under the weight of battle, making it impossible to trace back, but this is a portent of things to come.

WHAT'S MINE IS MINE!

One possible result of the negotiations and scouting could include the sept launching an attack on Qorjin's army. It's not a particularly great idea; even if a significant portion of the Garou survived, the sept would be unprepared for the events of the eclipse and the Black Spiral Dancers' plans would continue without significant interference. On the other hand, nobody ever congratulated the Garou on their anger management.

It's a bitter and bloody fight. Qorjin's soldiers have silver weapons, and each one is hand-picked because they do not suffer the effects of the Delirium. They also have the Bey's Hand on their side. The Sept of the Red Cedar is maybe thirty Garou strong in addition to the pack.

If the tide of battle turns against him, Qorjin will not hesitate to call a retreat — he knows better than to engage the Garou in a fight to the death. He takes his surviving troops and the remains of the Bey's Hand and retreats, leaving a severely wounded sept to face what is to come.

THE DEAL/NO DEAL

If the sept still hasn't responded by the eve of the seventh day and assuming the sept didn't launch an attack against the army, Pei Ling makes one last overture. She'll travel as far as it takes, going to the caern heart itself in order to speak with the sept's elders. If they've not heard Qorjin's offer, she'll state it in his place. She then implores the Garou to accept his terms of peace, not just for the good of the sept but for the good of all of Gaia. It can bring about a truce between a wide range of septs, and they can fight the Wyrms better together than they can apart. It's a powerful speech, but the sept is split, and the elders give the pack the casting vote, as they've had the most dealings with the Mongols.

It's up to the pack, as the ones who made first contact, to convey the sept's answer to Qorjin. If they refuse, he won't take action for or against the sept. He's not mad enough to attempt an alliance with the Black Spiral Dancers, but at the same time, if the sept won't swear vassalage to the Khan, he's not about to help them. He gives the order to break camp, but the events of Act Three stop him leaving.

If the sept pledges vassalage to the Khan, Qorjin enters a formal alliance with the sept. He asks the Bey's Hand to return to the sept with the pack to arrange the deal. If the sept came to a swift decision, they may still not yet be seven days from the moot, during which time Pei Ling and her pack do their best to be as helpful — and as respectful — as possible. They're aware of their status as outsiders, and don't want to do anything that would cause the sept to reconsider.

ACT THREE

On the seventh day after the moot, a shadow creeps across the face of the sun, and the Black Spiral Dancers' plans bear fruit. A lot of what happens in this act depends on whether the sept is allied with Qorjin or not.

THE COMING DARKNESS

The sun turns its face from the world in the middle of the day, casting a strange darkness over the world. Luna's face is also hidden from view, and only a thin ring of light casts any illumination. If the pack did not disturb the ritual site under Taw ĩle, each Garou gains three points of Rage, which can take them over their maximum. Even with the ritual site disturbed, every werewolf witnessing the eclipse must roll Rage (difficulty 4) to avoid flying into a berserk frenzy. If she's present, Pei Ling can offset the worst of the frenzy, using Gifts that help the sept's Garou manage their Rage.

Barely thirty seconds after darkness falls, the Black Spiral Dancers attack en masse. Twenty twisted werewolves and thrice that number of strange and terrible fomori assault the sept, jumping out of the ground at the caern heart and laying waste around them. With many of their number having attacked their friends, the sept is ill-prepared for the assault. An alliance with Qorjin brings more benefits; a short while after the sept joins battle, a hundred Mongol horsemen arrive with silver weapons and orders to kill anything that looks warped or twisted even for a werewolf.

Play up the chaos and confusion of the battle. A frenzied werewolf will strike out at anyone around him, and the Black Spiral Dancers and fomori appear out of nowhere to attack. If the Mongol cavalry arrives, the sept can turn the tide, but without them it's a bloody and hard-fought battle that might well kill everyone at the sept.

SHADOW WAR

The Black Spiral Dancers' all out war against the Sept of the Red Cedar isn't just a straight-up fight in the physical world. The more dangerous threat lies in the Umbra. The spirit of the Red Cedar still holds Dažbog bound, preventing the great bane from wreaking havoc. Several Black Spiral Dancers — perhaps fifteen in total — use the chaos of the assault on the sept to strike at Red Cedar itself. If they can weaken the totem, Dažbog will be free to do as it will, laying waste first to the sept, and then to Volga Bulgaria as a whole.

The Spirals who launch the Umbral assault aren't the Hive's most capable combatants. They rely on Gifts and surprise to fight spirits rather than natural combat ability, but in the fight against Red Cedar, they've got numbers on their side. If Sister Worm survived the fight under Taw ĩle, she leads the Black Spiral Dancers.

If the pack focus on the physical battle, they still might use short Umbral jaunts to get an advantage on their fellows; if they don't, other werewolves at the sept surely will. They'll have some idea of what's happening, but once again it's up to the pack to do what they can to save the sept.

If the Bey's Hand have allied with the sept, they'll follow into the Umbra. Pei Ling and Batuani Seven-Shadows both have more experience fighting in the spirit world than in the physical. If the situation looks particularly dire, Pei Ling can bring a handful of Mongol soldiers into the Umbra with their physical weapons, but working the rite requires her full concentration — not the easiest thing to maintain in the midst of battle.

If the characters are the only ones to fight the Umbral battle, since the rest of the sept must resist the Black Spiral forces, they've got a much harder time of it. A single pack against fifteen Black Spiral Dancers is a hard task to begin with. Enough of them will break off to occupy the pack while the others strike at Red Cedar. Unless the pack can react quickly and tear the other Spirals away from the Caern totem — either via a clever plan, or brutally efficient combat — they will see Red Cedar weaken and falter. Dažbog is free.

DAŽBOG UNLEASHED

If Sister Worm and her Black Spirals free Dažbog from the clutches of Red Cedar, the great Bane presses through the Gauntlet into the physical world. Rather than giving substance to its spiritual body, Dažbog instead creates a body from the corpses of slain Garou, both Black Spiral Dancers and their Gaian opponents. The resulting creature is almost forty feet tall, studded with the faces and fur of close friends and deadly enemies, a blasphemy against everything that the Garou stand for. It wastes no time in slaughtering everything it can see. Dažbog attacks the Black Spiral Dancers and Gaian Garou with the same fervor, and lashes out against any Mongols or fomori stupid enough to stand in its way.

Dažbog is a terrible and dangerous opponent. Most of the Black Spiral Dancers will flee when they see it cross through the Gauntlet. It will try to destroy the caern heart first of all, finally severing Red Cedar's link to the land. When it has destroyed the heart and no Garou survive, it walks off into the night, searching for anything living that it can destroy.

If the sept hasn't taken heavy losses from the Black Spiral Dancer assault, and have support from Mongol troops, they might just be able to ward off Dažbog. Actually defeating the Bane is a task far beyond the sept at full strength, and would require the assistance from the Red Talons to the North and other Garou besides.

A LAST STAND

Even if Dažbog remains secure, it's not at all certain that the Sept of the Red Cedar can survive the Hive's onslaught. Having at least one their packs have to fight off a parallel assault in the Umbra has left the sept weakened and vulnerable. If they don't have reinforcements from Qorjin's Mongols, it's very likely that the Black Spiral Dancers will

capture the Caern. If the pack can help fight off the Black Spirals this time, they can come back whenever they want to finish the job.

If they've not yet allied with the Mongols, Qorjin offers refuge and aid to the survivors, and even send reinforcements to help re-establish the caern — if the sept swears vassalage to the Khan. Of course, the sept is only likely to accept his hospitality if they trust him. If they don't,



or if they blame him for the Black Spiral Dancer attack, the Sept of the Red Cedar is effectively finished.

TURNING THE TIDE

With the assistance of both the Bey's Hand and the Mongol soldiers, the sept stands a much greater chance of surviving the eclipse. The pack has allies against the Umbral attack, and the Mongol soldiers help fend off the

assault in the physical world. As the sun creeps out and the darkness lifts, the werewolves can survey the damage and plan how they want to move on.

Since they've pledged allegiance to the Khan, Qorjin lives up to his word. — Not just willing to send his soldiers to fight alongside the Garou, he offers help rebuilding the sept. The pack and the sept elders may not be happy with the idea of a human helping with such a delicate task, but he has another offer that the werewolves might prefer. He's willing to fight with the sept's Garou to launch a counterattack against the Hive.

Epilogue

The events of the story branch off and remix enough that you can use it to launch a number of further stories.

- The sept and Qorjin's men launch an attack against the Hive, systematically killing the Black Spiral Dancers, fomori, and kinfolk who live there. Just how far does the Hive extend, and what twisted surprises might they find deep under the ground. Might one wrong step lead them into a deadly trap or straight into Malfeas itself?

- Perhaps they want to bring Dažbog back to the Wyld, or cement his bonds further — the sort of thing that Batuani Seven-Shadows and Pei Ling could help with, if the sept would accept their assistance. Doing so would require finding ancient rites and lost secrets from deep within the Umbra. Can the Sept of the Red Cedar survive without the pack for so long?

- If they chose vassalage to the Khan to gain Qorjin's aid, representatives of the sept must travel to Karakorum to pledge vassalage to Ogedei Khan. Who better than the players' pack, who have been at the heart of so many events surrounding the Mongols already?

- With the caern's defenders depleted, what of the Red Talons to the north? Do they want their old hunting grounds back, or do they wait for the Hive to attack again, arriving to lend assistance — and when they win the day, to take over?

- If Dažbog escaped but the pack survived, someone has to gather allies to hunt the great beast down before it destroys every living thing in Volga Bulgaria and beyond. The players' pack, as the only survivors of the Sept of the Red Cedar, probably know the most about the spirit, and know how dangerous it truly is.

- Six years from now, the Mongols return, this time with far greater numbers as part of their invasion of the west. If the sept pledged vassalage, what will the Mongols require of them? Is Qorjin still a trusted advisor or are all Garou just monsters who must fall before a Mongol blade? If they resisted Qorjin's offer, the sept might only just have finished rebuilding when they stand in the way of a greater army than they ever expected.



SETTING

This section details some of the areas that the pack will likely investigate in and around the Sept of the Red Cedar.

The Hive

The Pit of the Black Spiral Dancers is unlike almost any other. Originally found in the cellars of an abandoned fort in the Volga, it now stretches far further. Much of the Hive is shaped out of the bare earth, an underground network of tunnels, natural caves, and artificial burrows stretching almost half a mile in each direction. The larger passages are reinforced with stone taken from the fort's upper levels, carved with nightmarish glyphs and decorated with frescoes depicting the torments that the inhabitants would visit upon those who still serve Gaia. Over many years, the Black Spiral Dancers and their twisted kin have added concealed passages, false floors over pits filled with silver-tipped spikes, and tripwires that trigger darts coated with the vilest of Wyrms-toxins or jets of sickly-green balefire.

In addition to the packs of Black Spiral Dancers, the Hive is also home to many of their kinfolk — those too mad or twisted by their exposure to corruption to pass for normal among the nearby human population. They serve the basic needs of the Hive, shoring up extra tunnels, installing new traps, and serving their Garou masters. The Pit doesn't have many structures on the surface, just wooden sheds that hold a few cows and sheep kept for their meat — though the animals' feed is not fit for any living being.

The main tunnels are large enough for a Garou to walk easily in Crinos. Those that lead to the kinfolk quarters do not allow a werewolf's bulk to pass. A few passages can only just fit a Lupus Garou, making them harder to spot and ideal for ambushes.

RUNNING THE HIVE

Some Storytellers might want to map out the twisting tunnels and chambers of the Hive before the game begins, marking traps, concealed tunnels, and other features where she sees fit, so she knows what to expect. Another might simply describe the environment, making a map as he sees fit and adding features as and when they seem dramatically appropriate. Both approaches can work; it's not "wrong" to avoid mapping the Hive in its entirety.

Black Spiral Dancers using the concealed tunnels do not need to roll to sneak up on their foes. A defender must instead roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6 + the Black Spiral's Stealth). On a success, she's able to defend against the attack; if she fails, she must wait until the next turn to act. Roll initiative after the surprise attack.

If the pack is being careful, they can notice the signs of various traps with a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty

6-9 depending on the trap). The Storyteller may want to roll for the pack, to keep them unaware of the surprise. Taking it slow is safer, but leaves the pack open to surprise attack. If the pack rushes through, they must avoid the consequences.

Each trap can be avoided with a reflexive Dexterity + Dodge roll at difficulty 7. Failure means the victim falls victim to the trap.

Trap	Effect
Pit lined with silver spikes	Six dice of aggravated damage.
Gout of flaming oil	Soak difficulty 5; deals two health levels of aggravated damage per turn until extinguished.
Dart coated in poison	Three levels of lethal damage per turn for three turns, until all damage is regenerated, subtract 1 from all dice pools

THE UMBRA

The Volgan Penumbra is a dark place that exaggerates the natural world: trees grow taller, forests are darker and full of strange undergrowth, and caves seem more like the maws of forgotten creatures. It's dark, and even the full glare of Helios at midday shines as though through thick cloud. The awakened spirits do not treat werewolves in the way that many outsiders expect, displaying a mixture of fear and fealty rather than any sense of camaraderie or shared purpose.

This strange attitude is even more pronounced at the Sept of the Red Cedar. Dažbog, bound and imprisoned at the heart of the caern, acts as a reminder to other spirits of what can happen when their kind gets too close to creatures of flesh.

Some of the larger trees appear to have faces, remnants of the pagan gods worshipped by the Bulgars. Away from the towns and the paths, deep in the forests and the wilderness, one might find a spirit that still wears the shape of a small god, though it's been so long since anyone worshipped them that such spirits remain rare.

Most villages and farmsteads bear the Weaver's webs, though with nowhere near the density as in larger cities. The hewn stone gives home to a handful of pattern spiders, linked along deceptively thin strands of web that follow the known tracks and roads where humanity has made its mark on the land. The Weaver's presence is far stronger in towns like Taw Île, with webs stretching between buildings and along the roads. And yet, the pattern-spiders seem reluctant to expand. In Taw Île, they would earn the wrath of the Sept of the Red Cedar. Elsewhere though, spirits of

order and progress do not venture off the beaten path. A theurge closely attuned to such things might get the sense that they are waiting for something big.

The pattern-spiders can sense the coming of Batu Khan and Subutai, and of Ogedei Khan and Qorjin riding ahead of them. The invaders spread their understanding of the world, establishing order and trade routes between the conquered nations. In doing so, they spread the Weaver's influence, linking towns and cities with thick strands of spiritual webbing.

An old stone fort, now ruined, is covered not in webs but what looks like a sickly blue mold or lichen. This growth offers a slight luminescent glow at all times, and clearly bears the Wyrms' taint. As spirits or Garou approach, the mold spreads out towards them, seeking out their spiritual power and trying to infect them with the touch of the Wyrms. This is the main entrance to the Hive, a giant network of underground tunnels, caverns, and chambers. Populated by Black Spiral Dancers, fomori, and kinfolk in the physical world, the catacombs' penumbra is the home to both banes and the twisted spirits corrupted by the blue mold, all of whom lash out against any invaders.

The Eclipse

When the sun turns its face away from the world, the Umbra changes with it. With neither Helios nor Luna shining above, the darkness proves troubling even to Garou. The patches of darkness provide cover for spirits who would ambush unwary travelers, wanting to vent their frustrations against the Garou without their mother goddess looking down from above. Though Gaia will still feel their actions, without Luna as a witness, they feel their attacks are justified.

These ill feelings do not come from nowhere. Theurges among the Black Spiral Dancers enact rites to turn even helpful spirits against the Gaian Garou. Though their rituals can only last for the time of the eclipse (as much of their energy has gone into blotting out the sun in the first place), it's still enough to make the Umbra very dangerous. Perhaps things will calm down when the sun returns, or perhaps relations between the Garou and the spirits will become even more strained.

The Sept of The Red Cedar

Caern: The Red Cedar Caern, northeast of Taw Ile, along a minor tributary of the Vyatka River.

Level: 4

Gauntlet: 3

Type: Healing

Tribal Structure: All tribes are welcome here, and only the Fianna and Red Talons do not have permanent representation.

Totem: The Red Cedar

Geography

To the south of the Kama River the trees dwindle, becoming an endless steppe. Miles to the north are marshes, eventually giving way to taiga. And nestled in between is a flat expanse, thick with pine and cut through by dozens of swiftly flowing rivers.

At the point where the Kama and Vyatka rivers meet is the town of Taw Ile. An hour's walk northeast, along one of the Vyatka's many tributaries, is a tiny island amid the swiftly flowing river. Wide stone bridges span the river, connecting the islet to both banks, and clustered about its shores is what appears to be a tiny village. Its left bank is dotted with a dozen of the circular stone homes familiar to the Bulgars who roam these lands; they are shared among the semi-permanent residents who travel the Vyatka and back. Most times only a few are occupied at once, though in times of need, yurts and other temporary dwellings are erected to handle the overflow. On the right bank, to the north, is an open area for gatherings, and beyond that a bathhouse of enormous proportions. To the east, where the river's banks rise affording the best view of the surrounding countryside, an elaborate manor-house sits among an immaculately-tended grove of firs. This is the Sept of the Red Cedar.

The Bawn

To the southwest, Taw Ile makes up the farthest point of the bawn. All of the lands between the Vyatka and the Kama are claimed by the caern, and watched over either by themselves or their Kinfolk. Men are tolerated among the caern's lands; the nomadic families know not to travel too close to the heart, and warn away strangers who may not know any better.

The Heart

At the center of the island is a Siberian cedar with dark crimson bark, upon whose trunk is inscribed the name of every Garou who has ever died in service to the sept. This is the heart of the caern, and it marks the prison of a god.

History

The first Garou to occupy the lands north of the Kama were Red Talons, who ranged the entire length of the Volga unchallenged for millennia. Then in the 7th century, the Shadow Lords arrived with their Bulgarian kinfolk. In time, the Red Talons faced a choice: retreat or come to heel. The vast majority of the Red Talons chose retreat. Their spiritual holdings passed into the custody of the Shadow Lords. Their sept was the Sept of Endless Sky.



Anxious about their oldest rivals now standing between them and their greatest caern - the Crescent Moon - the Silver Fangs looked for any way possible way to break the Shadow Lord hold over Volga Bulgaria. It took little prompting to move the Russian princes against their eastern neighbors, and with each Bulgarian settlement that fell, the Silver Fangs had a new outpost from which to plan their strategies.

Unknown to both tribes, a powerful Jagglng servant of Helios dwelt very near these lands that had taken an interest in the Realm and in the Garou in particular. The Red Talons had dwelt harmoniously with it and the Bulgarian settlers, mistaking it for their ancient sun-god Dažbog, worshipped it, but the Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords went to war over it, seeing in it a powerful ally in their war against each other. Dažbog despaired for its chosen family, and as its melancholia deepened, the Wyrms crept in.

When Dažbog emerged from the Umbra, he wore as flesh the bodies of countless werewolves. Many dispirited Garou refused to raise arms and were dragged into the Wyrms' pit, where they joined the ranks of the Black Spiral Dancers. Many more died as the newly-birthing fomor exploded in violence upon their ranks. Only two survived: the Shadow Lord Bakr al-Aswad and the Silver Fang Ondreiana Volkovna. Together they raised an alarm, and then held the abomination at bay until others could arrive. Innumerable Garou sacrificed themselves in the battle, but in time, Dažbog was subdued.

Some would later say the tree had not existed before that moment, and it grew from sapling to maturity before the very eyes of the weary survivors, a gift from Gaia delivered in their time of need. Others, particularly the Silver Fangs, say it was as old as time and had called out to the heroes, leading them to it just as it had Falcon long ago after another great battle with the Wyrms. Either way, its purpose was clear: it was to be the prison into which Dažbog was bound. Bakr and Ondreiana, without words or prompting, set about inscribing the names of each fallen Garou in the trunk of the tree, not resting even when their claws cracked and their paws bled, staining the tree a deep crimson. In its shade a new sept was formed, the Sept of the Red Cedar.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

It is said that if a tribe-mate's name adorns the Cedar, you are welcome in the Sept of Red Cedar, and as such, it exists as one of the few multi-tribal caerns in all of Europe. Black Furies and Fenrir guard the banks of the Vyatka. In Taw Ille, at the farthest edge of the sept's bawn, you can find Warders of Men, Children of Gaia, and Bone Gnawers, and many more occupy the nearby former-capital, Bolghar. Even Silent Striders find welcome here, particularly among the steppe-kinfolk who share their wanderlust. Fianna are

rare, but over the years some few have come here to see the near-mythical Red Cedar for themselves. The Red Talons remain the lone hold-out, though a few of their cubs have inched southward of late, occasionally coming into contact with the Red Cedar Garou. Whether this reopens old wounds, or acts as a salve for them, is yet to be seen.

The encroachment of the Red Talons, an influx of enemies both mortal and supernatural, and the petty biases of visiting Garou have revealed the tiniest of fissures among the Red Sept's members. But rather than tribal, this rift is generational. Two hundred years ago, Bakr and Ondreiana put aside their grudges to live as siblings and do Gaia's will, and for the most part their descendants have acted in kind, welcoming others as vital and important members of the community. Today's elders embrace that spirit of unity, but there are now those among the pack - younger members far removed from the stories of old - who whisper that perhaps the best way to serve Gaia is to close off the caern, unbind the moon bridges, and remove themselves from Garou society entirely. These rumblings are quickly denounced whenever said within earshot of an elder, and any that go so far as to transgress the Litany are severely punished. Still, these measures haven't squelched such thoughts, merely driven them deeper into hiding.

THE KURIYEN

The Mongol kuriyen is an impressive place, a village unto itself that only a few days before didn't exist. Arranged like a circle, there are perhaps fifty ger here, each with its door facing south, as is tradition among the Mongol people. The five arbans that make up the encampment are kept together, forming "neighborhoods" of sorts, the character of which is reflective of its residents. Warriors are not the only people in this camp, though; young boys help care after the animals, healers and scholars can be seen tending to their own duties, and craftsman toil to keep weapons and saddles in good repair. Among the population are Muslims, Nestorian Christians, Buddhists, and other less familiar faiths, practiced by people of Chinese, Korean, Indian, Turkic, and Persian ethnicities. There are almost half as many women as men in the kuriyen; some of them even appear to be baghatur. In total, there are about two hundred people present in the camp, creating quite a lively bustle.

At the center is a larger, more ornate ger: Qorjin's residence. During the day it is empty, as Qorjin personally oversees the training of his men. In the evening, his arban chiefs meet with him and the plans for the following day laid out. At night, he sleeps, his safety watched over by one man from each of the five arbans. When the pack arrives at the kuriyen, this is where Qorjin will entertain them before making his offer.

To the southeast, where the fields are greenest, three hundred horses graze. These animals are the lifeline of the

jagun and each arban takes turns guarding them, such that they are never left unsupervised. To the west are the other animals: goats, cattle, and even a few camels. There are dogs too, though they're allowed to roam freely.

The kuriyen is guarded day and night. Each arban takes an equal shift, during which the soldiers patrol the perimeter out to a distance of a quarter mile. They employ dogs to help, with each soldier having at least a couple while on watch. Even the Umbra has been guarded, with Batuani having enlisted the aid of guardian spirits to watch for trespassers. It's near impossible to get to close to the kuriyen without raising an alarm.

The kuriyen has one other significant defensive feature: not all of its soldiers are housed there. In fact, only half of them are. Another fifty men are encamped a mile away, in a smaller, more rudimentary kuriyen. Each day, one arban from the main camp and one from the secondary camp switch locations, rotating in and out so that none go too long without proper rest or nourishment. Should either kuriyen come under attack, a signal of flags or fire would be raised, alerting the other camp to the danger and allowing them to enter into the battle from behind, hopefully with surprise.

SYSTEMS

STARGAZERS IN THE DARK AGES

In 1230, the reclusive and enigmatic Stargazers remain largely unknown even to other Garou, a mystery wrapped in a puzzle atop an impregnable fortress. Even the Mongols seem a small concern to these Garou; the lands around them may fall, but their mountain fastnesses prove excellent defenses against the horse-lords and their steppe ponies. Still, not even the Stargazers can sit atop the world immune to the happenings at their feet, no matter how high they lift their eyes.

Appearance: Stargazers tend to be smaller in stature than other Garou. They are lithe and graceful, and when they move, their motion is purposeful. Their fur is typically lighter though black hues are not unknown, and stripes and other similar markings are quite common.

Kinfolk and Protectorates: The Stargazers call the Himalayas and the adjacent Tibetan Plateau their first home, but they have ancestral caerns throughout China and as far west as eastern Khwarizm, with especially powerful strongholds in the Fergana Vally, the Tien Shan Mountains and the Altai Mountains. The latter puts them squarely with the borders of Mongolia; many pay homage to the Mongol sky-spirit, Tengri, and more than one has kinfolk among the horse-lords.

• **Character Creation:** Stargazers, on the whole, are introspective and meditative, and as such tend to favor Mental Attributes. They prize Knowledge among all Abilities, with particular emphasis on Academics, Enigmas, and Occult. Some Stargazers possess a special Skill, the Garou martial art of Kailindo, though rules for its use are beyond the scope of this supplement.

Tribal Totem: Chimera

Initial Willpower: 5

Backgrounds: Stargazers may not purchase Allies, Fetish, or Resources.

Beginning Gifts: Perfect Balance, Sense Wyrms, Student and Teacher

STARGAZER GIFTS

• **Perfect Balance (Level One):** With his Gift, a Garou can walk along any surface without fear of falling: ledges, ropes, tree branches, etc. The surface must be strong enough to support their weight. It is taught by wind spirits found only among the highest peaks. **System:** No roll or expenditure of points is necessary. All relevant difficulties are reduced by three.

• **Student and Teacher (Level One):** The Stargazer is both student and teacher, always learning from those around them, always seeking to impart new wisdom to those who will listen. This Gift is taught by great ancestor spirits of the Stargazers. **System:** If a packmate has an Ability superior to that of the Stargazer, the Stargazer may reduce the experience point cost to learn or improve that Ability by one. If the Stargazer has a superior Ability, a packmate may always reduce the experience point cost to learn or improve that Ability by one.

• **Eye of the Storm (Level Two):** The Garou radiates calm, making aggression against them difficult. This Gift is taught by a wind spirit. **System:** The Garou spends one Gnosis and for the remainder of the scene, anyone the Garou has not attacked finds it difficult to attack them; would-be opponents must spend one Rage or one Willpower to initiate combat with the Garou.

• **Heaven's Vault (Level Two):** The Garou can leap astounding distances, even from a complete standstill. This Gift is taught by a flea spirit. **System:** The Garou always rolls Athletics when jumping, even if they are standing still, and by spending a point of Gnosis, they may double the height or breadth of a single leap.

• **Clarity of Vision (Level Three):** It is difficult to obscure a Stargazer's sight when they possess this Gift. The Garou can see through fog, darkness, cloud cover, and even illusions or invisibility. This gift is taught by a wind spirit. **System:** The Garou rolls Perception + Enigmas (difficulty

NEW TOTEM: CHIMERA (WISDOM)

Background Cost: 5. Chimera is the Lady of Mirrors, most often associated with dreams, enigmas, and wisdom.

Traits: Chimera's children can disguise themselves as something or someone else while in the Umbra (roll Gnosis, difficulty 7). Subtract two from all difficulties involving puzzles, riddles, Enigmas, or dreams, and gain two points of Wisdom (given); gain +3 to Enigmas and +1 to Perception (pack).

Ban: Chimera imposes no limits upon her children, but will not visit them if they do not seek enlightenment.

7). This is an opposed roll when trying to see through an opponent's illusion.

- **Mouse Step (Level Three):** The Garou can move normally across any surface, even in defiance of Natural Law. This gift is taught by the spirits of small, oft-ignored animals. **System:** The Garou spends one Gnosis and for the remainder of the scene can walk or run along any surface by rolling Dexterity + Athletics. The difficulty of the roll depends on the surface: water or snow might be 5, hot coals 6, the blade of a sword 7, straight up a wall 8, and on a ceiling 9.

- **Dance of the Falling Leaf (Level Four):** The Garou calls upon a wind spirit to gently guide her away from the attacks of enemies. This Gift is taught by helpful wind spirits. **System:** The Garou spends one Gnosis and rolls Perception + Dodge (difficulty 7). All opponents' dice pools to hit the Garou are reduced by a number of dice equal to the number of successes of the die roll. This applies even if the Garou cannot see her opponents, or doesn't know their attacks are coming. The effect lasts for one scene.

- **Inner Peace (Level Five):** With this Gift, the Garou's spiritual enlightenment allows them to transcend the need for anger or spite. This Gift is taught by the oldest and wisest of Stargazer ancestor spirits. **System:** The Garou may now spend Gnosis or Willpower to achieve the same effects as Rage, and they may spend points up to their permanent Rage score per turn.

STARGAZER RITES

- **Rite of the Silken Cloth (Level Two):** This rite, rooted in ancient Stargazer tradition, allows a Garou to purify the spirit of a human by "cleansing" them with a silken cloth. This allows them to enter the Umbra

with the Garou. **System:** After performing the rite, the Garou may step sideways. If they succeed, the Garou can take one purified individual with them per Gnosis point spent.

UKTENA

Though part of the Three Brothers in what we now call America, the tribe of wise-men, shamans, and witches is not confined to that continent. Some travelled with the Wendigo over the ice to Siberia, or along the Aleutian chain across the Bering Strait. They traveled further than their cousins, establishing a presence in modern-day Siberia and down into Mongolia. The Uktena settled with their kinfolk, wary of the European tribes after some initial conflict. Only as the Khan gathers his armies — and Uktena kinfolk along with them — do an appreciable number of the shamans, wise-women, and spirit-talkers ride west.

Appearance: Most Uktena who come to the West are of Siberian or Mongol descent, though the tribe breeds with oppressed minorities in what is now India and parts of East Asia. Generally, they try to look like someone who doesn't quite belong in their surroundings, setting themselves apart from others. In Lupus form, they have reddish-black fur, and those with Pure Breed show a distinct resemblance to red wolves.

Kinfolk and Territory: The majority of Uktena kinfolk come from native peoples throughout the Americas, especially those in the southern parts of North America. They have some kin among the disenfranchised and oppressed ethnic groups in Siberia, Mongolia, India, and — not known to the Beast Courts — parts of China. They prefer secluded territories, especially places that have a bad reputation in local folklore, as those places have often earned their reputation from powerful banes and other ancient horrors bound beneath the land.

Character Creation: Perceptive and wise, the Uktena value high Mental Attributes. Most members of the tribe have at least some dots in Occult and Rituals, and they never pass up an opportunity to learn new rites and pick up new fetishes.

Tribal Totem: Uktena, a Native American river spirit that takes the form of a horned serpent with the features of a puma. Its brood includes many water and snake-spirits, including sea serpents, feathered serpents, and serpentine Asian dragons.

Initial Willpower: 3

Beginning Gifts: Sense Magic, Shroud, Spirit Speech

UKTENA GIFTS

- **Sense Magic (Level One)** — The werewolf can sense the coiling threads of mystic energies, from Garou Gifts to the bloody powers of vampires and the arrogant power of mages. A spirit-servant of Uktena teaches this Gift.

System: Roll Perception + Enigmas, with a difficulty based on the strength and subtlety of the magic. While she cannot identify the exact nature of the magic used, with three successes she gains a sense of the magic's kind — "Gaian," "Wyrnish," or "blood magic," for example. The radius is 20 feet per success.

- **Shroud (Level One)** — As the Black Spiral Dancer Gift.

- **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

- **Spirit of the Bird (Level Two)** — Almost nobody expects a werewolf to soar like a bird, which is an excellent reason for the Uktena to do just that. This Gift allows a Garou to fly or hover in place. Any bird spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point. The Garou can fly for an hour, flying at up to 20 mph or hovering on the spot. The difficulty of all combat maneuvers increases by 1.

- **Spirit of the Fish (Level Two)** — The werewolf can breathe underwater, and swim as fast as he can run in Hispo form. Any fish spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). The effect lasts for one hour per success.

- **Banish Totem (Level Three)** — Calling out ancient and powerful words, the Uktena can bar a totem from aiding its children, disrupting their sense of being part of a pack. An ancestor spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Uktena must concentrate for a full turn, and must know the totem his victims follow. The player spends a point of Gnosis and one of Willpower, then rolls Gnosis at a difficulty of the pack's combined Totem score (maximum of 10). If successful, the targets lose all Traits derived from their totem, and cannot use

pack tactics or teamwork for the rest of the scene. If the Uktena is knocked out or killed, the Gift's effects end immediately.

- **Invisibility (Level Three)** — By concentrating, the Garou can vanish from sight. She must walk slowly, and cannot draw attention to herself when doing so. A spirit-servant of Uktena teaches this Gift.

System: Spend one Gnosis point and roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 4 if already concealed, 6 in the open, 9 in plain sight). Anyone actively searching for the werewolf must score more successes on a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) than the player did on the initial roll. Anyone not actively seeking the werewolf will not see her at all.

- **Call Elemental (Level Four)** — The Garou can call one of the classical elementals to his aid. An elemental teaches this Gift.

System: Spend one Gnosis point and roll Gnosis (difficulty of the local Gauntlet) to manifest the elemental. She must then roll Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7) to make the summoned elemental amenable to helping her. The elemental returns to the Umbra at the end of the scene.

- **Fetish Doll (Level Five)** — The werewolf can harm her victims from afar using a specially-crafted effigy. She must have a small piece of the victim or an object belonging to him, which she must incorporate into the doll. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The doll takes a week to construct and enchant; the player must succeed at a Perception + Crafts roll (difficulty 8) to do so. When complete, the player can roll Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty equal to the victim's Willpower). Each success inflicts a level of aggravated damage to the victim. After 10 successes, the doll is of no further use.





What news from Carterhaugh?" Melusine's voice, even in the snarling, guttural language of the Winter Court, bubbled from her lips like a quickening stream. The sound made the messenger shiver with chill he felt deep in his bones. He pulled his light spring cloak around him, wishing for something warmer.

"My lady," the messenger mumbled, dropping swiftly to one knee as he remembered his manners. "The lord of Carterhaugh is on the march, in accordance with your wishes. He'll be at the traitor's camp before the appointed time and ready to strike as you will." He answered in the tongue of Spring, if only to help warm himself. He reached into the slit in the front of his tunic and produced a scroll, its seal still intact. Melusine gently plucked the scroll from his fingers, and a light coating of frost materialized on the messenger's fingers for a brief moment.

As Melusine read the scroll, she nodded slowly. "Excellent," she replied. "You may rise. Enjoy my hospitality at your leisure and get a full night's rest. Go to the kitchens, and they'll prepare a meal for you." She dismissed the messenger with a wave of her hand in the direction of the kitchens. The messenger rose to his feet a little too quickly to do as she bade.

As the messenger approached the doorway to the kitchens, the smell of blood and cooking meat hit him in a wave, and his stomach gurgled in reply to its siren call. As a result, he didn't see the young human boy no more than thirteen dash past him, but he felt it. A flash of blinding pain cut short any pleasure he felt at the promise of food. He staggered a bit on his feet and looked behind him in the direction the boy had gone. A bit of gold around the boy's neck flashed in the sunlight.

"Don't you worry about Will, my lord," the cook called to the messenger, wiping his hands on his apron and leaving handprints of blood and grease. A large hunk of meat with the bone in rested on a heavy oak table, and the cook hefted an ax to cut it into more manageable hunks. "He doesn't eat much, and he does his fair share of work here. We just keep him where he can do the least harm."

"What happened to him?" the messenger asked, pulling up a stool close to the cooking fire. He warmed his hands, still pale green from the first days of the new spring. His fingertips were a little paler from the touch of frost from Melusine.

"Baptized as a pup, the poor thing." The cook wriggled his snout in discomfort of saying the word 'baptized'. "The lady of the house took him in and a couple other young ones like him."

The messenger forced a smile. "How—kind of her?" His voice raised in an unbidden question.

"I don't ask questions. Better that way." The cook shrugged with a snort, then gestured to the hunk of meat on the table. "I'm about to put this on the fire. Same as what's on the spit now. You want some? It's priest. Well, might've been a friar."

The messenger grimaced. "I think I'll pass," he offered weakly.

"Aww, have a little priest, won't you?" The cook chuckled. "Isn't good luck to eat priest on your own. Nice enough of the lady to bring him mostly drained." The cook grinned at the messenger with big, bone-crunching teeth, then laughed. "You all right? You're looking a little... green! Ha!" The cook cackled at his own joke and switched the hunk of meat on the spit with the new, fresh, uncooked hunk of flesh.

"How'd she get the priest?" the messenger asked with a hard swallow. The scent of the cooking meat still gnawed at him, and he licked his lips despite himself.

"Don't know for sure. She brought him up to her study where she makes all her potions and such. She'd been up there pondering a way to get back at Peg Powler. The next thing I knew, the whole castle's caught up in a shudder. Next morning, a messenger heads out to your lord and this gets brought to me." The cook gestured a big, thick hand to the meat on the spit. "Then Will comes strutting in with a big gold cross around his neck. Said it was a gift from the lady and that it'll help him regain himself."

The cook placed the roasted meat on a platter and sliced it carefully with a delicate hand. The messenger stared in surprise at the gentle touch, and his stomach rumbled even more. "...I think I'll have some after all," he conceded.

"There you go. That'll fatten you up. You're so skinny, like a sapling barely out of the earth!" The cook poked the messenger's arm, then put together a plate of meat and a cup of wine.

The messenger looked at the plate with a bit of apprehension. "This... this isn't normally in my diet."

"What? Do you not like meat?" The cook scrunched up his snout.

"No, no! Not that," the messenger protested. "Just... not this kind of meat." The messenger sniffed at the meat again, and that enticing scent of spices made his mouth water.

"Same as any other meat, if you get down to it. We're all meat. Sacks of muscle and organs and bone." The cook piled a plate high with priest-meat for himself and barely set it down before taking a big piece of it into his mouth.

The messenger took a tentative bite, then sat back in pleasure just from the experience of it. The flavors melted onto his tongue with a slight tingling, almost like what he felt earlier when the boy crossed his path, but not so intense as to truly cause pain.

"This is quite good," the messenger mumbled, his mouth full. A smile blossomed on his face as another unbidden thought gave itself voice. "Are you sure it wasn't really a... fry-er, though?"

The cook laughed loudly again, rattling the wooden bowls on the shelves above. "That's the spirit! Eat up, my friend. Won't be much time for merriment after the Oath-Truce falls."

The delightful flavor of the meat waned on the messenger's tongue. "You're right about that indeed," he mused wistfully, then took another bite.



FÆ

ACCIDENTS AND DELIVERIES

Introducing the Adventure

The characters have been approached to serve as guardians for a caravan. The journey will take the characters from the court of Melusine in Brittany to the camp of Tam Lin in northern Wales. At one time, these two great firstborn were rivals. Peg Powler, who is responsible for the death of at least one of Melusine's children, has fled north, and her own personal agenda has interfered with Tam Lin's plans one time too many.

Rumors abound regarding the contents of the caravan. Some say it is nothing special, just a small host of tributes in thanks for Tam Lin's service in dealing with Peg. Others say that it contains the hope of bringing fae souls back from obliteration by Christian baptism. Still others say it contains a weapon that could signal the end of the Oath-Truce, bringing the War of Seasons roaring back to the fore.

When the true nature of the caravan is revealed, the characters are faced with a choice. Do they continue to their destination, delivering a weapon that could wreak untold devastation? Or do they find some way to avert the crisis, both saving the teenagers and preventing the immediate end of the Oath-Truce?



Requests: Courts and Patrons

If including this adventure as part of an ongoing chronicle, have one of the Storyteller characters that the characters have impressed in the past recommend them for this particular task. Prior discretion, impressive use of force, or general competence would make the characters seem to be a proper fit for the task at hand.

Spring Court fae want to see change. The Oath-Truce has served its purpose, but the tensions it causes have made the Spring Court restless. The weapon Melusine has created (or so the rumors say) could turn the tide toward a future that does not involve the Oath-Truce. Given Even if the Spring Court does not come out on top (though they will certainly give it their best effort to do so), they welcome a change in the status quo. However, one thing that has not changed is their feud with the Winter Court. Spring-kin would greatly prefer not having that change come at the hands of their hated rivals. The fact that the trek of this caravan passes so close to their fabled Great Change is not lost on the Spring Court, and this act of magic could start to sever the threads that bind the human world and the faerie realms, leaving them forever apart.

The Summer Court are preparing for the War of Seasons to begin anew. They've bided their time for the past century, knowing that the peace cannot last. Even with the magic surrounding the Oath-Truce getting stronger against even the



slightest infraction that could be interpreted as violating the Oath-Truce. Still, the order of the last century appeals to the hidebound nature of the Summer-kin, especially the young ones who never knew the War of Seasons firsthand. Tam Lin, for one, hopes for peace while he prepares for war.

The Autumn Court might not immediately see the appeal to accompanying the caravan until they know what they're transporting. With their baptism, these teenagers are human, and yet they've lived with the fae. Their baptism, while it makes them difficult to physically touch, does not turn their thoughts completely away from their fae selves. Even as the Shadow Hour approaches, the Autumn-kin hold out some hope that the fae and humanity might somehow coexist.

The Winter Court will easily jump onto the concept of transporting a weapon that could turn the tide of the War of Seasons. However, they may be less concerned about the safety of the baptized "milkings," even with the order for their protection coming down from a powerful firstborn of their own Court. Once they know how the weapon works, the Winter Court fae are the most likely to keep the teenagers to themselves as a potent weapon for when the "quiet sky" comes. With these weapons, they'll be able to slaughter their enemies with impunity.

Solstice fae might take pity on Peg Powler's plight and seek to sabotage the caravan to spare her from Tam Lin's impending attack. The machinations of the Seasonal Courts are striking firmly at one of their own, and what better opportunity than this to stick it to those uppity Courtiers who look down on those who don't play along?

The Patrons have a vested interest in the contents of Melusine's caravan, especially since the rumors about the caravan being a weapon are true. Patrons are more likely to want the caravan to not arrive at its destination. The weapon's potential to rekindle the War of Seasons would run counter to their efforts of restoring traditional seasonal rule. If the characters are closely tied with the Patrons, a Vanguard noble may have recommended them to the task and then sent word separately to the characters, ordering them to sabotage the journey.

Personal Ties

Changelings have a great deal of personal interest with the caravan, since the teenagers in the caravan used to be changelings themselves. Their fate could easily happen to them, and if there's even a glimmer of hope that these teenagers could regain their fae selves, the changelings want to know about it.

Peg Powler is one of the inanimae, and while some inanimae have been known to give birth, the concept of the bond between mother and child is alien to them.

Constantinians, with their study of mortal religions, have a keen interest in the potential for reinstating the fae souls of the teenagers. If there's any possible way to reverse the effects of baptism, they want to know about it. When they discover the real purpose of the caravan, however, the implications are horrifying, with faith and faerie magic canceling each other out to create a world where neither can thrive.

Crossover Introduction

If you're not playing **Dark Ages: Fae** and you want to use this scenario, there are multiple ways to adapt it to suit the supernatural types present in any of the other **Dark Ages** books. Each of the following plot hooks will replace the introductory explanation and shape the reasons why a group of other characters would be traveling with the weapons.

Werewolf

Werewolf characters have noticed that recently a number of kinfolk have been among the usually random kidnapping victims of the fae, replaced with changelings. Upon investigation, they discover that the fae may have developed a cure for the problems caused by baptism. The characters negotiate to get the kinfolk back, and the fae agree to return them. As part of the negotiations, the werewolves must guard a fae caravan headed to Wales.

The werewolves might not necessarily know how to investigate the rumors they're hearing prior to arriving to Melusine's court. It's possible to present the information in a dream vision, gossip from local spirits, or an account from a relative who had been kidnapped.

Inquisitor

Inquisitor characters will have a natural hook into this adventure. Melusine's research goals are in direct contravention of God's Will. They could hear about the caravan from their superiors, gossip from locals who've spotted a strange caravan, or reports from local agents of the Oculi Dei. No matter how the characters hear about it, it's abundantly clear to the Inquisitors that Melusine's research is trying to remove the souls (or the Grace of God) from those who have been baptized.

Instead of guarding the caravan, the Inquisitors will be pursuing it. Whether their intent was to attempt to snatch the cargo on the road or to see what transpired in Tam Lin's court, it would still allow them to encounter any of the events which transpire. Should they discover the real effects of the fae magic on the teenagers, will they be urged to save these youngsters from certain death or use them to their own ends against the enemies of God?

Mage

For magi, the first encounter with the super-weapons might be during a Paradox backlash. After encountering one, the mages desire to learn more about what they've encountered, leading them to Melusine and Tam Lin. More than any of the other supernatural types, mages have quite a bit in common with the fae. This can be played up. For an extra twist, instead of fae, have the weapons' creator be a Mage.

Mages may wish to study the phenomenon of the weapon further, as it would seem to be a potent tool for them if they can figure out how it works. While mechanics for the ritual are given, we leave it in your hands as to whether or not they can make it work.

Vampire

Vampires will require a recasting of many of the faces in the scenario. Instead of Melusine and Tam Lin ruling groups of fae, they may instead be the princes of cities allied with each other against a third power. In this scenario, Peg Powler is a dissenter, unhappy with the current status quo and agitating against the players' own prince, who has sought the aid of allied courts. Change the Treasure to an item that triggers a thaumaturgical ritual that renders the supernatural properties of vitae inert, and suddenly this becomes a vampire story to its core.

Chronicle Map

The characters are chosen by their superiors, either by their Court or by the Patrons, to accompany a shipment from the manor of Melusine in Brittany to the camp belonging to Tam Lin in Wales. Whether or not they are used to being messengers and couriers, they are told that they're the only ones who can be trusted with this job. Before even starting the assignment, the characters begin hearing rumors that what they're accompanying is a weapon of immense power.

If the characters investigate the rumors before traveling, they will discover that though very few facts can be found, plenty of stories about what the shipment could be are traded around campfires. From riches untold to enchanted swords to assistance from some outside agent, no two people agree on what the characters will actually be guarding. Further, there are sinister whispers as to why Melusine would engage in trade with Tam Lin.

When they arrive at the manor, however, the characters discover that the cargo in need of guarding does not appear to be any recognizable weapon. Instead, a group of adolescents awaits transport from one court to another. The characters are charged to guard these teenagers, whatever the cost, and to the death if necessary.

On the journey, the characters discover that their charges are aware of fae society, though they appear to be normal mortal humans. Further discussion reveals that these teenagers were once changelings. Each of them was baptized into the Christian faith and lost their fae soul as a result. They've been told that they're on a journey to someone who will help them recover themselves, a feat which until now has been completely impossible to the fae. They know very little about how such a thing might be done, but they had heard rumors that an upcoming eclipse might have something to do with it.

As they continue to travel from Brittany and the home of Melusine, the characters will discover that Melusine has given their charges false hope and is using the characters to protect what is, in her mind, simply an investment. Regaining a fae soul after baptism is as far out of reach as ever. Instead, Melusine has ensured that when these teenagers are faced with an Unleashing, the ritual she has set upon them will kill them and release a field in which no magic is possible.

While on the road, they encounter at least one obstacle set up by Peg Powler, an unstable power seeking to obtain the adolescents. Through the resolution of these obstacles it is revealed that Peg knows the truth of the mission the characters are on. The adolescents are, as rumored, a great weapon that Peg is certain Tam Lin will use to eradicate her. To prevent this from happening, she has sent mercenaries to Tam Lin's camp to kill him and steal the teenagers.

The next morning, the player characters must decide what to do after everything they've seen and experienced. Will they simply leave the weapons in Tam Lin's hands? Will they keep the weapons from him to prevent the imminent end of the Oath-Truce that could result? Will they work for an extension of the Oath-Truce since this new magic could wreak a new kind of devastation to all faeriekind? Or will they simply keep the weapons for themselves as protection against aggression in the coming days?

Personalities

Here are some of the major players in this story.

Melusine la Bretagne

Background: Melusine is a firstborn of the Winter Court, and her purview lies with chill rivers, springs, and coastal waters. She once held sway further north, but after her falling out with Tam Lin, she moved south to Brittany. The slightly warmer waters have softened her a bit, as has her grief from losing her child to Peg Powler. As the end of the Oath-Truce draws near, she is steeling herself for the battle to come, remembering her cold Winter roots.

Image: A woman with regal bearing and fluid garments. Her skin has a tinge of blue and the faint suggestion of scales. She has a swimmer's body, muscular but sleek, and her hair



ripples when she walks. Her eyes are large and unblinking and her fingers are slightly webbed.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the absolute mistress of your castle. No one dares tell you no, and if they do, you find a way to wash away the earth right under their feet. Only Tam Lin has gotten the better of you, but even he owes you favors. Part of you hopes that Tam Lin will release an Unleashing too soon in the presence of the baptized changelings she has sent and bring about his own downfall.

Secrets: Melusine and Tam Lin were once lovers. She meant to give him his Saining to the Winter Court, but due to the interference of a mortal, Tam Lin was freed from Melusine's service and he chose a different Court. Melusine has never quite forgiven Tam Lin for that. She developed a Treasure that can create an area where no magic will take hold when worn by a baptized changeling. The effect is not permanent, but it's long enough that anyone who uses it will have a considerable advantage on their enemy.

Influence: Melusine has several contacts throughout the British Isles and has granted favors to many fae over the years. Her manor is solidly fortified and her subjects are loyal. The manor will fall only when the mistress of the manor falls herself.

Destiny: Melusine will take to the field when the Oath-Truce falls, but fall victim to one of her own booby-trapped changelings. Broken and bloodied, she will retreat into the Mists and, when the Shattering occurs, be lost to the mortal world forever.

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Winter

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Autocrat

Apparent Age: Late 20s to Early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Expression 1, Kenning 2, Leadership 3, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Politics 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Gramarye 3, Hearth Wisdom 3, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Politics 2, Seneschal 3

Dominions: Dawn 2, Day 1, Dusk 2, Night 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Holding 5, Influence 2, Resources 4, Retinue 4, Status 4

Mists: 5

Weaving: 3

Willpower: 5

Peg Powler

Background: Peg Powler rose from the remains of a sickly old woman who died in the forest during a particularly rainy autumn. The poor wretch fell and breathed her last in a circle of mushrooms (commonly known as a faerie ring) and the teeming life from the decaying body, the leaves, and the mold coalesced with raw remnants of the Mists. Peg is the pitiable creature that resulted.

Peg's appearance and origins deeply rooted in humanity caused many respectable fae to disregard her with extreme prejudice. As a result, she had to distinguish herself in other ways, both in strength of arms and wily craft. Plants and fungus, both beneficial and poisonous, are within easy reach for Peg; sometimes she just needs to reach into her hair or under her robe to find it. Her concoctions restore allies and weaken foes, and when a poison doesn't bring an enemy low, she can just pummel them senseless.

Peg's talents made her a favorite mercenary under Melusine la Bretagne. While Peg herself was not particularly charismatic, her raw competence drew other Solstice fae under Melusine's employ to Peg's side. Peg personally led several efforts to interfere with Tam Lin's agenda, often going above and beyond out of her own sense of loyalty.

And then a horrible accident occurred. While Peg put some of her followers under a mock-Saining to pledge their allegiance to her, Melusine's daughter got wrapped up in the proceedings and died as a result. At first, Peg didn't understand Melusine's grief. Melusine had other children, did she not? And surely she could still bear more? Melusine's grief turned to wrath, and Peg fled Brittany across the channel, right into the territory of Tam Lin. It's not an enviable place to be.

Image: Peg appears small, old and haggard. Her scraggly hair sticks out at odd angles and her lopsided face is all odd angles and strange protrusions from mold. She has long fingers and almost skeletal hands, but her frail figure betrays unexpected strength and resilience. Her eyes are amber, rheumy-looking orbs sitting in a collapsed skull. She piles on any rags she can find to make herself look larger, inadvertently taking on the appearance of a witch straight out of folk tales.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a wretch. That's all there is to it. Still, you're a resourceful wretch, and you've made the best of it, even gaining allies and contacts you once thought unavailable to you. That doesn't change the horrible misunderstandings that put you in the position that you're in now, but you'll do whatever you need to keep yourself alive. The Oath-Truce is about to break any day now, and if you're the one to break it, so be it. These foolish Seasons brought the War and the untenable peace on everyone, so why should it stand further?

Secrets: Peg has spread herself too thin. With all the favors she promised and called in to have a proper defense, it would take centuries to repay those debts. Many of the favors

she'll need to repay will put her at cross purposes with other creditors. She'll end up in the same situation all over again. The irony of this precarious situation is not lost on Peg, but she'd rather go this route than die.

Influence: Peg kept in touch with all of the Solstice fae that passed through Melusine's court. Those who bear Tam Lin ill will or simply want a store of favors to call upon later that aren't tied to any Season have answered her call, and as long as they don't know how stretched thin she is, they'll honor their accords with her.

Destiny: Between Tam Lin, Melusine, and the considerable debt of favors she called down, Peg Powler will be lucky if she survives the eclipse. As it is, she's stuck between two powerful fae who want her out of the picture. Even with the forces she has at her beck and call, if both Tam Lin and Melusine move against Peg in a concerted effort, she is done for. Whether her death comes during the eclipse or shortly afterward could very well depend entirely on the characters and their inclination to complete the delivery of the caravan.

Origin: Inanimae

Court: Solstice

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Penitent

Apparent Age: Unknown (at least late 60s)

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Kenning 2, Leadership 2, Intimidation 3

Skills: Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Gramarye 3, Hearth Wisdom 4, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Politics 1

Dominions: Dawn 2, Day 2, Dusk 3, Night 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, seven dots of Oath spread out among several different separate Oaths (Storyteller's discretion), Resources 1, Retinue 4, Sprite 2, Treasure 5

Mists: 3

Weaving: 4

Willpower: 4

Tam Lin

Background: Tam Lin was once a young squire in Melusine's Court. He took the majority of his Fostering there, but he started his Fostering under another local fae lord of the Spring Court. During the War of Seasons, Melusine took the young Tam Lin hostage. She laid a series of complicated Oaths to prevent him from escaping. These Oaths bound him to the

forest of Carterhaugh when he was not in direct service to Melusine. This left Tam Lin very, very bored. So he amused himself with the mortals who wandered into Carterhaugh, especially pretty young women.

Janet, the daughter of the mortal lord of Carterhaugh, strode right in. Her boldness drew Tam Lin to her, and while his Oaths did not permit him to escape, it did not forbid him from telling another how to break him free. While Tam Lin was marching to the Battle of Stone, Janet followed. By doing exactly as he instructed, his Oaths to Melusine were undone. Melusine tried to pursue him, but he charged toward the battle and she lost the trail. By the time she tracked him and Janet back to Carterhaugh, the Oath-Truce was in full effect.

Since then, Tam Lin has been Sained to the Spring Court, as he should have been in his mind. As the fae lord of Carterhaugh in his own right with Janet by his side, he has ruled through the Oath-Truce virtually unopposed. Only Peg Powler has truly challenged him, though he has heard rumors of stirring far to the north in Barra. His influence does not yet reach so far, but he has sent scouts and diplomats there.

Image: Tam Lin is a tall, striking figure who can go from androgynous beauty to rugged good looks after a few nights without sleep. He looks more at home in his armor than in courtly raiments, but his features are distinctly human. Regardless of his vestments, his skin and hair are a warm bronze, even when he himself is caked in dirt and the blood of his foes.

Roleplaying Hints: When without your Janet, you are a flirt and a scoundrel. With her, you are the paragon of a faithful lover and husband. You know the ways of war well through your time with Melusine, and if it weren't for your love of humanity, you might have Sained to the Summer Court.

Secrets: Tam Lin will always have a Janet. Even with the Summer Court's disdain for mortals and changelings, Tam Lin needs a Janet. After the first Janet died, he went to Carterhaugh to weep for a full year, and then he resumed his old games with women who wandered into the forest until another virgin named Janet came. She became his new bride through every bit of force and cunning he could bear. When she died, the third Janet came swiftly after, and when she died, he had three virgins named Janet approach Carterhaugh, and he had leave to choose. His current wife is the fourth Janet, and possibly the cleverest and most practical of the lot. His court is filled with changeling children, born to him from three different Janets.

Influence: Tam Lin is a little out of his depth in Wales. He normally holds sway further northeast in Scotland. That said, he is not without reinforcements if Peg somehow gets the upper hand or Melusine betrays him.

Destiny: Tam Lin will die protecting his wife and youngest son from the ravages of war. It may not be the War of Seasons

started anew, but some war among faekind will erase him from the mortal world. No rebirth in the Summerland awaits him, but his devoted wife Janet, whichever Janet she may be, will make sure his tale echoes through the glens of Scotland for many generations to come.

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Spring

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Gallant

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Stats:

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Expression 1, Kenning 2, Leadership 3, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Politics 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Gramarye 3, Hearth Wisdom 3, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Politics 2, Seneschal 3

Dominions: Dawn 4, Day 2, Dusk 2, Night 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Influence 2, Resources 4, Retinue 2, Status 3,

Mists: 5

Weaving: 3

Willpower: 6

Janet: Janet is Tam Lin's wife, a mortal woman who helped Tam Lin escape an oath he swore to Melusine which would have led to his death. When she discovered her husband had dealings with Melusine again, she urged him not to go through with it, especially when she learned the reason for the deal with Melusine. She pleads for clemency for the sake of the baptized changelings, clinging to the changeling child she had by Tam Lin to her breast. Still, as she spends more time at the side of her true love, she can feel herself changing into something not quite human. She also knows she is not the first Janet, but she hopes that as the Mists change her, she has a chance of being the last.

Alais: The oldest of the four baptized changelings, Alais is the daughter of a miller just outside of Cherbourg, or so she thought. She traveled with her father to deliver grain to Melusine's castle. After the last delivery, Melusine invited Alais to stay with her in order to help educate the girl in future wifely duties. Her father agreed, having no suspicion of Melusine's true intentions with Alais. Since she has come to Melusine's court, she has fallen in love with a young butcher in the village just outside the castle. He appears to return her affections, and she hopes to marry him when she's a little older.

Will: The youngest of the four baptized changelings, Will is the most excited about the journey ahead. He grew up in extreme poverty until he was snatched up by Melusine. His lot improved very little with her, though, and it grew worse when, after what should have been a routine trip to Cherbourg, he was baptized when he wandered into a church. None of the other members of Melusine's court who were part of that particular caravan have been seen since. Will spends most of his time in the kitchens of Melusine's castle.

Jehanne: Prior to a few months ago, Jehanne's life was peaceful and she was devout in her service to her family and the Lord. Her skill with embroidery was nearly the best in the house, and she was about to be betrothed to a wealthy noble. All that changed when Jehanne was snatched up by Melusine's spies. Jehanne quickly learned the truth of her heritage: she was born fae and swapped with the child that truly belonged to the man she thought was her father due to some slight the knight gave to one of Melusine's allies. Jehanne's baptism into the Christian faith thwarted the attempt at revenge. Jehanne's noble upbringing helped her adapt to life with the fae, but in truth, she just wants to go home and pretend none of this ever happened.

Richard: The son of a hostler, Richard was also swapped with a human child early in his life. His mother sensed something "wrong" with her sweet little boy as a toddler; when he babbled at the horses, it seemed like the horses snorted and neighed back to him. She saw this as a sign of demonic possession and got the child properly baptized as quickly as she could. Even after Richard lost his fae self, he still showed a talent with horses, albeit lessened. Since his induction into Melusine's household, he began to train one of her steeds with a new method he developed himself.

The Bard: On the surface, The Bard is a messenger, nothing more. He speaks very little, but when he does, his words don't always make sense to the situation. He can't always control it, either; even if he covers his face and mouth or even bites his tongue, unbidden words still come out. He has refused to be Sained to any Court for fear that his words might spell doom for any Season that would take him. Still, he makes a fine messenger, and Melusine calls upon him regularly, if only in the hopes that his gift of prophecy might lend some additional weight to her words.

Hamish MacNeil: A mass of seaweed and smooth stones, this inanimae is far too far south for his liking. Normally, he protects the young up-and-coming Clan MacNeil on the isle of Barra in northern Scotland. Still, Peg Fowler's favors are still as good as any, and when she provided an opportunity to go after a caravan controlled by Winter-kin, he won't turn it down. There's also the convenient coincidence of the caravan heading to Tam Lin, whose activities further north have begun to encroach on his land. He calls it "his" land, since he rose from a pocket of the Mists tucked into the beaches there.

Scenes

Following are the scenes that comprise our story.

Scene I: The Mission

The characters receive a letter with a request for them to undertake the task of accompanying a caravan from the castle of Melusine in Brittany to the encampment of Tam Lin, her former rival, in Wales. The letter comes with warnings that failing to agree to this task will have dire consequences for the future of all fae. It emphasizes that the writer has heard of the characters and believes they have the potential to do what is necessary for the protection of the fae. If part of an ongoing campaign, the writer will drop the name of another highborn fae the characters have assisted in the past, or a fae that the characters trust and respect.

The messenger who accompanies the letter, known only as The Bard, gives the characters a sense of foreboding. He appears to want to be anywhere but where he is right now,

THE BARD SPEAKS

The Bard tries to speak as little as possible, since he does not always have control of his tongue. Every now and again, the Mists take hold of his voice and infuse his speech with prophetic words or warnings of tragedy. The Bard is aware of when he says something he didn't intend to, and tries to resist it when he can. When he speaks, sometimes he clenches his jaw or claps his hand over his mouth mid-sentence. Sometimes that's sufficient to prevent it, but not always. He doesn't always understand what he means when he says some

Seed other snippets of potential doom or foreshadowing of future scenes in The Bard's speech if he does have to speak to the characters for longer than he might like. He unintentionally hints at the nature of the caravan the characters will be guarding, but when pressed as to what that means, he seems confused or even denies that he ever said such a thing.

In addition, The Bard has found himself slipping the phrase "The Oath-Truce will fall with the darkening sky" into conversation at the least appropriate times. He has no skill in astrology or divination, so he doesn't know the eclipse is approaching or how the end of the Oath-Truce could be tied to the eclipse.

eager to leave and put this business behind him. He seems to know that the mission is more than it seems, and if pressed will share that he's heard they're being sent to protect something important.

If left to his own devices, The Bard will give the players the message, offer to deliver their reply ahead of time, give them the location of Melusine's castle, and promptly leave. He does not have any details on what Melusine is willing to offer in return for their services, and is sorry he can't give it. The Bard tries not to talk very much about himself, or at all if he can help it. However, if the characters ask him additional questions, he may let something slip that he did not intend to.

Investigating the Rumors

If the characters choose to investigate the situation further before heading to Melusine's castle, many other fae they encounter will have heard of the struggle between Melusine and Tam Lin, as well as Peg Powler's role in their rivalry.

Feel free to use information in the descriptions of the Storyteller characters as rumors. Don't be afraid to bend, fold, spindle, or mutilate the information as well, as rumors often change dramatically as they pass from fae to fae. For example, one fae might claim that Peg killed all of Melusine's children, while another might say it was only one, and the death was an accident, while a third could claim that Melusine made the whole thing up just to have an excuse to expel Peg from her court.

In addition, rumors about the nature of the caravan abound:

- Melusine is planning to break the Oath-Truce, and the caravan contains an assassin.
- Melusine is paying Tam Lin off to keep him quiet about something.
- Melusine has developed a cure for fae who've been baptized and is sending the information to Tam Lin.
- No, it was Tam Lin who developed the cure. Melusine is sending Tam Lin a reward or bribe to share his secrets with her.
- Whoever has developed the cure, the eclipse is part of the magic that will restore the fae souls of baptized changelings.
- Tam Lin is encamped near Peg because he knows the exact hour in which the Oath-Truce will fall.
- Melusine is sabotaging Tam Lin on purpose, and if he receives the contents of the caravan and uses them against Peg, they'll both die.

If the characters do any divination or consult any sources of astrological knowledge, they will find out that an eclipse is about to occur. If they remember The Bard's warning and

the various legends about the end of the Oath-Truce, this can help impress upon the characters that the mission offered could very well end the Oath-Truce abruptly or provide hope for extended peace.

This could also raise a host of questions. Why are Melusine and Tam Lin really working together, especially with their personal history? Is Peg really such a dangerous threat to them both that they need to join forces to stop her? Will their efforts constitute a threat to the Oath-Truce and provoke the magic that enforces it to wipe them all out? And what will really happen when the eclipse occurs?

Leaving Without Investigating

If the characters leave for Melusine's holdings without investigating the rumors, they may have another opportunity upon arriving at her castle. Depending on where they're traveling from, they may have to pass through or around Cherbourg, a bustling trading port. The household still needs supplies, after all, and any visitors coming to Melusine by sea would probably sail to Cherbourg first. Talk of strange visitors heading west would likely reach the characters' ears, especially if they reveal they're going west as well. Any local fae, especially outcasts from Melusine's court, could provide the information the characters might otherwise acquire from prior investigation.

Refusing the Mission

If the characters simply refuse to take the job as The Bard presented it, an alternative way to introduce the adventure would be to skip to the Traveling with Changelings scene below and have the characters encounter the baptized changelings on the road either to Cherbourg (if the characters are in Brittany) or from Poole (if they're in Britain proper). Alternatively, they could also end up on the same boat as the baptized changelings crossing the English Channel. They are traveling alone because they are fleeing for the sanctuary they believe is set up at Tam Lin's encampment.

In this scenario, it would be the changelings who would have rumors of the Oath-Truce falling imminently, as well as astrological hints to the eclipse.

Scene II: Dining With Melusine

The characters may have to travel a long distance to arrive at Melusine's holdings less than a day's ride west of Cherbourg. However, they should arrive at Melusine's castle in relatively good shape. They may be curious or apprehensive about what lies ahead, but the traveling should be easy-going, and their experiences along the road not overly taxing.

Melusine's holdings are downright luxurious, a proper castle standing near the shores of the English Channel. The castle itself is solid stonework house with a wall and parapet;



a smaller, private house just beyond where she lives, and a large garden of both flowers and herbs. A small but thriving community lives within the walls of Melusine's holdings, and the surrounding fields support a wide variety of crops and livestock. The northern expanse of Melusine's holdings comprise of a picturesque beach which supports fishing. The community is almost self-sufficient, but not quite. The goods that sell at market in Cherbourg pay for what supplies they cannot produce on their own. The telltale sign of the Season that holds sway in Melusine's lands is the remarkably cold temperature of the streams and the winds that pierce through clothes to chill the bones.

As the characters approach the castle proper, any villagers and field workers will pause briefly in their toils and offer them deference. Even if the characters are dressed more raggedly than the villagers themselves, they treat the characters with cautious respect. Have the characters make a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 6). One or two successes would allow them to spot an occasional limp or a spatter of blood on the fields or the dirt road as a villager passes. Three or more successes would reveal telltale signs of bruising, lacerations, and other injuries that the villagers actively try to conceal.

When the characters arrive, Melusine treats them to hospitality. She arranges for them to join her for a banquet as a token of her appreciation for their favor to her. The food and drink are sumptuous. The atmosphere is pleasant. Sprites and human servants see to the characters' every need with care. The human servants in particular are extremely careful not to upend a platter of food or spill a drop of wine. If one of the human servants does stumble, Melusine raises one hand, and a couple of brutish stone inanimae escort the offending servant away.

Melusine will make a point to bring up rewards for the characters for their service to her. She will have something that each character wants desperately, whether it's an Oath of protection, some fine Treasure made just for the character in question, information on a dear friend or hated rival, or patronage for advancement within the character's Court. Melusine has done her homework; she knows exactly what the characters want and can demonstrably provide it.

When asked about the contents of the caravan, Melusine calls it "a delivery of assistance to an ally." She assures the characters that they will see it in due time, and that it will pose no danger or threat to the characters.

Rumors Over Supper

If the characters chose not to investigate previously, or if you'd like to seed other rumors, the banquet is the perfect place to get the fae to chatter. Instead of sitting with Melusine, the characters sit with other members of her court. Though the talk will be more cautious here in her stronghold, there are still fae and sprites who are suspicious of her motives, such

as visitors to her court and disgruntled servants.

The mood over supper darkens as talk turns to the fact that astrologers have confirmed that the hour the Oath-Truce will fall is nearing. Play this up. The players may know that the eclipse will happen, but their characters should have no idea unless someone else has told them previously.

Some of the local fae also talk of four "poor young souls" that recently came to Melusine's court. If the characters ask for more information, sideways glances and awkward throat-clearing ensues, but eventually, it does come out that Melusine is working with four changelings who have been baptized. Melusine's most loyal supporters talk of restoring the baptized changelings' fae souls, but that story causes skeptical rumblings. Those who have seen the baptized changelings mention seeing intricate gold crosses around their necks.

If any talk of where they're going comes up, the mention of Tam Lin's encampment brings a grim smile to Melusine's face. Should their shared past come up, she is a bit more wistful, but she glosses over any details of the story. If Janet is mentioned, Melusine will change the subject or simply end the conversation. Melusine has expressly forbidden the mention of Peg Powler in her court, but the characters won't immediately know that. If they do bring her up, Melusine will sternly inform them of the ban. If anyone asks why, or follows up in any way, there are rumors that Peg had something to do with the death of all of Melusine's children. Further pushing for details will bring up accusations of murder, although no one has any firm details at all about what really happened to Melusine's children. Only one of Melusine's children is confirmed dead by Peg's hand.

Refusing the Mission

The characters may also refuse the mission after hearing more about it at Melusine's court. If they refuse, Melusine is upset, but she will insist that they stay the night so that they may be well-rested in the morning when they leave.

Scene III: A Good Night's Rest

After the banquet, Melusine provides the characters comfortable rooms for the night so they can start their journey in the morning, whether that journey is to Wales with the caravan or elsewhere. The rooms she sets aside for the characters are sumptuous, set in the highest point of the tallest parapet. However, when the last of the servants leave them for the night, the sound of a lock clicking and a heavy bar come from the other side of the door. If the characters try to open the door, it won't budge. The window is little more than an arrow slit. If one of the characters has a Greater Feature that would allow passing through such a narrow opening, they could potentially escape. They would just have to contend with a considerable drop to the ground below.



In the middle of the night, a scream comes from just beyond the door, then shouting and the sounds of a struggle. Shortly after is a crackle of fae magic, then a sickly-sounding thump. If one or more of the characters can manage to get out of the room before the struggle, they will hear the scream from outside. If they reach the other side of the door in time, the two stone inanimae present at the banquet will be there. However, they appear smaller than they did at the banquet; human-sized, to be more precise. The body of a young teenager lays at their feet. Two or more successes on a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 6) will reveal an intricate gold cross around the body's neck (see *The Friar's Cross*, p. 62). One of the inanimae will try to pick up the body by himself, but need the assistance of the other to carry it down the stairs. They insist they will bring the matter to the attention of their lady and escort the errant character back to their guest room.

If the characters are near the door to the guest room (on one side or the other) when the teenager dies, their ability to draw on the Mists ceases to exist. Changelings cannot assume their fae mien at all, inanimae cannot their Greater Features for a mechanical benefit, and firstborn cannot use the Mists to hide themselves. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

Scene IV: The Journey Begins

The next morning, the characters' access to fae magic is restored. Melusine ensures the characters have a hearty breakfast before their travels, which provides the characters an opportunity to ask questions about the events of the night before. Melusine evades the characters' questions as best she can, but promises she will get a full report from the guards on duty. It's clear that she knows what happened, but she isn't talking.

After breakfast, Melusine escorts the characters to the courtyard, where the caravan awaits: four human-looking teenagers, each with gold crosses around their necks. If any of the characters spotted the body last night, they'll spot a resemblance between the crosses. Melusine has each of the teenagers introduce themselves and explains their plight: they are all changelings who were baptized before they could properly join the ranks of the fae. According to Melusine, Tam Lin will help these youngsters regain some, if not all, of their lost legacy. The crosses around their necks are for protection on the road. The teenagers say nothing in protest or contradiction to Melusine's story. If the characters previously refused Melusine's offer, this is a perfect opportunity for them to think of the children and potentially change their minds. In any case, Melusine will make sure that the group is properly outfitted for their journey if they need anything, and gives them her best intelligence for how to find where Tam Lin will make camp.

Before they leave, Melusine has one last instruction: under no circumstances are the characters allowed to remove

the crosses around the baptized changelings' necks. The enchantment on them will not allow the wearer to remove the cross themselves.

The characters set out on the road to Cherbourg, and at first everything is quiet. The teenagers don't say a word, but they don't try to escape. As they venture further from Melusine's lands, however, they relax and become a bit more talkative, if still a little apprehensive.

As the group prepares supper, eats, and divides up a watch shift that night, the teenagers congregate more amongst themselves. The youngest, William, seems to be the least scared, and comments on how the travel rations are delicious and he's never eaten so well in his life.

As the eating slows down, William ventures some of his story. He's a child who grew up in extreme poverty, until he was taken by Melusine. He's excited to be on this trip, and looking forward to seeing Wales. He has a younger sister and he's sorry she couldn't come, although he understands that she's just not old enough. Slowly, he starts to open up and talk about when Melusine gave him the cross around his neck. She said the cross would help him turn into one of the fae when he reached Tam Lin's camp. He's hopeful that with that kind of power he might be able to lift his family out of their dire straits.

During the night, Will has bad dreams. His companion, Alais, sits up with him, comforting him and promising to keep whatever the monsters he's dreaming of away from him. Their bond is platonic, but is something like the strength of a family love, not a simple friendship. Will is soothed by her presence, and will sleep quietly when she is watching.

Alais is tired the next day when resuming traveling, having stayed up all night to watch over Will.

Learning About the Other Changelings

The characters can learn about the other changeling teenagers if they wish. Each will open up as trust is built between themselves and the characters. Alais will talk about her sweetheart, a young butcher who she hopes to marry when she's a little older. Richard is the son of a hostler, who loves horses and is training one with a new method he developed himself. And Jehanne was the daughter of a knight, who had good prospects. She just wants to go home, but knowing what she does now, she's torn on whether or not anything can be the same for her if she does.

The changelings should become something more than a piece of a two-dimensional escort quest. The characters don't have to like the changelings they're traveling with, but they should have feelings that the players can identify with. Play up the changelings that appeal to the players at the table, and tone down the ones likely to turn them off. Ultimately, these four changelings are still people.



Will's Nightmares

If the characters make the effort to develop a relationship with the changelings, and get them to open up, they will learn that Will's nightmares are of the future of the fae. Will has dreams, every night, of arriving at Tam Lin's encampment too late and arriving on the scene of a slaughter. Tam Lin and all his forces are dead, and the ground is soaked in fae blood. The sun in the noonday sky is blotted out, making the battlefield dark as night.

Will is absolutely certain this will come to pass in some way, although the others all do their best to reassure him that it won't. Alais, however, seems to believe him that something awful will happen. Doubt shows in her eyes and her bearing.

If at any point during this journey the characters decide not to accompany the changelings to Tam Lin's camp, go to "Abandonment" (see "Premature Endgame" sidebar, p.56).

Scene V: Crossing the Channel

Melusine has booked passage for the characters and the baptized changelings across the Channel from Cherbourg to Poole in Great Britain. The ship itself is a seaworthy vessel with oars to prevent the vagaries of the wind from blowing them completely off-course. The trip is short; a day or two with good weather and favorable winds, a week at most. The

sailors make this journey regularly, taking passengers and small loads of goods for trade with each trip.

As they sail on, the sailors tell stories of Vikings and other robbers who attack ships crossing the Channel. Of course, they say, such a thing will never happen on their boat. Will and Richard love hearing the sailor's stories. Alais stays close to Will, while Jehanne busies herself with repairing a tear in one of the sails.

As night falls, though, the winds grow unfavorable, blowing out any lanterns. Seaweed tangles up the oars, delaying the journey further. With the ship sitting still, another ship sails dangerously close and its crew boards with the intent to. The leader of this force is Hamish MacNeil.

Hamish's crew is mostly human, with a couple of changelings. Hamish lets his crew do as they please; his main target is Melusine's caravan. The baptized changelings scurry below to escape the fighting. The fae members of Hamish's crew will do their best to avoid directly attacking the characters, but with the situation as it is, the characters can attack the fae members of Hamish's crew. They're defending themselves, after all.

In numbers, the crew of the characters' ship is roughly evenly matched with Hamish's forces, or possibly at a slight disadvantage. The characters should give their ship the upper hand or even the odds. Play up the chaos of the battle, and

include opportunities for the characters to interfere with attempts to go below decks to collect their charges.

Hamish does not surrender, even if the rest of his crew does. The characters must subdue Hamish or kill him outright to stop him. If he is subdued, he has choice words about Melusine and only under threat of cold iron will he reveal that he was sent to stop the caravan from reaching Tam Lin's camp. If further pressed, he will reveal the name of the one who sent him: Peg Powler.

When The Friar's Cross takes effect, no one's magic will work successfully for the rest of the scene. The characters are not unfamiliar with this feeling; it's exactly what happened at Melusine's castle the night before they left. Now they know its source. The wearer of the affected Friar's Cross convulses in unbearable pain and drops dead. The Friar's Cross remains intact.

If Hamish and his crew prevail, he takes the characters and the baptized changelings hostage aboard his ship. Regardless of which ship prevails, after the attack, the rest of the voyage is smooth sailing.

If Hamish has taken the characters hostage, he escorts them directly to Peg Powler once they reach Britain. Skip to "Peg Powler's Camp" to continue (p. 56).

Scene VI: Mercenaries In Wales

The trip north from Poole to Tam Lin's camp is another week or two worth of travel by mundane means. If they've managed to escape the pirates, they can reach central Wales with little to no molestation or excessive delays. Peg Powler, who has Tam Lin camped outside her front door, has hired some mercenaries to deal with that fact. Though she cannot strike at Tam Lin until the Oath-Truce falls, she can attempt to kill or kidnap the baptized changelings before they reach the camp. She sends the mercenaries to handle the group with little concern if they succeed or fail. Even if the mercenaries do not return, they will have worn the opposition down, and she'll be in a better position to strike against Tam Lin.

The mercenaries strike in the middle of the night, two days before the characters will arrive at Tam Lin's encampment. The mercenaries will attempt martial combat first, but if they seem at all outclassed or feel threatened, they will resort to magic.

Hand to Hand Combat

The mercenaries will attempt to kidnap the baptized changelings if at all possible. However, because of the Oath-Truce they will not specifically and directly attack the characters. If the characters attack first, however, the mercenaries will defend themselves. The mercenaries will only fight to incapacitate the characters, not kill them.

If the characters kill all of the mercenaries before they can move to using magic, the next most logical scene would be "A Visit From Janet." If the mercenaries are able to use magic, see "Unleashing" below.

Unleashing

If pressed, the mercenaries will use an Unleashing to attempt to knock out the characters and get away with a prisoner. In the event that the mercenaries can capture one of the baptized changelings, they will go for Alais first. She's tired, finds it harder to fight them off, and will be easy to subdue. However, don't be afraid to change their target if the characters have gotten more attached to one of the other baptized changelings. They will be the one who is closest to the mercenaries when they use the Unleashing.

When The Friar's Cross takes effect, no one's magic will work successfully for the rest of the scene. The characters are not unfamiliar with this feeling; it's exactly what happened at Melusine's castle the night before they left. Now they know its source. The wearer of the affected Friar's Cross convulses in unbearable pain and drops dead. The Friar's Cross remains intact.

If the mercenaries subdue the characters and the changelings completely, they escort them directly to Peg Powler. Skip to "Peg Powler's Camp" to continue (p. 56).

Scene VII: The Changelings React

After the mercenaries are gone, either killed or escaped, the mood has changed. Each of the baptized changelings reacts to the loss of one of their own in their own way, but none of the poor, traumatized teenagers handle it well.

Will is heartbroken at the death of any of their number. If Alais dies, he is inconsolable. He refuses to sleep, fearful that the nightmares will return. Without Alais to comfort him, he feels he cannot fight them alone. He despairs that he will never become one of the fae or be able to help alleviate his family's poverty.

Alais, if she is still alive, is visibly shaken. Already exhausted from watching over Will and the events from the night before, she faints the moment they are in relative safety. She doesn't awaken until late the next day, delaying their travel. The weight of everything that happened is simply too much for her. When she awakens, she'll be confused and disoriented, and will fall apart emotionally if reminded of the death of her friend. If Will dies, she is just as inconsolable as he would be if she died.

Jehanne responds with anger. She viciously berates the characters, thinking that they knew what would happen to them. She demands answers that the characters might not have, or that they are reluctant to give. If the characters admit they had experienced the loss of their magic before and the Cross was involved, she will try to remove it with no success. This will only make her even more hysterical, to the point where she just breaks down into a heap of angry sobbing.



Richard is sullen. He mumbles about it being God's will that they die so that they won't fall to sin and undo the work their baptism did. After watching one of his friends die, he doesn't want to become one of the fae. However, he is torn over the fact that if he leaves this life behind, he will no longer see the steed he has been training.

Jehanne and Richard (or only one of them, depending on which one) will insist on giving their fallen friend a Christian burial. There are plenty of chapels and monasteries along the way that could assist. That could make the characters very uncomfortable. Not only is it a representation of the faith that destroys changelings' fae selves, but it also provides an opportunity for escape, especially if the church where they stop is particularly strong in its faith. If the characters adamantly refuse to allow a Christian burial, Jehanne and/or Richard will refuse to go further with them willingly.

If they do allow the Christian burial, play up the innocent tragedy of it. These teenagers simply wish to do the right thing by the faith they've been baptized into, even if it runs counter to what was once their true nature. It's a strikingly human moment. Fill it with small, heart-breaking moments, like laying wildflowers on the grave or one of the teenagers singing a hymn to honor their departed friend. It is entirely acceptable, and even encouraged, to make your players cry during this scene.

Scene VIII: A Visit from Janet

Not long after the teenagers have a moment to react to the death of their friend, a single rider approaches the characters' camp. The rider is Janet, Tam Lin's wife. She has a small honor guard with her. They're not armed to the teeth, but what weapons they do have are clearly visible.

Janet's appearance is striking. Even though she was born and raised human, the Mists have begun to work their magic on her. In a year or two, she might even qualify as a changeling. Seeing such a change occur in a full-grown adult is remarkably rare. Some might say it's even impossible, but Janet proves this is clearly not the case.

Janet comes as a messenger and ambassador of good will from her husband. She tells the characters that Tam Lin wishes to give them some additional context regarding the mission they are about to complete. He knows giving the characters all the information and allowing them to make the choice of what to do could create a disaster, but it is the only thing that can ease his conscience.

Janet explains that Tam Lin and Melusine agreed to work together because Peg Powler killed one of Melusine's daughters. The girl had been hidden in a mortal village in Wales to protect her from fae that schemed against Melusine.

The story goes that Peg found the girl, kidnapped her, then killed her to get back at Melusine. When Tam Lin heard that Melusine was looking for someone to help with her plan for revenge, he volunteered. Melusine created the Friar's Cross so Tam Lin could use it to neutralize Peg's forces.

Since they developed the plan, Tam Lin has developed a conscience. He realizes that if he strikes against Peg when the Oath-Truce falls, he will be singlehandedly responsible for bringing back the War of Seasons, reigniting the conflicts that could lead to the destruction of fae society. Janet had a hand in changing Tam Lin's mind, pointing out that any of his own children could have been baptized, and thus a catalyst for the most destructive effects of the Friar's Cross. That said, he would still like the baptized changelings to come to his camp, not only to protect them, but to also have a deterrent on hand if Peg Powler decides to strike first.

Janet is aware that Melusine initially created five of them. If the baptized changelings are still with the characters, Janet will ask why there are only three. If they are not, she will ask where they are. The characters can explain at least one of the missing teenagers, and possibly both, if they took part in "A Good Night's Rest" and sufficiently connected the dots.

If Will is still alive and the characters don't ask first, he will ask Janet if Tam Lin has a way to restore their fae selves. Janet hesitates a moment, then answers as gently as she can that no, there is no way to do so. This reveals Melusine's lie to the baptized changelings, which raises a whole host of questions. If the baptized changelings were reluctant to go to Tam Lin's camp before, they're even less inclined to do so now.

At this point, the characters have several options. They can go to Tam Lin's encampment for further aid or to complete the mission, request that Tam Lin come to them to collect the teenagers, help the baptized changelings escape to what might be a better fate, or simply cut their losses and abandon the baptized changelings on the road (see the Premature Endgame sidebar, p. 56).

This should be something they talk out, and should be the real focus of the scene. Peg will overrun Tam Lin's camp if they don't deliver the teenagers. However, if they do deliver the teenagers, they'll be condemning these people they know, who are already emotionally fragile from the stress they've endured, to a painful death.

Regardless of their decision, Janet offers to deliver it personally to her husband. She expresses her deepest sympathies for the teenagers, and if they do decide to go to Tam Lin after all, she gives her word that she will do everything within her power to help keep them safe and ensure they have a better future after all of this is over.

If the characters decide to proceed to Tam Lin's camp, go to "Tam Lin's Camp" (p. 59).

Premature Endgame

It happens to a lot of groups every now and again. Through one turn of events or a decision from the players, sometimes the characters cut the adventure short before its full conclusion. If the characters decide not to deliver the baptized changelings to Tam Lin and have not yet gone to Peg Powler's camp, these are a few options that could bring the story to a close or start a whole new one.

Several of these options also leave the question of how to remove the Friar's Crosses from the teenagers' necks. A successful Intelligence + Gramarye roll will easily give the characters a hint that someone with a current connection to the Mists can remove it.

Ultimately, at the end of the adventure, however it ends, everyone at the table should have fun with it.

Escape

If the characters choose to save the changelings rather than deliver them to Tam Lin, they will need to hastily break camp and leave. With Janet's visit, Tam Lin will know that the characters have the baptized changelings in their care. By helping them escape, the characters conscientiously protest the assignment, and could potentially lead to complications between them, Melusine, and Tam Lin later on.

If Peg Powler hears about the characters' flight, she would gladly welcome them into her camp, letting bygones be bygones. However, she won't let the baptized changelings go free until after the battle, and only if she does not use them herself first.

If the characters don't go to Peg Powler, they could keep the baptized changelings around as traveling companions after the eclipse. With the War of Seasons about to start anew, they'll need protection, especially if either Melusine or Tam Lin (or both) offers a reward for their recovery.

Abandonment

This could happen at any point on the road, even before the characters leave Brittany. The characters simply cut their losses and leave the baptized changelings on the road to fend for themselves. This will raise both Melusine and Tam Lin's ire and leave them susceptible to the mercenaries Peg sent to stop the caravan in the first place. If the characters leave the Friar's Crosses around their necks, the mercenaries will know exactly what to look for.

If they want to offer the baptized changelings a little anonymity, they could remove the Friar's Crosses. At that point, they'd have powerful Treasures on their hands that they might not fully understand. If they try to sell or research the Treasures, the characters will have to be very careful who they ask if they don't want to get Melusine's attention.

Resolving Peg's and Melusine's Disagreement

The characters may wish to seek Peg out and get her side of the story in an attempt to resolve the differences between the two. While this would not prevent the Oath-Truce from expiring, it would mean these two fae would not be responsible for shattering it forever. It may also allow for further diplomatic efforts to create a more lasting peace in the future.

However, this would require going to Peg Powler's camp to discuss things with her. However, Peg won't let the baptized changelings go free so easily. Oaths would have to be sworn to even get Melusine and Peg to the same place, let alone to have them listen to one another in a reasonable fashion.

Scene IX: Peg Powler's Camp

If the characters are captured by Hamish MacNeil or the mercenaries, or they decide to seek out Peg Powler on their own, her camp is in northern Wales, about two days' ride southeast of the Isle of Anglesey, in a spot that would later be called Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Travel with any of Peg's subordinates is rough. They move at a quick pace and will not put up with stragglers. If anyone lags behind or tries to run away, they'll simply pick up the offender and carry them. For them, time is of the essence. Beyond that, the characters and the baptized changelings are treated with respect and courtesy, given their fair share of travel rations, and even allowed sufficient rest.

Peg's camp is filled with Solstice fae and disgruntled, martially-inclined Spring and Summer courtiers who barely hold onto their Court allegiance. As the characters' traveling party makes their way through the camp, Peg's followers look at them askance. The baptized changelings will get a wide berth, but the Friar's Crosses around their necks cause a stir. With this large of a gathering of fae, more than a few will recognize an immensely powerful Treasure when they see it. Why would these creatures who've long since lost their fae birthright have such items on their person?

If the characters listen closely to the camp banter, they can determine a few things about their location and the camp itself.

- Tam Lin's encampment is only a few hours to the east of Peg's camp. It's just far enough away to make meeting on a true battlefield difficult, but not so difficult as to prevent scouting.
- Peg has promised some hefty favors to those who follow her. Her followers talk about how much they'll enjoy whatever it is they're getting from Peg once it's all over.
- Peg's plan of attack depends entirely on an astrological event. She consulted an astrologer for a certain date, which

is only a day or two away, but it has to happen at a certain time. Many believe that it means they will be part of the ending of the Oath-Truce.

- Peg heavily favors Solstice fae over those fae who ascribe to a Seasonal Court. This has caused some rumblings within the camp itself, but no one has called Peg on it. Yet.

The characters and the baptized changelings get an immediate audience with Peg. Regardless of how they get there, Hamish escorts them to Peg's tent, which is little more than a lean-to of moss and branches. He then stands at Peg's right hand, flanked by the mercenaries.

Peg has her own interpretation of her situation with Melusine. She did kill Melusine's daughter, but only one of them, and it was an accident, not an act of war. She was performing a mock Saining on some of her own chosen, dedicating them to her personal cause. Melusine's daughter stumbled on the act, and as Peg reached out to take the hand of the next inductee in line, she instead took the hand of Melusine's daughter. Peg held her underwater, as this is how she performed the dedication. She didn't realize that she had the wrong person until it was too late. Peg closes her eyes as a symbol of blind trust to her inductees, you see. According to her, Melusine's daughter was a tragic drowning.

She claims that she felt horribly about it, and that she attempted to make amends to Melusine, but the attempts were always rejected. She now maintains an army because she has always feared that Melusine would find some way to attack her and wipe her out for this perceived crime. Peg has no idea what happened to the rest of Melusine's children.

Now, with Tam Lin camped outside her front door, Peg is certain that he and Melusine have cooked up some scheme that will destroy Peg's lands and the people who've come to rely on her. For that reason, not only did she raise an army, but she hired mercenaries to steal whatever weapon Melusine is sending to Tam Lin, and to kill him if they can.

Peg truly believes the annihilation of Tam Lin and his forces would be justified, and doesn't really care that it would rekindle the War of Seasons. She has very little love for the Seasonal Courts at all, and would love to see them annihilate each other. If her attack on Tam Lin jumpstarts those efforts, so be it. If anything, it will be a signal to the Spring and Summer courtiers in her army to tell their comrades that the war is back on.

Of course, there is no way she will let the characters leave with the baptized changelings. If the characters have already encountered the mercenaries, she knows what the Friar's Cross can do. Besides, what better way to defeat her rivals than use the weapon they planned to use against her? If the characters refuse to leave the baptized changelings with her, Peg orders her followers to take the characters and the baptized changelings to the Oubliette.



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

There are a few different possibilities of what really happened to Melusine's children and Peg's role in their deaths:

- Peg deliberately searched for where Melusine hid one, some, or all of her children away and killed them in cold blood.
- Melusine's daughter accidentally stumbled into Peg's mock Saining, but when Peg realized her mistake, she didn't stop with the goal of pledging Melusine's daughter to fight against her own mother. Unfortunately, the poor girl just wasn't strong enough to hold out.
- Peg is telling the truth. She only killed one of Melusine's children, and really does not know what happened to the rest of them. They may still be alive. It really was a horrible accident, and Melusine refuses to listen to reason. Who could blame her?
- Melusine killed her own children to craft the Friar's Crosses long before Peg left Melusine's service.

Choose the answer that fits the adventure best for the players at your table. If a better option presents itself to answer these questions, use that one instead. If the characters don't ask about what really happened on their own, seed hints into the scenes that follow or leave it alone in favor of the larger storyline.

With that, any gentler, courteous treatment ends. After a liberal application of shackles and rope, Peg's followers roughly goad and prod the characters along to the Oubliette (see below). Some of Peg's most trusted followers even carry weapons of iron, though they will only use them under extreme duress, like if the characters attack first. The baptized changelings are handled with as much distance between them and Peg's followers as possible.

The characters can definitely fight back and attempt to escape with the baptized changelings. If they do try to make an escape, intersperse a few short skirmish combats with some Dexterity + Athletics rolls, starting at difficulty 8 from being at the heart of the camp and getting less difficult as they get further out, down to a difficulty 5. If the characters use an Unleashing as part of their escape strategy, the Friar's

Cross takes effect, killing another baptized changeling in their number. If they get free and clear of the camp, use some Dexterity + Stealth rolls to lose anyone who might be following them.

If they do manage to escape, they can head in the direction of Tam Lin's camp (and proceed to "Tam Lin's Camp") or just flee (see the "Premature Endgame" sidebar, p. 56).

If they don't escape, either by failure or lack of trying, proceed to "The Oubliette."

Scene X: The Oubliette

Peg's Oubliette is little more than a locked steel box with a small barred window. The box rests in a wagon, ready to be transported anywhere Peg wishes the Oubliette to go. The box appears to be welded shut, but Peg opens it with no effort at all. The characters' guards shove them in one by one, and the box swallows any sound the characters might make when they land inside.

The Oubliette is pitch black for a few long minutes after being shoved inside. Reaching out fingertips to find walls or other landmarks yields only empty space. Each of the other inhabitants of the Oubliette can hear each other, but the sounds echo strangely, making it hard to pinpoint a sound's source. Cantrips are more difficult to cast, and Unleashing takes even more effort. Any light generated by fae magic reveals what appears to be a dirt floor, but the light itself doesn't extend very far. Still, with enough effort, the characters and the baptized changelings can find one another and make their way out.

Play up the distortion of space and time while the characters are in the Oubliette. The Oubliette is effectively a faerie realm in its own right. The characters know that fae realms distort the perception of time. This should not be new to them. However, the baptized changelings are less accustomed to such things, and it will scare them. If they stick together, though, they can still make their way out. While the rolls help determine how much the characters progress with unlocking the Oubliette from within, draw it out with encouraging the characters to help each other hold onto their memories.

If they do manage to escape, they can head in the direction of Tam Lin's camp (and proceed to "Tam Lin's Camp", p. 59) or just flee (see the "Premature Endgame" sidebar, p. 56).

If the characters and the baptized changelings cannot escape the Oubliette before the battle begins, they will see a light in the distance. If they approach it, they'll see a hand reaching into the Oubliette, as if trying to grasp something deep inside it. The closer they get, they'll see the outside world, and even if it looks like the hand reaching in is out of reach, they'll feel it grab them and try to pull them out. When they emerge, they will be at the edge of the battlefield on the day of the eclipse. Skip to "Truce or Slaughter" (p. 60).

Scene XI: Tam Lin's Camp

If the characters decide to go on to Tam Lin's camp, either directly or after escaping Peg's camp, Tam Lin and his forces welcome them with open arms.

The characters receive the greatest courtesy and comfort a battlefield camp can manage. Tam Lin's accommodations are not as lavish as Melusine's, but what he does have is well-made and made to last. Tam Lin is also not in his own holdings in Carterhaugh, and when he does have his audience with the characters and the surviving baptized changelings, he will ask their forgiveness for what meager hospitality he offers.

Each of the baptized changelings will react differently to Tam Lin's camp. Will is in total awe of how well he is treated in comparison to what he is used to, and will say so several times. Alais will be polite as she can, but she stays close to Will if she can, clearly a little frightened of what may come. Jehanne will bring all her courtly training to bear to remain courteous, but cool. Richard will still be sullen and not speak to anyone beyond yes, no, please, and thank you.

If the characters have seen Peg Powler's camp before arriving, have them roll Perception + Investigation, difficulty 7. A single success lets them notice that Tam Lin's forces look remarkably small in comparison to Peg's. Three successes give the characters more detailed information: Tam Lin's followers are lesser in number and in stature. While a few giants fill out their number, most of Tam Lin's forces look more suited to scouting than melee combat. One could ascertain that Tam Lin will need all the help he can get if he wants to soundly defeat Peg.

Tam Lin allows at least some time for the characters to rest from their journey. Depending on when the characters arrive, they may even get a full night's rest before meeting with their host.

Once the characters have had an opportunity to rest, Tam Lin will invite them and the baptized changelings to his command tent for a meal. Janet, Tam Lin's wife is in attendance. Even out in a land far from his home, he pulls out all the stops as best he can to provide a filling, delicious meal for his guests. If left unchecked, Will will even eat himself sick.

Over the course of the meal, Tam Lin will encourage the characters to tell the entire story of their journey, asking for as many details as they are willing to share. During this, the characters will have his rapt attention. He'll ask questions to tease out details, laugh at all the right points (and especially if Peg's agents are foiled), and even shed a tear or two if the characters describe the funeral of one of the fallen baptized changelings.

If the characters never met with Janet, Tam Lin will sigh as they complete their story, as if the whole thing is actually very sad. Janet then lays out an abbreviated version of the information she dispenses in "A Visit From Janet" (p. 55). Tam Lin can only nod in agreement with his wife. However, she would leave out any ambiguous options that



WHEN DO THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE?

By purely mundane means, the trek from Melusine's castle in Brittany to Tam Lin's camp, with good conditions can take anywhere between nine days (riding at a messenger's pace with well-trained horses) to over a month with a full trade caravan. Melusine would allow plenty of time for more mundane travel, as she is not sure how the baptized changelings will react to traveling via trods.

If they go straight to the camp, prevail over Hamish and the mercenaries, and none of the teenagers die: three days before the eclipse

If one of the teenagers dies when the mercenaries attack: two days before the eclipse

If they are captured or go to Peg's camp first and escape Peg's camp before getting put in the Oubliette: two days before the eclipse

If they are capture or go to Peg's camp first and escape Peg's camp after getting put in the Oubliette: the day before the eclipse

If the characters use trods to cross some of this distance, this will add a day or two of extra time between. However, it is highly unlikely that the characters will be able to use trods to go directly to their destination. Tam Lin's camp will be mobile at the time the characters depart, and the characters have probably never been there before. The baptized changelings may also have difficulty traversing the Trods due to the way they lost their fae souls. Storytellers are encouraged to use their discretion on what those effects (if any) may be.

Feel free to simply choose a moment that would heighten the drama. Perhaps the characters escape the Oubliette right before the battle begins or on the way to the battlefield.

would leave the characters options to help the baptized changelings escape.

After Janet explains the matter of conscience, Tam Lin will tell the characters with a heavy heart that he is now honor-bound to accept the baptized changelings into his care and, if he deems it necessary, to use them against Peg Powler. He will do his level best to try to find a way not to use them, but he can make no promises to that effect.

If the characters did speak with Janet in a previous scene, Tam Lin has one last question when the story is complete. "Knowing what you know now, why did you bring these youngsters to my camp?"

Make the players think about how their characters will answer this one. Give them a short break to go out of character and discuss their response, if they need it. Make it clear that their answer to this question will have significant weight in Tam Lin's decision on the baptized changelings' fate.

If the characters bring up feeling honor-bound to complete the mission they promised Melusine, Tam Lin will react as he would if they had never met with Janet: sigh and tell the characters that he is now honor-bound to accept the baptized changelings into his care. If he deems it necessary, he will use them against Peg Powler to neutralize her superior martial force. He will do his level best to try to find a way not to use them, but he can make no promises to that effect.

If the characters answer in any other way, Tam Lin will approach the baptized changelings. Muttering a few words, he will then remove the Friar's Crosses from their necks and promise them that if they stay with him until after the eclipse passes, he will do everything within his power to protect him. After that, though, they will be sent on their way.

Tam Lin begins to discuss his strategy. He won't take the first swing; he'll leave Peg Powler to do that. While he hopes she will think twice, he suspects she will, and he'd be right. Any additional input Summer Court characters have would be welcome. He really does not want to use the Friar's Cross, especially if he has heard of the death of one of the baptized changelings already.

Scene XII: Truce or Slaughter

On the day of the eclipse, both armies ride out to meet one another. The sun is high in the sky, still intact, for now. Fae on both sides of the battlefield look to the sky, squinting and waiting for the moment the sky goes dark. The field itself is out of the way of most human civilization, but a few farms and one small church are easily visible from the battlefield.

Play up the tension of both forces coming to the field. Everyone is waiting for the eclipse. Anyone who crosses the line early dooms the lot. Those on the front lines on either side are there specifically to hold back their more bloodthirsty comrades. If one soldier charges forward on either side, both have archers to pick off their own insubordinate soldiers.

If the characters and their charges are with Peg's camp, Peg releases them from the Oubliette and keeps



them close to her until the sky darkens. If the characters are with Tam Lin's camp, they will ride with him and his commanders, but the baptized changelings are nowhere to be seen.

Before the sky darkens completely, Janet rides forward with a sword on her hip. She beseeches Peg for a truce. Her presence is commanding, even for a fae-touched mortal, and even Peg is surprised by her audacity. Still, she will consult with her commanders (or the characters, if they are with her) on how to answer.

If Peg accepts the truce, she and Tam Lin meet at the center of the field. Tam Lin binds Peg and her commanders to an oath to not harm any baptized changelings or to move against Melusine la Bretagne. The characters will have some say on the exact wording of the oath.

If Peg does not accept the truce, Janet challenges Peg to a duel to first blood. Tam Lin tries to stop her, but Janet will have none of it. She wants this to end with as little loss of life as possible.

Regardless of whether or not the duel occurs, as the eclipse reaches its zenith, farmers and priests will emerge to look to the sky and gasp in awe of what they see. The eclipse has parted the Mists on its own, and every firstborn, inanimae, and changeling on the field, no matter what court they swear allegiance to, will be revealed for what they truly are. The priests will run to the church and ring the bell to drive out their influence. Some of the farmers may try to chase the fae away with pitchforks. Others may simply leave a bowl of cream out at their doorstep. Play off the characters' Echoes for more ideas. These gestures, while small, will also affect other fae on the field and provide additional leverage.

If Peg accepts and the characters are with Peg, she chooses one of the characters as her champion, and Tam Lin fights as Janet's champion. If the characters are with Tam Lin, Peg chooses a champion from within her ranks and Janet asks the characters politely if one of them will act as her champion.

As the duelists meet at the center of the field, the eclipse chips away at the sun and the sky darkens. No matter who wins the duel, the Oath-Truce will expire. If Tam Lin fights one of the characters, he pulls his punches so as not to kill, but he does not hold back his skill. Peg's champion, however, is not so kind, and is out for more than first blood. If one champion takes a single point of lethal or aggravated damage or three points of bashing damage, they lose the duel.

If Janet's champion loses, Tam Lin bows his head in defeat to Peg, offering an honorable surrender. Peg claims his lands in Carterhaugh for herself and declares to her army that they ride south to challenge Melusine

la Bretagne. She lets the characters go and opens a trod leading elsewhere, but she keeps the baptized changelings close. If the characters try to fight back, she has no compunction about using lethal force. No Oath-Truce will stand in her way. After the characters step through the trod Peg opens, they're left to their own devices. Do they try to rush back to Brittany to warn Melusine? Do they simply move on? Leave it up to them.

If Peg's champion loses honorably, she grudgingly accepts her defeat and takes her troops off the field. While the Oath-Truce is expired, it is not by the battle she wished to take place that day. However, she now has a disgruntled army to deal with, and they have no reason to spare her if they don't wish to.

If Peg's champion dies, Tam Lin dies, or Peg simply chooses not to accept the duel, Peg screams for her armies to charge. Some might follow her order and charge for Tam Lin's troops. Those in the Spring and Summer Court, however, will turn their blades and lances to her to punish her. At her order to charge, riders approach to collect the baptized changelings and ride into Tam Lin's ranks.

If the characters are unsuccessful at protecting the baptized changelings from being scooped up, Peg's riders will sling one each onto the backs of their horses. They will ride out to the left, right, and center of the fray, focusing on spots where more of their enemy's forces occupy the field than their own. They will then toss the teenagers off their horses and Unleash their Dominions at them in some way. Some will choose to be merciful in an attempt to dull the teenager's pain. Others might choose to use the power of the Mists to torture their charges first. Killing them outright before the Friar's Cross takes its effect will not work, though. Tam Lin's forces will be devastated and routed without the use of their fae magic, and Peg will claim victory. Peg claims his lands in Carterhaugh for herself and declares to her army that they ride south to challenge Melusine la Bretagne. She opens a trod and No Oath-Truce and no treachery will stand in her way.

After the Eclipse

If a truce is sworn, the peace of the Oath-Truce continues in Great Britain, if it is still a bit uneasy due to no real magical enforcement. The surviving baptized changelings are free to go as they please, and the characters are free to pursue other adventures or even to return to Melusine and report what happened. Since they have been to her castle, opening a trod will make travel that much quicker. Melusine will have a lot to answer for, after all.

If the battle between Tam Lin and Peg takes place, either in the form of a do, word of it spreads among humanity and faekind alike. The effects of the Friar's

Cross shake all of faekind to their very bones. Stories of its use spread throughout the British Isles, even if only one of the baptized changelings dies due to the effects of the Friar's Cross. Rumors start from Melusine's court and spread outward until nearly every fae looks at a gold cross with dread, magical or not. Inquisitors will come to investigate the story and seek out the fae involved, especially if any of the baptized changelings were killed. This might lead to Inquisitors on the characters' trail, wherever they end up.

Many fae who wish to fully re-ignite the War of Seasons attempt to recreate it, causing more Unleashings all over and seeking out baptized changelings to cripple their enemies. More and more fae become Lost, and the Mists react violently to the abuse to the point that Unleashing becomes nearly impossible in some places, especially human cities. The firstborn find it more difficult to hide in the Mists and have to find other means to conceal themselves, if not retreat into faerie realms completely. Changelings feel the sting of this less keenly, as they can more naturally walk among humanity.

In an effort to adapt, some fae try to use cantrips for the same effect of the Friar's Cross, especially changelings. With the imposition of order and structure, the fae themselves become less varied, taking on Features similar to one another that are shaped by the dreams and nightmares of humanity. This gives rise to different kiths of changelings.

When the Oath-Truce falls, the Shattering begins.

New Systems

New Treasure: The Friar's Cross

Level Five

The Friar's Cross is a large, ornate gold cross that hangs from the wearer's neck by a chain or leather thong. The cross can be ornate or simple; aside from being made of gold, the aesthetics are irrelevant. The cross is imbued with the power of the Mists while submerged in the blood of a priest with particularly strong faith. The cross provides protection against the wildest energies of the Mists, but has unexpected, disastrous side effects when a baptized changeling wears it.

System: The wearer cannot put on or remove the cross themselves. Another can remove the cross from the wearer with a successful Weaving roll (difficult 7). Only one success is needed to remove the cross.

If the wearer is submitted to an Unleashing, magic is partially absorbed a number of times equal to the wearer's Weaving. After that, the cross shatters, doing one level of lethal damage to the wearer for every Unleashing it absorbed. If the wearer is a mortal or has no connection

to the Mists, after absorbing one Unleashing, the cross shatters, doing one level of lethal damage.

If wearer is a baptized changeling, the result is far more devastating. Baptism leaves a metaphysical hole in the former changeling's being where their fae soul once resided. After the cross absorbs one Unleashing, the vast amount of faerie magic and that hole cancel each other out. Every fae within a fifty-yard radius of the afflicted baptized changeling loses the ability to call forth faerie magic for an hour or a scene, whichever ends first. Changelings cannot assume their fae mien at all, inanimae cannot their Greater Features for a mechanical benefit, and firstborn cannot use the Mists to hide themselves. In addition, the rebalance of magic kills the unfortunate baptized changeling. However, the cross remains intact.

New Treasure: Oubliette

Level Five

The word "oubliette" comes from the French word oublier, which means "to forget." Humanity perfected the oubliette as a form of brutal captivity. The application of fae magic only enhances the original design, adding features that humans can only dream of.

On the outside, the Oubliette looks like a sealed trunk or case. The fae who created it can open and close it at will. The inside of the Oubliette is a small faerie realm designed for punishment. The space is pitch black, making it difficult for whoever is trapped inside to know where they are within it or how much time has passed. In addition, sounds echo in unusual ways, making it appear that there are others in the Oubliette when one is alone, or that others in the Oubliette are closer or further away than they really are.

System: Inside the Oubliette, rolls to gain one's bearings in time and space or to find others within the Oubliette start at a difficulty 8. Using the Night Dominion is at +1 difficulty. Using any other Dominion is at +2 difficulty. Any Unleashing takes on an additional +1 difficulty. Fae can only use their Court to reduce the difficulty of using a Dominion.

Long stretches of time within the Oubliette make it more difficult for the prisoner to remember exactly why they're in the Oubliette in the first place. At first, the prisoner rolls Perception + Dusk at difficulty 6. If the prisoner succeeds, the next roll stays at difficulty 6. If they fail, the next roll is difficulty 7. After three successful rolls, the prisoner rolls Perception + Night instead, starting at difficulty 6 once more. After three successful rolls, the prisoner rolls Perception + Dawn, starting at difficulty 7. After three more successful rolls, the character finally rolls Perception + Day at difficulty 8. If they have three successful Perception + Day rolls, they successfully hold

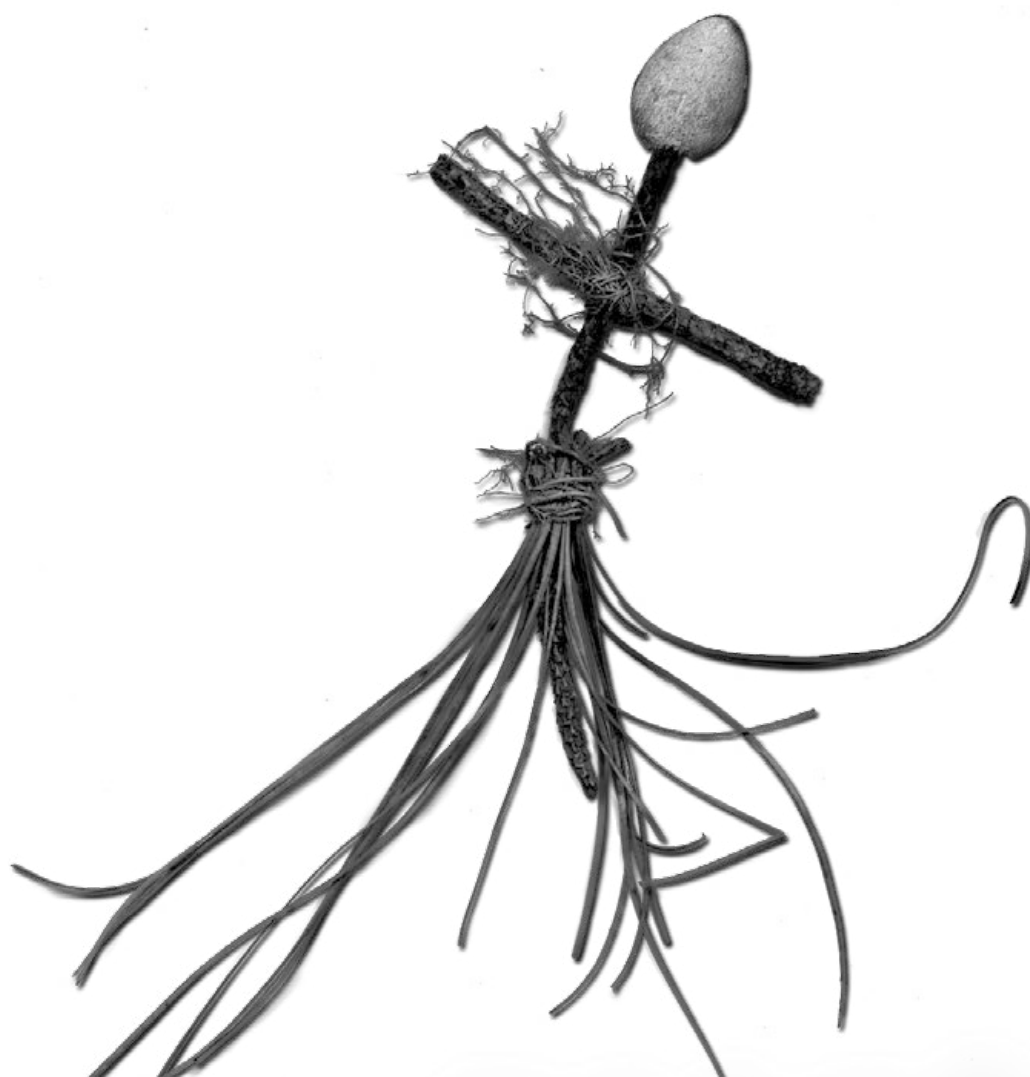
onto their memories. The downside to this is that if the act that led them to the Oubliette weighs on their conscience, they will never forget it while in the Oubliette.

If the prisoner had the Memory of Stone cantrip in effect when they entered the Oubliette, these rolls have their starting difficulty reduced by 1.

Escaping the Oubliette cannot be done alone. All of the individuals within an Oubliette have to find each other through

mundane or supernatural tracking means. Each other individual the prisoner finds in the Oubliette that he knows reduces the difficulty of remembering themselves by 1 to a minimum of 4. When all of the prisoners of the Oubliette successfully hold onto their memories, the Oubliette opens, as it failed its purpose.

An Oubliette can contain up to ten individuals, regardless of size. However, the Oubliette must be large enough for the prisoner to step into it.





Have I ever told you,” asked the Procurator, “how I came to serve the Lord?”

The novice set his pen down and lifted his eyes. He had heard the story many times before, but the Procurator’s age and status permitted him many indulgences. “I have not,” he said.

Candles lit the chamber, their dim illumination casting shadows across the stacks of parchment, paper, and etched wood that comprised the Inquisition’s library of information. The new material had been accumulating so quickly of late.

“When I was a child in Vienna,” the Procurator said, “I was a thief. I stole bread from the baker’s. I still remember how warm it felt under my arms as I ran across the winter snow.” He closed his eyes and smiled at the memory, licked his lips at the imagined taste of that ancient loaf. “That was when I was discovered.”

“Discovered?”

“There was a man,” he said, “who caught me. But he did not punish me or drag me back through the streets to the baker. He told me that he would give me a purpose. He would give me, a chance he said, to learn the truth of the world.”

The novice cast his eyes to the stacks. There were too many letters to ignore, but he did not dare interrupt. He nodded, hoping that the Procurator’s weakening eyes would see the movement or its shadow against the wall.

“The Magister,” the old monk continued, “and I was always to call him Magister, took me in. He did not treat me as I knew other boys were treated by those who brought them in from the streets. He wanted me pure for another reason.” He licked his lips again. “One day, he showed me what that reason was.”

The novice kept his pen hovering over the half-finished instructions to the most recent cell of Inquisitors to be called to duty. A drop of ink fell to the parchment.

“Do you know the invocation of the Princes of the Oil?” the Procurator asked. “It’s an old method. It doesn’t work. I mean to say, it doesn’t work without another power to invigorate it.” He didn’t wait for an answer. “The Magister took my hand, blackened it with soot, then smeared oil on it to make it a dark mirror. He whispered words that were supposed to call up whatever spirit he had in mind, stood behind me, and asked what I saw.”

His shoulders tensed as his eyelids fluttered shut. “I remember the feeling of his fingers digging into my shoulders when I said that I saw nothing. Again, he recited the summons, and again, he asked me what I saw.”

The novice lay down his pen. This far into the tale, there would be no need to write anything further.

With his eyes closed and head lowered, the Procurator went on. “I don’t know how long it was before I finally told him that I saw what he wanted me to see. I told him that I saw a man with sharp teeth and horns on his head, a man carrying a sword.” The tension in his shoulders eased, as if he were feeling the grip of his master finally relinquishing itself after so many decades. “Then he conjured the spirit to tell him his future.”

He gave a dry chuckle. “Nothing happened,” he said. “I said what he wanted me to say, and he rewarded me. I don’t remember what I...”

His voice drifted into silence as his clouded eyes open again and scanned the room. They settled for a time on the stack of messages. “What do they have to say?”

The novice straightened, gathered the pages in front of him, and replied. “There are signs,” he said uncertainly, “of the End of Days. They appear in the astrological charts of the heretics, the visions of the faithful, and...” He shuffled through the messages. “They are everywhere.”

“I have lost so many friends over the years,” sighed the Procurator. “So many friends. I think that we are always living in the last days.”

There was nothing to say to answer that. The novice looked down at the pages before him, pretending to study them with care. “Do you truly think this is the end?”

Once more, the Procurator shut his eyes. He leaned into the unforgiving wooden chair without only a slight wince of unease. “Before you were born,” he said, “and after my Magister gave up his dreams of mastering the future, I saw signs. He had no idea, of course. He had no idea that the powers he called upon were only the barest sliver of the horrors that exist in our world. He never asked to see men possessed by beasts, the walking and hungry dead, the spirits that feed on chaos, or the specters that haunt the shadows. He only wanted to see the things that would lead him to treasure or compel women to love him. But I saw. Eventually, I saw truly.”

He lifted a hand to point at the messages. “They will tell you that the world is falling into darkness. They will tell you that things rise up that no mortal man should ever see. They will tell you that the light of day will be extinguished and that the veil of the Temple will...” His eyes rolled back into his head. His voice grew deeper, more distant.

“Come and see,” he intoned. “There will be churches that teach falsehoods, sheltering under the wings of fallen angels. There will be animals who pretend to be men, coupling with those who have not the strength to resist them. There will be corpses who blaspheme the mystery of our Lord, consume the flesh and the blood without care. There will be...”

He began to tremble, his hand dropping to shake and his head rocking back and forth in confirmation of some new revelation. The novice had seen it before: visions always took their toll. There was nothing to do but wait, and write.

INQUISITOR

PHANTASMAGORIA

Introduction

When they write about the event, the one night that all became a phantasmagoria, official documents do not corroborate personal accounts. In general, accounts were simply removed from legal documents, leaving families to ask why their uncle, brother, or mother was imprisoned indefinitely without court records. The Church destroyed any parish diaries that recognize the event as happening. No spin to make it a curse from God or the Devil. Better it was simply erased forever.

But what was the phantasmagoria? How did it happen to those who lived through it?

Simply, it was a night when the veil was pulled back. Scholar and peasant, man, woman, and child alike, suddenly all were able to see the monsters in their midst. Like All Hallows reversed, all the masks were pulled away.

It's a night for hunters, and the worst night to be a hunter imaginable: chaos in the streets, monsters and beasts in a panic, and human beings driven to the edge of their sanity as the lie is revealed to them.

And so, tonight, and for the next three nights, the veil is pulled back and the World of Darkness is revealed for what it is, not just to those gifted with a second thought, but every person with any sense to observe. The Inquisition has long taken advantage of the anonymity of monsters as it hunts and tries to protect all of humanity. But now, thanks to the cursed eclipse hanging over all of Italy, they will have to rush across the countryside, minimizing the danger to innocent humanity as they find themselves confronted by a world beyond our world that the Inquisition has long sought to protect its flock from.

A normal night of hunting might mean a steady and bloody hand in response to occurrences of evil, but the Inquisitors do not have that luxury tonight. Tonight, they must restore order and keep as many of these small incidents from spilling over into region-wide exposure and bloodshed.



Crossover

Introduction

Granted, the assumption is that the Church has sent Inquisitors all across the Italia region to put out fires they've heard about. There is nothing to say these fires might come to the attention of other monsters. Many a creature that bumps in the night may be driven to settle some of these problems either out of a general fear of the eclipse' effects or because the specific leg of the adventure is near to their doorstep. The Dramatic Travel system described below even takes into account the possibility of travel by creatures who can travel much faster than humans and horses, so that converting this Chronicle to other inhabitants of the World of Darkness isn't too difficult in that respect.

The difficulty comes, primarily, in the fact that so long as the eclipse is in the sky, all monsters are unmasked. This includes player character monsters. And so, without need for roll or special powers, any mundane person can see some suggestion to a monstrous character's true nature. Vampires might appear dead, impossibly terrifying, or compelling like a knife's edge to a man destined to take his own life. A werewolf's feral nature would appear in their brow and in the mouthful of hungry teeth whenever they speak or smile. This should not mean that any and all social interaction is impossible, only that characters will have to try harder to either disguise their appearance entirely (which is suspicious) or work harder to ensure trust with those they do interact with. Avoiding contact with mundane people is, of course, worth attempting, but to do that and to solve the obstacles put before the characters would be quite a feat.

Vampire

Of course, Peter the Abbot would be of special interest to any and all Kindred. He's an elder with particular talent for cohabitating with humans and has pull within the Church, never mind his incredible occult library and his access to the secrets within. This is a particularly valuable piece on any Kindred's chess board, and so it would be reasonable, clearly, to rush to protect him in the hopes of gaining his favor.

A Storyteller could simply use the Abbot as a single adventure for Dark Ages Vampire, or else, the characters might come into letters from the Pope to Peter, asking him to look into the coming eclipse. Perhaps Peter has discovered other locations likely to be hit hard by the eclipse, and since they helped him (or found his journal on the matter after having failed him), he might request that they investigate these other locations. Getting to these other locations in time could grant occult-oriented Kindred an incredible amount of access to the other creatures that lurk in the World of Darkness. In addition, proving Peter's suspicions about other locations were right would further cement the alliance they had thus far built.

Werewolf

The Espositos are not simply a family of good-looking vintners with influence not only in Genoa, and but also within the Church. They have a sort of innate standing in werewolf society, thanks to their strong Silver Fang lineage. While they don't tend toward lording themselves about, they are wealthy kings among the People and understand their position in the world. They put off involving other packs in their sept's impending difficulties as long as they could, but when Great-Grandmother can finally prove to them without a shadow of a doubt that her predictions are true and the eclipse has exposed them, they put out a call to any area packs or septs for any aid they can provide.

Once a pack of characters have engaged with the drama here in Genoa, they may move on to their own business. If the Storyteller would like to use other scenes from this chronicle in their Dark Ages Werewolf campaign, simply have the characters notice a group of embodied and mutated eclipse spirits that run off from Genoa to cause trouble all over the countryside. In chasing these spirits, the characters will run across the other events outlined in this chronicle.

Fae

The nearest Freehold to Palaia has long tried to disavow any responsibility for the area. There is a heavy political conflict there, all enforced by oaths that has left the local fae out in the cold, so to speak. The court that oversees the area has, in general, issued orders to stay clear of the small town and its Inanimae master. Of course, that was before the contracts came up to dispute. The accord between a Winter terror and the Inanimae could potentially create a power vacuum in Palaia, and, of course, the leader of the local court is very, very interested. And so, he's sent the motley of characters off to investigate the fertility rite, 'conveniently' leaving out the fact that peace there is about to come to an end.

As soon as the characters finish up in Palaia, however they manage to shift the power structure there, they trip and fall off the perfectly mundane path on a perfectly mundane road, and slip into the fae realms. This is unusual, of course, and stranger still, all roads through faerie seem to have faded, save for a few that are still illuminated by the terrible eclipse. These roads lead to the other incidents in this chronicle, should the Storyteller like to use the rest of this chronicle with their Dark Ages Fae game.

Wage

Eclipses would, of course, already be of interest to Dark Ages Mage in general. When this eclipse starts to trigger strange supernatural events, there is no doubt that a cabal of mages would investigate the whole of the thing.



Fear of witch-burning and persecution might draw their attention to Libbiano and the suspected witch in their midst. The characters would be able to tell right away there is no witch among the people of Libbiano. The eclipse has caused their magical nature to reveal itself; all Mages have an image of their Avatar superimposed, god-like, over their own appearance, making them impossible to mistake for mortal man and woman. Dealing with Libbiano to prevent the murder of a potentially innocent woman, or at least a woman who is not a witch, will be a challenge when the characters are themselves so obviously other.

This is not the only incident of chaos and mystical exposure in the region. Word will reach their ears from mystical channels that monsters are exposed, popping up all over. Surely the characters could look into this and find out what it is that connects the eclipse to the exposure to humanity. And more importantly, is it something that the Mystic Fellowships can use?

Chronicle Map

Panic, because the streets of Italia will flood with blood! Panic, because monsters are real! Panic, because there are just too many nightmares come true, and too short a time to stop all of them from spilling over into death and mayhem! The eclipse will kill many an innocent human being, and yet, it is the Inquisitors' job, no, their duty, to stop the chaos and save lives.

From the start of the eclipse, the Inquisitors are doomed to failure in their task. It is up to them and tragic, random chance, to see how terrible that failure will be.

In laying out the flow of this chronicle, leave the Inquisitors no moment of peace. There is no rest for the righteous or the wicked in the three days that elapse under the eclipse's terrible power. There is not enough time to travel as far as necessary to save everyone, and each choice the characters make could lead to more tragedy, no matter how they choose. No one but God can be in all places at all times, and it is possible that even in attempting to be like God in this way is the hubris that will eventually topple the Inquisitors in their duty.

Motivating the Characters

But why would a group of Inquisitors even undertake such a seemingly impossible task? Motivation should be as individual as the characters themselves and may be worked out with each player and the Storyteller. Here are some ideas.

Authority: They have been ordered to do the impossible, and so it is in the character's nature to follow those orders, no matter how impossible it may seem. Maybe the character has the personality of a devoted soldier and will

act without hesitation or question, or maybe the character is ambitious, and see these orders as a chance to springboard themselves up in the Church.

Faith and Superstition: There is right in the world, and there is wrong in the world. Innocent people killed by monsters and evil portents in the sky may be enough to motivate some characters.

Personal Tie: Perhaps each of the characters has family in all of the locations outlined. Ignoring the call to assist in whatever chaos has fallen over the place could mean a loss of kith and kin. Socially, this could be devastating for many, as family is so important in the region and the time period.

No matter the reasons, the Storyteller should direct the action by having Church messengers carry sealed letters that order the characters all over hill and dale, perhaps with conflicting demands from several members of the Church. A mix up? A conspiracy to force the characters to fail? The bad fortune of the eclipse, or a test from God? That will be up to the characters to speculate on.

Travel and Chaos

This chronicle should leave the characters exhausted without bogging the players and Storyteller down with the minute details of travel in the Dark Ages. To facilitate that, a dramatic travel system follows the end of this chronicle that gives the Storyteller the tools necessary to create the feelings of stress and suspense that unsure travel should produce without too many mechanics to get in the way. The dramatic travel system is outlined in detail on p. 83.

Whatever order the characters tackle their adventures in, there should be diminishing returns in terms of travel and adventure. As a result, each adventure should add successes necessary to reach their destination in time. Additionally, should the characters dawdle or otherwise waste a great deal of time, a Storyteller can add to that success necessary, and announce that is the case so that players can experience the need for perhaps sloppy expediency and increase the need for urgency.

Adventure Flow

A traditional chronicle written in a book tends to follow in an order, one after another, with one event causing the next, often thanks to the characters' meddlings.

This chronicle plays with those assumptions a bit. Instead of looking at it as a single series of events, the Storyteller should look at these events as if they all are happening more or less happening at the same time. The eclipse has triggered the beginning of these events, and not, say, the actions of the characters alone. The Storyteller characters are not simply sitting around waiting for the characters to arrive and engage with them. Rather, they are alive, thinking, and doing, and most importantly, reacting to the events as they unfold.

But how do you avoid leaving the characters out of things, leaving them to watch as Storyteller characters have all the fun and drama? That's a matter of pacing and information distribution. Storyteller characters may be stoked and ready to burn down a winery or eat the population of a small town, but perhaps the characters are the ones with information or tools these Storyteller characters need to find their goals and act. In essence, the Storyteller should assume that events are taking place and simply slow their escalation so the characters can arrive, though possibly too late, depending on how their dramatic travel goes and what choices they make.

Personalities

Here are many of the personalities you'll find throughout the story. These characters are mostly mortals, who shouldn't pose meaningful challenge if confronted. Thus, they're not fully statted. If you need, assume they have three dice in most dice pools, or six to seven in important pools.

The Abbey at Monte Cassino

Peter the Abbot (male, apparently late 60s, actually closer to 300, bookish and kind): Peter the Abbot has been a chronicler since his days in the sun. As the third son of his family, he was destined the clergy from birth, which he did not contend in the slightest. He took to monastic life quite easily, devouring any text he could. He spent the vast majority of his life devoted to building out and expanding his personal library, which caught the attention of a powerful vampire within the Church. He made Peter into a creature of the night when Peter was in the twilight of his life. Peter continued in his normal pattern of amassing and absorbing knowledge, with a brief stint in building up the nascent Franciscan Order. His texts and knowledge have been a boon to the Church, and have kept him alive and protected despite his monstrous state. The eclipse shows those close to him just how monstrous he is, despite all the precautions he takes to be a good Christian: feeding on animals, healing the sick, and sharing his massive library with the Church and those who serve the Lord.

Brother Alonzo (male, early 20s, bookish and thin): Alonzo wants nothing more than his old friend and mentor back. This monster seated at Peter's desk could not possibly be kith or kin to the man Alonzo respects so completely, and yet, it explains so much about the abbot that he had never considered before. He'll call for mercy as best he can; in his eyes, Peter is a prime example of how even the monsters of Hell can seek redemption in service to Christ.





Cardinal Adamo (male, early 30s, severe and ambitious): Cardinal Adamo cannot believe what he has inherited with the death of His Holiness. He has heard that monsters walk among good Christians, but did not expect such claims to hit so close to home and so high within the ranks of his beloved Church. So he comes to the abbey at Monte Cassino to see this ancient creature posing as a holy man, convinced this must be the Devil's work. He has heard of the good works Peter has performed as well, but in his mind, this can only be a ruse to lure those pure of heart to sin. And who knows? If Adamo is lucky, there is some way to purify Peter's spirit so that he may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. If Adamo can get it right, that's at least one step to sainthood.

Genoa

Edoardo Esposito (male, late 30s, roguish good looks, gregarious): Edoardo is the current head of the Esposito family. He keeps the winery's day-to-day operations going, but is more active at night, keeping the local vintage flowing freely. He makes a point to always be charming, especially in the presence of beautiful women. Under Edoardo, the winery has flourished; early donations to the Church encouraged discussion on craft between Edoardo and monks in charge of making sacramental wine. As such, the quality of Esposito wine increased, making it more valuable and raking in even more money, which, of course, has gone to the Church. These lavish donations help keep the local convent running, which may or may not be where many of Edoardo's bastard children are raised. As a werewolf, he acts as the alpha of the family pack.

Great-Grandmother Esposito (female, late 80s at least, dour): The grande dame of the Esposito family has kept an eye on her pack and family for many, many years. She isn't as sprightly as she used to be, but her cane helps her get around, if a bit slowly. Still, that cane can fly out quickly to rap anyone upside the head for doing (or even thinking) something foolish within her reach. Her gift for prophecy has saved many a harvest at the family winery. While Edoardo acts as the alpha of the family pack, he relies heavily on Great-Grandmother for her advice, which she gives freely. She has had visions of the upcoming eclipse for many years, and her urgings ensured that the immediate family is prepared. Still, she dreads that the reach of this event exceeds the family's grasp, leaving a trail of blood right up to the winery gates.

Andrea (female, mid-teens, skittish): Andrea grew up believing Edoardo Esposito was a close friend of the family, almost like an uncle. He always brought sweets and small toys for the children, but Andrea always got something extra special. There was a little tension between Papa and Edoardo, but it never spilled over into violence. As she grew from a little girl to a young woman, she couldn't help but notice how little she looks like the man she calls Papa or

her other brothers and sisters. Her mother has never said anything about it, but the townsfolk close to the Espositos are beginning to talk. If Edoardo knew, why did he leave her to live in a place that was decidedly lesser? As the sky darkens, her skin begins to itch, and the awfulness of her situation gnaws at her heart. The pain in her chest is growing too much for her to bear. Who knows how that pain will manifest itself?

Palaia

Francesco Becchi (male, early 40s, stoutly built and boisterous): Francesco and his brother Perino work in the vineyards on the outskirts of the village and take great pride in the wine they produce. Today, Francesco's main fear is that the weather will ruin the year's grapes, and he is dealing with his fear by drinking heavily. He is a widower.

Perino Becchi (male, mid-30s, red-bearded, red-faced): Perino is more devout than his brother, and if he hears Francesco's dismissal of St. Boniface's power, he will chide him for it. The two of them fall into arguments easily, especially on religious matters.

Filippa Davanzati (female, late 40s, dignified and tense): Filippa works as a weaver, which she will mention while pointing out that some of the tapestries on the walls of the Albertini house are her creations. She would prefer not to be at the feast; in the past year, she has lost her husband and her two grown sons to fever, and is still in mourning for them.

Masino Consigli (male, early 20s, full of laughter): Masino and his wife Carletta have worked in the groves since they were children, and loved each other for nearly as long. Last year, they were married, and only a few months ago, Carletta gave birth to their first son, Tommaso. He is still overjoyed by the child, and will hold him up for others to admire: a healthy, green-eyed boy with hair so blond as to be nearly white. While he worries about the rain, it is not enough to dampen his spirits; Palaia has suffered bad weather in the past and they have St. Boniface on their side. (If inquisitors examine the baby for signs of the supernatural and have a power that allows them to discern it, they will recognize something unusual on a successful check: it is not a diabolic touch, but something that feels ancient and innocent at the same time. If they have had past experience in dealing with the fae, they can recognize that while Tommaso is entirely human, he has been fae-touched in some way.)

Carletta Consigli (female, early 20s, weary and wearing a strained smile): The birth of her and Masino's son has been more exhausting for Carletta than her husband, but she tries to put on a good face for him in public.

Orlanduccio Lorini (male, late teens, anxious): In the midst of the feast, Orlanduccio is distracted by dark thoughts. Under the tutelage of Don Rafael, he has learned

to read and begun studying some of the more esoteric books in the priest's collection. As a result, he has become certain that the omens of the day are signs of the birth of the Antichrist.

Cecco Setti (male, mid-50s, stern and patrician): The Setti family is the second most influential in Palaia, and the family as a whole resents the Albertinis for their success. Cecco Setti, the family patriarch, has only come to the feast because it is expected of him and because he is looking for a wife for his son, Pieruccio. If there are women among the Inquisitors who look like they might be a good match, he will do his utmost to suggest a marriage alliance. He has rich land, flocks of sheep and goats, and cousins in Siena who have hinted that his son could have a place there.

Pieruccio Setti (male, late 20s, uneasy and withdrawn): Cecco's son Pieruccio has far less interest in matters of marriage than his father. Although he believes that he is condemned as a sinner, he cannot deny his love for Don Rafael. His beloved, meanwhile, focuses only on Orlanduccio Lorini, despite the latter's complete obliviousness to his advances. However much this frustrates Pieruccio, there is nothing he can say, so he follows his father's wishes when it comes to choosing a bride for him.

Alberto Albertini (male, late 50s, harried and short-tempered): In the midst of a storm that threatens the future of the village, Alberto must focus on the feast and his guests. He spends most of his time in motion, greeting new arrivals, ensuring that they have enough food, and carrying on the briefest of conversations as he goes. The other guests take their lead from him; if the Inquisitors behave rudely or in a confrontational manner, not only will Alberto demand that they leave, but a dozen or more of Palaia's younger men will stand up to challenge them when he does.

Margarita Albertini (female, mid-50s, rushed and forcedly cheerful): Like her husband, Margarita has to concentrate her attention on the guests. She spends much of her time moving in and out of the house's kitchens, giving directions to the village women who have helped prepare and serve the food. Her only response to the arrival of the Inquisitors is to worry about whether there will be enough to feed them properly. She has little time to talk, but will direct people asking about the rites to speak with Filippa Davanzati, Carletta Consigli, or Don Rafael.

Don Rafael (male, early 30s, uncomfortable and touchy): Don Rafael was sent to be Palaia's priest from Siena after being discovered dabbling in heretical theologies by his superiors. He treats his current position as one of exile—an educated man surrounded by uncouth peasants and backwards practices—but still feels protective of his flock. He is especially fond of his protege, Orlanduccio, although he is concerned that the young man is growing too zealous in his devotion.

Libbiano

Piera (female, early 30s, generous but curt): Piera is the nearest thing that Libbiano has to a physician, caring for humans and animals equally. Her cures are not always effective, but they are better than having none at all. The very recent death of her husband, Amadio, is one of the sources of rumors about witches being active in the area. He was not a well-liked man, and after he died from a sudden and painful illness, people began to speculate that he had been cursed by someone whose path he had crossed. The truth of the matter is that Piera herself poisoned Amadio after he, in a drunken temper, broke the arm of their young daughter, Mea. It was not the first time he had been violent, but Piera swore it would be the last.

Fra Sisto (male, mid-30s, wild-eyed and animated): Although not a native of Libbiano, Fra Sisto was welcomed there immediately after his arrival. Despite a lack of formal education in theology or anything else, he has a sharp and imaginative mind, a knack for public speaking, and a gift for recognizing exactly what his audience wants to hear at any given time. His popularity in the village has made him overly proud, however, and certain that his apocalyptic vision of the End Times is true. His followers in the village believe it as well, making him exceptionally dangerous.

The Pandolfi Family: The Pandolfis—Pandolfo Corsi, his sons Martino and Bernardo, and Martino's wife Bruna—all share a house with Bruna's sister, Scarlata, and their mother, Marsilia. The family is tight-knit and protective of each other against outsiders, but they have their own internal tensions. Pandolfo despises Marsilia, Scarlata has been carrying on an affair with Martino while ostensibly being promised to Bernardo, and Bruna is upset at Martino for not providing her with a child.

The Baldovini Family: The Baldovinis are Fra Sisto's fervent devotees. The parents (Baldovino Ugi and his wife, Lucia), their sons (Brasca, Brunaccio, and Baldoccio), and their daughter (Lucilla) are entirely under the spell of the preacher's oratory. Before the eclipse, this meant that they lived fairly humble, spiritually-oriented lives, but with the rising of apocalyptic fervor, they have changed into something more fanatical.

Events

This story is broken up into four different events. Each has a series of attached scenes.

Event I:

Peter and the Library

Peter the Abbot is, by all accounts, not much of a writer in his own right. His translations are adequate at best, and many of his peers consider his work to lack a certain spark of



devotion. However, he's gentle, likeable, and hard-working and has an incredibly organized mind. His ability to index and categorize greater works by better writers and more spiritual men led the church to grant him a small abbey outside of town, a handful of scribes to work with, and a phenomenal library. His access and knowledge of the works contained within the library seems impossible for the work of one lifetime, but he's just so friendly, no one has ever wondered much about it. He's a boon, a blessing to have. His ability to dig up rare medical meditations and treatises on herbs and poisons has saved a dozen or more lives over the years in the surrounding area.

The problem is that Peter the Abbot is dead. He has been for about two hundred years now. He manages himself through prayer, hard work, and the sad sickly cows that the abbey maintains for milk and cheese making. It's possibly a known secret among some ranking members of the Church, but so far they've taken a look-the-other-way policy with Peter the Abbot because of his library and his usefulness in utilizing that library. There is literally no human scholar who could do what he does.

The manifestation of that problem has come with the eclipse. Peter has been exposed to the locals as the walking dead. It hasn't changed who or what he is, though. A great debate over poor Peter's fate has erupted, and the characters may be the ones who must make the final call.

Theme and Mood

The Church has been keeping a secret for years now, a hundred of them or more, a secret of convenience and in some ways, necessity. Peter the Abbot is as much an embarrassment as he is a potential threat to those in the Church who turned a blind eye.

But what about the good he's done, all monstrosity aside? What about the lives he has saved with his medical knowledge and occult references? The locals love him, or at least they did before he became exposed.

This is a town in conflict, and a local Church structure in agony over one sad little abbot who just happens to be the undead. The Storyteller should fill the story with conflict over rhetoric versus practical experience. Best practices versus the high ideals of the Inquisition play out in this part of the chronicle, to be sure, but the conflict can be much smaller too. What about the young cleric working at the abbey who has seen the horrid death mask of the abbot, but would have died but for Peter's ability to treat a serious infection he got as a child? Is there a way to meet and balance these extremes? Is the Inquisition even capable of this sort of compromise, especially when the Church itself might be threatened by exposure here? Certainly, there are those firebrands who might suggest that killing Peter (and perhaps his human allies) is the only way for the Church to save face, but what a terrible cost! What a terrible choice!

The Abbey at Monte Cassino

Built and rebuilt by Roman's and Pope's alike, Monte Cassino has long been home to one or another places of worship. Currently, the hill-top Abbey is home to an extensive and exhaustive library managed, maintain, and translated by the dedicate monks who live at the Abbey. It's current Abbot, Peter, has taken a particular interest in the occult and medical research, fostering that expansion in the vast and well organized library.

The physical Abbey itself is a four story tall rectangular structure with a large rectangular walk and garden inside the abbey walls. Scribes can be seen working the garden or reading in contemplative silence most of the year.

About a mile west of the Abbey is the small but vibrant town of Cassino, the locals there living in close relations with the abbey, managing book trade, pilgrims, and the import of whatever the monks need in exchange for spiritual and medical services. It is, in it's own way, an idyllic relationship.

Alonzo Beseeches

Brother Alonzo is a young, capable, good-looking man drawn to the Church as a youth, thanks to a natural bookishness in an age when academia was the sole domain of the Church. He's a simple Brother, and his vows aren't that limiting. As a result, he works as a go-between from the abbey to Cassino. He's good with the laity and beloved by the clergy. He's been studying under Peter for years now, and the abbot has no more dedicated student. Brother Alonzo was the first to see Peter's true face since the beginning of the eclipse.

He's since called out for help, having rushed to Cassino to find the abbot's most trusted supporters to warn them and rally them. He so devoted that he can accept Peter for what he really is, and will beseech anyone who might listen of the goodness of the abbot despite all appearances. He's sent out a few letters to his allies higher up in the church, including a long-time companion in Rome not twenty miles away. His pull there is not dramatic, but it is strong and it's possible that should things be timed right, his allies in Rome will arrive to influence things in Alonzo's favor.

If the characters will listen, he will tell them stories of Peter's kindness, his knowledge, and all the influential visitors from Rome and the rest of the world who come to visit Peter. He'll tell the characters about the boys he saved by driving back a demon possession three years ago. He's both persuasive and passionate, swaying the village quite strongly in favor of protecting the abbot at all costs.

Letters from the Cardinal

When the characters first arrive at the abbey itself, Peter is reluctant to see anyone from outside the abbey due to his current condition. It will take some doing to

convince him that they don't mean him any harm. They'll have to find some way to convince him to come out of hiding so they can deal with his situation in whatever way they ultimately choose to do so.

This scene really consists of a set of clues to help flesh out the situation the characters face. If at any point they go digging around the library, the Abbot's office or quarters, or even Alonzo's room, they can come across a stack of letters. You could even have them come across this collection of letters on the body of a messenger on the road on the way to the abbey.

Knowledge of the letters and their contents may give the characters the edge they need.

The letters date back at least a hundred years, one or two a year, and so this quite a collection of missives. They follow a series of exchanges from a young priest as he keeps tabs on Peter by letter. At first, the priest is skeptical of Peter's good intentions, and he reminds Peter that he is at the mercy of the Church, to be put down at any time. Over the years, the priest grows in influence, and more importantly, in fondness for the old vampire. The letters suggest they end up good friends by the time the priest is named Pope. Then, the letters change tone, becoming warnings and instructions to future men of the church how Peter is to be treated and, in many ways, maintained. Peter's skills, His Holiness insists, are a boon to the church, and any other 'unfortunate conditions' of the abbot should be politely ignored so that he may continue his good work in service to God and the Second Estate.

Eventually, the Pope dies, handing off the 'care' of Peter and his secret to a new young man on the fast track to a cardinal position. This current cardinal, Adamo, is less impressed by Peter, but willing to preserve the secret in memory of the late Pope.

The Abbot Himself

There are a few things that might cause Peter to emerge from his hiding spot so the characters can interact with him.

They may be able to convince him they're friends, but this will take some doing, as they'll have to shout the information about the abbey and hope he hears. If they've read the Cardinal's letters, they might have better luck with this.

If they can convince Alonzo they're here to help Peter, he may be able to draw the abbot out. Alonzo is smart and wisely suspicious, and putting anything over on him should be incredibly difficult. Better to approach him with honesty, if the characters can afford to be honest in this situation.

Threatening Alonzo and taking him as a prisoner will also draw Peter out. He will be resolute and broken, offering his life in exchange for Alonzo's freedom. He will passionately protest on behalf of keeping the young Brother safe. He will do whatever he can to avoid fighting, up to and including suicide, but he will, if pushed, use his dark

gifts against the characters if Alonzo's life is on the line. He feels that deeply about the young Brother.

If the Cardinal or the characters threaten the lives of those in Cassino, Peter will come out of hiding to aid and protect the townspeople, as he has for a hundred years or more. As with Alonzo, he is willing to lay down his unlife for the lives of others. However, if it comes to that, it is unlikely that his martyrdom will be remembered in that way.

If they meet with Peter on even terms, and it does not come to violence against him, he will tell them about the library. He will show them his incredible cataloguing of a vast collection of books. He can tell you page number on any obscure topic. It is his passion. Beyond that, he is barely animate, a cold fish of an old man, now looking like a wizened and dried corpse that sounds of dried paper whenever he moves. There's no hint of violence or rage inside him, and he'll remark this makes him unique (and unwelcome) among other vampires, which is another reason he is so grateful to the Church. If he survives, his research abilities would be an incredible boon to the characters as they hunt. He would make a valuable ally.

The Pushback

When Cardinal Adamo and his people arrive at the abbey, they will have been troubled the entire way, their tempers are short, and frankly, they're bloodthirsty and sword-sure. Seeing Peter in his emaciated and horrible true face will not do much to assuage their desire to wipe the whole place off the map. They will take key points around the village and demand Peter come and answer Adamo's summons.

From there, it can get very messy.

Will the characters help Peter in convincing the cardinal there's no reason to attack anyone? Will Peter have to sacrifice himself to save lives, and will he need to be convinced not to leap to suicide when there may still be other options on the table? Will the characters instead side with the Cardinal and his men in their desire for a quick and dirty solution, fighting and killing these foolish scribes and townspeople who have been so corrupted by Peter's obvious vampiric manipulations? How many will they have to cut down in the name of God?

Travel and Arrival

Even if the Inquisitors choose to go to Peter's Abbot first, there are dangers and travel time to consider. Depending on how late into the chronicle they characters decide to journey to the abbot, the Storyteller should choose the successes needed at an increasing rate. Should they go here first, it might only take one success. They'll need one more success per adventure they've already taken part in to arrive in time. For more on dramatic travel in this chronicle, see p. 83.

Below are suggestions to help guide the potential fallout of dallying or otherwise not arriving at the abbot in time.

If they arrive in time: The village nearby has not yet caught a glimpse of Peter in his revealed condition, and only his most trusted companions now know that he not human. Word is headed to the local cardinal that Peter may have been exposed, but he has not arrived yet and in theory, things can be managed before he even arrives.

If they arrive just when things go bad: The rumor has traveled, and a few of the bravest and most curious villagers have come to see what's wrong with their beloved abbot. They will be somewhere between shocked, betrayed, and horrified, and careless words or careful manipulation could still sway the locals one way or another. The cardinal is on his way, and he's not happy about coming out here for this purpose.

If they arrive already too late: The cardinal and his men are here already, and have decided there is nothing to be done but purify the entire area, the abbey, the abbot, his clerks and scribes, and whatever villagers have been 'corrupted' by Peter's presence. The village has responded, and while most of them are not as skilled as the military men that the cardinal has at hand, some of them have experience in war, they are armed, and they are many. The bloodshed is likely to be gruesome.

Possible Obstacle to Travel: Ghosts. The abbey itself was possibly built on an ancient shrine to Apollo, which lays dormant under the Christianized structures above. However, the powerful mystical event of the eclipse has roused ancient, angry priest-ghosts of the old way. They appear, bother, and attack travelers on the road with blinding, burning beams of ghost-light enraged by anything that looks remotely Christian. For more on how obstacles work with the dramatic travel system used in this chronicle, see p. 83.

Event 2: The family Esposito

The Esposito family has considerable wealth and influence. Their family winery in the suburbs of Genoa sell bottles as far away as Paris, and it's rumored they even export their wares to Egypt and along the Silk Road. Their wine is exceptional, and they have always seemed to have a knack for predicting good and bad seasons, altering their grape crops in anticipation of those predictions.

It seems entirely possible that the family does have some sort of precognitive gifts, or at least an advanced knowledge of astronomy and climate studies and the omens that indicate coming misfortune and bad weather. Because of this, they suspected that something terrible was coming, and in desperation, reached out to their allies in the Church. They pulled in every favor they could to this end, and risked their very lives because they believed, and perhaps rightly so, that the risk to their own lives was

worth it, considering the potential for chaos and bloodshed without Church intervention.

While they did not know the full extent of what the eclipse would do, their oldest and honored great-grandmother warned them that the eclipse would expose them. Their secret would be revealed to the city, and that exposure could (and most likely would) result in terrible bloodshed between the family and the citizens of Genoa as they panicked in the face of truth.

The truth, in this case, is that the Esposito family is (and has been for a very long time) a very large multigenerational pack of werewolves. To the best of its ability, the family has, pulled into their winery outside of Genoa in hope of avoiding exposure, but this may not be possible. After all, the Espositos have been living and loving in and around the Genoa, and their family lines may actually spread farther than even they realized. It seems that the stress of fear and paranoia has triggered more than a few eruptions of lycanthropy.

Theme and Mood

Genoa sits in anticipation of the horrors the suddenly darkened sky have in store. Rumors spread from citizen to citizen, and those inside the city eye their neighbors with suspicion and watch the shadows with an unshakable, primitive fear of the dark most adults have long since outgrown. Stories of men turned to beasts running along the roads, howling at the moon, stole chickens and maybe maidens, have long floated around Genoa. Up until now, they were stories told to frighten children and excite youths. Since the eclipse, someone has seen a thing, and told another person. Everyone in Genoa knows someone who knows someone who saw a terrible transformation, or has seen a half-man half-beast, covered in blood-soaked fur and baring thirsty, gleaming fangs.

Outside of the city, things are scarcely better for the Espositos. Their great-grandmother has been warning, threatening even, for years that this night would come, and that the eclipse would mean bloodshed and death for everyone. She whispered from human mouth and howled from wolverine maw that the eclipse would mean the deaths of every last Esposito, or the deaths of hundreds of fragile humans of Genoa. She has long claimed there was no other way. Out of desperate fear that Great-Grandmother might be correct, Edoardo Esposito reached out to his allies everywhere, especially his allies in the Church, to stop what many members of the family take as inevitable. They have two choices: give in to fate that's long been predicted and become the monsters that the Espositos have long resisted and be killed anyway, or, as they chose to do, reach out to the Church and await the brutality that would surely bring down on their heads. Mercy, Edoardo's letters all read. Show mercy on us so afflicted, because if the Church cannot find some sort of mercy, perhaps there's no hope for anyone.

Scenes

The characters may explore Genoa and the surrounding area in any number of paths, and so what follows are simply locations where events might take place. The Storyteller should guide the characters to experience most or all of these scenes, but let the characters explore beyond them, should the characters like. Simply take note if the characters take an especially long time exploring Genoa, as it will likely increase the successes necessary to travel to the next part of the chronicle as a part of dramatic travel. (See p. 83.)

The Marketplace

Andrea's mother isn't a member of the Esposito family. It's important to note that her mother delivered linen to the winery and spends a lot of time there, but she and her husband aren't members of the family. And yet, there was always rumor, talk, about just how friendly Edoardo and Andrea's mother were, and are to this day. What's more important, though, is that Andrea has stopped in the middle of the street, dropped a basket of bread she'd just purchased at the bakery, and started to scream.

She screams, not out of fear, but out of pain. Her back straightens and her arms splay outward, fingers like claws in a painful and involuntary convulsion. And that's only the start of the suffering.

She pitches forward, still screaming in pain, and her simple dress tears as her back expands rapidly, the skin actually peeling back to reveal a dense fur pelt under it. Her screaming mouth stretches out horribly into a fang-filled maw, and her clenched fingers throw their nails, long black talons ripping through her fingertips.

Sweet Andrea, it appears, is a werewolf. And everyone watched it happen.

Do the characters simply put her down? Do they try to incapacitate her and bring her to the Espositos? Will they get a chance before guards come to do the job as they see it? How many will die if she's driven to violence out of a desire to survive stronger even than her suffering?

The Esposito Winery

Under normal conditions, the Winery is a busy place by day and open late into the night. Great-Grandmother Esposito still manages the business side of the winery, directing servants and family as they work the fields and the production of their family wine. Into the evening and late night, Edoardo, her son, takes over managing matters by wining and dining visitors and business associates, hosting members of the Church in the area, and on holidays, welcoming many citizens into the winery to keep relations fluid and friendly, often intimately so.





Arriving day or night, things are different as the characters reach the winery. It's quiet, but not peaceful; more like an anxious child holding their breath for fear of being caught doing something wrong.

As they venture into the Espositos' home (maybe declaring their intention, maybe not), Edoardo and Great-Grandmother Esposito will eventually reveal themselves to the Inquisitors with intent to beg for the mercy Edoardo wrote about when he wrote to his allies in the Church. They are horrible, this mother and son. The old lady is hunched with mangy gray and silver hair covering her entire body. Her maw is missing many teeth, and she only sees out of one reflective yellow eye; the other is milky with cataract. Edoardo is easily eight feet tall, his shirt torn apart by his incredible size, his wolf-like head as majestic as it is terrible sitting on his fur-covered body.

They can speak, and they will speak. They claim that since the eclipse, they cannot control their form, but that isn't the norm. Everyone can see their true selves, though normally humans simply forget what they've seen when they meet one of the pack in this form. They explain that they have been in hiding, hoping to call in as many of their pack as possible and keep the humans out. But they are deeply afraid that other potential members of the family live in secret in Genoa, and could be in grave danger. More, they are terrified of human curiosity, and their tendency to respond with violence when they're afraid. Edoardo will admit too, that his family is violence prone as well, and dreads the potential fallout should a conflict arise.

Edoardo begs the characters, that they help hold citizens back, or perhaps go and collect any lost cubs that may pop up tonight. Or any missing cousins. He begs them to not respond only with violence, but understands that the Inquisition is the Inquisition, and hopes to minimize the deaths as much as possible.

An Assault on the Nunnery

Perhaps because a fair number of women who 'fall' do it on account of a man in the Esposito family, there are more than a few potential Esposito orphans and sisters otherwise abandoned by their families in a small convent in the city. In parallel (unless people know what the Espositos are), there is a rumor circulating that there are werewolves in the convent. As a result, a small but dedicated mob has formed outside of the convent to break in and burn any suspected werewolves found inside.

They will, of course, find terrified and embittered werewolves within. The question is, who will the characters side with? Can they prevent a fight from breaking out so that they can avoid picking sides to begin with? What will they do with any werewolves that survive? Honor Edoardo's wishes, or take more extreme measures?

Blood in the Vineyard

It is possible that despite (or possibly because of) the character's meddlings, there will be some kind of confrontation at the vineyard. No less than ten men will probably show at the vineyard for this final confrontation. The size of the mob will depend on how hard the characters work to keep the citizens of Genoa from discovering much about the werewolves in town, or how hard they work to rally an army themselves.

It is possible the characters can still talk the mob down and drive them away from this final conflict. It is also possible that they rile the mob and use them as a weapon against the family.

The family will try to stick to the shadows and hide their monstrosity from the mob while still coming out to frighten them off.

Make no mistake, the scene is tense, and one wrong move will result in violence. However, it's possible to minimize this with diplomacy or quick thinking. And then? On to the next eclipse-fueled catastrophe.

Travel and Arrival

Even if the Inquisitors choose to go to look into the trouble the Esposito family is suffering first, there are dangers and travel time to consider. Depending on how late into the chronicle the characters decide to journey to Genoa, the Storyteller should choose the successes needed at an increasing rate. Should they go here first, it might only take one success. They'll need one more success per adventure they've already taken part in to arrive in time. For more on dramatic travel in this Chronicle, see p. 83.

Below are suggestions to help guide the potential fallout of dallying or otherwise not arriving at the right time to address the Espositos' situation.

If they arrive in time: There may still be time to sequester the clan back at their winery until such time as the eclipse fades. While the clan may ultimately need to be cleansed from the earth, the characters are in no position to root out a pack this large, and they tithe a great deal of money to the local church. Keeping the town from seeing just how many werewolves in their midst is the only way to ensure lasting calm until the Inquisition can decide what, if anything, to do for the city.

If they arrive just when things go bad: Citizens of Genoa have spotted werewolves in and around the city. Rumors circulate that the city is in great danger, and since no one knows who the werewolves are when they are men and not beasts, no one is to be trusted. Anything the characters attempt to do will be met with paranoia and not unreasonable fear, making their investigation and negotiations very difficult indeed.

If they arrive already too late: The Espositos have been driven past the breaking point, their cousins have been

kidnapped and murdered, and they feel there is no choice but to go to war. The bloodshed will be complete, as a pack of werewolves as large as the Esposito family can do a great deal of damage, the Inquisition presence notwithstanding.

Possible Obstacle to Travel: In journeying to Genoa, the characters run across a well that has spoiled. In fact, the groundwater in the area in general has been corrupted, and as a result, drinking water will have to wait, or else everyone gets sick along the way. And that's if they can identify the problem with the water to begin with! For more on how to use obstacles during dramatic travel, see p. 83.

Event 3:

Under Olive Boughs

Once every year in the village of Palaia, young wives take to the olive groves to entreat the spirit of the grove for the gift of a child. In the past, the Church has turned a blind eye to the custom, but as omens gather during the eclipse, the Inquisition can allow no deviation from the path of the faithful to go unexamined. Little do the Inquisitors know that there is more at work in Palaia than simple heresy or pagan superstition: rival supernatural forces are about to clash, with humans caught between them.

Theme and Mood

This part of the Inquisitor's story is about jubilation and desperation. On what was supposed to be a day of feast and festivity, the sun has darkened and a cold rain falls on Palaia. The people of the village are caught between their fears and their need to find some spark of hope in the day turned night. The Inquisitors can offer that hope if they are careful, but if they take the path of unwavering zeal, they will be just as destructive as the forces they fight against.

The Call to Palaia

Information about Palaia's peculiar custom comes from the Procurator Fiscalis, either by letter or through an envoy to the Inquisitors' cell. His description of the situation is simple: the married women of Palaia have, for many years, gone into the olive groves on the feast day of St. Boniface to petition the saint to bless them with fertility. Although the Church has long suspected that these prayers are the relics of some older tradition, the clergy has treated them leniently in the past. While there is no sign that the saint intervenes on behalf of the women involved, there is also no indication that the practice hides any sort of pagan debauchery.

Now, however, the Inquisition must be vigilant for all signs of the unnatural, whether it is heresy, paganism, witchcraft, or worse. The cell, therefore, is ordered to investigate Palaia and its people—and if necessary, root out any misdeeds.

Truth and Phantasmagoria

The secret behind the St. Boniface rites is that they are, indeed, pagan. Centuries ago, an Inanimae—in this case, one born of the olive grove itself—swore an oath to the villagers' ancestors. So long as they would tend the grove and keep its existence a secret, it would ensure that the olive trees flourished. Moreover, on one day of the year, it would give a blessing of fertility to any woman who found it hiding among the other trees. To this day, both the humans and the fae have upheld the oath.

All of this may change on the day of the eclipse, which is also the day that marks the end of the Oath-Truce that has kept the warring courts of the fae in check for centuries. Although the Inanimae, Cantemorio, is a relatively peaceful creature of the Spring Court, it has a rival from the Winter Court, Demalion, who has waited patiently to redress an old grievance. As soon as the eclipse begins, Demalion rushes across the countryside toward Palaia, spreading destruction in his wake.

An Unnatural Rain

The first sign that something is wrong in the area around Palaia is the rain that begins to fall as soon as the Inquisitors are within a mile of the village. It's a torrential downpour, icy cold without turning to sleet or hail, and coating everything it touches with an oily film. Any character with a sense for the supernatural can immediately detect that the storm is not an ordinary one; it smells of bog-earth and decaying fish, not so strongly as to be overpowering, but enough to suggest an otherworldly source.

The rain is a constant throughout this scenario, ending only when Demalion is killed or driven off. The longer it falls, the more damage it will do to Palaia's crops. If the inquisitors do not find the source, it will ruin them completely and drive the village into starvation.

Rolls to track anyone through the rain are made at +2 difficulty, as are any other Perception rolls when both the character and the target are outdoors and more than five yards apart.

The Village of Palaia

Palaia stands on a hillside, looking down over olive groves, vineyards, and fields of sprouting vegetables. It is a place in transition, but it is hard to tell whether it is being built up or falling into ruin; in the northeast is the base of a square stone tower from which extend the outlines of an equally unfinished wall that run only a handful of yards before ending. The heart of the village is a horseshoe of stone buildings belonging to its prominent families, all encircling a covered well, but beyond those, Palaia's other homes are more humble constructions of wood and thatch.

There is a single small church in the village, barely distinguishable from its other stone houses except for its

whitewashed walls and empty bell tower. Its interior is as modest as its exterior: a few bare wooden pews, a simple altar, and a carved and painted wooden crucifix. The walls are decorated with fading murals of Jesus teaching his disciples under the shade of flourishing grapevines.

When the Inquisitors arrive, the only light in the village shines through the shuttered windows of the largest of the stone houses, that belonging to the Albertini family.

Scenes in Palaia

These scenes take place during Under Olive Boughs.

The Albertini House

For St. Boniface's Day, the Albertinis have invited their fellow villagers into their home to feast and drink while waiting for those women who have sought out the saint's blessing to return. The combination of rain and portentous darkness has forced the family to bring all thirty of their guests inside to share the noisy, cramped, and hot main room of the house. And it is very noisy, cramped, and hot—perhaps a welcome change from the bleakness of outdoors for a little while, but it quickly becomes suffocating.

Gaining entrance to the house is not difficult. The Albertinis are hospitable enough to welcome strangers on such a dire day, offer them bread, hot stew, and strong red wine. Provided the characters are polite, they will be given places at one of the long wooden tables that dominate the house's main room, spread out among the other villagers. Their tablemates are eager for news of the rest of the countryside, and welcoming of conversation.

If asked about the St. Boniface rites, the initial response is to shrug and be dismissive. The men will say that they do not know and the older women will either say (to men) that it is a women's matter or (to women) that the saint is good to those who pray to him. A successful Perception+Empathy check (difficulty 6) will give a character the impression that the people are holding something back. Getting more detailed information will depend on who the characters speak to.

If the Inquisitors are hostile or confrontational in their questioning, Alberto Albertini will order them out, and a dozen or so of Palaia's young men will rise to support him. Otherwise, neither he nor his wife will have time to interact much beyond the initial welcome.

Each character has the chance to speak to one or two of the guests, up to a total of six of the nine listed below. Once they have spoken to six, a young woman bursts into the house, trembling and soaked with rain. "Something is in the olive groves," she says breathlessly. "Everyone else is dead!"

What the Guests Know

Francesco Becchi: His wife took part in the St. Boniface rites when she was alive, but she never bore him any

children, so he doubts that the saint has any interest in what prayers he hears. Besides, if the saint had any power over Palaia at all, wouldn't he protect them from the rain and the darkness?

Perino Becchi: The saint has always answered prayers in the past; if he has turned his back on Palaia now, it is because of some sin inside the village itself. He believes that the rites are effective, but knows little about them except that they are only for married women. Maybe, he suggests, they get up to some sort of witchcraft in the groves.

Filippa Davanzati: Both of her sons were conceived with the help of the rites. She knows that the creature in the olive groves is not a sign from St. Boniface; to her, it is "something that was old when Rome was young." She has kept that secret from everyone, including her husband, but while the guilt still weighs upon her, she will say nothing unless strongly coerced.

Masino Consigli: He is certain of the saint's power, although he knows nothing about the rites themselves. His confidence stems from his healthy newborn son, Tommaso, who was born nine months after his wife visited the groves on the last feast-day.

Carletta Consigli: She took part in the rites last year and would have again today if it were not for the rain. However much her husband wants another child, he recognizes that she is too tired for such exertion. If asked about the rites themselves, she will give a simple answer: women who desire a child pray to St. Boniface, then go out into the groves with a strip of cloth in their hand and tie it to the branches of one of the olive trees. If the saint favors them, they will become pregnant in the coming month and the child will be healthy. Even the pain of childbirth is lessened, she adds. If pressed on the matter of whether she saw anything unusual there, though, she will reluctantly admit that she thought she saw the saint's face on the tree where she tied her cloth.

Orlanduccio Lorini: He believes, although no one else does, that the Antichrist will be born through a perversion of the village rites, and must be destroyed as soon as possible. In his mind, the rites are thoroughly pagan and should be ended anyway, but for some reason, none of the elders in the village agree.

Cecco Setti: He has little interest in talking about the rites. Yes, his wife took part in it many times, but he could never tell if she won the favor of the saint or if his own natural virility was responsible for his children.

Pieruccio Setti: He has nothing to say about the rites; they are, as most other villagers would say, matters for women, and Pieruccio shrugs such things off without a second thought. What he can say, however, is that anyone who wonders about the power of the saint to intervene in the life of Palaia's people should pay attention to the children with green eyes.

Don Rafael: While he does not entirely approve of the village rites, he is also very protective of his flock and will not give away their secrets, even to other members of

the clergy. He downplays the importance of the feast-day, deflects questions onto other topics, and generally dismisses the entire matter as harmless.

The Olive Groves

The olive groves just outside of Palaia include over a hundred mature trees and many more young ones. The trees are spread far enough apart to let each one flourish, but are not arranged in neat rows. Vision among the trees is limited to about ten yards before one or another tree trunk gets in the way.

Cantemorio spends most of the year inanimate or hidden through the use of fae magic, simply looking like one tree among many. Like most of his kind, he has little sense of the passage of time, but he always awakens on the day when he must uphold his oath to the villagers. His dedication to the oath is such that he will not leave the bounds of the groves under any circumstances—even if under attack—until he has fulfilled his part of the bargain on St. Boniface's Day.

He is aware that his enemy is approaching, but while he is a strong and sturdy creature, he has few ways to defend himself from attack, especially when the Phantasmagoria strips away his ability to conceal himself. His best hope is to flee, and he will if he can do so without breaking his oath. However much he wants to, he cannot do anything to draw the attention of any of the women searching for him, either. They must find him on their own.

Demalion will descend on the groves not long after the Inquisitors reach the village. If they spend too much time at the Albertini house, he will start attacking the women taking part in the rites, then move on to his true foe. Demalion is a creature of water and darkness, quick in his movements and able to use the combination of his conjured rain and the eclipse to hide until he is ready to strike. He knows Cantemorio's oath, which is why he purposefully kills those who could allow the other fae to uphold it.

At the beginning of the St. Boniface rites, there are eight women in the groves searching for Cantemorio. For every conversation that the player characters take part in with the Storyteller characters in the Albertini house, Demalion will have enough time to kill one of them. When there are only two left, one of them will flee back to the house after discovering the bodies of several of the others and alert the Inquisitors. If they arrive sooner, more of the women will still be alive and will run to the safety of the village.

Because the Inquisitors are not from Palaia, Cantemorio is not bound to his obligation not to reveal himself to them. If approached, he will speak and beg their mercy. He warns them that there is a "dark and murderous spirit" in the groves, and that he was powerless to protect the women from it. He is genuinely distraught





CANTEMORIO

Forced into his fae mien, Cantemorio stands twelve feet tall with a hide of bark and branches sprouting from his back. He is strong, but he is not a warrior: his powers are those giving gifts of fertility to plants, animals, and humans, none of which are helpful in his current predicament.

Powers: Body of Ancient Wood (one extra Bruised Health Level; soaks 8 dice of damage from bashing or lethal attacks, but only 3 dice from fire, cold, or other sources; moves one yard per turn), Branch Swipe (2 dice to attack, 5 dice bashing damage), One Tree Among Many (while remaining still and silent, the difficulty to spot him by ordinary Perception checks is 9).

DEMALION

This Firstborn of the Winter Court is tall, long-limbed, and pale-skinned. He wears a coat of armor resembling blackened fish scales and wields a spear forged from bone and faerie ice. Cunning and driven by anger, he will turn the full force of his martial and magical abilities against anyone who gets between him and Cantemorio.

Powers: Armor of Scales (soaks 5 dice of damage from bashing or lethal sources), Spear of Ice (5 dice to attack, 4 dice lethal damage, and anyone injured by a strike must make a difficulty 6 Willpower check or lose their next action due to cold), Fluid Body and Cloak of Shadows (8 dice on Stealth checks; 3 dice to dodge weapon attacks no matter how many actions he has taken on his turn; this power does not work for one turn if he is damaged by fire or exposed to bright light), Freezing Blast (4 dice ranged attack, 4 dice lethal damage, and anyone injured by the blast is rooted to the ground for one turn).

as he explains; he thinks of the villagers like a family and wants only to help them prosper. If they attack him, he will defend himself with his fists, but not retreat. If they listen to him, he can tell them that fire and sunlight are the best weapons against the creature stalking the groves.

Demalion, meanwhile, will only attack the Inquisitors on two conditions: if they speak to Cantemorio or if there are women in the group. Not knowing whether the women are or are not part of his enemy's oath, he takes no chances. His preference is to use his Freezing Blast for as long as possible, darting back into the shadows after each attack while warning the characters not to interfere in his revenge. If driven into the open, he switches to his spear and focuses his attention on the weakest-looking of the group first.

Travel and Arrival

Even if the Inquisitors choose to go to look into the rites in Palaia first, there are dangers and travel time to consider. Depending on how late into the chronicle the characters decide to journey to the village, the Storyteller should choose the successes needed at an increasing rate. Should they go here first, it might only take one success. They'll need one more success per adventure they've already taken part in to arrive in time. For more on dramatic travel in this chronicle, see p. 83.

Below are suggestions to help guide the potential fall out of dallying or otherwise not arriving at Palaia.

If they arrive in time: The Albertinis' feast is in full swing, giving characters time to share a meal, talk with the locals, and gather information.

If they arrive just as things go bad: Although the feast is continuing, there is no time to rest or talk; the girl who escaped from the groves rushes into the Albertinis' house almost immediately.

If they arrive too late: The village is in mourning. All of the girls who went out to take part in the rites are dead, killed by what appear to be spear wounds. Cantemorio is dead as well, leaving behind only an ice-crust olive tree. They may be able to follow Demalion's tracks moving away from the village, but following him is no easy task.

Aftermath

If Demalion is defeated, the freezing rain ends within minutes, but the sky remains dark. How the Inquisitors want to deal with Cantemorio is up to them. As for the people of Palaia, they have sinned by knowingly harboring the fae, but whether that is a crime worthy of punishment is also up to the Inquisitors to decide.

Event 4: The Witch at the End of the World

The tiny village of Libbiano is in the grip of fear. There is a witch among them, drawing wolves to slaughter their flocks and striking dead those who offend her. This sign of the Devil's growing power and the coming of the eclipse have further convinced the people that the End Times are upon them. Can the Inquisitors intervene to prevent fear from becoming frenzy?

Theme and Mood

This is a story of blind conviction and the struggle to find justice in the Dark Medieval world. Just as Inquisitors are driven by the twin forces of piety and pride, so too are the people of Libbiano. They are faithful, but so frightened

by a world they cannot understand that they cannot see what the truth is around them.

The Call to Libbiano

The information on Libbiano from the Procurator Fiscalis is limited. There have been reports of wolves attacking the villagers' flocks of sheep and goats even after the lean months of winter, and there have long been stories circulating in the area about shapeshifting witches who suck the blood of infants and the elderly, but nothing in the way of clear details. Although the Procurator is inclined to believe that these rumors are nothing more than exaggerations and local superstitions, the Inquisitors' cell is to investigate them regardless.

Truth and Phantasmagoria

The Procurator is, in the case of Libbiano, largely correct. There is no witch in the village, only frightened people desperately trying to understand what is happening to their world and looking for a scapegoat. While the wolf attacks are real, they, too, are mundane in origin.

The danger in the village comes from a different direction: the possibility that the people, to protect themselves from imagined witchcraft or the wrath of God, will fall into even greater sins. Even worse, that danger will not end when the eclipse does. There will still be a poisonous fear in Libbiano that will eventually lead to tragedy and violence.

The Village of Libbiano

Libbiano can barely be called a village at all. There are only four houses, all built of the same rough gray stone and flanked by wooden sheds. One of them can be seen to be a small church, taller and narrower than the other houses, next to which are the worn stone markers of the village graveyard. The first impression Libbiano gives is one of desolation; if the entire village were abandoned, it would look no different than it does when the Inquisitors arrive. The only signs of life are the flocks of sheep and goats that cry plaintively from the level fields nearby.

Wolves in the Fold

A pack of wolves roams the forest just beyond the fields where the families of Libbiano keep their flocks, sometimes dashing in to catch an animal that strays too far from the rest. Most of the time, there will be someone there to drive the beasts off, but the combination of icy rain and darkness has left the flock without any protector.

If the Inquisitors choose to search for the wolves in order to determine whether or not they are natural, they can find tracks at the edge of the forest fairly easily. Following them deeper into the woods requires a tracking roll (Perception + Survival, difficulty 7), with only one success needed. If the tracker rolls three or more successes, they

can determine that the pack has between six and eight members of different sizes.

Deeper in the woods, near where the wolves make their lair, the tracks cross the ruins of a small pagan shrine. There is little left of it but a few stones to mark where its walls once were, the base of a broken column, and a small statue that has been reduced to a pair of winged feet. The people of Libbiano know nothing of the shrine, nor does anyone else. It is nothing but a relic of an older time.

The wolfpack will confront the Inquisitors if they track it to the shrine, because of its proximity to the animals' lair. They will circle at a distance, then charge in pairs to attack each character. Although they are hungry, they are not so starved that they will fight to the death. The first lethal or aggravated damage that a wolf takes is enough to drive it away, but the pack will continue to trail after the characters so long as they remain in the forest.

The Witch of Libbiano

Asking questions about witchcraft in Libbiano will meet with different answers, depending on who is asked. Although there is no genuine witch in the village, tensions are high enough that individuals may make accusations freely.

Piera is the least likely to make them against others, but the most likely to be suspected. Her home is filled with drying herbs as well as medicines (some helpful, some poisonous) and salves that she has concocted herself. Anyone else in Libbiano can tell Inquisitors asking about her that her mother was also a healer, one with a reputation for mixing remedies that were almost miraculous in their effectiveness. They will also remember that her mother argued frequently with the last village priest, that she accompanied her healing work with prayers in some foreign language, and that she had a supernatural gift for calming animals. If Piera has the same witch's blood in her veins, it could explain why her flock of sheep has never been attacked by the wolves around the village and also why her husband died so suddenly.

The truth is more mundane: descriptions of Piera's mother's skill have been exaggerated over time, and while she did argue with the old priest, it was because he was secretly Piera's father. Her incantations were Christian prayers in a bastardized form of Latin. Her talent with animals was unusual, but by no means supernatural. As for Piera's sheep, they have been safe for two reasons: first, because she watches them and the movements of the wolves vigilantly and always brings the flock to shelter if they are in danger; second, because of an herbal ointment that she rubs into their wool, one whose odor the wolves find noxious.

Piera is, however, guilty of her husband's murder. An Inquisitor using the Moral Compass Blessing will sense the heavy weight of sin upon her. Her guilt for that crime, combined with an awareness of what the other people



of Libbiano believe about her, makes her reluctant to speak too freely to any Inquisitors that come to her door asking questions. She will tell them outright that there are no witches in the village. If they are looking for signs of the Devil's work, she will say, they should look elsewhere.

The situation with the Pandolfis is more complicated than with Piera. The animosity and secrecy within the family approach a crisis; asking questions about witchcraft may be just enough to push them into turning on each other. If asked as a group whether or not they believe that there is a witch in the village, the family will not only agree, but say that it is obviously Piera. Pandolfo will tell the story of her mother, while his sons explain that her animals are seemingly immune to harm from wolves. Marsilia will voice her suspicions about Amadio's death; she thought he was a brute of a man, but he was too strong and too healthy just to wither away and die so easily. She would not be surprised if Piera cursed him or called up some demon to strike him down.

But the household has other stories to tell as well, which they will share only if they have the chance to talk to the Inquisitors separately. Bruna has begun to suspect that her sister is having an affair with her husband and will hint that she has seen Scarlata lighting candles at night while reciting charms over them. She also believes that Scarlata has cursed Martino with impotence, since he seems to have lost interest in her ever since her sister came to live with them. Pandolfo, meanwhile, is more than willing to suggest that Marsilia may have been responsible for at least Amadio's death. He knows that the old woman had a grudge against him ever since he (accidentally) knocked her into the mud outside of church last Easter.

If Scarlata is confronted with Bruna's accusations, she will first be outraged that her sister could claim such a thing. If pressed about her nocturnal practices, she will admit that she has said a few prayers to the Blessed Virgin at night and claim that they are only for the safety of the family. (She was actually praying that she not be pregnant after the last of her trysts with Martino, but will not admit that unless strongly compelled.)

If Martino or Bernardo notice that the Inquisitors' questions risk tearing the family apart, they will take action by loudly proclaiming that they know Piera is the witch. Taking up torches, they will try to lead the group directly to her home to face her, all the while making escalating claims about her supposed misdeeds. They say that they have seen her riding a black goat on nights of the full moon, that she goes into the woods to perform pagan rites, that she keeps a wolf skin hidden under her house and uses it to transform into a beast. They will say anything they can to divert attention from their family.

The Church of Santo Spirito

Libbiano has not had a village priest for the past year. Instead, its people follow the guidance of a lay preacher, Fra Sisto, who arrived there shortly after his predecessor died of old age. A charismatic and enthusiastic orator, he quickly won them over with his sermons on the corruption of the world and the perfection of spiritual life that awaited them in the future. They did not care that he performed the Mass in their native Tuscan dialect instead of Latin. If anything, they appreciated it, just as they appreciated the new insights he offered them into the true meaning of the Word of God.

Fra Sisto is a Cathar, a member of the dualist sect that believes the material world to be an evil creation that must be transcended to achieve perfection. He was converted to the path by some of those who fled from the persecutions of the Albigensian Crusade, and has wandered across southern Europe for years to spread his message. With little education and only a partial understanding of Cathar doctrine, however, he has come to create his own, more apocalyptic, interpretation of theology.

From the moment that the eclipse began to darken the sky, he gathered his half-dozen closest followers from the Baldovini family and revealed his vision: that the time had come when the faithful had to demonstrate their devotion to the true spiritual God by mortifying their flesh, even to the point of death. And that is what they are doing.

Inside the crumbling walls of the church, Fra Sisto and his followers—four men and two women—pray aloud for deliverance from evil as they torture themselves and each other. Whether with knotted ropes, thorny branches, or stout staves, they seek to show God that they deserve to be among the elect. All the while, the preacher exhorts them further while he warns of the hellish torments that await those who are left behind when God gathers up His own.

Fra Sisto has also warned them that the forces of Babylon—his term for the Church corrupted by the material world—will try to stop them. If the Baldovinis are interrupted in their practices by any stranger they think might be of Babylon, they will swarm, weak and bloodied, to attack.

In their frenzied state, the followers use the rules for animal swarms rather than individuals (Damage 6, Health Levels 12, Initiative 5). They will try to keep the Inquisitors at the door of the church to prevent more than one or two from fighting back at any time. Fra Sisto, meanwhile, encourages them from the rear while brandishing a knife, ready to cut his own throat if his flock fails to protect him.

Travel and Arrival

Even if the Inquisitors choose to visit Libbiano first, there are dangers and travel time to consider. Depending on how late into the chronicle the characters decide to

journey to the village, the Storyteller should choose the successes needed at an increasing rate. Should they go here first, it might only take one success. They'll need one more success per adventure they've already taken part in to arrive in time. For more on dramatic travel in this chronicle, see below.

Below are suggestions to help guide the potential fall out of dallying or otherwise not arriving in time.

If they arrive in time: Fra Sisto's followers will not have started their bloody self-sacrifice, but they are inside the church already and gradually being worked into a frenzy.

If they arrive just as things go bad: The cries of Fra Sisto and his disciples are audible throughout the village, drawing some of the other villagers out to investigate just as the Inquisitors arrive.

If they arrive too late: Seven fresh corpses lie in the village's church, with no explanation of how they came to be so mangled. Meanwhile, the villagers, having just discovered the bodies, are ready to turn on Piera and accuse her of witchcraft.

Travel and Adventure, No Grief

There are a plethora of games that cover the nit-tty-gritty of travel in pre-modern eras. Travel by horse or by ship is tracked down to the minute with charts and cross-references. Those games are great, but that mode of communicating travel simply doesn't work in a game that focuses more on drama and the cinematic.

Instead, this adventure treats travel as a function of drama and focuses on the 'why' of travel and not the 'how,' or more importantly, the 'what if.'

If your characters are traveling to a place with no pressing concern, there is no reason to roll dice. You might stage a scene for roleplaying along the way. You might have them run into an obstacle or danger they might need to overcome, but these are easily handled by the normally structured scenes and existing systems.

However, if you're characters have to travel a considerable distance in a difficult amount of time in order to get to some important event, that's where you bring in the Dramatic Travel rules.

Dramatic Travel

This system is used throughout the adventure, to reflect challenges in travel.

Decide on the Event

There is some important event happening at a specific place at a dramatically appropriate time. What is that scene?

Is it a coronation? An execution? A marriage? Whatever the event is, make sure that the Storyteller and the players are on the same page as to where and what it is, and have a loose idea of when it will happen.

Decide on the Place

Where this event takes place is important, but should be seen as relative. If you know how far away in miles or days travel your characters are from the event that's about to take place, that's great! In order to use Dramatic Travel, however, you're going to need to make sure that crossing that distance in the amount of time the characters have is tight or maybe even impossible. Delay them. Put boundaries in their way. Get them lost. The important thing is, before you start your Dramatic Travel scene, the distance the characters need to travel is relative to how bad things will go if they don't get there in time.

Decide on the Stakes

Now, as the Storyteller, you need to decide what will happen if the players get there on time, what happens if they get there just when things go bad, and what happens if they get there when it's already too late.

"They get there in time" means that the characters can do some planning and act on those plans, or otherwise have an edge when they arrive.

"They get there just as things go bad" means that as the characters ride in, you may want to start the scene in media res. No time for planning or preparation. The drama and danger has already hit the wall and the characters will have to scramble if they hope to salvage the event. Put an important Storyteller character in danger, or risk the possibility that they lose an important piece of information or tool.

"They get there when it's already too late" means the characters have missed their moment and the worst thing that could go on has gone on. This should be a pretty big deal, and it should change the course of your chronicle. Things should never be the same for your characters, because they've lost someone close to them, or a valuable tool has been destroyed forever. There's no going back, and the chronicle may now need to focus on repairing the damage done.

Here's an example. The characters are in a rush to get to Marta's wedding, because they believe the abbot officiating the marriage is also a diabolist who is using the ritual to summon a terrible beast from Hell.

If they arrive in time: They may confront the abbot before the ritual or plan to strike at a perfect moment during the ritual so as to prove themselves correct in their fears.

If they arrive just when things go bad: The ritual has begun, and it cannot be stopped. However, the abbot can be made to suffer for his actions, and maybe some of the guests can be saved.

If they arrive already too late: The beast has risen, the marriage party has been murdered to the last, and the abbot has ascended to a new kind of terrible power. The chronicle will need to be changed to suit this new, powerful and terrible enemy.

Decide On Dice Pools

Decide what characters are contributing to the roll. They'll be teamworking, but they can use a variety of pools to help each other out. Are they on foot? Is a character with Survival making sure they're on the right track? Is a character with Hearth Wisdom following omens to give them just a touch of good fortune as they go? Is the character with Persuasion cheering the rest on? Hang on to what each player is going to roll until the end, but keep in mind what they're doing as you work through the rest of Dramatic Travel.

Monsters and beasts traveling: Some more monstrous characters from other game lines, such as vampires or werewolves, might have certain unique powers that would make travel faster, such as taking on the form of the wolf or an unholy strength powered by their stolen blood. In these cases, rather than complicating the pool, simply add the dots the character has in said power as bonus die to whatever they would otherwise be rolling. This is loose and again, meant to emulate exciting cinematic travel rather than a detailed slog.

Decide on Successes Needed

Decide how difficult it should be for your characters to reach their destination in the time they have available. This is a score of one to five as below.

Successes Needed	Difficulty
One	A simple feat, but a feat nonetheless.
Two	A challenge for the fleet of foot.
Three	Tragedy hinges and fate conspires against the characters. They must overcome!
Four	The distance ahead and the hours between seem nearly impossible. This will be a truly heroic undertaking.
Five	Stories are written of such daring, and short of a Herculean effort or an intervention by God, who could hope to reach their destination in time?

Remember, this is all relative. A need for given successes could reflect crossing Europe on foot in a month's time, or it could be crossing Venice in an hour during a citywide celebration.

Decide the Target Number

In general, the difficulty players are hoping to hit is a base of six. This difficulty can be manipulated by complications on the road and stumbling blocks that they may encounter along the way. Pick a few obstacles from the

examples below, or make up your own. Your players then have a choice. They can glaze over the obstacle in the narrative, assuming they get past it, in which case, their difficulty is raised by one for each obstacle glazed over. If the players want to take the time, they can instead engage each obstacle as a scene between themselves and getting where they're going. The difficulty does not get adjusted, but it could lead to wounds and exhaustion when the characters actually arrive at the event they're rushing to get to.

Torrential Rain: It's coming down as if God has decided it was high time for another flood. The roads have flooded, and the land is soggy and almost impassable. Skin chafes under leather or rough cotton, and mud makes every step as filthy as it is treacherous. Crossing any large body of water may be perilous, as bridges could wash away at any moment.

Earthquakes: Naturally occurring or the result of foul magic, the earth shakes and betrays its constant, solid nature. Trees fall, buildings collapse, and dams break. It is not just the shaking of the earth that threatens the characters, but the fallout from mountains spilling loose rocks and the rampaging stampede of loose and crazed herd animals.

Peasant Revolt: Travel through the city would be, after a fashion, as easy a journey as a character could hope in the period, with straight roads and occasional paving. Unless of course, the streets are full of an angry populace demanding fair treatment from their superiors.

The Roll

Now that you have dice pools, successes needed, and difficulty adjusted, you can roll to see how the journey progressed. Each player rolls their pools, aiming for the successes you've determined necessary.

If the average of the total successes of the characters' rolls meet the successes necessary, your characters have arrived just as things go badly, in media res.

If the average of the total successes of the characters' rolls fails to meet the successes necessary, they arrive too late.

If the average of the total successes of the characters' rolls are two points higher than successes necessary, the character arrive ahead of time and can plan and scheme as described earlier.





Look 2013

The night air was still cool this time of year. As a sudden breeze picked up, Ordonio drew his cloak tightly about himself and shivered slightly. Perhaps it was a bit foolish – he no longer felt the cold, and the streets were quiet and empty, but he made it a habit to keep up appearances. You never knew who might be watching. In a city as fractured as Sevilla, it was important to always keep up your guard.

He shortly arrived at his destination, a wealthy banker's home in the merchant's quarter, only to discover that the gate locked from the inside. Sighing in irritation, Ordonio looked around quickly. Seeing no one, he decided that the risk would be worth it and used his augmented strength to hop over the wall and into the garden.

Ordonio made his way to the far corner of the garden, making sure to stick to the shadows. Stooping beneath an ancient olive tree, he lifted a loose paving stone, smiling when he saw the square of folded parchment underneath. He slipped the parchment into his vest, leaving the usual bribe in its place.

His purpose achieved, he slipped quietly through the ornamental plants around to the side of the house, looking hopefully at the window of the back bedroom. His lips curled back in a snarl when he saw the small lantern in the window, the signal that it wasn't safe to come in. Growling in frustration, he resisted the temptation to stomp back down the path to the house and barge in anyway. Instead, he jumped to the top of the wall, careful to keep the large olive tree in between him and the house, and slipped back down into the street.

He would have to find dinner elsewhere tonight.

Gerushah sat at her desk, catching up on her correspondence, when she heard the knock indicating that one of her agents was outside. "Come in," she said absently, taking a moment to finish her sentence before setting down her pen.

Ordonio entered, quietly shutting the door behind him. Rather than sitting in the empty chair across from her, he dropped two pieces of parchment on her desk before perching nervously on the windowsill. Intrigued, Gerushah raised an eyebrow at the younger Cainite. "What is this?"

"Take a look for yourself," Ordonio said shortly, gesturing impatiently at the documents.

She frowned at the lack of respect, but because of his obvious agitation she humored him. "Copies of an accounts ledger. And..." She frowned at the second document. "A description of secret shipments?" Gerushah looked up, puzzled. "I'm sorry. You'll have to explain the significance."

"Banking receipts showing very large amounts of dinars changing hands. They've done their best to keep the transaction a secret, but they don't know that I've been bribing the man who does their accounts to keep a copy of his ledger." Leaning forward, Ordonio tapped the ledger, indicating one of the notes scrawled hastily in the margins. "I thought this, in particular, would interest you. This is one of the Curia's agents."

"Alfonso de Landa."

Ordonio nodded. "Most likely."

"And this?" She waved the other piece of paper. "What am I to make of this?"

"Ishaq is an arms dealer. These warehouses? Owned by some of your least favorite members of the Ashirra."

Gerushah swore. "Mercenaries."

"Mercenaries. Probably Christian, since they're easier to hire. The only bright side is that the Curia and your enemies in the Ashirra probably aren't working together." He paused, then shrugged gloomily. "But I wouldn't guarantee that."

Gerushah leaned back in her chair, alarmed. She had known her situation was growing increasingly precarious, but the potential of an armed coup attempt meant that things had grown direr than she had anticipated. Mentally she reviewed her list of potential allies, disliking how short it was.

She had turned to the Cappadocian sorcerer Aliyyah in the past for advice, but the Cappadocians had their own strange agenda and she was under no illusion that Aliyyah would stick her neck out for her. Aliyyah had been sympathetic to her as a woman looking to take and hold power, but that sympathy didn't extend far enough to expect any aid from Aliyyah or her fellow Cappadocians. As for the rest...

"Well, at the very least we can approach those in the Ashirra who haven't made up their mind if they are for or against me. We can show them your proof that my enemies are funneling money into the pockets of the Christian mercenaries, which just means that they will be well-funded when they are inevitably hired to fight to take Sevilla. It might not sway all of them, but it certainly can't hurt."

She paused speculatively, drumming her fingers in an excess of nervous energy. Deciding that Ordonio had long since earned her trust, she stood from her chair. "Come. We are going for a walk."

Ordonio followed, puzzled, as they walked toward the center of the city and the Grand Mosque. When it became clear that the mosque was their destination, he became even more confused. "Are you going to pray for help?" he asked, not quite succeeding at keeping the bemusement out of his voice.

Gerushah glanced at him, amused. "I doubt that anyone would heed such a prayer. No, I have a weapon of my own."

They walked through the mosque, pausing only to take and light a lantern, and down into the crypts below. Ordonio couldn't see anything that could possibly be of interest, but

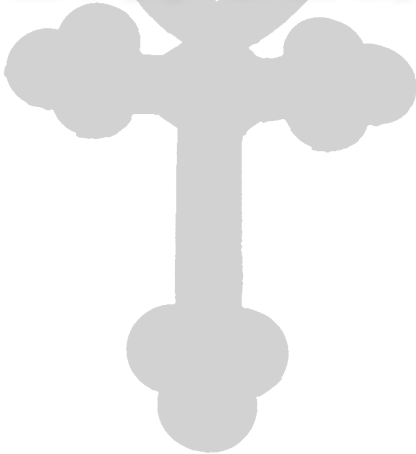
Gerushah seemed intent on a particular destination. Despite that the tunnels were confusing in their sameness, she wended her way through the maze without any uncertainty, pausing at last before a sealed crypt.

"If I find that you have told anyone of what I show you, I will find you and make you wish for a swift death," she said. The look in her eyes gave him chills and he found himself nodding, fully able to believe her. Gerushah hadn't lasted this long as Sultan out of luck. She was the canniest, most ruthless Cainite he had yet met. "Now help me unseal the crypt. I don't wish to dirty my clothing."

The two of them lifted the lid and set it aside. What lay inside was not what Ordonio would have expected. An ancient vampire lay in torpor within the crypt, his features more bestial than Ordonio had ever seen a Cainite bear. His nose was closer to a wolf's snout than a human nose, his ears drew up into long narrow points tufted with fur, and his fingers ended in wicked-looking claws.

Beside him, Gerushah gasped in surprise, pulling at the Gangrel elder's shirt to reveal an unhealed wound, a gaping hole in his chest that had collapsed several ribs and penetrated the chest cavity above the heart. He looked up to see Gerushah's eyes wide with something very close to fear. "Tell me that you unstaked him," he said, his voice shaking.

Gerushah shook her head. "I can't."



VAMPIRE

THE ABYSS GAZES BACK

Crossover Introduction

While this chronicle is intended to be played through by vampire characters, all character types have reasons to be concerned about the *Angellis Ater*'s activity in Sevilla.

Fae

Members of the Autumn court are constantly monitoring the vampiric activity in Sevilla. The fae court grows concerned when information about an Abyss ritual surfaces. They have no idea what opening a channel to the Abyss could do to the Mists, or to the human population. This information is brought to the other fae courts for discussion.

Winter courtiers who have had dealings with the vampires previously ask the characters to speak with the infernalists to dissuade them from their goal. The *Angellis Ater* are completely uncooperative and have their mortal allies attack the fae to drive them off. Gerushah's court is more than willing to work on stopping the ritual, and request the characters' aid in dealing with the infernalists. Scenes with Alfonso should be skipped as the Crimson Curia has no interest in the fae.

The vampires have no reason to reveal the presence of the sleeping Visigoth to the fae, and it is unlikely for the fae to desire the aid of the vampire factions, though they are more than agreeable to help the fae for the same reasons they would help vampire characters. The Eclipse scene should be run without the altercations with the Ashirra or the Crimson Curia, but the fae may run across angry or frenzied vampires.

Inquisitor

Inquisitor characters should be given the same hooks for investigating in Sevilla as the vampires. The Valencia Chalice has gone missing in the city, and such a holy relic should be in the hands of the church. The characters are sent to investigate and retrieve the Chalice if possible. Finding the Chalice is easier for the Inquisitor characters, but finding Ordonio illuminates a much worse problem. Ordonio is not willing to talk to the characters, and they need to either draw the information out of him, or investigate his haven to find out about his intentions with the chalice.

All the scenes involving meeting with the vampires of Sevilla should be removed from the chronicle. Inquisitor characters have to rely on their own abilities to find the *Angellis Ater* and stop them from performing the ritual in time. The rumors of the eclipse are mostly spread around the vampire circles, but those characters with ties to the Occult should have access to them.

The Muslim rule in Sevilla presents a unique problem to the characters. They have a harder time working openly than they would in more Christian areas, and are likely to be targeted or harassed as they attempt to work in the city. The Eclipse scene occurs without the Ashirra or Crimson Curia scenes. The characters still race to get to the ritual in time, and are attacked on their way to the ritual by chaotic vampires.

If the Visigoth is awakened, the characters have to contend with Gerushah's vampire court. Characters can make Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6) to recognize the ritual focus and that it needs to be destroyed to deal with the Visigoth. If the Valencia Chalice is used in the ritual, the characters must make a decision on how to handle it.

Mage

Rumors of dark ritual magics come to the characters through the human populace in Sevilla. Ashiqa's mortal servants are corrupted by the vampires, and it is evident to all who meet them. What's more, the Order of Hermes assumes the ritual magic is being performed by their wayward house, the Tremere.

The characters are asked to investigate the truth behind these rumors and possibly gain the aid of the local vampires to eradicate the supposed Tremere presence in Sevilla. Members of the Messianic Voice may have heard of the missing Valencia Chalice and are interested in retrieving it. These characters would encounter Ordonio and learn of the *Angellis Ater* this way.

The characters do not encounter Alfonso. Gerushah is less inclined to assist the mages, but she will correct their belief that the Tremere are behind the upcoming ritual. Hassan ibn Faiz is very interested in the mages, and will share information about the eclipse and the demon summoning ritual as he knows it, though he does not divulge information about the Visigoth.

The characters can circumvent Gerushah's court and go to the other vampire factions in the city, looking for aid against the Tremere. The knowledge of the *Angellis Ater* ritual is not widespread and these factions will offer to help find the ritualists with the characters, though they have no idea that they are not Tremere.

Remove the sections about the Ashirra and the Crimson Curia from the Eclipse scene, and run the other scenes as written. Regardless of the mages' knowledge of the vampire's true clan, they will have to deal with Ashiqa and her followers. All other scenes should play out as written.

Werewolf

A group of Black Spiral Dancers has been sighted around Sevilla. The characters are asked to investigate the activity and they find a Wyrms-infested caern just outside of the city. A little investigation reveals the Black Spiral Dancers are aiding Baali vampires with some infernal ritual. This discovery is disconcerting to the home sept and the characters will be asked to disrupt the ritual as much as possible.

It is likely for the characters to decide to destroy the vampires performing the ritual, destroy the Black Spiral Dancers assisting them, or both. As werewolves are generally distrustful of vampires, there is little reason for the characters to request aid from the different factions. The Taifa Gangrel are the most likely vampires the werewolves are disposed to accept any assistance from.

The werewolves need to discover where and when the ritual is happening, and finding that out may take some time. During that time, encounters with the Black Spiral Dancers should put the characters on edge. The Eclipse scene is similar in that vampires will be wreaking havoc through the streets. This should be a culmination of several attempts by both the vampires and the Dancers to stop the characters. Again, depending on how fast the characters move through the city, they may have to deal with the Visigoth. While the Visigoth is immune to their attacks, any character can see that in the Umbra, he is connected to a chalice by thin black threads.

Chronicle Map

This chronicle map loosely describes the order of events for the chronicle, as well suggests when each scene might occur depending on how the characters interact with the events around them.

Introduction and Hooks

The characters in this chronicle should start in Sevilla, and those who do not should be sent there by a patron or sire that is invested in the goings on of Sevilla, called the Guide. The Guide requests the characters investigate the

disappearance of the Valencia Chalice. Rumors abound amongst Cainites that any day now, Gotzon, a well-known Lasombra Abyss Mystic, is going to perform a ritual that will eclipse the sun, allowing vampires to walk during the day.

Scene 1:

Meeting Ordonio de Toledo

The characters follow the Valencia Chalice's trail to a house in lower Sevilla, where a young Lasombra ancilla, Ordonio de Toledo, has been gathering items for an upcoming ritual. Investigating the scene or questioning the Lasombra reveals an *Angellis Ater* plot to perform an infernal summoning ritual during the eclipse.

After discovering the plot, the characters have an opportunity to research the group and find out that the *Angellis Ater* are infernalists in league with the Baali. The character's Guide informs him that Ordonio is one of Gerushah's agents and encourages him to visit her with their information.

Scene 2:

Meeting Alfonso de Landa

On their way to meet with Gerushah, one of her political enemies, a Lasombra named Alfonso de Landa, sidelines them. Alfonso has a bit of information for the characters, as well as a proposal to betray Sultan Gerushah in exchange for assistance from the Crimson Curia, who he secretly works with. If the characters accept his offer, they continue the chronicle working directly with Alfonso instead of Gerushah. If they refuse him, Alfonso works against them, hoping to make Gerushah look incompetent.

Alfonso has information from Hassan ibn Faiz that Gerushah keeps an ancient Visigoth in torpor, and that the eclipse could cause it to awaken.

Scene 3:

Meeting Sultan Gerushah

If the characters refuse Alfonso, then they have extra information to share with Gerushah, gaining her trust immediately. She will inform the characters of the Visigoth and Hassan ibn Faiz's prediction that the eclipse will cause it to awaken. She asks them to speak with other members of the city to gain their support and will direct the characters to the Ashirra for support in dealing with the *Angellis Ater*.

Scene 4-8: Making Deals

The characters know they only have a few days to prepare before the eclipse, and finding the *Angellis Ater* seems to be mostly impossible. To be able to find them

in time to stop the ritual, the characters need assistance. They have the option to beseech the following groups for assistance: the Amici Noctus, the Ashirra, the Crimson Curia, the Cappadocians, or the Taifa Gangrels. If they accepted Alfonso's offer of assistance previously, they have ready support from the Crimson Curia in the city. If they refused him, the Crimson Curia is unwilling to aid the characters and is openly antagonistic. The characters only have time to meet with at most three of these groups in an attempt to gain support. The decision to help is dependent on who the characters already have as allies or enemies, and how well the characters convince the groups of the imminent danger to the city.

If the characters are able to convince one or more groups to assist them, then they have time to investigate where the *Angellis Ater* are located in the city and where their ritual is occurring. If they cannot get any assistance, they must spend all of their extra time researching the location of the ritual and are unable to make it to their territory before the sun rises for the day of the eclipse.

Scene 9: The Eclipse

The characters awake during the day to a pitch black sky. The eclipse is upon them, and Sevilla is in turmoil. The characters must make their way to the site of the ritual to stop the *Angellis Ater* before it is too late. The amount of success the characters have had garnering assistance during the Making Deals scenes dictates how long they must travel during the eclipse to make it to the ritual. The characters are beset upon by either the Ashirra or the Crimson Curia, depending on who they are working with. If the characters have made any other enemies during their dealings with the factions in the city, those groups will take this opportunity to seek them out for a little roughing up. Any martial allies will catch up to them at this time to assist them with their fight.

All of this takes time, and the amount of time the characters use during this scene for travel and for dealing with other vampires determines at what point of the ritual the characters are able to encounter the *Angellis Ater*. If the characters are particularly slow, they may end up taking too long to reach the *Angellis* before the ritual is complete. If this happens, the characters should skip the Showdown with the *Angellis Ater* scene.

Scene 10: Showdown with the Angellis Ater

When the characters arrive on site for the ritual, they encounter something that has clearly been in preparation for weeks. Ashiqah bint Jifri leads the ritual, and unless she is stopped it will come to completion. If the characters arrive before the ritual ends, Ashiqah's children will retaliate with violence. Martial allies will assist the characters

in dispatching the infernalists, but they have a Baali with demon creatures assisting them.

Disrupting the ritual before completion prevents the Visigoth from awakening. If they cannot stop the *Angellis Ater* before the completion of the ritual, then the Visigoth awakens.

Scene 11:

The Visigoth Awakens

If the characters are unable to prevent the ritual's completion, the sleeping Visigoth awakens. As the ritual ends, the sunlight begins to break through the darkness, and the characters must make haste towards shelter. There they sleep through the day, waiting to deal with the ravening Visigoth. When the sun sets that night, Sevilla is plunged into madness as the elder Visigoth attempts to satiate his intense hunger. Finding the Visigoth is as easy as following the screams of the dying.

Any allies the characters have gained throughout the chronicle come to their aid, along with Gerushah and her allies. Fighting the Visigoth is not easy, and dealing with it involves recalling the ritual that woke him.

Scene 12: Resolutions

Many factors go into determining how things end for the characters. How they handled Alfonso at the beginning of the chronicle, who ends as their allies and enemies, as well as the presence of the Visigoth and how much destruction he caused in the city.

Gerushah's Fate

If the characters decided to snub Alfonso and rat him out to Gerushah, she is able to cull the Crimson Curia from her city and unify the Ashirra to her side. Despite the presence of the Visigoth, Gerushah remains the Sultan of Sevilla.

If the characters decide to assist Alfonso against Gerushah, then one of two things happens. If the Visigoth rampaged through the city, the Ashirra lose faith in her, and remove her from the position of Sultan. If the characters were able to prevent the Visigoth from waking up, then Gerushah uses him as a lever to remain in power and punishes the characters for taking up arms against her.

War or Peace

If Alfonso is able to overthrow Gerushah with the characters' assistance, this causes unrest with the rest of the factions. If the characters assist Gerushah, but make enemies with all the other factions, a war breaks out. Peace will only be possible if the characters can unite the factions, either during their struggles or after them.

THE VALENCIA CHALICE

The Valencia Chalice is a two-handled cup made from red agate and chalcedony. Legend has it that this cup was passed down from Peter to the early Popes that succeeded him. When the Romans tried to eliminate the early Christian church by persecuting them and confiscating their relics, Pope Sixtus II managed to have it smuggled out of Rome, sending it to Spain for safekeeping.

Church scholars disagree on the provenance of the Chalice and what it was used for. Some claim that it was the cup used to serve the Apostles at the Last Supper. Others say that it was used to collect the blood of Christ at the Crucifixion. Both sides, however, will agree that the Chalice did hold the blood of Christ, which makes it nearly priceless, both as a religious relic and as a historical artifact.

Since the investigation into the theft of the Chalice is what will draw the characters into the adventure, here are some different ways you can present the theft in such a way as to compel them to investigate further.

Introducing the Adventure

Very recently, the characters will have heard rumors that the Lasombra Gotzon, a widely feared Abyss Mystic, will be performing an Abyss ritual that will blot out the sun during the day. The rumors fly fast and furious, though no one the characters talk to can identify their original source. Additionally, they all seem to contradict one another.

Some say that the sun will be extinguished for a day and a night, others claim there will be a week of darkness, and still others argue that there will be as many as thirty days and nights of darkness. Some rumors say that it will drive Kindred mad, and that ancient elders will rise up and destroy any Cainite they can get their hands on.

And then there are the rumors too fanciful to be credited. The ritual will let loose a horde of demons that will wreak havoc and chaos, or even that the coming darkness will be a sign of the end times and the return of Caine. The only point of commonality that all rumors share is that there will be an interval of darkness, and that Gotzon will cause it.

Kindred with scholarly inclinations dismiss all of this as nonsense. Any scholar of astronomy could predict that this coming darkness is no more than a solar eclipse, which will last no more than a few minutes. The period of complete darkness

will last no more than a few moments, and the sun will surely destroy any Cainite seeking to take advantage of the eclipse. Despite their attempts to provide a rational explanation, however, they have not gained much of an audience.

Concurrent with these rumors, the characters will have received news of the theft of the Valencia Chalice, an incredibly valuable religious relic. No one knows who stole it, but rumor has it that the Chalice is now in Sevilla.

Requests Personal Connections and Influences

Someone with whom they share a close personal connection, or a connection through an Influence could bring the theft to the characters' attention. When trying to decide who might be motivated to ask for help in retrieving the Chalice, consider the varying motivations that differing Kindred factions might have.

Whoever approaches them, the request would make the most impact coming from someone the characters either care about very much or are strongly motivated to assist.

Amici Noctis

The Amici Noctis are desperate to prevent the Shadow Reconquista to lead to open war within their Clan. The theft of the Valencia Chalice has the potential to further fan the flames of religious fervor. If the Ashirra were implicated in the theft, it might ignite a war between Christian and Muslim Lasombra. They will offer great rewards for its safe return, including an invitation to the Amici Noctis, should any of your characters belong to Clan Lasombra.

Cappadocian or Road of Bones

Whether or not you believe the legends surrounding the Chalice, it is centuries old and carries a fascinating history. The church has guarded the Chalice too closely for anyone to perform a scholarly examination of it. If you were to recover it, you could be the first to write such a treatise, which would surely establish you as one of the preeminent scholars of the age.

Church (influence), Crimson Curia, Cainite Heresy, or Road of Heaven

Such a holy relic as the Valencia Chalice should be safe in the protection of the church. As the vessel that once contained the blood of Christ, it is a very important object of reverence for all of the Christian church. Surely the blessings of God will be upon whoever recovers the Chalice and returns it to the church.

Order of Bitter Ashes

These Cainite knights are dedicated to finding and acquiring relics that prove the existence of God. What

more concrete proof could once desire than the Valencia Chalice? Although once it is recovered, it should remain with those of the Order of Bitter Ashes and not be returned to the church. They did fail to safeguard it, after all.

Road of Sin or Followers of Set

You admire whoever stole the Chalice, because surely it took planning and talent. But think of all the money and power you could amass if you were to recover it and auction it to the highest bidder. Cainites are a greedy and vain bunch, and many rich and influential Kindred would trade just about anything to say that they owned the Valencia Chalice.

Personal Motivations And Furthermore

If the following fits any of the characters in your chronicle, you can add extra personal impetus to the quest to retrieve the Chalice:

Malkavian

Their sleep is disturbed by dire premonitions that cause them to awake sweaty and shaken. Visions of madness haunt their dreams, foretelling riots and open warfare between Kindred in the streets. They can only watch as the city of Sevilla burns. When they learn of the theft of the Valencia Chalice, they know instinctively that its theft is connected to their visions.

Road of Night or Path of Retribution

The Valencia Chalice is a truly holy relic. The reasons for stealing the Chalice can only be immoral, if not evil. They feel deeply that it is their sacred duty to bring God's judgment upon those who took it.

High Status Lasombra or Lasombra Abyss Mystic

If any Lasombra characters in your chronicle have high standing within the Clan, study the Abyss and Abyss Mysticism, or are full-fledged Abyss Mystics, they will push for the rest of the characters to assist them in investigating the eclipse and the disappearance of the Chalice. In that instance, an external Guide will not be necessary. The Lasombra character will act as the Guide, with the Storyteller providing cues as necessary based on that character's experience. *I.e.* "You know that Gerushah is well-enough placed in the Clan that the Amici Noctis would have had extensive dealings with her".

Gotzon is a highly famous Lasombra and is well-known within the Clan. From your personal knowledge of Obtenebration, you know that such a ritual should be possible, although you don't initially know the details. You are aware of how much damage the chaos that would result from

such a ritual would cause. If you have high status within the Clan, you are concerned about the damage that could be done to the interests of the Clan in the aftermath of the ritual. If you are an Abyss Mystic, you will be drawn to where the ritual will take place out of sheer curiosity.

Personalities

Below are the main personalities you'll find in this chronicle.

Gerushah bint Yoav

Background: Gerushah bint Yoav, the Sultan of Sevilla, is in a tenuous position. A Jewish convert to Islam, her conversion infuriated the Jewish Kindred of her city. Though the Ashirra contrived to have her placed on the throne, they mistrust the sincerity of her conversion and now maneuver to have her removed. Kindred that were once allies are now enemies, and there are few who are willing to openly ally themselves with Gerushah.

Still, though her enemies grow increasingly bold, they have not succeeded yet. Gerushah still holds the throne, and where other lesser Kindred would have made fatal mistakes, she has learned to navigate the shifting political landscape as a camel walks on the sand. For Gerushah, the key to survival is staying above the petty machinations and not being afraid to step on obstacles that get in your way.

Image: Gerushah is a proud woman with a regal bearing. Embraced well into middle age, she is no great beauty, but her features are striking and the sheer force of her personality makes her a compelling figure indeed. Proud of her station, she dresses in rich silks and jewels from foreign lands.

Roleplaying Hints: You spent your mortal life as the properly humble and self-effacing wife of a modestly wealthy Jewish merchant, but your Embrace proved that you were destined for greater things. Now that you have power, real power, you'll do anything to hold onto that power. So you'll play along and best the vipers at their own game. And should you fail, Allah forbid, you'd rather see this city burn than give it up.

Haven: Gerushah has a richly appointed haven hidden in the heart of the city's Muslim quarter. Guarded by mortal retainers and ghouls, it is quite secure. She also has a number of hidden bolt-holes scattered around the city, prepared in case of an emergency that might require her to disappear.

Secrets: Gerushah has a network of spies that she employs to keep her informed of her rivals' efforts against her. The secret she guards most closely, however, is the knowledge of the sleeping Visigoth, hidden in the crypts beneath the grand mosque.

Influence: Gerushah has an extensive network of mortal retainers, and an even larger network of kindred spies. There is not much that happens in Sevilla that escapes her notice, as she has well-placed spies that keep her apprised of her enemies movements against her.

Destiny: When the city falls to the Christians, Gerushah flees to Granada. She becomes bitter and disillusioned at seeing the persecutions the Christian conquerors visit against her Jewish kin and relocates to Egypt, where she falls under the sway of the Followers of Set.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Yoav ben Ezra

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 953

Apparent Age: Late 30s to Early 40s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Empathy 1, Expression 3, Leadership 3, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Politics 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Politics 2, Seneschal 3

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Obtenebration 5, Fortitude 2, Auspex 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Domain 2, Generation 4, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 5

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 2

Road: Kings 8

Willpower: 6

Elisheba bint Aliyyah

Clan: Cappadocian

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Ascetic

Embrace: 987

Apparent Age: late 20s

When Aliyyah first came to the Roman necropolis at Italica, she established a brood to assist in her research into death and the occult. Elisheba was the first childe that Aliyyah Embraced, and has proved to be the most loyal. Daughter of a Jewish Talmudic scholar, Elisheba was chosen for the Embrace as a scribe and assistant, nothing more. However, Elisheba proved to have a keen intelligence and proved capable of surprising insight. In time, Aliyyah found other assistants to relieve Elisheba of her menial duties.

Though some of Aliyyah's childer find her close supervision to be a trial, Elisheba enjoys her sire's company and the chance to devote herself almost entirely to her studies. She is all too aware of the tense political situation in Sevilla, and is happy to take advantage of Aliyyah's continued patronage to avoid the distasteful realm of politics herself. Occasionally, she will act as an agent or messenger on some errand for her sire, but for the most part, she is content to remain within the necropolis.

Hassan Ibn Faiz

Clan: Assamite Sorcerer

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 1011

Apparent Age: 22

Hassan originally hails from Egypt, the youngest son of a large family of wealthy traders. Having no interest in business, he became an Islamic scholar. His father was only too happy to support him, as it meant one fewer son to argue over who would inherit his business. Having heard of the great library of Cordoba, Hassan decided that he would travel and see the library for himself. However, it was on the road that Hassan encountered his sire, Faiz, an Assamite sorcerer. Faiz could see the seeds of fanaticism within Hassan, which he encouraged. When he offered Hassan the Embrace, Hassan accepted, eager for the chance to use his new power against the enemies of Islam.

Hassan's fanaticism has only deepened since his Embrace. He has become a leader in the Ashirra of Southern Iberia, a true believer in the cause of eliminating Christianity from the peninsula. He has made Sevilla his base of operations because of how leniently Christians are treated by the mortal emir, who bleats about unity and peace. Infuriated by this betrayal, Hassan is determined to bring an end to the Christian menace.

Nashwa bint Mukhtar

Background: Nashwa grew up in the courts of Cordoba. More than anything, Nashwa wanted to study with the foreign scholars who flocked to the taifa, to learn and make new discoveries of her own. But her father forbade it, setting watchers on her to prevent her from indulging such unwomanly interests.

Nashwa came to the attention of her sire shortly after she was promised to marry. Mukhtar was an adherent of the burgeoning Taifa Gangrel movement, which held that Gangrel should strive to be scholars, warriors, and faithful Muslims rather than giving into bestial savagery. Nashwa caught his eye as a woman of character who struggled against the constraints placed upon her. He came to her and offered her a choice: live as a servant or accept the Embrace and learn to be a warrior as well as a scholar.

In the years following her Embrace, Nashwa and Mukhtar traveled Iberia, Northern Africa, and the Middle

East looking for scholars with the hearts of warriors to add to her sire's brood.

Image: Nashwa is a study in contradiction. She wears men's clothing, but she also wears hijab. Her clothes are embroidered with feminine motifs, but when she moves, you can hear the sound of chain mail. She darkens her eyes with kohl, but the sword at her hip is both well-worn and well cared for, a tool that is much used.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a warrior and a scholar, no matter what body you were born into. Being a woman does not make you less capable or less intelligent than your male peers, nor does defying traditional roles make you less Muslim. Allah has offered you this chance to do His will, to push back the creeping advance of Christianity, and may he help anyone who has the audacity to stand in your way.

Haven: Mukhtar's brood maintains a small, sparsely appointed haven on the outskirts of town, just outside the city walls.

Secrets: Nashwa is accustomed to a semi-nomadic existence and largely doesn't bother to concern herself with petty local intrigues. She is aware of political efforts against Sultan Gerushah, but has rejected overtures from various factions looking for her aid.

Influence: Nashwa and her compatriots represent a martial force to be reckoned with. Though they have eschewed getting any more involved with local politics than necessary, many of the city's most influential would love to persuade them to aid their pet causes.

Destiny: Nashwa continues to travel with Mukhtar and his brood, but as the taifas fail and fall under Christian domain, many of Mukhtar's other childer lose faith and drift away. The ones who remain take part in the last stand at Granada, but only Nashwa and Mukhtar survive to flee to North Africa.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Mukhtar ibn Ali

Nature: Idealist

Demeanor: Ascetic

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1029

Apparent Age: 19

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Archery 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Ride 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Theology 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Fortitude 3, Protean 4, Potence 2, Celerity 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Generation 4, Influence 3, Mentor 4, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 3 Self-Control 3 Courage 4

Road: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

Mansuara Vermudez

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Mediator

Embrace: 725

Apparent Age: 25

As the unrecognized illegitimate daughter of King Alfonso IX of Leon, Mansuara was no stranger to courtly intrigue. Mansuara was a noted beauty, which is what caused her to catch the eye of her sire, an odious Lasombra by the name of Enrico de Alcazar who desired only to keep her beauty to himself. Unfortunately for Mansuara, her sire proved to be an idiot and a coward as well as a boor. As soon as her education into Kindred society was complete, Mansuara brought her case to the Amici Noctis and petitioned for the right of Amaranth.

The Courts of Blood granted her petition, and within short order, Mansuara had diablerized de Alcazar and claimed his considerable resources as her own. It didn't take her long to prove her worth to the Clan. Before long, Mansuara was invited to join the Amici Noctis, where she quickly ascended in rank, eventually becoming herself a judge on the Blood Court.

These days, the Amici Noctis have their hands full dealing with the fallout of the Shadow Reconquista. Despite an official declaration that the Courts were neutral on the issue of the Shadow Reconquista, the Amici Noctis have been unable to keep themselves out of the conflict between their Christian and Muslim kin. Mansuara is doing her best to prevent the Shadow Reconquista from erupting into full-out civil war within her Clan.

Crimson Curia: Alfonso de Landa

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Embrace: 1011

Apparent Age: 22

Alfonso was the youngest son of a Castilian noble blessed with an overabundance of sons. As such, his entry to the church was more of a foregone conclusion than a choice. Still, the young de Landa found peace in the arms of the church and excelled at his studies in seminary, making a very favorable impression with the church hierarchy. When de Landa took orders and became a priest, his career looked to be a promising one. At the very least, a bishopric

was in his future. The title of Archbishop or even Cardinal wouldn't have been out of the question, either.

This bright future brought Alfonso to the attention of his sire, Osrico de Borja, a bishop in the church and member of the Crimson Curia. It was Osrico who Embraced the young Alfonso and inducted him into the Shadow Reconquista. A true believer, it was not hard for de Borja to turn Alfonso's zeal into fanaticism. Since then, Alfonso has been a tireless crusader against the Ashirra and worked to bring about the downfall of Islamic rule in Iberia.

Alfonso has come to Sevilla for that very purpose. Nominally, he came to Sevilla to preach the word of God to the heathens. Secretly, however, he is building a network of spies in hopes of feeding information back to the Shadow Reconquista in the north - an endeavor that would surely see him hunted, if not destroyed, by the Ashirra were they to find out.

Ashika bint Jifri

Background: Ashika bint Jifri is of Moorish decent, born and raised in Sevilla. She was never very religious, though she was raised Muslim. She trained in medicine and poetry, and took up traveling throughout Europe with a group of Moorish missionaries. She caught the eye of Roderick, her German sire, with her quick wit and interest in more arcane forms of medicine. After her Embrace, she took to learning about the Clan Lasombra, especially the Abyss and their connection to it. As her knowledge and power grew, Ashika became certain that she was above mortal rules and morality. Megalomania set in and she quickly adopted the mindset that she was a deity. When she met the *Angellis Ater* (the black angels), she was drawn to the concept of infernal worship to increase her own personal power and happily joined their ranks. The combination of infernal dealings and Abyss Mysticism only solidified her deity complex.

Ashika sought out companions for her eternal life, and she Embraced to create a cult. Soon her small band drew the attention of the Baali. She made alliances and even persuaded one to join her. She returned to Sevilla in 1150 AD, seeking refuge from the Christian Lasombra that had begun hunting her for her heretical practices.

Image: Ashika bint Jifri is a dark mocha complexioned beauty with long black hair and pitch black eyes. She dresses in traditional female Moorish dress, including a veil over her face to hide black lines of shadow that constantly play across her body.

Roleplaying Hints: Ashika bint Jifri is power mad. She believes she is a god. Very little can persuade her differently, though she knows she is not all-powerful. Her hunger for more power is her only true motivation.

Haven: Ashika has several small bolt-holes all along the river in near the docks. She and her cult keep mostly to the west side of the river.

Influence: Ashika bint Jifri is the leader of her cult of *Angellis Ater* Abyss Mystics. She controls several mortal

worshippers who believe she is a deity come to deliver them from the mortal coil. Her control of the occult aspects of Sevilla is not complete, but she is well known amongst those that dabble in dark arts.

Clan: Lasombra, *Angellis Ater*

Sire: Roderick

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 983

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Archery 3, Crafts 2, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 1, Seneschal 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Influence 2, Resources 2

Disciplines: Daimoinon 4, Dominate 2, Obtenebration 3, Potence 3, Presence 1

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 3, Courage 4

Road: Road of Sin 7

Willpower: 6

Ordonio de Toledo

Clan: Lasombra, *Angellis Ater*

Sire: Medina

Nature: Idealist

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1149

Apparent Age: early 40s

Ordonio de Toledo was born in the County of Castile. He was a scholar and spent most of his time in libraries reading books and scrolls. No topic was too sacred for the atheist Ordonio, though he claimed allegiances to the Catholic Church. Medina bint Augustin found Ordonio in Toledo on a trip to Sevilla. She was attracted to his depth of knowledge and excellent memory.

After the Embrace, Ordonio took to his new life with zeal. He knew there were no such things as gods, and the vampiric condition confirmed that belief. He joined the Ashirra with his sire, though he had no real belief in the Muslim religion, he had no ties to Christianity either. Ordonio easily assimilated into Gerushah's court with clever conniving and bribery. He

was so good at his charade that he quickly gained a position as a trusted advisor and agent to Gerushah.

When Ordonio met Ashiqa and the *Angellis Ater* he was easily convinced of the presence of demons through their empirical increase in power. Finally finding something he could believe in, he pleaded with Ashiqa to let him join her ranks. She accepted, on the condition that he proves his devotion to her by assisting in an infernal ritual during the eclipse. He was more than willing to agree.

Mirabelle

Clan: Baali

Sire: Azaneal

Nature: Sadist

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 6th

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: late 20s

Mirabelle's mortal origin is muddled. She can't remember who she once was, as she has gone through so many identities since that time. Mirabelle fell in with Ashiqa in the Holy Roman Empire and has been part of her cult ever since. In Mirabelle's eyes, she is the leader of their cult, but she lets the younger Ashiqa believe she is making all the decisions as a way to conceal her true involvement from casual observers.

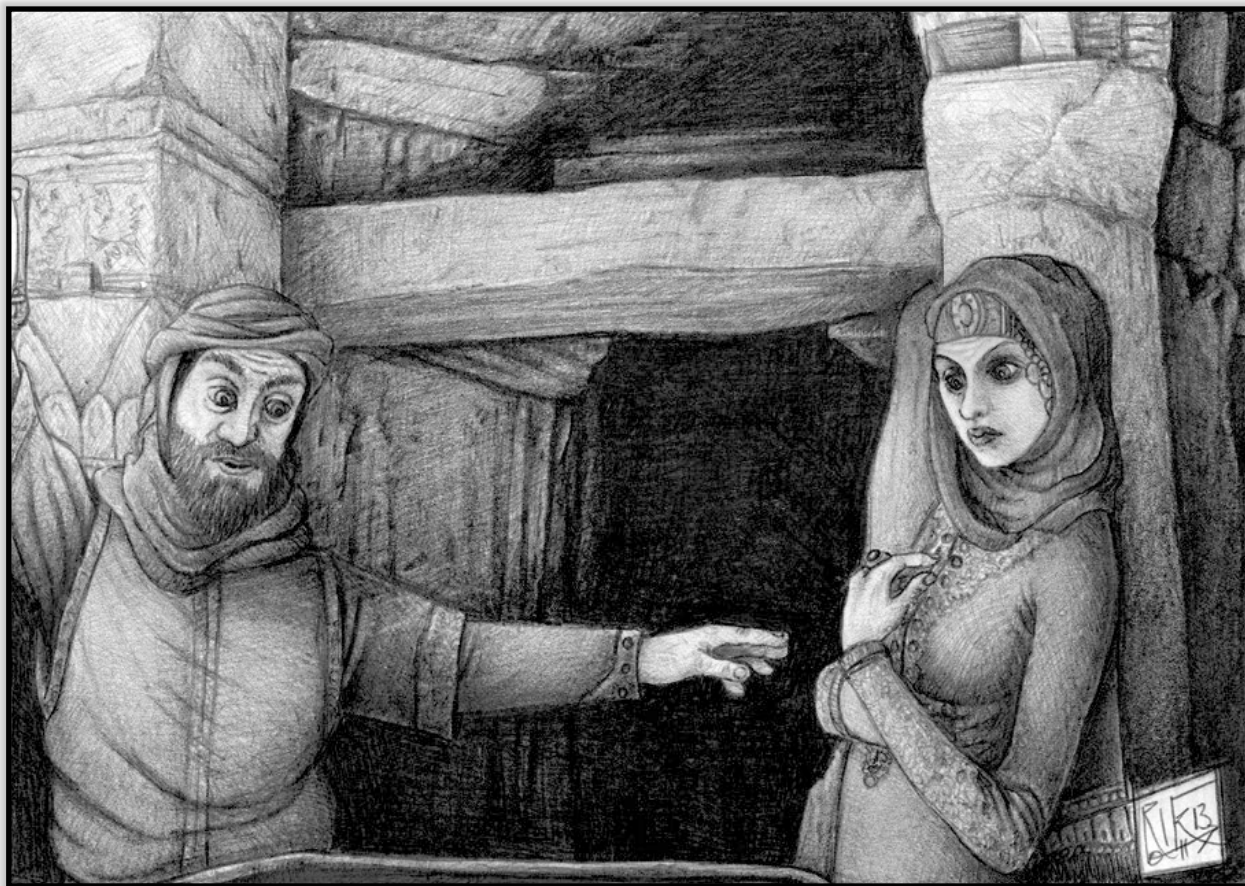
She particularly enjoys Ashiqa's fervor, and encourages her deity complex. Mirabelle would love to see Ashiqa's power continue to rise, as this only helps their little group. But Mirabelle cares too much about her own well-being to risk endangering herself to see this happen. She is completely willing to leave Ashiqa behind if she becomes too dangerous an investment.

Scene I:

The *Angellis Ater*'s Agent

The character that asks for the characters' aid in retrieving the Chalice (hereafter referred to as the Guide) has some information as to the whereabouts of the Chalice, and they are pretty sure that no one else knows as of yet. If the characters act on the tip right away, they will be able to follow a fresh trail of clues. However, unless they succeed in an Investigation roll with a difficulty of 9, it will turn out that the Chalice has already been moved. (If they fail, they will still easily find Ordonio himself.)

The Guide's information will lead them to a young Lasombra ancilla, Ordonio. By either searching Ordonio's haven or interrogating Ordonio directly, the characters will learn that Ordonio has been recruited into a Lasombra cult that believes that their mastery of shadow is proof that they are the chosen of Satan. That cult calls itself the *Angellis Ater*.



Further interrogation reveals that the Angellis Ater have allied with the Baali and are preparing to perform an infernal ritual to summon a demon during the eclipse, which will occur in less than a week. Ordonio was gathering items needed for the ritual as part of his full initiation into the Angellis Ater. (If the characters chose to search his haven first, they will need to find Ordonio to obtain this additional information, but that will not be a difficult task. His favorite haunts and feeding grounds are well-known.)

Ordonio will freely reveal this information, as the Chalice has already been delivered into the hands of the Angellis Ater, who have everything they need to perform the ritual. He is quite confident that the Angellis Ater will triumph and that the characters can do nothing to stop them. When asked, he will not be able to reveal the location of the ritual or the identities of his fellow cultists. Ordonio was not yet a full member of the Angellis Ater and was not privy to such information.

If the characters happened to succeed in their Investigation roll to find Ordonio, they are able to retrieve the Chalice from Ordonio's haven. However, he gleefully informs them that the Chalice isn't necessary to the ritual. The Angellis Ater was simply seizing an opportunity to desecrate an incredibly important holy relic. That's not to say that retrieving it is useless. Either the Cappadocians or the Amici Noctis will ally with you in exchange for the Chalice. (See Scene 4-8: Making Deals)

Puzzlingly, it is widely known within the city that despite his young age, Ordonio is one of Sultan Gerushah's trusted agents. Upon hearing of Ordonio's subversion and the infernalist cult, the Guide will urge the characters to speak at once with the Sultan.

Scene 2: Meeting Alfonso de Landa

The character's Guide should make it clear that it is very dangerous to let the *Angellis Ater* perform a demon summoning ritual. The characters may also wish to do research on their own to learn more about it. The Guide suggests the characters talk to the Sultan of Sevilla, Gerushah, to hear what she has to say. At the very least, bringing the situation to her attention could gain her favor in court. This is the most likely course of action, but the characters should not be browbeaten into going to see her. If they are terribly resistant to meeting with the city officials, then they will meet Alfonso de Landa out in the city during their investigations, as he is investigating Ordonio de Toledo as well.

If the characters go to Gerushah's court, they find Alfonso there first. He is also on his way to see her, and engages the characters in conversation. Alfonso is a smooth talker and is good at ingratiating himself with a group. He

is curious about why the characters have come to court and will attempt to get them to tell him about their encounter with Ordonio. Alfonso has been keeping an eye on Ordonio, and is nominally aware of his connection with the *Angellis Ater*. If the characters confirm his suspicions, he offers to compare notes with the characters as well as share new information. If the characters decide to talk to Alfonso, see What Alfonso Knows.

The characters could ignore Alfonso and go directly to see Gerushah, but Alfonso does not take slights well. He refuses to speak with the characters when they leave Gerushah's court and works against them for the rest of the chronicle. In short, he is openly hostile towards the characters and later conversations with him or his faction do not go well.

What Alfonso Knows

- Ordonio de Toledo is one of Gerushah's trusted agents. He is more than likely using that position to work with the *Angellis Ater* under her nose. Gerushah's relations with the Ashirra are tenuous at best. If she is linked to the *Angellis Ater* through her agent, it could spell disaster for her. Alfonso deeply wishes to see Gerushah lose her city. She has been a thorn in his side for some time, and wants to use this unique opportunity to unite the factions against her.

- Alfonso is secretly a member of the Crimson Curia and is selling information to the Shadow Reconquista, though he openly claims alliance with the Ashirra. He will only reveal this information if the characters seem interested in helping him.

- Alfonso has heard from Hassan ibn Faiz, an Assamite sorcerer and member of the Ashirra, that Gerushah is keeping an ancient elder Visigoth asleep in her care. It was once staked, but she has recently discovered the stake is missing. Gerushah fears that attempting to replace the stake will wake the creature. Hassan is concerned that a magical eclipse could cause the sleeping giant to awaken anyway. Gerushah seems unconcerned, much to Hassan's chagrin.

- Alfonso promises aid from the Crimson Curia to the characters in their research on the *Angellis Ater* and any future endeavors if they are willing to spread the word that Gerushah's agent, and by proxy Gerushah, is working with the infernal vampires. The presence of the sleeping Visigoth is extra proof of Gerushah's treacherous activities.

After speaking with Alfonso at Gerushah's court, the characters have the chance to go and speak with her. Alfonso encourages the characters to stay away from her whether they decide to help him or not. Choosing not to help Alfonso and meeting with Gerushah directly afterward causes him to threaten open hostilities against them, and there is no ability to salvage the relationship in the future. See Meeting with Gerushah, Sultan of Sevilla.

Scene 3: Meeting with Gerushah, Sultan of Sevilla

Gerushah is a patient woman, and is willing to sit through the entire tale of what the characters have to tell her. She is especially interested that Ordonio was caught working for the *Angellis Ater*. Her own personal stake in the situation is evident, and she is more than eager to give whatever aid she can in finding the infernalists and stopping their plans.

Gerushah's reaction to news about Alfonso depends on how much the characters tell her. If they simply explain that he is attempting to overthrow her, she acts unsurprised, but thanks the characters for the information and offers them a small favor in return. Revealing Alfonso's allegiances to the Crimson Curia and the Shadow Reconquista elicits a much more vehement response. Gerushah is not only angry about being deceived, but is violently opposed to the Crimson Curia being in her city. She offers the characters a very large favor in return for bringing his staked body to her door. See Dispatching Alfonso.

If the characters are helping Alfonso by this point, there may be little to say to Gerushah other than to introduce them to her court. Revealing the situation with the *Angellis Ater* is certain to get her asking for their help. They could accept her offers of support and play both sides if they so choose, but eventually alliances will be revealed and tensions between the factions causes one of the groups to take issue with the characters' double dealing. Revealing Alfonso at this point only delays his ire. The moment anyone comes looking for him, he would know of their betrayal.

Gerushah reveals that she has other concerns about the eclipse beyond the infernal ritual. She introduces the Assamite Hassan ibn Faiz as her court oracle and thaumaturge. Gerushah asks Hassan to inform the characters about an ancient Visigoth who Gerushah has been hiding as a secret weapon. See What Hassan Knows.

What Hassan Knows

- The Visigoth is an elder Gangrel and was staked in the late 800s by an unknown assailant. He has been under Sevilla ever since, and Gerushah found him less than a century ago.

- Just two days ago, Gerushah discovered the stake was missing from the Visigoth, though he was not awake. She is afraid attempting to stake him again will wake him up.

- Hassan knows that powerful magical energies will be at work when the eclipse happens and fears the magical energy will awaken the Visigoth anyway. Hassan is certain the energy of the eclipse combined with that of the infernal ritual will awaken the Visigoth.

• Hassan has had visions of the Visigoth awake and rampaging through the streets. In his vision, the Visigoth is wreathed in black flame and cannot be touched by spell or sword. He worries that the demon summoning ritual will not do what the *Angellis Ater* expect from it.

• Hassan is the face of the Ashirra in Sevilla. He is prepared to give the characters any aid he can to deal with the issue of the *Angellis Ater*.

Dispatching Alfonso

Taking the Sultan up on her offer to destroy Alfonso could garner the characters a lot of support in court. While it ensures they make enemies of the Crimson Curia, the Ashirra and even the Cappadocians would thank them greatly for their efforts.

Finding Alfonso takes a small amount of investigation. He is hiding out with a few other members of the Crimson Curia in the Christian boroughs of Sevilla. Alfonso is prepared for an attack now that the characters know his secret. The only way to catch him unaware in this scene is if the characters had promised to help him then sold him out to Gerushah anyway.

Alfonso and his assistants are fanatics and are willing to die for their beliefs. They will fight with the kind of zeal that one normally finds with people who have nothing left to lose. Once a fight is initiated with Alfonso, there is no backing down. Taking custody of all of the Crimson Curia would please Gerushah, though she only asked for Alfonso.

This fight should not be easy, and it is certainly okay if the characters leave some of the Crimson Curia to fight another day. They have an opportunity to deal with them again during the Eclipse. Also, hunting down Alfonso takes time. This scene takes the same amount of time as going to meet with one of the factions for support.

Finding the Ritual Site

If the characters were able to convince one or more groups to assist them, then they have had time to investigate where the *Angellis Ater* are located in the city and where their ritual is taking place. They should end their final night before the eclipse very close to *Angellis Ater* territory. While the eclipse has no specific time to occur, it should happen one day after the characters have met with three different factions. The characters should feel the pressure of uncertainty, but no matter how long it takes them to garner support, they have some time to find the ritual site before the eclipse occurs. If they attempt to speak to a fourth group, they lose precious investigation time and are not situated near the black angels' territory when the eclipse begins.

Finding the *Angellis Ater* can take many routes. This information is not public knowledge, so the characters will need to investigate. With the help of one or more factions, the characters should have an easy time of finding their havens and possible ritual sites. The dice pool to convince

WHAT ABOUT GOTZON?

Enterprising characters may decide that the best way to subvert the *Angellis Ater* is to stop Gotzon from performing The Cry that Slays the Light in the first place. While this might sound like a great idea, it is mostly impractical. A couple of problems stand in the character's way. Unlike our current information age, 1230 is rife with communication time lags and long travel times. Gotzon is somewhere inside the Holy Roman Empire, far from the Iberian Peninsula. Even if they knew where to find him, getting to him takes too long and the eclipse will go on without them.

They could possibly find an elder Lasombra to take them through the shadows to him, but there is no guarantee that they will get there and back in time, even with that mode of travel. This is not to say they can't try, but that it should be strongly discouraged.

What's more, Gotzon has no planned time for the eclipse. He has already performed the ritual, and could speak the trigger word at any time. No one knows Gotzon's plan or reason for the ritual, just that he has done it. At this point, there is no convincing him to let it go.

the various factions to help will depend on the method the characters use to make their case.

Amici Noctis – Mansuara has leads on activity in the city that is reminiscent of the Abyss. Her assistance gives characters -2 difficulty to rolls using Academics, Leadership, Occult, and Politics while investigating the site of the ritual.

Ashirra – Hassan can perform a scrying ritual for the characters. His assistance gives characters -2 difficulty to rolls using Commerce, Investigation, Hearth Wisdom, and Occult while investigating the site of the ritual.

Cappadocians – Elisheba has information regarding increased deaths along the river in the city. Her assistance gives characters -2 difficulty to rolls using Medicine, Investigation, Occult, and Seneschal while investigating the site of the ritual.

Crimson Curia – Alfonso has been following Ordo-nio around Sevilla and has developed a pattern for him. His assistance gives characters -2 difficulty to rolls using Intimidation, Occult, Subterfuge, and Theology while investigating the site of the ritual.

Taifa Gangrel – Nashwa has rare tombs detailing strange rituals and rites which may give insight into where the optimal location for the ritual may be. Her assistance gives characters -2 difficulty to rolls using Academics, Hearth Wisdom, Intimidation, and Occult while investigating the site of the ritual.

Making Deals : Seville Factions and Their Agendas

Amici Noctis

Who are they? The Amici Noctis, or Friends of Night, is comprised of members of Clan Lasombra who have proven to be individuals of merit and worth to the Clan. Lasombra who are part of the Amici Noctis are the elite within their Clan, since membership is by invitation only.

However, the Friends of Night exists as more than just a network of influence. Members of the Amici Noctis can be called upon to solve problems and resolve disputes between clanmates. Through the Courts of Blood, they regulate and control diablerie within the clan by ruling when it may be permissible and when it may not. Lasombra who perform the Amaranth without the express sanction of the Blood Court are dealt with swiftly and harshly.

What do they want? The Amici Noctis want to remain neutral in the Shadow Reconquista and to prevent civil war within their clan.

Notable Character: Mansuara Vermudez

Allies: The Amici Noctis are not allied with any group outside the auspices of Clan Lasombra.

Enemies: None of the other major factions are considered enemies of the Amici Noctis.

Why would they help you? Warning them of the eclipse and the plans of the Angellis Ater plans will only cause the Amici Noctis to make provisions to fortify their havens against the impending chaos. In order to enlist their aid, you'll need to convince them that it is in Clan Lasombra's best interests to help you, which is not likely unless at least one member of your group is Lasombra. (9 difficulty to enlist their aid if your group has no Lasombra, 7 if at least one member of your group is Lasombra, 6 if they are a Lasombra with more than 2 Status.)

What will turn them against you?

Killing or diablerizing a member of the Amici Noctis, acting to actively sow dissent among Clan Lasombra, or otherwise acting in such a way that would be against the best interests of Clan Lasombra as a whole. Aiding Sultan Gerushah's political enemies won't earn their ire, but any violent action against her will turn them against you.

Because of the Amici Noctis' policy of neutrality with regard to the Shadow Reconquista, you cannot enlist their aid if you work with either the Crimson Curia or the Ashirra.

What happens if you work with Alfonso? If you accept Alfonso's offer (see Scene 2), that will not affect their stance.

THE RITUAL

If there are any characters who are Lasombra, they may attempt to obtain information from the Amici Noctis about the ritual that Gotzon will be performing. Succeeding at a difficulty 7 Investigation roll will let the character discern which of the Amici Noctis that they meet would have the knowledge of Abyss Mysticism that they need to gain vital information on the nature of the coming eclipse.

Succeeding at a difficulty 8 Occult roll will elicit detailed information about Gotzon's ritual, The Cry That Slays The Light. The characters will learn that the eclipse will last exactly one hour, which will allow them to better prepare for their confrontation with the Angellis Ater.

System: A Cainite wishing to shout The Cry That Slays Light must spend one week in absolute silence. During this time, she spends all waking hours mentally repeating a litany of hatred for the sun and moon and the Creator of light. Once the ritual is complete, the vampire's player rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 8). A botch results in the vampire's banishment into the Abyss for a century per 1 rolled, during which time the vampire gains at least one derangement and loses all blood, but never falls into the release of torpor. Failure means the caster fails and nothing happens. Success means the vampire hears the whispers of Ahriman proclaiming the syllable that is opposed to all being. The syllable cannot be telepathically extracted or mystically removed. At any time, he may shriek this syllable to turn day into night. For one hour, vampires may walk openly without fear of Rötschreck and are protected from the sun. The syllable then passes from the mystic's memory unless he casts the ritual once more to rediscover it.

Side Effect: Upon actually invoking the Cry That Slays Light to blot out the sun, roll the mystic's Road (difficulty 4). Each success allows the vampire to retain one dot of her Road. If this sudden degeneration reduces the vampire's Road to zero, she rampages under the cover of darkness and kills everything and everyone she can find. When the darkness ends, it subsumes her into its being and her hunger is added to the Abyss.

Ashirra

Who are they? The Ashirra is made up of Islamic Kindred who believe that Muhammad promised redemption for Cainites who are true followers of Allah. Its members are mostly Lasombra and Assamite, but any Kindred who is a Muslim can belong to the Ashirra.

Initially founded in the earliest days of Islam, the Ashirra originally existed as a means to defend the faith and to share

the words of their Prophet with other Kindred. With the spread of Islam, the Ashirra has grown beyond that initial purpose. The Ashirra are a force to be reckoned with, with real power both political and military. There are many within the Ashirra who are still true believers in the promise of Muhammad and redemption, but the growth of the power of the Ashirra has seen an increase in Kindred who follow Islam as a matter of convenience rather than true conviction.

What do they want? The Ashirra want to spread the faith and destroy the enemies of Islam. Members of the Ashirra in the Iberian Peninsula believe it is their sacred duty to drive back the Christian invaders and retake the lands that have been conquered.

Notable Character: Hassan ibn Faiz

Allies: The Taifa Gangrel. If you earn the respect of the Taifa Gangrel, the Ashirra will view you very favorably.

Enemies: The Crimson Curia. The Ashirra will attack anyone aiding the Crimson Curia.

Why would they help you? Appeals to religion would be heard favorably. The very nature of the *Angellis Ater* as Satanists and demon worshippers is an affront to Islam. You could also win them over by taking action to weaken the Crimson Curia. The Ashirra is split on the issue of Gerushah as Sultan; aiding her enemies will not affect their opinion either way. (6 difficulty to gain their support, 5 if

you have already gained the support of the Taifa Gangrel)

What will turn them against you? Acting to aid the Christians or the Crimson Curia in the Shadow Reconquista will earn the Ashirra's ire. You cannot convince them to remain neutral if you aid the Crimson Curia, nor can you keep your involvement with the Crimson Curia secret if you decide to work with Alfonso de Landa. The Crimson Curia are nearly universally hated and de Landa is kept under very tight scrutiny at all times.

The Ashirra are divided on the question of Sultan Gerushah. Many distrust her as a convert and would like to see her replaced, though she does have supporters within the Ashirra as well.

What happens if you work with Alfonso? Working with Alfonso will inflame the ire of the Ashirra. They will do everything they can to thwart you and during the eclipse they will attack you on sight. If you refuse to work with Alfonso but contribute to the Shadow Reconquista to buy the neutrality of the Curia, you might be able to keep it a secret, but it's not too likely. (9 difficulty)

Cappadocians

Who are they? Aliyyah, the Whisper of Death, is a Cappadocian who came to Sevilla to study the haunted Roman necropolis at Italica. She has since built a small



settlement of Cappadocians who reside there permanently to study the ruins.

The Cappadocians have no personal stake in whether Sevilla is ruled by Muslims or Christians; they are more concerned with their studies of death and the dead than with such petty concerns as religion. However, Aliyyah believes it is inevitable that the Christians will triumph in their Shadow Reconquista. It is against that eventuality that she has made deals with the Crimson Curia to deliver Sultan Gerushah to them when the time comes.

What do they want? They want to keep what Aliyyah has built in Italica and to be able to continue their studies unmolested.

Notable character: Elisheba bint Aliyyah

Allies: The Cappadocians are too insular and suspicious to form permanent alliances with any one faction.

Enemies: The Crimson Curia. Aliyyah has made secret deals with the Curia to provide for her continued domain of Italica when Sevilla falls. However, the Cappadocians play a deep game; they have plans that have not yet come to fruition, and they would not like to see the Crimson Curia's progress toward victory hastened.

The Cappadocians are also deeply suspicious of the Taifa Gangrel's interest in the necropolis. Many of them believe that the Taifa Gangrel's scholarly interest is an act to permit them to scout the ruin in preparation for taking it for themselves. If you ally with the Taifa Gangrel, it will be very hard to persuade them to assist you.

Why would they help you? The Cappadocians are inclined to remain neutral. Their settlement is removed from the city of Sevilla itself, and the idea of a mass slaughter might be of intellectual interest to some of these morbid scholars. Offering them an exceedingly rare artifact or tome that would aid their studies might be enough to enlist their aid. Otherwise, you will need to convince them that the rise of the *Angellis Ater* would threaten the safety of their settlement. (Difficulty 7 to enlist their aid, 8 if you are also working with the Taifa Gangrel)

What will turn them against you? Exposing their collaboration with the Crimson Curia either to Gerushah or the Ashirra will infuriate the Cappadocians, as will destroying their settlement at Italica or otherwise making it impossible for them to reside there anymore.

What happens if you work with Alfonso? The Cappadocians will not endanger their bargain with the Crimson Curia by acting openly against them. Still, they are in no hurry for the city to fall and will not aid you if you accept Alfonso's offer.

Crimson Curia

Who are they? The Crimson Curia is made up of Kindred members of the Christian Church. The Crimson Curia has infiltrated church hierarchy significantly in the

last few centuries and exerts a good deal of influence over the mortal Christian Church. Clan Lasombra in particular has been very successful in seeing its members attain very high rank within the church.

In the Iberian Peninsula, the Crimson Curia is synonymous with the Shadow Reconquista. They believe it is their sacred duty to eliminate Islam in Iberia.

What do they want? They want to spread the Gospel among non-believers and to reconquer the land that was taken from them.

Notable Character: Alfonso de Landa

Allies: The closest thing the Crimson Curia have to allies are the Cappadocians, who will not acknowledge their support openly.

Enemies: The Ashirra and the Taifa Gangrel are the antithesis of the Crimson Curia. There is too much bitter difference to even attempt to bridge the divide between them.

Why would they help you? If you accept Alfonso de Landa's offer, they will be your allies in the confrontation against the *Angellis Ater*. Otherwise, the best you can hope for is to earn their neutrality. If you reject de Landa's offer, you will need to either take some other significant action to aid the Shadow Reconquista or otherwise convince them of your righteousness in order for the Crimson Curia to not actively act against you. (Difficulty 8 to convince them not to attack you, difficulty 9 if you want to keep it secret from the Ashirra.)

What will turn them against you? Rejecting Alfonso's offer and making no further attempt to negotiate with the Crimson Curia will make them enemies, as will any action to aid the Ashirra or Sultan Gerushah.

What happens if you work with Alfonso? You will have the full and undivided support of the Crimson Curia in acting against the *Angellis Ater*. Instead of coordinating with Gerushah, you will work directly with Alfonso to gather resources against the coming crisis.

Taifa Gangrel

Who are they? The Taifa Gangrel are a movement that was formed in response of the conversion of an ancient elder of the clan, Shabaqo, to Islam. Inspired by his example, others of his clan converted and pledged to follow his example by resisting the bestiality that their clan was prone to through following Islam. The Taifa Gangrel are most prominent in Iberia and Northern Africa, taking their name from the taifa kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula.

Within Sevilla, the Taifa Gangrel are represented by Mukhtar and his trusted childer Nashwa, who have formed a small coterie of Mukhtar's childer and other sympathetic minded Gangrel.

Notable Character: Nashwa bint Mukhtar

Allies: Working with the Ashirra will not automatically earn the assistance of the Taifa Gangrel, but it will make them favorably disposed toward you.

Enemies: If you ally with the Crimson Curia, the Taifa Gangrel will do everything they can to thwart you.

What do they want? They want to engage with the scholars that have come to Sevilla from foreign lands. They also want to fight against the enemies of Islam.

Why would they help you? The Taifa Gangrel are not as extreme as the Ashirra; they want to defeat the Shadow Reconquista and destroy its agents, but they don't view Christianity itself as a threat and see no problem with Christians and Muslims existing side-by-side. They are, however, rather nomadic by inclination and have no deep ties to Sevilla. You will need to convince them that the *Angellis Ater* poses a threat to Islam in the Iberian Peninsula in order to receive their assistance. (Difficulty 8 to recruit them, 7 if you have already recruited the Ashirra.)

What will turn them against you? Failing to convince the Taifa Gangrel to help you will not make them your enemies. They will either ignore you or leave Sevilla altogether. Only openly allying with the Shadow Reconquista would cause them to become your enemies.

What happens if you work with Alfonso? If you accept Alfonso's offer (Scene 2), the Taifa Gangrel will not assist you in any way. The best you can hope for is to convince them not to attack you. (Difficulty 8)

Side scenes Characters with oracular abilities

The eclipse is a powerful magical event that will send ripples throughout time. If any of the characters in your chronicle are Malkavian or possess oracular abilities, you can use visions of the possible future to emphasize the dire nature of the situation and heighten tension for the players.

Here are some suggested points during the adventure at which you can narrate visions of doom for oracular characters. The locations of these scenes are suggestions; they can be elaborated upon or moved however you feel it would best serve the needs of your particular story.

Upon learning about the Visigoth (either from Gerushah or Alfonso)

You receive a vision of the chaos that the eclipse will cause, although it is clearer this time, now that you know what you are seeing. Darkness covers the sky and there is chaos in the streets as the city burns, but then the vision changes. The darkness roils, filling you with fear as the shadows come to life.

Somewhere hidden, you see the Visigoth, ancient and powerful even in torpor. You see him awaken as he is covered in shadow. He rises from his tomb, and it is clear that the shadows are in control.

After the vision: The oracular character may roll either Perception + Occult or Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 8.

If they succeed, they successfully deduce that the *Angellis Ater* intend to summon a demon to possess the Visigoth. If they botch, they are shaken by the visions of what they have just seen. The difficulties of all rolls are increased by one for the remainder of the scene, as they are unable to shake the feeling of dread inspired by the visions.

Upon making an enemy (after learning of the Visigoth): As before, you see the sun disappear in darkness. The shadows loom about you, but then are still. In his tomb, the Visigoth stirs, then subsides into deeper slumber. In the streets above, however, the chaos has erupted into open civil war among the city's Cainites. Under a black sky, the Kindred of Sevilla war openly in the street, using the power of their blood to strike fear into the hearts of mortal and Cainite alike and to destroy their enemies.

You see Muslims fighting Christians, Christians fighting Christians, and Muslims fighting Muslims. The tensions that have been so deeply buried erupt into violence that shocks even you.

Who counts as an enemy? No matter what choices the characters make, they will have to make an enemy of someone. If they choose to help Gerushah, they will make enemies of the Crimson Curia. Likewise, if they choose to aid the Crimson Curia, they will make enemies of the Ashirra.

Depending on the circumstances, it's entirely possible that the characters might make enemies of multiple characters or groups. When this happens, feel free to have the oracular character assaulted by repetitions of the vision, but increase the level of horror and violence each time.

The first time they see the vision, say only that they see fighting, then continue to add descriptions to increase the horror as needed. For example, "You see Nashwa restrained by several members of the Curia, who have her bound in heavy chains. She screams as they toss her into a burning building." Or, "you see the Cappadocians set upon by Christians and Muslims alike. Elisheba is torn apart by the ravening mob, which then turns inward against itself". Or, "You are running through the crowded streets. Everything is on fire, and there is nowhere to hide from the violence that has spilled out into the streets. You can only hope to keep moving long enough to keep a mob from ganging up on you."

Immediately before the eclipse: You see a circle painted in blood, and nearby a pile of corpses. Inside the circle are unfamiliar runes, runes that seem to writhe as you look at them and hurt your eyes to gaze upon. At the center of the circle is a figure robed in shadow. She chants in a language you have never heard. Her voice is rough and exultant, and the sound of the words inspires terror. You have never heard anything like this before, but you know that it is *wrong*.

The air in front of her begins to coalesce. Beginning as a dark mist, it begins to grow and take shape. You tremble in fear and pray that you will wake up before you see its face.

After the vision: If the oracular character succeeds at a roll of difficulty 7, they remember the face of the woman in the vision clearly enough that they recognize Ashiqa immediately as the person performing the actual summoning. If they botch, when the time comes to confront the *Angellis Ater*, they will have to pass a difficulty 8 roll or spend the first round of combat frozen in fear.

Scene: 9 The Eclipse

If the characters did not talk to the different factions for assistance with the *Angellis Ater*, then this scene is quick. Sevilla is thrown into utter chaos by the eclipse, and the characters must struggle through the throngs of people crowding the streets. This poses several opportunities for the characters to encounter both allies and enemies that they may have created in the previous scenes.

As the characters awaken to the pitch black of night, they know immediately that something is wrong. They can hear people yelling and screaming outside the walls of their temporary haven, and everything seems darker than normal, as no lights have been lit on the streets. Emerging from their havens, they see the utter darkness of night, with no stars or moon in the sky. If the characters have investigated the ritual Cry that Slays the Light, they are aware that the eclipse only lasts for an hour. Otherwise, they have simply heard that the eclipse could last minutes or hours. Either way, they must race to the ritual site to stop the *Angellis Ater* before the sleeping Visigoth is awoken.

Though they do not have far to travel, the streets are packed with panicking people and gawkers. On top of that, the Cainites of the city have decided to take this opportunity to run freely through the streets, killing and causing general mayhem. Gerushah's enforcers are spread throughout the city attempting to quell the rogue vampires, but they cannot be everywhere at once. As they push their way past frightened people, the characters encounter a small band of Cainites. Depending on who they have chosen to assist determines who they run across in this scene. If they ignored Alfonso or ratted him out to Gerushah, see *Dealing with the Crimson Curia*. If they assisted Alfonso, see *Dealing with the Ashirra*.

Dealing with the Crimson Curia

In the event the characters chose to hunt down Alfonso and the Crimson Curia before the Eclipse, then this scene only occurs if any members of the Curia were left alive after the encounter. Otherwise, skip to *More Enemies*.

The Crimson Curia is understandably upset to be revealed in Gerushah's court. They have been biding their time up until now. With the chaos of the eclipse upon the city, they see this as a great opportunity to get revenge, and possibly make the characters seem untrustworthy.

The characters need to deal with the vampires to move past them. Killing them in the street could pose more problems

than it is worth. The Curia is intent on attacking, but if the characters engage in a fight, the violence sets the mortals off on their own violent actions. Brawls amongst the people break out, making it harder to maneuver through them, slowing the characters. The players need to make successful Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty 6) to take any physical actions in the throng, including passing through once the fight is over. The characters may lure the Curia down a side ally to fight them. While this prevents the mortals from reacting to the fight, it makes the fight take extra time.

The characters may be able to talk the Crimson Curia down. If the characters can convince the Curia that they did not actually sell them out to Gerushah, the Curia may back down. This also takes time, so the characters need to work quickly. The characters can spend 10 minutes attempting to convince the Curia. The players roll Charisma + Expression (difficulty 6). If they actually did reveal the Curia to Gerushah, this instead requires a Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 8) check. A botched roll wastes 10 minutes and causes the Crimson Curia to attack anyway.

Regardless of how the encounter goes, characters will enter the scene *More Enemies* afterward.

Dealing with the Ashirra

Gerushah has spies everywhere, and has discovered the presence of the Crimson Curia in her city. Reports that the characters are working with the Curia prompted her to send two assassins to execute them.

Again, dealing with the Ashirra vampires causes problems with the crowd (see *Dealing with the Crimson Curia*). Fortunately for the characters, the Ashirra are most likely to ambush them in a less populous area. The mortals still react, but the Dexterity + Athletics roll to maneuver is set to difficulty 5.

If the characters are really ambitious, they can attempt to convince the Ashirra that they are not working with the Crimson Curia. They must come up with a plausible story, such as they are attempting to infiltrate the group and gather information for Gerushah, or they were lied to, or the characters were waiting for a good time to kill the Curia themselves. If the characters spent time spreading rumors about Gerushah to the other factions, then these lies are impossible to sell. If they have been less than helpful with Alfonso's goals, then the Ashirra are more likely to believe them. The players can roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 8) to convince the Ashirra that they meant Gerushah no harm.

If at some point the characters contacted the Ashirra for assistance and gained them as their allies, the Ashirra in this scene attempt to speak with them before attacking. If they antagonized the Ashirra, no amount of talking will convince them to stop attacking.

Regardless of how the encounter goes, characters will enter the scene *More Enemies* afterward.



More Enemies

After the characters deal with either the Ashirra or the Crimson Curia, they will run across one or more of the following groups; the Amici Noctus, the Ashirra, the Cappadocians, the Crimson Curia, or the Taifa Gangrel. If the characters did not bother to contact any of these groups, then ignore this part of the scene and skip directly to Showdown with the *Angellis Ater*. Only factions the characters contacted or are currently working with show up during this part of the scene.

Depending on which they contacted previously, and how that engagement went, this part plays out in one of several ways. If they were unable to convince the factions one way or another, then the faction will act as a grudging ally to the characters. They will do nothing to actively help the characters, but they will work towards the common goal of defeating the *Angellis Ater*. Any factions they were able to ally themselves with will arrive to assist against the *Angellis Ater* at this time.

If the characters antagonized any of the groups, then that faction takes this opportunity to attack the characters without fear of repercussions. Again, the same rules apply as in Dealing with the Crimson Curia for dealing with the crowd and possibly talking the aggressors out of their actions.

Scene 10:

Showdown with the *Angellis Ater*

Finally able to get past the distractions, the characters make it to the ritual site with little time to spare. How much time they have is dependent on how long they spent dealing with the vampire factions on their way to the ritual site.

If they havened near the site, they are ten minutes away. If not, it takes thirty minutes for them to arrive without any altercations. Assume that each combat scene takes five to ten minutes, depending on the difficulty of the opponents. Each time they try to convince a group to let them go peaceably, they spend 10 minutes. Meeting up with allies takes no more than five minutes of their time.

The *Angellis Ater*'s ritual takes a full hour to complete. If the characters arrive before the ritual ends, they will see an elaborate ritual set up. Cultists surround an intricate circle inscribed with runes and covered in blood. Ashiqa bint Jifri leads her cultists with chanting and bloodletting, her voice like a dissonant song rising on the air to meet the shouts and screams of the panicking mortals. She holds in her hand a chalice (the Valencia Chalice, unless recovered from Ordo-nio) which she uses to collect blood from herself and from human sacrifices littering the circle. A successful Intelligence

+ Occult (difficulty 7) check will reveal that the chalice is a ritual focus, and destroying it will disrupt the ritual.

Members of her cult will break away from the ritual the moment they notice the character's arrival. Players can make a Dexterity + Stealth (difficulty 7) for characters to sneak past the cultists' notice. If successful, the characters can attack Ashiqa and disrupt her ritual. If they fail to sneak past, the cultists attack the characters and their allies attempting to prevent them from disrupting Ashiqa.

Ashiqa is prepared for the inevitability that someone would try to stop her, and she has entreated the Baali, Mirabelle, to assist with the ritual by summoning small demons to guard the ritual site. Mirabelle creates one demon every fifteen minutes, and sends her minions out against the characters when they arrive.

The ensuing fight is meant to be a crescendo to the chronicle. The characters should be fully capable of defeating Ashiqa and her cultists to prevent her from successfully completing her ritual. Make sure the characters feel both the tension of the time constraint and the importance of ending the ritual. If the characters succeed in stopping the ritual, see Resolutions; otherwise, see The Visigoth Awakens.

If the characters arrive too late or cannot stop the ritual, they find Ashiqa covered in blood over the red glowing remains of her summoning circle. The light of the sun is slowly emerging, forcing all the vampires to search for cover. The Visigoth is awakened and must be dealt with when they awake that night. See The Visigoth Awakens.

Scene II: The Visigoth Awakens

At this point the characters are in a bad state. They have either failed to make it to the ritual in time or failed to defeat Ashiqa bint Jifri before she completed the ritual. When they awaken this time, the sky is normal, though screams fill the night air.

If the Visigoth is awake because the characters were too late to attempt to stop Ashiqa from finishing the ritual, they find her emerging from her own safe space at the same time. Fighting Ashiqa at this point might seem useless, but she attacks the characters anyway to show them not to mess with her. Use information from Showdown with the *Angellis Ater* to deal with her.

The *Angellis Ater*'s ritual worked, though not the way they thought it would. They have summoned a demon into the world, who has taken up residence in the Visigoth. The demon-possessed vampire is raging through the streets feasting on the blood of any mortal he comes across.

Finding the Visigoth is easy for the characters. They can easily follow the sounds of death and destruction. People flee from the Visigoth in droves, and traversing the roads is much easier as the population of Sevilla has shuttered itself indoors to hide from the beast.

The Kindred factions are out in force and enmities are set aside to deal with the ravaging vampire. When the characters catch up to the Visigoth, they find Gerushah's enforcers along with several other militant groups surrounding the creature. Hassan ibn Faiz approaches the characters to tell them he has been researching the ritual with this inevitability in mind. He believes that the Visigoth is bound to the magical energies from the ritual and is possessed by a demon. He relates that the creature seems immune to damage from physical and magical attacks. Something must be done to release the magical energies binding the demon to him.

Hassan mentions a ritual focus, or words that were used in the binding. He suggests returning to the ritual site to recover the item. Characters who made the check to recognize the chalice as the ritual focus will remember this. Otherwise, have players roll Wits + Awareness (difficulty 6) to remember seeing the item in Ashiqa's hand. Characters who completely missed the ritual can make an Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7) to recognize the chalice as the ritual focus when they return to the ritual site.

The chalice can be destroyed in one of two ways. Either it can be broken with the use of Potence at any level, or any character with blood magic can spend a few minutes decomposing the magical bindings on the chalice. Once the chalice is destroyed, the demon bound to the Visigoth is expelled, and without an anchor, is banished from the world. The Visigoth loses his magical immunities and begins taking damage immediately. He is still an elder Gangrel in frenzy, and they must deal with him accordingly. They can choose to allow the hunger frenzy to work itself through by providing people for the vampire to feed on. They can also attempt to pull him from his frenzy via supernatural powers. Afterwards, the characters can attempt to talk to the Visigoth and prevent him from causing further destruction in the city. If unsuccessful, their only option is to neutralize him through combat.

Scene 12: Resolutions

After the characters defeat the *Angellis Ater*, or the Visigoth if he was awakened, the city settles into an uneasy rest. The eclipse and the surrounding events have changed the face of Sevilla, both for mortal and for Cainite society. What happens to the political climate of Sevilla next depends on the choices the characters made throughout the chronicle.

Gerushah's Fate

If the characters decided to help Alfonso de Landa in his campaign against Gerushah, they find her very upset with them. If the Visigoth was roused, the factions lose faith in Gerushah's ability to lead, and she is removed as Sultan. Alfonso is so pleased with the results, he offers more opportunities for the characters to work with him in the future.



If the characters were able to stop the ritual in time, the other factions are more inclined to keep Gerushah around. If the Ashirra have been aiding the characters, they push to remove Gerushah from Sultan. However, if the characters made an enemy of them, or they found out the characters are working with the Crimson Curia, they swing the other way. The Ashirra are one of the largest factions, so their opinion in this matter is the most influential. If all the other factions have been convinced of Gerushah's complicity, they push to remove her, and she loses her position as Sultan. Without power, she is incapable of striking back at the characters, and they have earned a bitter enemy for the future. If she remains as Sultan of the city, she has a little leniency towards the characters and simply exiles them from her city instead of ordering their deaths.

If the characters betrayed Alfonso to Gerushah, she is thankful for their assistance with the *Angellis Ater*. She then offers the characters a new job to help her root out all of the Crimson Curia in her city.

War or Peace

A power vacuum is created when Gerushah is removed as Sultan of Sevilla, and the factions go to war with one

another to determine who next rules the city. Depending on which factions the characters allied with, they may have their work cut out for them in the future to secure the city.

In the case the characters are exiled from the city, those factions that supported them continue doing so to save their reputation and a war breaks out between factions, divided amongst those favorable to the characters and those opposing them. Even if Gerushah remains Sultan, the tensions Alfonso stirred force the factions into open animosity. Only if Gerushah remains Sultan and the characters were able to unite several factions under her banner can she maintain an uneasy peace between factions.

Continuing Chronicles

This chronicle is easily set within ongoing chronicles, or characters can continue after this chronicle into new adventures. The eclipse is a worldwide event that creates changes everywhere. One such change is that the power of the ritual used to create it is enough to wake torpored elders from their sleep. Also, by the nature of the ritual, Gotzon has completely forgotten his involvement in the eclipse, meaning that the true reason for the eclipse is steeped in rumor and uncertainty.

New Systems

Fires of the Abyss

(Daimoinon •••, Obtenebration •••)

The Cainite can integrate her mastery of the dark arts with shadows from the Abyss to create terrifying effects. The vampire can create tentacles made of shadow wreathed in black flame emerging from darkness. The tentacles can lash out at foes, and set surrounding objects on fire.

System: The player spends one blood point and makes a simple Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7); each success enables the creation of a single tentacle. The tentacles have size and traits as described in Arms of the Abyss. Though the tentacle is wreathed in fire, it is still composed of shadow, and is affected by other sources of fire and sunlight as though it were a vampire.

Tentacles may strike at foes, inflicting (Strength -1) aggravated damage per turn. Tentacles cannot grasp or hold a target, as the fire separates and passes around solid objects. Tentacles may set inanimate objects on fire if they come in contact with them for a sufficient amount of time. Vampires confronted with the black fire make Rotschreck tests as if confronted with a fire the size of a torch (or bonfire if the tentacle is larger than 6 feet). This power costs 18 experience to learn.

Gazing Into The Abyss

(Ausper •, Obtenebration ••)

The Cainite is attuned to the shadows. He can determine if someone else is manipulating the darkness nearby. He can also tell if a bit of darkness he is viewing is natural or not.

System: As with Heightened Senses, it takes a reflexive action to activate this power, but no other cost or roll is necessary. Once activated, the character can see the shape of shadows. He is able to discern if a shadow is currently being manipulated by use of Obtenebration. This does not reveal the user of the Obtenebration, only that it is being used on a particular shadow. The vampire can also discern if a particular patch of shadow has been created from the Abyss, or is a natural occurrence.

This power also conveys the ability to see in pitch darkness, as the Cainite is able to see into the heart of the shadow creating the darkness. Also, any penalties for being in a tenebrous cloud created by Shroud of Night are reduced from +2 to +1. This power costs 6 experience to learn.

One of Us (Presence •, Obfuscate •••)

The Cainite can convince observers that her clothing and features fit into any group of people, regardless of how discerning or secretive the group is. By sheer force of personality, she can convince even the most scrupulous observer

that she belongs with the group, even if she doesn't know the correct secret language or signs to normally pass as a member.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Performance (difficulty 7) to determine how convincing the disguise is. The more the Cainite knows about the organization, the better the disguise works, the Storyteller can lower the difficulty based on prior information the character has about the group.

Successes	Results
1 Success	The vampire's clothing and colors match those of the organization she is impersonating.
2 Successes	The vampire looks different from herself and her clothing may have a sign or symbol similar to that of the organization.
3 Successes	The vampire's gestures and speech patterns are perceived to match that of the organization she is impersonating.
4 Successes	The vampire is able to convince listeners that what she says is what they want to hear, including the correct answers to secret questions.
5 Successes	The character flawlessly mimics a member of the organization, even fooling august members and organizational leaders.

Even the most convincing Cainite must be careful when infiltrating a group or organization on multiple occasions. The use of this power does not magically impart the secret codes and phrases to the user; it simply tricks those perceiving her into believing that what she says is what they want to hear. This power costs 10 experience to learn.

Shadow Looking Glass

(Ausper ••••, Obtenebration ••)

The vampire is capable of projecting her consciousness into a shadow and view distant events near other shadows while still perceiving her physical surroundings. The vampire does not need to target a specific person or place, but instead views scenes through connected shadows.

System: The player spends a blood and rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 6) and concentrates on a shadow within line of sight. The vampire enters a meditative state and projects her consciousness into the nearby shadow. She is able to perceive any other shadow connected to the shadow she has projected her thoughts into. She perceives the surroundings of the shadow as though she were standing inside of it. As long as the shadows are connected, she can move between them freely. If the vampire enters a moving shadow, such as one belonging to a person or an animal, she is trapped in that shadow until it connects to another one. In this way, the vampire can send her consciousness through an entire city. Shadow Looking Glass splits the

vampire's perception between the shadow and her own surroundings. As a result she is at a +3 difficulty on any roll relating to actions involving her physical surroundings. This power costs 18 experience to learn.

Soul Stain (Daimoinon ••, Obtenbration ••)

This power conveys the ability to corrupt the minds of mortals over time with shadows that twist the victim's soul. The Cainite creates a tiny bit of supernatural darkness which he can then place into the shadow of any living creature. The darkness lingers there, whispering dark promises to the victim.

System: The Cainite must first use Sense the Sin on a living creature to learn his innermost flaws. The vampire then spends a blood point to create a small patch of darkness and attaches it to the victim's own shadow. A victim may resist this corruption with a Self-Control roll (difficulty 7). For the next twenty-four hours, the victim is plagued by promises of fulfilling his heart's darkest desires. These promises come with a corrupting influence, causing him to degenerate the more he listens. During the twenty-four hour time period, the victim suffers a +1 penalty to difficulty of Willpower rolls. Victims corrupted by this influence are more susceptible to the vampire's successive attempts to use any powers on him, decreasing all difficulties to use powers by 1. Soul Stain can be used on a victim in successive nights, and its effects are cumulative up to a maximum of five. This power costs 12 experience to learn.





He wants what?"

When the page arrived previously to deliver the news, Ioanna hadn't bothered to turn around and acknowledge his presence. Her attention was too focused on the map spread out before her. The desk was nearly twice the size of the bed in her appointed chambers. The massive furniture and the free hand with all of the preparations spoke volumes of the largesse of her host, King Frederick II. How many Crusades did it take to fill the coffers sufficiently to afford such grand apparatuses as he desired and to feed and clothe his vaunted guests so richly? Ioanna secretly wondered if the gold he paid her would disappear by dawn, but it always remained.

The page swallowed hard and hefted the large tome he carried. He handled the large velvet ribbon marking the twentieth page gingerly and opened the volume, squinting at the Latin to look for the passage he sought. Ioanna's posture went rigid as she saw the slender slip of a lad handle the pages; in the back of her mind, she feared his delicate, uncalled, courtly hands would drop it due to the sheer weight. "In *The Enthronement of the Yellow Emperor*, it states clearly that—" the page began.

"I know what it states!" Ioanna hissed, cutting him off. She stormed forward, snatching the volume from the page's hands and clutching it to her chest. Her arms barely encircled the book's girth. "This should not have left the library! Do you know what you have risked bringing it here?!"

The page stood there, struck dumb with terror. Ioanna scowled up at the lad. "Of course you don't, you fool."

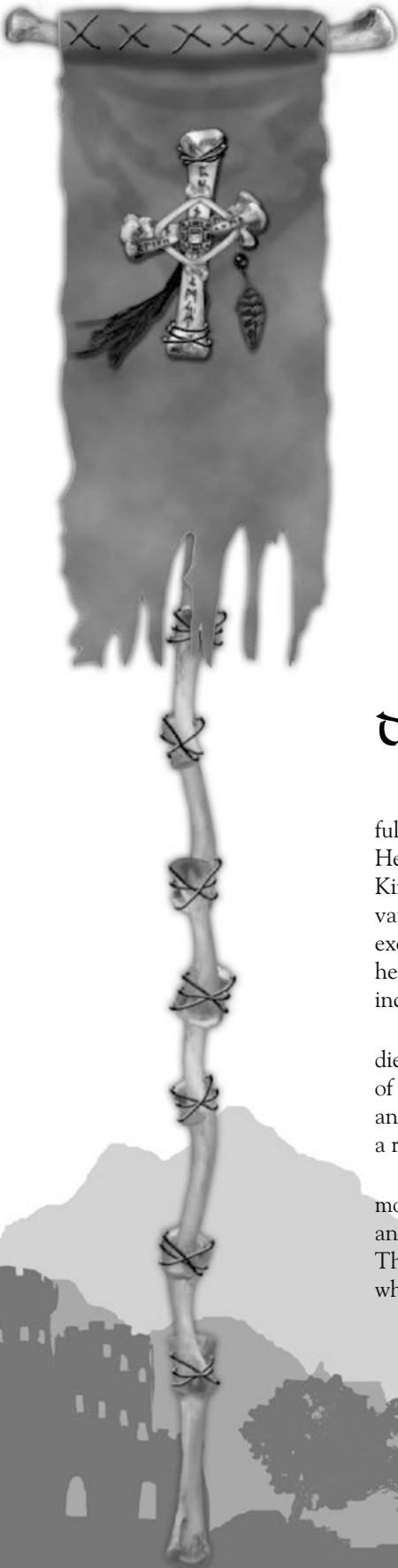
Finally, the page stammered his best and only retort. "Madam, it... it is as His Majesty desires and commands." As he spoke, he stood straighter and raised his chin. "Shall I tell him that you have denied him?"

Ioanna clutched the book. With a world-weary sigh, Ioanna pinched the bridge of her nose. "I serve at His Majesty's pleasure. I will see that it is done. Now get out of my sight. And take this with you." She shoved the tome back into his arms. "See to it that you place it back in the library exactly as you found it or you will have a special place in the ritual."

The page blinked and stared at Ioanna in confusion. Ioanna sneered at the page in return, baring her teeth. "In the catacombs."

With that, the page's eyes grew wide and his newfound courage evaporated. He scrambled out of the room as if Ioanna or the Devil himself would follow.

Ioanna returned her attention to the desk. She turned over the sheet of parchment overlaid on the southern portion of the map and began to sketch once more, muttering to herself. If the Holy Roman Emperor wanted a horn of fire for his great ritual, he would get a horn of fire, regardless of her wishes. Still, King he may be, but Frederick was still a Commoner. It was up to Ioanna to make sure the whole God-forsaken ritual would work. Well, by whatever definition of "work" the Emperor desired.



MAGE

DIVINE RIGHT



Pride goeth before destruction and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

DIVINE RIGHT

Jerusalem rests in an uneasy peace under Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, who also crowned himself king of the Crusader State. He won the city peacefully in a nearly bloodless Sixth Crusade, but this diplomacy enraged the Church. He came here with the rights of a regent, as his son has a legitimate claim to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but in taking the crown for himself, he has provoked the Levant's Christian lords. The Emperor also walks in a cloud of unsavory rumors. He was excommunicated just a few years ago for refusing to lead an army to the Levant, and he breaks bread with Saracens and scholars known for their dangerous philosophies, including reputed sorcerers.

Frederick believes that, as an heir to ancient Rome, he must to seek his own audience with God. After all, the mantle of philosopher-king predates the establishment of the Church, so he cannot trust in the Gospel alone. Surrounding himself with sages and sorcerers, he has chosen Jerusalem as the place where he'll cry to Heaven, using a rite devised by a gathering of magi.

Through rumors, visions or messengers, your players' magi have heard his summons. Perhaps they've come to help him and reap rewards in gold, political influence, and access to occult lore. They may be enemies determined to kill him or ruin his rite. They may also be driven to his side by sheer curiosity, a powerful motive for those who study hidden things.



CROSSOVER INTRODUCTION

Fae - Frederick II rules with a facade of sanity and sobriety filled with disquiet. It is said that Frederick beckons to each of the seasonal Courts to use the pathways into the faerie lands to move great armies. Such a plan requires a powerful oath that can only be made when the sun is blotted out in the midday sky. What is Frederick willing to give in return to bind such an oath? How will it be possible to open the ways to the faerie lands for so many? How will this affect the Mists the Firstborn rely on so heavily? Summer is coming, and the scent of blood lingers on the heated winds.

Inquisitor - Disturbed by the news of Frederick's rapid rise to power and the disquieting peace of the region, the Inquisitors are sent to Jerusalem to work out the truth and deal with it as necessary. They believe that Frederick will make his move during foretold blackening of the sky, but what that move is precisely is unknown, but there is little doubt that what will transpire will serve the Glory of God. There are many targets: the "common" people who know a bit more than they're letting on, the soldiers who seem a bit too vigilant at their posts, and Frederick's inner circle. Even Frederick himself is not beyond the Inquisitors' reach; he's just somewhat less accessible. Some Inquisitors may seek to defend the innocents in the way, yet others might see these innocents as sacrifices that must be made for the greater good.

Vampire - In this rendition, Frederick II does not seek to transform himself into a greater being. Instead, seeks to gain the control over a Methuselah residing beneath the catacombs of Jerusalem, much as the Tremere did at their inception. With all of his usual allies refusing to aid him in such a sacrilegious task, Frederick II must turn to outsiders and mercenaries, vampiric and otherwise, to aid him. Frederick intends to track down and subjugate this powerful being, eventually bending the Methuselah to his will. Everything revolves around the eclipse, when Frederick will press the charge down into the bowels of Jerusalem. The players' vampires can either ensure that Frederick succeeds, seeking some measure of the Methuselah's power for themselves. Alternately, they could betray him, leading to either Frederick going mad with power or a hungry Methuselah ravaging the city of Jerusalem.

Werewolf - Through the efforts of two elder theurges, Mummad Al-Sik of the Silent Striders and Paul Laistorus of the Warders of Men, the players' Garou hear disturbing rumors of the Holy Roman Emperor seeking to take a step beyond humanity through a dangerous rite that will call upon Luna herself. In theory, this would bring forth a new age of mankind. In practice, the ritual could make Frederick susceptible to frighteningly powerful banes and could transform him into a fomor of untold might. The Holy Roman Emperor has brushed off the warnings that

A NOTE ON HISTORY

The Dark Ages line began before the birth of resources like Wikipedia, but this book belongs to an era where it's easy for anyone with an internet connection to pick up basic history about the era, people and places mentioned in this chapter. Therefore, we won't waste much time repeating mundane historical facts, though we'll refer to them while concentrating on Dark Medieval secrets.

It should be noted that we've stretched normal history a touch by keeping Frederick II in Jerusalem through 1230 even though in real history, he left the year before, and made his representative, Riccardo Filangieri, regent. Filangieri will be forced to defend Frederick's authority against the Crusader nobility in the War of the Lombards. In this story, such tensions manifest through magi aligned with the contending factions.

following through with this ritual would rapidly escalate the timetable for the end of days. Through stealth or a storm of muscle, Frederick II must be stopped for his own good.

CHRONICLE MAP

This story is divided into scenes that don't contain objectives per se, but moments of interest the players' magi may resolve in a number of ways. They are:

Omens and Communications: This is the entry point into the story. Through various means, the magi learn that their kind are gathering in Jerusalem to advise and participate in a magical operation sponsored by the Holy Roman Emperor—a man rumored to have little regard for Christian doctrine and much curiosity about the secrets of Creation.

Pilgrims and Killers: Toward and in Jerusalem, the magi discover that beneath the peace imposed by Frederick's treaty, strange alliances have formed for and against his authority. With the quiet support of the Messianic Voices and the Sultan of Egypt, the Ahl-i-Batin Farooq ibn-Hassan Al-Masri has come to disrupt the ceremony. Al-Masri is a scholar first, and resents his role as a political tool.

The Court of the Heretic King: In Frederick's palace, magi trade information, settle rivalries, and prepare for the coming ritual. They witness the wondrous and horrific experiments that have been done to prepare for it. Depending on their opinions and approach, the players' magi are either honored guests, or must infiltrate the court. They might discover that no matter the ritual's outcome, *something* will happen. The eclipse will punch a hole in the lunar sphere, opening a gateway to the energies beyond—God, or something else.

Screaming Beyond the Shell of Night: On May 14, 1230, an eclipse pierces the shell between Heaven and Earth. Frederick sits at the center of a celestial coronation. If the ritual succeeds, he becomes something more than human, but far from God. But failure releases eldritch forces beyond the confines of his flesh. Thus, the magi must choose either a demon Emperor or a legion from what might be Hell.

AIDES AND CONSPIRATORS

DURAND DE GRISSE

Background: The son of prosperous farmers in Orleans, Durand De Grisse was plagued by terrible headaches and visions of angels as a child, leaving him unable to work the land. His parents arranged for him to enter the clergy as a novice monk, but he ran away at 16—he couldn’t read, no matter how often he was taught and beaten. He entered service (or at least camp follower status) with soldiers headed to the Fifth Crusade. Messianic Voices within the Templars sensed his piety and mystical potential, but were unable to train him to become a theurgic magus. Instead, he learned a few effective prayers (Hermetics would call him a “hedge magician”) and the military arts. He commanded ordinary Templar forces during the attack on Cairo in 1221, but was forced to turn back along with other Crusaders.

Ever since then, he has acted as a special servant of the Messianic Voices, marshaling mundane Templars for their purposes throughout Europe and the Middle East. He still can’t read, but the headaches have lessened, and he has a talent for languages and tactics that serve him in his travels. De Grisse now takes his orders from Malbert, the self-styled “Guardian of Dolorosa” (p. 116).

Image: De Grisse is a weathered 30-year-old man with light blue eyes and long, stringy blond hair turning to a prematurely white, and an unshorn beard on his face. His heavy armor and shield are both dirty gray, painted over to conceal his force’s origins. He speaks French quickly, and other languages with only a slight accent, though his voice is hoarse.

Roleplaying Hints: You’ve seen miracles and satanic horrors in your day, and these have snuffed out any doubt in your mission. God acts in the world. The Devil waylays the innocent. You’ve been blessed with the ability to call a few petty miracles, but know that your superiors and their strongest enemies are capable of much, much more. You prefer to attack by surprise, knowing that hesitation could leave your men burning in hellfire.

De Grisse not a true magus, but is capable of a handful of miraculous acts which he channels through screaming, fervent prayers into the following blessed objects.

SATOR Amulet: By chanting the Lord’s Prayer before a SATOR amulet (see **Dark Ages: Mage**, pp. 29-30) De

Grisse can subsequently hang it from its thong as a pendulum, and it will swing to where spells that have been cast within the past week. Each use expends 1 Willpower point.

Relic Sword: De Grisse believes his bastard sword’s hilt contains a fragment of the legendary blade Durendal, itself a reliquary. When he prays and meditates upon Christ’s temptations in the wilderness, the weapon glows with ethereal fire, visible to him and others capable of seeing invisible, spiritual energies. This adds +2 to the weapon’s damage, which becomes aggravated for the scene. This act causes De Grisse to manifest stigmata-like wounds, inflicting 1 health level of aggravated damage when this ability is activated.

Storytellers may add one or two other abilities, but these are his most powerful and most often used.

Durand De Grisse goes into battle with knight’s armor (+4B/+4L soak), a full helm (+3B/+4L soak vs. head attacks), a shield (he has separate shields for foot and mounted combat; parry diff. 6, +1 to incoming melee/missile attacks), his “blessed” bastard sword (Strength +5L damage, +1 diff. to use one handed) and a dagger (Strength +1L damage). If riding, he carries a morning star (Strength +3B damage) and two lances (Strength +0L or 8L damage on horseback) as well.

Influence: Technically, Durand De Grisse is a sergeant in the Knights Templar because he is not an aristocrat, but it is well-known to the upper echelons of the order that De Grisse has the backing of powerful individuals, and thus cede authority to him, but only when required.

Age: 30

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Penitent

Physical: Strength 4 (Strong Sword Arm), Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Leadership 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 2, Crafts 2, Melee 4 (Sword), Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Hearth Wisdom 2, Occult 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4 (Arabic, French, and others of the Storyteller’s choice), Medicine 2, Politics 1, Theology 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 3.

Willpower: 5

TEMPLAR “OUTLAWS”

Background: Led by Durand De Grisse, these 18 soldiers are one of several groups of Templars on missions to kill “strange travelers” who might be throwing their lot in with Frederick.



Image: Some of the Templars believe they've come to deal with "heretics" and "servants of Satan," but most think they're raiding the roads to make pilgrimages more dangerous and emphasize the continued necessity of the Templars themselves. Thus, none of the "outlaws" use identifying heraldry or clothing, though a few of them keep Templar medallions (depicting two brother-knights riding the same horse) beneath their clothes. They might also give themselves away with their beards and long hair, as many Templars leave their hair uncut as an act of piety. About half of the force maintains that tradition.

Roleplaying Hints: Under De Grisse's command, the Templars attack intelligently, using archers before charging in with horses and melee fighters. They will commit no more than half their number unless De Grisse believes the enemy can be definitively broken by a larger force. They try to avoid killing innocent pilgrims, but won't hesitate to cut down anyone who takes up arms against them, "witch" or not. If they doubt their ability to prevail, they'll track the magi to Jerusalem, sending fast horses ahead to try confronting them in the city itself.

The Templars have equipped themselves for roles as archers, footsoldiers and mounted warriors. When prepared for battle, they use the following:

Archers: Light armor (+1B/+2L soak), small shield (slung on back when using the bow; parry diff. 4), short bow (2L, 60 yard range), saber (Strength + 2L damage), dagger (Strength +1L damage).

Foot Soldiers: Heavy armor (+3B/+4L soak), light helm (+2B/+3L soak vs. head attacks), footman's shield (parry diff. 6, +1 diff to incoming melee/missile attacks), broadsword (Strength +4L damage), mace (Strength +1B damage), dagger (Strength +1L damage).

Mounted: Composite armor (+2B/+3L soak), light helm (+2B/+3L soak vs. head attacks), cavalry shield (parry diff. 6, +1 diff to incoming melee/missile attacks), 2 lances (damage Strength +0L or 8L from horseback), saber (Strength +2L damage), mace (Strength +1B damage) and dagger (Strength +1L damage).

Influence: None.

Age: 20s to late 30s

Nature: Various

Demeanor: Various

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 2 (3 for experienced archers), Crafts 1, Melee 3, Ride 2 (3 for experienced knights), Stealth 2, Survival 1

Knowledge: Academics or Hearth Wisdom 1, Occult 1, Linguistics 1 to 3 (all of them speak French) Theology 2

Backgrounds: Not applicable.

Willpower: 3 each

FAROOQ IBN-HASSAN AL-MASRI

Background: Farooq Ibn-Hassan Al-Masri is a philosopher and mystic, not an assassin. However, as a miracle worker in the Ahl-i-Batin, he has been forced to act as a spy and killer to defend his Fellowship's interests. This unhappy situation exists because Al-Masri came to the Batini through the Nizari Ismaili sect. The Ahl-i-Batin appreciate similarities between Nizari beliefs and their own Doctrine of Unity, to the point where some Batini say that Hassan-i-Sabbah's theology was inspired by the Kwaja-al-Akbar itself.

Unfortunately, they were not the only secret society so inspired. A sect of pagan vampires appropriated aspects of the Nizari sect, going to far as to create an impersonator of Hassan-i-Sabbah and replicate the fortress of Alamut, corrupting the Nizari chain of command. Rival magi confused affairs further when they founded cults that deviated from the faith. Al-Masri belongs to a group of Batini devoted to protecting Ismailis from further corruption. Much of his work involved preserving writings and ideas, but he was forced to learn violent and stealthy skills to seize knowledge from the hands of enemies. Much as he prefers Plato or the philosophical intricacies of hadiths, he uses a knife as skillfully as his mind.

Image: His true form is that of a fit, 46-year-old Egyptian man whose light brown eyes glimmer with curiosity and intelligence. Al-Masri is used to assuming other shapes and faces, but has trouble concealing that signature, penetrating gaze. Nevertheless, he knows how to change his posture and voice in an instant to complement a magical disguise.

Roleplaying Hints: The Ahl-i-Batin wish to maintain good relations with the Sultan of Egypt and the Messianic Voices of Jerusalem. Fate seems to be bent out of shape around this Crusader king and his entourage of magi, as well—he's like a diseased limb that must be cut away. But who has ever amputated a limb without the patient knowing it? The Sultan must appear blameless in what is to come. Once you perform this delicate surgery, you can get back to your books.

Influence: None.

Age: 46. In disguise, he normally limits his apparent age between his early teens and late 50s.

Fellowship: Ahl-i-Batin

Nature: Pedagogue

Demeanor: Defender

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5 (Misdirection), Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4 (Sorting Information), Intelligence 4 (Book Learning), Wits 4 (

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Subterfuge 5 (Disguise)

Skills: Archery 3, Crafts 2, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 3, Melee 4 (Daggers), Ride 2, Stealth 4 (Fortresses), Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 4 (Philosophy), Enigmas 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3 (Aramaic, French, Parsi, Coptic, in addition to Arabic), Occult 4 (Magical Practices), Theology 4 (Muslim)

Backgrounds: Library 3 (in Cairo), Resources 3

Foundation: Al-Ikhlās 4

Pillars: Al-Anbiya 2, Al-Fatihah 3, Al-Hajj 3, Al-Layl 4

Willpower: 7

MALBERT, GUARDIAN OF DOLOROSA

Background: Blessed with long life, unbreakable faith, and a will of steel, Malbert attributes his gifts to the holy city. Faith nourishes him in old age, and the Lord leads him down a treacherous but pure path, away from devotion adulterated by tolerance. His first memories were of slavery; before that, he feels impressions of riots and battles too painful to view with the mind's eye. By the age of eight, he knew he was Malbert the Bastard, a product of Crusade violence. He was passed from one master to another as part of a lot of goods until he was given to a group of priests who tended to Christian pilgrims. He considered them his true parents. They taught him to read and write, and gave him hope that he might enter the clergy. All that changed on the day he rushed to a man dying from being thrown from a horse. His prayers healed the traveler, but the priests looked upon him with sadness. They told him he must leave them and enter the service of another sect: the Messianic Voices.

He developed his faith into a magical Art, but never lost his resentment at being taken from his true family. He hid his hatred for the Saracens and Jews of the Fellowship by standing apart, meditating in holy places. He eventually refused to speak to non-Christians. When one Crusade after another tore apart Messianic unity, he was there to comfort his Christian flock and drive away the rest. He recruited from the militant orders and showed them true miracles. Soon, Templars and other faithful soldiers became his eyes, ears and swords. Now, he considers the Via Dolorosa to be his special protectorate, but has designs on "purifying" the rest of Jerusalem. This is a delicate problem, as the city is nominally ruled by a heretic in the name of Christ. To eliminate the heretic and keep the city, he is forced to deal with the Saracens again. They're better schemers by nature anyway.

Image: Malbert looks so old as to defy attempts to estimate an exact age. He believes he's about 100. He

still moves with the vitality of a man in late middle age, however. Unkempt white hair and a long, dirty white beard contrast his deep brown skin. He covers his tall, thin frame in a collection of rags taken from cast-off clerical garb.

Roleplaying Hints: Ascetic faith alone cannot make you the Lord's pure instrument. You must nurture that inner purity and let it flower in this most holy of cities by freeing your home from heretics, Jews and Saracens. You're a sinner, but God has given you a sinless purpose, freeing you to consider strategies that, were they to be pursued by any other, might condemn a man's soul. You've given your full faith to Christ, and His blood has painted a path to Heaven for you no matter what happens. If he hasn't taken you yet, it's because you still have work to do.

Influence: Malbert is the head of a sect of six Christian Voices, three of whom are Templar officers. Through them, he can direct the Knights Templar to act in accord with his objectives, but cannot openly command them. Malbert knows that if he did that, other parties with an interest in the order might contest his influence.

Age: At least 100.

Fellowship: Messianic Voices

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Penitent

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 5 (Holy), Manipulation 4 (Concealing Intent), Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4 (Managing People), Wits 2

Talents: Awareness 5 (True Faith), Brawl 1, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Subterfuge 4 (Appearing Unimportant)

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 4 (Church), Ride 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4 (Asceticism)

Knowledge: Academics 4 (History), Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2 (Aramaic and Arabic, in addition to French), Occult 4 (Theurgy), Theology 4 (Christian)

Backgrounds: Library 3 (in Cairo), Resources 3

Foundation: Divinity 5

Pillars: Gavri-El 3, Mikha-El 4, Rapha-El 5, Uri-El 3

Willpower: 9

IOANNA, THE IMPERIAL CRAFTMASON

Background: Born to exiled Byzantine aristocrats, Ioanna burned with the Gift at an early age, but joined the Order of Hermes reluctantly. Her love of the Art conflicted with her contempt for the Hermetics, who stood by idly while Crusaders and Saracens sacked her home. They talked of mighty forces, but used them in irrelevant struggles amongst themselves. They knew secrets that went beyond the teachings of any religion,

FUTURE FATE: THE TEMPLARS

Malbert will eventually be forgotten, but his effects on the Templars endure. Although three of the founders of the order were Christian magi, it grew too quickly for them to exercise effective leadership. By the middle of the 12th Century, the order suffered under the machinations of vampires, other magi, clerics and kings, all eager to partake of the order's wealth and military force.

By entering after the effective collapse of outside supernatural influence, Malbert revives the order's religious ambitions even as he teaches them that political underhandedness is no obstacle to fulfilling them. This ensures the survival of a force of knight-clerics, even as other Templars amass entangle themselves in banking and statecraft. Despite persecution at the hands of King Philip IV of France and dissolution by the Papacy, the magical Order of the Temple of Solomon survives until the modern era.

but would not challenge the clerics who sent the soldiers, dangling salvation as a reward for bloodshed.

Then a new movement rose among magi born of humble origins. They said that Creation was a machine that might be moved with skillful labor—and that it ought to be moved for the common good, not some ethereal notion of enlightenment. She joined these Craftmasons and made their Art her own. She supplied their small House with resources from family coffers and helped them find audiences with the nobility. Despite sexist attempts to silence her, she became known for her lectures on philosophy and physics and wrote several books under pseudonyms to share her ideas.

These efforts attracted the attention of the Emperor, and she soon became his intellectual confidant. For her, the ritual represents the chance to throw of the chains of the Church and establish a society ruled by reason. Like one of Plato's philosopher kings, Frederick II will behold the Divine Good and use its light to burn away religious mythology. She's not stupid enough to reveal her complete opinion to the wrong people, however, and frames her agenda with language that magi and other scholars want to hear. Her diplomatic skills have not blunted her zeal, and it continues to blind her to the dangers of the rite.

Image: Shaped by the trades she learned as a Craftmason, Ioanna is a short, muscular woman of 45. She wears simple gowns made of fine materials, and wears a cloth cap instead of a wimple to cover her wavy black hair.

Roleplaying Hints: Through this mystical operation, you'll bring about glories that haven't been seen since the peak of the Roman Empire. You will create an Emperor capable of seizing this glorious destiny. He will end religious war and turn clerics into harmless eccentrics, peddling

myths to ordinary people while the wise worship at the altar of Reason. You're brimming with confidence, and why not? You're the most intelligent person you know. Your two apprentices revere you, and you treat them like noble scions, even though they came up from common trades.

Influence: Ioanna has the ear of the Holy Roman Emperor, but understands that if she uses this connection improperly, it will bring the wrath of the Church upon him and raise the ire of Hermetic magi who oppose meddling in mundane politics.

Age: 45

Fellowship: Craftsmasons

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (Diplomatic), Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5 (Philosopher), Wits 3

Talents: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4 (Academia), Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 4 (Machines) Etiquette 3, Herbalism 3, Ride 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 4 (Philosophy), Cosmology 4 (Celestial Realms), Enigmas 4 (Metaphysics), Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 5 (Storyteller's Choice; knows any language required to further the story), Occult 5 (Grimoires), Theology 2

Backgrounds: Destiny 3, Fount 3, Library 4 (in the Tower of David), Resources 4

Foundation: Modus 5

Pillars: Anima 2, Corona 3, Materia 2, Primus 5, Vires 3

Willpower: 8

OMENS AND COMMUNICATIONS

We've provided three ways to connect your characters to the story. You may well play through to a fourth way, or mix up what we've provided to suit your group. In any event, the players' magi might get involved through astrology, ominous dreams, a direct invitation, or by learning about the rite in Jerusalem from other mages.

ASTROLOGY

Based on astrological and proto-scientific studies, a small number of magi know that an eclipse will arrive on May 14th, 1230. These include members of the Order of Hermes, the Craftsmasons, and Ahl-i-Batin, as well as a few monastic Messianic Voices.

The first three Fellowships all draw their knowledge from common Ptolemaic lore and the supernatural secrets magi use to supplement it, but it is still the realm of specialists. Numerous volumes draw their principles from a grimoire called the *Pentabiblios*, a volume said to have been written by Ptolemy with the secret assistance of Simon Secundus, reincarnation of Simon Magus. The better known *Tetrabiblios* (a book that exists in our world, as well as the Dark Medieval) is a sanitized version of this text, missing certain philosophical principles and occult techniques. Alongside Ptolemy's *Almagest*, it's a standard work for scholars who study the stars and planets.

Conventional scholars and members of every Fellowship that follows Classical traditions believe in the Ptolemaic system, where heavenly bodies move around the fixed point of Earth by attachment to celestial spheres. The lunar sphere girds the world, and serves to limit the reach of sorcery.

The *Pentabiblios*' most ardent students learn to predict eclipses and other complex and rare celestial phenomena with perfect accuracy, through a rote called True Celestial Knowledge (see p. 133). To learn it, one only need study the book and possess the requisite astrological knowledge (Cosmology 3).

A HOLE IN HEAVEN

The players' magi may stumble upon an ominous event in their own studies of astrology, or when allies use True Celestial Knowledge and discover the upcoming eclipse. They sense the May 14th eclipse is coming, but it will not just cast a shadow on one slice of the world, but plunge it all into darkness for almost five hours. This eclipse is a "negation of the Sun and Moon." The texts say they will both be replaced by a great hole in the lunar sphere, between the powers of Heaven and Earth. Magic might reach beyond the lunar barrier and higher celestial energies could touch the mortal plane. Skilled astrologers will note that the eclipse has an inconjunct relationship with Jupiter. Scholars who combine this with worldly political knowledge will realize that this formation appeared between the Sun and Jupiter when Frederick II was born—but this is black, not bright.

HEATHEN INSIGHTS

Members of so-called "heathen" Fellowships don't use the Ptolemaic system, but they can discover future events as their own traditions dictate. All of them know that after the thread of life frays, some of the dead may look into the tangle of time, heedless of whether mortals would call it past or future. The Valdaermen are perhaps the most adept at this, but magi from other pagan Fellowships know that certain ghosts can see the future, and might be persuaded to reveal it to those who employ threats or offerings. Ghosts capable of seeing the future are not mere echoes, but powerful, devious personalities who have mastered an arcane skill they call Fatalism to see the future.

In addition, some members of the Old Faith know how to use their ancient sacred sites to observe celestial phenomena.

These circles of stone and wood often mark mystic Crays. Many have been pulled down, but those which are sufficiently intact can be used to predict astrological phenomena much like a scholastic grimoire. This usually requires a rank 1 conjunctional Effect using the Season of the time of casting and the later Season the pagan wishes to study.

OMINOUS DREAMS

The upcoming eclipse, the foretold rite, and its consequences are of such importance that individuals sensitive to magical power may be plagued with dreams and visions of its coming. These phenomena are most likely to cluster around magi with high Fount and Destiny Backgrounds. The former connects a magus to the world's currents of Quintessence, and the latter links her important fate to others—she will be pulled toward nations falling, or fractures in the structure of Creation.

Make such characters, as well as magi prone to visions and prophecies, recipients of the following dreams, as well as any you choose to invent. Present clues to interpreting them as magi encounter relevant facts during the course of the story, or by referring to interpreters' Ability dots. For example, a magus who has seen a Holy Roman coronation could identify the Iron Crown of Lombardy with ease. Another magus might need to research a historical chronicle. An illiterate third might only see that it's an old, valuable symbol of some unknown king.

THE STATUE

The character sees a rough, man-shaped wooden statue with a small hole cut into the top of its head. It is very dark, yet she and the statue are unmistakably standing in some room for rough work, like a forge or kitchen. In one corner, a fire is dying, and a black cauldron decorated with iron stars bubbles above it. The character feels an urge to take the cauldron and pour the tarry liquid within into the hole in the statue. A voice hisses out, "You must not spill a drop, or the sun will rise on disaster!" In the distance, an Islamic call to prayer rings out.

Interpretation: The statue is Frederick II, and the working room represents the ritual to come. The wooden effigy also recalls his experiments to capture the souls of condemned men (see p. 123). The cauldron is the eclipse, and its fluid is the power that will either pour into the king or fall on the world if it is "spilled." The call to prayer hints of its Jerusalem location.

THE PALE BOY

A pale little boy in rags with a scarred head, arms, and legs crawls to Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate. He has the odd four-limbed gait of a feral child. He babbles dissonant nonsense, but the dreamer understands he is saying, *I have come to sit at the right hand of my father, who has summoned me through a greater Gate.* A guard places the Iron Crown of Lombardy on the child's head.

Interpretation: The pale boy resembles one of the children Frederick isolated in order to learn the language of Babel (see p. 124), and also represents the power coming from the "greater Gate" of the eclipse. The Iron Crown of Lombardy belongs to Frederick as Holy Roman Emperor, and the city points to the rite's location.

RUMORS

Although only Hermetics and a few Messianic Voices build significant communes in the West, all magi enjoy bonds of Fellowship, and might learn about Frederick's ambitions, the rite, and the upcoming eclipse through these connections. The following Fellowships are thick with rumors about what may come. Note that the listed Storyteller characters are rough sketches to use if you don't have any that fit the bill.

AHL-I-BATIN

Egyptian Batini know Mohareb the Copt, the Fellowship's diplomat for Franks and other foreigners who visit Egypt and the nearby Levant. He says that the Messianic Voices within the Templars believe Frederick is a probable heretic, even an Infernalist, though he's certainly seen these accusations come and go according to political convenience. In any event, the Messianics have made it known that they want the "King of the Romans and Jerusalem" gone, and have invited the Batini to do the job for them. The Fellowship has chosen to defer to the mundane Sultanate in this matter, and they might send an emissary to act as a spy, or perhaps a killer.

MESSIANIC VOICES

According to the magus-monk Thomas of Rome, Frederick II is only a friend to priests when he wants to learn from them. He studies voraciously without any regard for a work's doctrinal status. This comforts Voices who adhere to heretical interpretations of Christianity, but angers conservative supporters of the Church. They excommunicated him once, but he treated it like a mere political impediment. Now he reigns over a corrupt peace in the Holy Land that he only bought by accommodating the Saracens and their Batini backers. Certain knight-magi in the Templars have promised to deal with it.

Otherwise, the Emperor knows magi exist. It is said he employs a few in occult experiments, but none of them are Voices.

OLD FAITH

The seasons are falling out of balance. Snow strikes in June, bulls have gone mad on moonless nights, and no sacrifice seems to be able to persuade the Old Gods to tell of any secret beyond a "great darkness in mid-May." The Scots elder Athdara of Strathclyde went to one of the ancient sites, the Starry Staves near Stonehenge, and

used it to discover the eclipse, learning the information revealed in "A Hole in Heaven." Athdara has interpreted it as the "opening of the eye of Balor, through which a great evil may fall."

ORDER OF HERMES

As Alexandra bani Criamon (a lesser house of Hermes) tells it, the Order has seen kings come and go, and all were either stupidly pious or used religion as a forum of political opportunism. *This* ruler, Frederick, is different. Like a magus, he seeks the truth beyond dogma. Hermetic chantries traditionally ignored temporal rulers and expected them to return the favor, but the Emperor sends gifts in exchange for advice as if the wizards were a true "fourth estate." Considering the Order's current problems with blood-drinking Tremere, this is a welcome development. In fact, three Hermetic magi assist his studies into the nature of the soul, and he has invited others from many nations to convene in Jerusalem before the month of May.

SPIRIT-TALKERS

Something whispers in the night, above the invisible worlds. It comes from the stars. You can hear it, but you can't understand it. It's getting stronger every day.

VALDAERMEN

Valdaermen traveled with ancient Norse traders to all corners of the known world. More of them live in the snow, but the sand of the Levant is known to them. Harald Blackeye plays the part of a Byzantine trader, but this funds and covers for his spiritual duties as he tends to a flock of secret pagans in the East's Varangian population. Having crossed Jerusalem several times on business, he has observed a growing number of magi in the city and their tendency to fight among themselves, like the other sects of this "holy city."

INVITATIONS

The simplest way to get the players' magi involved is to have Frederick invite them. This is plausible if they've achieved some fame within the loose community of magi, with whom he has had certain dealings, especially the Order of Hermes.

Medieval letters were highly structured, lengthy exercises in rhetoric, so instead of attempting to reproduce one in full, we suggest you just transmit the gist of it: the invited party and his "brothers in the pursuit of true wisdom" have been invited to attend the court of Frederick in Jerusalem at the beginning of May. While there, they may confer with others of their kind with the aim of perfecting "an operation to know the true will of the Lord, that He might guide His kingdoms on Earth." The letter further promises an unspecified but significant reward for anyone who devises the key to this operation.

The invitee and his companions are advised to present the letter as a guarantee of unhindered passage in their journey to the Holy Land, with the backing of the Emperor's mark and seal.

PILGRIMS AND KILLERS

For some magi, taking to the road will be a trivial affair; they'll use distance-twisting magic like the Batini al-Hajj Pillar or ride spirits through the Umbra. Most will have to contend with the vagaries of the road, but should be comforted by the fact that they'll be taking well-trod routes, since Jerusalem is where pilgrims go to visit holy sites from a number of religions. This means it shouldn't be difficult to find traveling companions and places to rest upon the way, such as a peasant's house, or less commonly, a hostel that caters to pilgrims.

The **Dark Ages Mage Grimoire** discusses the reality of travel in the Dark Medieval, as well as magical permutations, on pp. 149-153. Foot travel with a typical load of personal supplies may only permit 15 to 20 miles of progress per day. With horses, magi might travel twice as quickly, and magic opens up the possibility of even greater speeds. If the characters don't arrive by May 14th, they'll have missed the opportunity to intervene in Frederick's plans, so they should find *some* way to get there in time.

Unless you'd prefer to simply segue to the gates of Jerusalem, a lengthy voyage should include complications: holy figures, squabbling pilgrims (read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*), and territorial supernatural beings.

ANointed OUTLAWS

Bandits occasionally attack groups of travelers, especially if they're passing through politically unsettled territory. These bandits are deserters, fugitives, lost soldiers, or mercenaries willing to prey on travelers between official missions.

You can throw ragged bandits at your magi to portray ill-fortune in the Dark Medieval, but we suggest that one such band consist of well-equipped Templars bent on killing the players' magi. If they showed a letter of invitation to ease travel on the road, this draws the Templars' attention after they question whoever saw it. Otherwise, they follow their leader Durand De Grisse, who uses his SATOR amulet (see p. 114) to track the magi after they cast spells.

IN JERUSALEM

The players' magi arrive in Jerusalem to discover a city whose official peace covers a tumult of imported conflict. Driven away by other Crusades, much of the native population from previous centuries migrated to more peaceful settlements, leaving the remainder to care for holy sites and serve the needs of pilgrims and conquerors.

Despite the peaceful transfer of power to Christian hands, the city simmers with feudal strife. Frederick is a

foreigner who took the city through political schemes and calls himself king, even though succession should pass to his son, Conrad, via the boy's mother, Yolande (formally called Isabella II). As far as the Christian aristocracy of the Levant and Cyprus are concerned, he is an interloper, and Conrad should be guided to the throne by the "native" nobility.

Led by the Ibelin family, the Levantine nobles have brought the Knights Templars into their sphere of influence. Frederick's camp includes the Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights. Violence between the partisans is common and in truth, the "King of Jerusalem's" power doesn't stretch far from his fortress, the Tower of David.

This state of affairs is a scab over the deep wound of supernatural politics in the city. The "Cainites," or vampires, used to enjoy a surprising degree of power, given the preponderance of holy sites. In fact, they learned to use these places to their advantage as meeting places for intermediaries and boundary markers. Vampiric ascendancy collapsed with the city's permanent population; most of the Cainites have left, suffered destruction, or wait for better times in torpor's deathlike repose.

Magi stepped in to replace them as secret benefactors and conspirators, but operate with different motives. The Messianic Voices have become self-appointed guardians of the city's sacred sites, but have largely abandoned the

tolerance they display in other nations. Buoyed by Templar wealth and military force, Christian Voices have all but driven away their counterparts from other Abrahamic faiths. Some Muslim and Jewish theurgists have abandoned the Fellowship and devote themselves to solitary study.

Given the current political situation, this bigotry has produced a paradoxical result. Influential Christian Voices despise Frederick, but he is the Holy Roman Emperor for as long as he avoids another excommunication. It would be political suicide to send the Templars against him while the Levantine Christians still refuse to commit to open conflict. Furthermore, Frederick keeps heretical magi by his side. After all, sorcery must be countered with sorcery. Therefore, they've reached out to the Ahl-i-Batin, just as the Templars have secretly communicated with the Nizari "assassins," to encourage them to sabotage Frederick's rule or even slay the man himself.

Templars patrol Christian sites under the pretense of allowing pilgrims unhindered access, but actually harass non-Christians (especially Muslims) on their way to the Dome of the Rock, as the mosque was ceded to Muslim governance as part of the treaty with the Sultan of Egypt. In Jerusalem, they act as the eyes and ears of a group of Messianic Voices led by Malbert, Guardian of Dolorosa. In this capacity, the Templars are now following, assaulting,

HOLY SITES AND TRUE FAITH

Due to its age and the popularity of the religions that claim it, Jerusalem contains an unprecedented number of holy sites that burn with True Faith. Against magi, holy ground has the following characteristics:

- Increase spellcasting difficulties by 2 unless the magus practices a form of faith-based magic compatible with the site's religious background.
- Subtract the area's True Faith rating in successes (not just dice) from all spellcasting rolls, including each roll in an attempted ritual. This also applies retroactively, to spells cast before the magus enters holy ground.
- Add the area's True Faith rating to any Backlash. This Backlash takes forms appropriate to the site's religious alignment where applicable. "Witches" might burn or be savaged by the invisible claws of demons.
- A small number of magi possess personal True Faith ratings. If this True Faith is linked to the same religion as the holy ground, subtract the magus' rating from the area's score for the purpose of determining any deleterious effects.

Magi do not suffer particular discomfort when they enter holy ground. Thus, they often treat sacred places as neutral territory where they may meet without fear of

sorcerous attack. The magi of Jerusalem are unusual in this regard, as they treat holy ground as exclusive territory.

Holy sites (and their True Faith ratings) in Jerusalem include:

Church of the Holy Sepulchre	7
Church of St. Hannah	2
Coenaculum of the Last Supper	4
David's Tomb	5
The Dome of the Rock	7
The Dung Gate	1
The Golden Gate	3
Herod's Gate	1
The Lion Gate	2
Pool of Bethesda	4
Pool of Hezekiah	1
Temple Mount	7
The Via Dolorosa	7
The Wailing Wall	7

and when they can get away with it, killing the “heretical scholars” who’ve come to meet under Frederick’s banner. The Templars have been warned of witchcraft, and will retreat to a nearby Christian holy site (see the list and effects on p. 121) if a magus displays her true powers. They’ve killed a handful of weak magi with surprise attacks. Malbert and his disciplines provide occasional help to counter enemy Arts.

Use the traits listed for Durand De Grisse’s forces (p. 114) for these patrols. In fact, De Grisse himself might be here, if he followed the characters to the city. If the Templars believe the magi are among the witches and heretics who have come to aid Frederick, they’ll try to kill them. If they gather sufficient intelligence beforehand (and as Storyteller, you think it would create an appropriate challenge), they may benefit from magically enhanced weapons and countermagic: “blessings” from their Messianic masters.

THE CONSPIRATORS

After consulting with Al-Kamil, Sultan of Egypt (who gave Jerusalem to Frederick without a single battle), the Batini decided to send a single agent to interfere with the rumored magical rite and if possible, kill the emperor. Farooq Ibn-Hassan Al-Masri has been advised not to betray any connection to the Sultan for fear of starting a war. He is a reluctant operative, but his scholastic focus serves him well because he is familiar with the mystic practices of many Fellowships and cults.

Using his magical senses and mundane observation, he detects the players’ magi, and attaches himself under whatever guise he believes will be most effective. He knows how to play the part of a local guide, a member of the Messianic Voices or Order of Hermes, or as a Hermetic courier called a “Redcap” (he has stolen their livery). He uses covert Al-Layl Pillar magic to make himself especially convincing. Even if he discovers the players’ magi intend to interfere with the rite, he will not disclose his true identity. He must occasionally report his progress to Malbert, who has promised to reduce the harassment of Jerusalem’s Muslims if he seems to be moving forward. Occasionally, magic cannot help him communicate at a distance, as Malbert often spends time in holy places. He must travel in person—a possible key to finding out his true motives.

THE COURT OF THE HERETIC KING

Frederick’s court is in the Tower of David, the traditional seat of the Crusader kings. The citadel is a hybrid structure, mixing Roman construction with fortifications installed under Christian and Muslim rulers. Beneath it all, ancient ruins and catacombs date back further. The people believe this is the site of King David’s palace, but time and war have wiped away any reliable history. It was even a holy

site a century ago, but kings, bloodshed, and rebuilding have erased the last scrap of mystical True Faith from the place.

The fortress is heavily guarded by Frederick’s Lombard troops, foreigners who only increase the antagonism between the Emperor and local Christians. Without sealed invitations, visitors will be challenged and killed by sentries (use the traits for Templar soldiers on p. 114, but limit them to light armor and small shields, regardless of troop type). Furthermore, magical methods of entry run into wards and bans created by the Craftmason Ioanna and her Hermetic companions. These wards protect the great hall where Frederick holds court, as well as his chambers and areas adjacent to and connecting both locations. Scrying and magical entry via teleportation or the Umbra must defeat 10 successes of protection to succeed. If the players’ magi present an invitation, one of the Hermetics uses sorcery to confirm its authenticity. If they are truly invited guests, however, the Commoner guards treat them with great deference and escort them to court.

THE IMPERIAL CONVOCATION

Frederick’s court has been almost completely turned over to the “Great Work.” A dozen magi who responded to his invitation debate, share knowledge, and study rare grimoires here. Most of these hail from the Western Fellowships, but about a third come from foreign societies. Their Fellowships and identities have been left for the Storyteller to determine. One might be a *Wu Lung* sorcerer far from the Silk Road, or a *Taftani*, one of the jinn-binding heirs of Solomon and Zoroaster. None of them belong to the Ahl-i-Batin or Messianic Voices, but this omission is to be expected. The Emperor wants to speak to God, and members of these Fellowships would consider that the apex of hubris.

Most of the magi here care little for the ritual itself. They’re interested in gold, titles and the opportunity to acquire secret lore. The Emperor appears for only an hour or two each evening to encourage them, but Ioanna of the Craftmasons acts as his representative, urging them to work toward a common goal: opening a path of communication that extends beyond the lunar sphere into the unknown precincts of Heaven. They’ve been working together for some time, in Jerusalem proper and in small groups elsewhere before the gathering, so the most doubtful have already been purged in duels and other unpleasant, violent incidents. Nevertheless, this convocation of magi have learned that despite their willfulness, occultists with wildly divergent philosophies can work together toward a single goal—a possibility their descendants might explore in the centuries to come. For now, they’re motivated by personal gain. In the event of any violent conflict, they’re not going to stick their necks out for the Emperor or his retinue. Only Ioanna and her apprentices will intercede in any such crisis.

The central problem the assembled magi face is that even though they can conceive of “speaking to God” in

the abstract sense, and know the stars and outer realms through astrology and other passive means, none of them practice a form of magic that reaches beyond the sphere defined by the Moon's passage. A few of the foreigners claim to communicate with a higher, celestial realm, but Frederick conceives of God as an ultimate Platonic being, not a dweller in some "pagan dream."

To translate this into a system, the ritual requires additional *knowledge* and *power* beyond the ken of the assembled magi. Frederick and the assembled mages have made some progress toward gathering both, in the form of experiments and occult books. If the players' magi intend on readying the rite, they must complete one item marked "Power" in parentheses below, and another marked "Knowledge." Otherwise, the power of the eclipse, and the entities beyond, will manifest in an uncontrolled fashion.

The Laboratory

Frederick is a devotee of reason, not faith—but that's reason as he conceives of it, which operates within the framework of a universe described by Genesis and Greek philosophers. In that frame of mind, he has sponsored experiments into the nature of language and the soul. Before he assembled magi to help him, these were unsuccessful, but with their help, they may act as potent aids to the ritual. One wing of the Tower of David's dungeons has been set aside for these studies. They include:

Soul Collection (Power): Condemned prisoners have been sealed into containers that are airtight except for a

MISCELLANEOUS MAGI

In this and other sections of the scenario, there are numerous magi who go unnamed and are not given Traits. These include Malbert's Messianic allies, Ioanna's two apprentices, and the dozen or so magi at Frederick's court. Space considerations prevent us from detailing them all, but it should be noted that none of these secondary characters possess rank 5 in any Foundation or Pillar. Use the following short guidelines to determine their Traits:

Weak Magi (Ioanna's Apprentices, Hapless Visitors): 3-4 dice in most mundane pools where the character possesses Ability dots, 6-7 in a few pools, Foundation 2, Pillars 2/1 or 1/1/1.

Standard Magi (Messianic Templars, Most Visitors to Court): 4-5 dice in most mundane pools where the character possesses Ability dots, 7-8 in a few pools, Foundation 3, divide 8 ranks among Pillars (maximum 3 per Pillar).

Strong Magi (Powerful Visitors to Court): 5-6 dice in most mundane pools where the character possesses Ability dots, 8-9 dice in a few pools, Foundation 4, divide 10 ranks among Pillars (maximum 4 per Pillar).



small pinhole. Frederick was hoping to use this experiment to observe and perhaps capture a soul upon its escape, as he believes it must consist of an extremely fine material that can only exit through the hole. This is consistent with current teachings on the substance of angels and demons.

Magi must augment this experiment with spells that can manipulate souls. This might be accomplished with Al-Fatihah 5, Spring 5, Uri-El 5, Wise One 5 and at the Storyteller's discretion, strange applications of other Pillars. Sacrificing a soul over the course of the rite provides the required power.

The Language of Babel (Knowledge): The Emperor has attempted to raise a number of children in isolation from any language. He believes that as innocents, they should escape the confusion of languages if they aren't corrupted by any teaching, and spontaneously develop the language spoken by humanity before the fall of the Tower of Babel. Deprived of language and isolated from most human contact, these children are ashen-faced and feral, like the child in the dream of the Pale Boy (see p. 119).

This experiment might be "perfected" by opening the children to contact with the Umbra, whose denizens speak something like a primordial language. Pillars such as Corona 4, Gavri-El 5, Spring 4 and Wise One 4 can accomplish this, as might novel or conjunctive uses of other Pillars. However, the caster must somehow guarantee that the correct entity makes contact with the child and protect against unwelcome visitors. This provides knowledge of the "divine language" which can be used to complete the rite.

The Library

Frederick and his allied magi have assembled an impressive library that specializes in the celestial realms, the soul, and occult communion with higher powers. The collection provides a Library rating of 4 to studious magi and also includes a number of curious tomes. If these volumes were complete, they would be mystical grimoires that might assist the working.

Of Death (Knowledge): This book has no real name. Marginalia in the first few dozen pages reveals that it is a translation synthesized from Greek and Arabic fragments, and the scholars who made it called it this for pragmatic reasons. As the reader progresses, she will notice that the marginalia degenerates into grim jokes, nonsense phrases and increasingly illegible, dire warnings. The book contains a detailed description of the soul's passage after death, the fate of a "companion Daemon," and how they might be manipulated by unnamed powers by using chants and sigils that do not resemble the methods of any known Fellowship. In the future, this book will be known as *Ex Libris Necro*. Once its final sections have been recovered, *Of Death* provides the knowledge required to complete the rite. It also reduces the total cost of studying a Pillar that affects souls or ghosts by five Experience points.

The Enthronement of the Yellow Emperor (Power):

Although a preface claims the book comes from far Cathay, it is written in Arabic and a dialect of Greek used by Yavanas, descendants of Alexander's soldiers who stayed in India. It is an informal description of a ceremony designed to affirm a king's right to "speak for Heaven," written as if to guide ceremonial celebrants through the correct costuming and ritual phrases. As such, it most resembles a play. In it, one participant wears a pallid mask and plays the role of Heaven's representative. He must be pacified with occult diagrams, sacrifices, and the drama of the ritual itself. In another form, this book might be one day known as *The Yellow Sign*, or *The King in Yellow*.

If a magus finds the grimoire's final fragments and performs the ritual, she acquires the ability to cast a single spell as if she possessed rank 6 in a Pillar she knows. This is a one-time benefit that comes with a grave cost: a permanent Derangement caused by contact with powers beyond the known celestial spheres.

The Razor Folio (Special): Most Hermetics have at least heard of House Golo, a group within the Order of Hermes' House Ex-Miscellanea consisting of the Italian merchant-magus Lorenzo Golo and his apprentices. House Golo follows the philosophies found in a pre-Socratic tome Golo acquired in Al-Andalus: the *Kitab al-Alacir*. House Golo has copied and shared the book widely—except for these pages, which appear to have been slashed out of the original and, based on the blackened edges, burned and then retrieved from the fire. The ordinary *Kitab al-Alacir* claims that all conceivable objects exist, and can be summoned from the realm of ideas, but this section warns that certain secret, intelligent entities *must* come into being once they are even conceived of in sufficient detail. A magus can only influence the manner of their arrival, not stop it.

Once joined to the rest of the *Kitab al-Alacir*, this grimoire inspires the Gift of magic in a Commoner if she already stands at the spiritual threshold, though this is a property the standard *Kitab* already possesses. With the addition of the Razor Folio, the character acquires two ranks in the Destiny Background, which may be increased further when the character is designed as a magus (this can't increase the Trait past 5). This is of secondary interest to magi researching the ritual, however. For them, the *Razor Folio* is useful even in its incomplete state, because it reveals that the preparations for the rite have set *something* in motion, and that it will not so much cause a phenomenon, but set its manifestation.

Completing the Grimoires

Magi must venture beyond court to find the last fragments of these incomplete grimoires. If they arrive far ahead of May 14th, a side excursion to find the rest of each grimoire can keep the story going in the interim. If you'd

like a grimoire to take on a central role, remember that another one of the assembled magi can do the fieldwork.

No matter who sets out to find these remnants, Storytellers can benefit from the following hooks. Even if other magi seek the final pages out, their efforts may inspire other stories worth pursuing.

Of Death: Studying the history and structure of this book reveals the existence of an earlier translation entitled the *Azif al-Muat* ("The Keening of Death"). Fragments of this text could complete *On Death*, but they can be found in Cairo in the safekeeping of the Hem-Ka Sobk: a cult devoted to destroying sin. Devoted to the heart-devouring crocodile god of ancient Egypt, these ascetics often perform their missions by *eating* the unworthy. They care nothing for money or temporal power, living as beggars. Most of them cannot read the texts they guard, but know that they might be used to unleash great evil. The magi must convince this cult of its righteous purpose or defeat this sect of stealthy killers and cannibals.

The Enthronement of the Yellow Emperor: The part of this book that sits in the Tower of David was stolen from a minor Infernalist who was taking it to his master in the Persian city of Ray. Known as the Liar, this sorcerer believes the text can summon a *deva* aligned with Ahriman to do his bidding. The Liar had no allies beyond his now-dead apprentice, but surrounds himself with minor demons bound to do his bidding. Some of his strongest demons guard the rest of the grimoire.

The Razor Folio: It isn't strictly necessary to complete this text to assist the ritual but fortunately, it's relatively easy to acquire a copy of the *Kitab al-Alacir*—unless House Golo learns it's being reunited with the censored *Razor Folio*. In that case, members of the House will try to seize and destroy the *Folio* itself.

SCHEMES AND COUNTER-SCHEMES

Thrust into social and occult complexities of Frederick's court, the players' magi are not bound to follow any particular course. Instead, scenes at the convocation develop out of the characters' aims and actions. They might be intent on stopping the ritual, completing it, or even just taking what they can and getting out. However, they cannot keep the eclipse from wreaking magical havoc, as explained on p. 130.

ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR

To anyone hoping to halt the ritual, killing Frederick II might seem like the quickest way to get it done. Ioanna, her apprentices and dozens of elite guards bar the way, but the Emperor himself, while a brilliant scholar, is not a magus.

Killing the Emperor won't stop the eclipse from unleashing magical phenomena, and without him acting as a vessel for that power, it washes over the city, as described on p. 132. Alternately, Ioanna may decide that she *must* see this

to its fruition. She continues the rite, but takes Frederick's place. If word of the Emperor's death spreads beyond the walls of the fortress, the Templars and their local allies will attempt to seize the Tower of David and assume control of Jerusalem. Once the news spreads to Egypt, Sultan Al-Kamil will regard the treaty that gave Frederick the city as null and void and send a force to retake it.

COMPLETE THE RITUAL

The Storyteller can either give the players' magi responsibility for completing the ritual, or make it a background event set in motion by other assembled magi. If the players' magi arrive close to May 14th, the latter option is probably more convenient. It may also be possible that Storyteller characters have already solved the Power or Knowledge requirement, but need outside help to finish the job. Malbert and Al-Masri will both oppose efforts to perfect the ceremony using armored soldiers and a knife in the night, respectively. Even if the players' magi aren't working on the ritual, they may witness these interventions, and might have to fight off Al-Masri or Templar killers sent against others.

RANSACK THE COURT

The magi of the court have assembled an impressive library. They might have come with Talismans and other riches. Frederick is also one of the wealthiest men in Christendom. The tower treasury contains a fraction of those riches, but it's still enough to strain the imagination of the average person, even when that person is a magus. Ioanna knows that some magi can pass through walls, so she has instructed the court to keep the treasury's location a secret, but she hasn't got around to applying wards and bans, as she has for other parts of the fortress.

Ioanna is capable of tracking book thieves who don't erase the mystical "Resonance" or sympathetic connection from their acquisitions, but has no such power over the Emperor's coins and gems. A sufficiently large theft of those (which would require spirits or arcane forces, due to the volume involved) would interrupt his cash flow, leading to delayed payments for those in his service, temporary levies, and civil unrest that others might use to challenge his rule.

SABOTAGE THE RITUAL

The subtlest maneuver of all might be to *appear* to help design the ceremony, but to actually introduce flaws that will keep it from functioning. For example, a Hermetic magus may introduce flawed Platonic solids that represent the planets, causing celestial energies to churn out of control. The trick isn't to make it go wrong, but to successfully conceal the flaws from Ioanna and anyone else who might review the plan.

Acting in concert, each saboteur rolls Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 6) and pools their successes. If any participant fails, the sabotage is obvious to any occultist, and the saboteur knows it. This erases all successes and about a day's work. They must start again. On a botch,

BRIBERY AND THREATS

Everybody has their price. In spite of being paid very handsomely for their services, the mercenary soldiers and mages who guard and enact the rituals could be “convinced” to look the other way, botch a job, or outright turn upon Frederick II and his remaining forces with the appropriate compensation or other motivation. Given the depth of Frederick II’s pockets, the PCs will have to strive very hard or be exceptionally canny in order to budge the inclinations of their targets.

Even those who are most loyal to Frederick II, with the exception of Ioanna, can be convinced with the appropriate application of leverage, evidence of wrongdoing, or other methods of persuasion. Accurate or not, if the proof of Frederick not being his old self is shown convincingly enough to his aides, the players’ magi can rally some powerful comrades to their cause.

With or without allies, the players’ magi should be a force to be reckoned with. Through craft, guile, and skill, they can apply pressure in just the right places to skewer the ritual like a blister.

it’s obvious, and the erring saboteur *doesn’t* know it. Her companions can’t tell unless they take time afterward to perform a dedicated review their work, as Ioanna will. She (and any other interested party) may inspect the plan for the rite with an extended Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 6, two hour intervals between rolls). If she matches or beats the successes of the saboteurs, she detects the flaws. Ioanna will spend up to 16 hours reviewing the rite unless she is pressed for time or distracted. If anyone reviewing the rite scores five or more successes than the saboteurs’ collective success threshold, they can tell the flaws are *intentional* and not the result of mere ignorance. But beyond the dry systems, magi attempting to do this must find time to conspire and work, and must find a way to keep Ioanna from having enough time to discover its flaws.

SCREAMING BEYOND THE SHELL OF NIGHT

The Perfect Ritual for the Perfect King: Frederick accepts nothing less than excellence from his staff and his treasures. With the guidance of the Order of Hermes and the Craftsmasons, Frederick expects the same from his magical ceremonies; not only must it be effective, but it must also meet his aesthetic standards. The result is a pure, elegant, and complex manifestation of power; an excellent ritual made by excellent men for an extraordinary ruler. With multiple

paths to success and a number of redundant fail-safes, it is very much representative of the man it serves. The heavy musical inspiration throughout the enactment of the ritual only plays to his ego, layering an extra touch of class that befits the grace and bearing of a king who will come to rule over so much more.

ORIGINS

This ritual was devised by Ioanna and the magi brought to create. Under Ioanna’s restless eye and relentless drive for perfection, all the willing participants have worked tirelessly to pore over parchments, scrolls, and grimoires to harvest swaths of esoteric theories, metaphysical evidence, and astrological calculations. All of this effort has been leveraged to develop the most robust ritual that makes use of the readily available human, geographical, and architectural assets of the Tower of David.

The components of the ritual come from Hermetic philosophy, excerpts from the grimoires the assembled magi have collected (with heavy inspiration from *The Enthronement of the Yellow Emperor*), and Frederick’s own requested personal touches. Despite these pressures, Ioanna has made the whole operation as harmonious as possible. Through expertise, labor, willpower, and the suffering of countless undesirables and innocents, Frederick II and the cabal of magi now have the blueprints and logistics for a ceremony that will bring a state of omniscience to one man. That one man will be Frederick II, unless he is stopped.

The PCs will have to decide whether to aid him and gain the favor of an elevated being, or to destroy his chances through pure force of magic, subterfuge, or betrayal.

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

It was Plato who said, “Music is the movement of sound to reach the soul for the education of its virtue.”

This is the grounding principle behind the ritual, and a flair for the dramatic and orchestral has been highlighted in full force with the preparations and proceedings.

At its essence, the ritual is the temporary erection of a magical construct overlaid across the Tower of David. This construct siphons all of the experiences in the world into one being. This is the first step that the magi have theorized must take place before expanding to reach beyond Earth and into the cosmos. This accumulation and perfunctory consumption of knowledge will be the first step in achieving godhood, becoming the perfect and best human, and from there, becoming the perfect being.

However the sheer mental pressure of taking in all of the knowledge in the world wholesale, even just one paper-thin slice of time, would cause the vessel to burst from the sheer volume of information being processed.

The largest concern for the ritual is the management of time, and huge resources have been committed to managing the fourth dimension. While it is somewhat easy to conceive of a method to gaining all of the experience of the world given

enough time, normal magical means make it impossible for anyone to have the longevity or physical fortitude to engage with all of this knowledge for either a magus or a Commoner. To accomplish this within the span of a human lifetime, let alone within the span of an eclipse, would be impossible without the massive amounts of sorcerous scaffolding.

DEATH, FRONT AND CENTER

The main driver and energy source of the ritual is a complex interplay of human suffering punctuated by the gentle exhalation of the last breath of death from prisoners held beneath the palace's surface, within the catacombs. This concerto of pain and death is performed by the highly skilled torturers in Frederick's employ. This is the magnetic force in the engine of the ritual to pull in the psychic threads that will forcefully elevate the target of these energies to the apex of humanity.

Cruel executions and tortures have taken place for weeks leading up to the eclipse, building in frequency and awfulness until a cacophony of death reaches its zenith when the eclipse reaches its apex.

The sheer potency of these magical energies requires considerable support to harness to their intended purpose. A number of filters must separate the wheat from the chaff, each filter either removing duplicated experiences, or simply slowing the flow of energy and knowledge from a civilization-destroying tidal wave to a much more manageable river. After all, there is no need to experience the death of a penniless farmer, frozen urchin, or human sacrifice thousands of times over. Each one is essentially the same as the last.

ELEMENTAL FAIL-SAFES

Four elemental filters have been set up at each wall of the Tower of David. These musical keystones elevate the ritual from a run-of-the-mill ceremony to a truly concerted effort.

The walls surrounding the palace will also play a role as an additional layer of foundation, anchoring the ritual's energies within the bounds of the citadel.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CELESTIAL RITUAL

Elemental conduits have been built in each of the four cardinal directions in the compound of the Tower of David. These four conduits are also known as the four "stages" of the ritual. These conduits have a small complement of guards surrounding them and one or two magi overseeing their functions. These magi will most likely not be of the Order of Hermes. As much as Ioanna's might like to put the Hermetics on the front lines, animist and nature-based magics work best here. If the players' magi have allied with Durand De Grisse and his Templars, they

could be called upon to distract the martially-inclined opposition. Storytellers are encouraged to use their discretion when determining exactly how heavily guarded each stage of the ritual will be. Make the opposition challenging for the players' magi, but not entirely insurmountable.

THE EAST WALL - THE AIR CONDUIT

The air is clear and bright to blow away the chaff and dust. The inconsequential is swept away.

Role and summary: Representative of wind instruments, this stage is one of the filters that helps protect Frederick from taking in too much unnecessary information. Like chaff being scattered by the wind, this elemental focus blasts away the duplicated trivialities, achievements, hardships and small victories that populate so much of the human experience.

Structure: An array of pipes carved from lustrous obsidian are coiled together, side by side, twisting into a spiral pattern, like a very unusual fence. From the furthest outside pipe a mere foot in height to a thirty-foot spire at the middle, it forms an enormous drill from a distance.

Strengths: The east wall of the citadel is entirely within the city of Jerusalem. Any outside forces attempting to assail the citadel and prevent the ritual would have to get into the city first. A large public square lays immediately adjacent to the east wall, and any foolish enough to attack in force, either by mundane or magical means, would be at a severe disadvantage.

Weaknesses: On the other hand, the reliance on mundane tactical advantage renders the main body of the instrument vulnerable to subtler unconventional attacks. Subterfuge and deceit are likely methods to disrupt the militaristic defenses of the Air Conduit. Additionally, the obsidian pipes themselves are brittle. A well-aimed stone from a sling could crack them easily.

THE WEST WALL - THE WATER CONDUIT

Wash away your cares of the day and cleanse your body and soul. If all you seek is purity, then immerse yourself in the bowl.

Role and summary: Representative of string instruments, water swirls and rushes through the instrument of this stage, and the experience of the world is thrust through it. The agitation of the water polishes away the roughness of the celestial knowledge and lubricates the entry into the mind of Frederick II.

Structure: The foundation of the ceremony of this stage is an extremely elegant body of metalsmithing. Painstakingly crafted from a single casting of molten copper and clad with silver, the apparatus is an enormous hollow bowl in the shape of a large spoon with the handle bent over to create a semi-circle. Five pipes spring from the bottom, and one pipe juts from the wall of the bowl, perpendicular to the handle. A drain in the

bottom of the bowl keeps the vessel from overflowing, and unseen inner workings keep the fountain moving perpetually.

Procedure: Throughout this hollow structure flows crystal clear purified water. The five lower pipes constantly fountain straight streams of water upwards. Every few beats, in an irregular pattern, the perpendicular pipe shoots a stream of water to break up the fountain pattern, creating a sound reminiscent of a harp being plucked by the practiced hand of a virtuoso.

Strengths: The malleability of the medium of energy transfer, water, means that a direct attack will probably only have a temporary effect as long as the water in the vessel flows somewhere. The quality of the construction of the bowl gives it an innate purifying property. Corrupting the water or its container would require a much greater amount of effort than would be expected for similar bodies of water.

Weaknesses: There are multiple moving parts to the Water Conduit, and they must always be moving to be effective. The guardians of the vessel must ensure the inner workings are free from obstruction at all times. Inhibiting the flow of water will destroy the effect of this stage.

NORTH WALL - THE EARTH CONDUIT

Without a sturdy foundation, all that you build will crumble, all that you know will be forgotten, and none of your efforts will ever be known.

Role and summary: Representative of percussion instruments, this stage is punctuated with loud, thunderous sounds caused from granite spheres dropped from great heights. The muted slap of rock onto dirt fills the air as enormous stone boulders crash into the earth, then roll away to make room for the next one. These thunderous impacts compact the meandering tendrils and monolithic chunks of thought into smaller pieces that are easier to process.

Structure: An immense step pyramid has been constructed overlooking the Jaffa Gate. The plateau at the top of the structure is rounded so that nothing that rolls can rest atop it. The pyramid is hollow, its interior intensively reinforced by mundane and magical means so it can withstand the great punishment that granite spheres inflict when dropped from above. These spheres create a resounding cracking sound, landing perfectly on the middle of the structure before rolling away from the center. The slightest vibrations or breath of wind urges them into any particular direction. As the spheres roll off of the pyramid, each progressive step creates a lower and deeper tone. An elaborate system of ramps guides the granite spheres back up to the top of the pyramid. Workers keep the spheres moving and occasionally add earth to the top of the pyramid to keep its apex rounded.

Strengths: The most physically resistant, a frontal attack likely to do little real damage. Each worker is well

sculpted, like the earth they work, and if pressed, could use their physical prowess to defend the pyramid.

Weaknesses: Easy to approach and loud by nature of the ritual, the Earth Conduit can be easily scouted by those taking a more cautious approach. The Jaffa Gate and the King David Road leading into the city provide an easy method of approach. Though the spheres are heavy, the desired randomness of the ritual can be disrupted into harmful predictability by a coordinated press of energy. Assailants could simply attack the practitioners themselves; in spite of their combat prowess, the distraction could disrupt the.

SOUTH WALL - THE FIRE CONDUIT

Without fire and destruction, there can be no creation.

Role and summary: Representative of the brass instruments, the role of the Fire Conduit is twofold. It amplifies the energy of the other stages and the heat burns away the unworthy experiences.

Structure: An enormous curved buccina (an Ancient Roman brass instrument) is laid on the wall itself.

Procedure: From the entry side, workers at a set of bellows force air steadily and powerfully into the buccina, feeding the relentless flames spouting from the other end. These gouts of flame are accompanied by the auditory component of deep brassy notes associated with tubas. The buccina must be fed a steady diet of enormous timbers, hauled carefully by bronzed slaves, some of whom may very well be consumed by the gouts of flame if they aren't careful.

Strengths: The nature of the flames, all-consuming and deadly, and hot as hellfire, is its own defensive mechanism. Those who seek to disrupt this ritual from a frontal assault would have to develop the right countermeasures to prevent damage from the temperature alone, let alone the risk of combustion.

Weaknesses: Beyond the requisite allotment of guardians to defend the stage, Ioanna relies on the sheer destructive force of the fire to be a deterrent to would-be saboteurs. If the players' magi can breach these two layers of defense, they could storm this stage by surprise. Additionally, this stage relies heavily on fuel and could burn itself out. By destroying or blocking access to the fuel source, the players' magi can stop this stage cold. Perversely, by increasing the intake of fuel to speed up the ritual's blaze, the players' magi could cause the ritual to end prematurely.

THE CATACOMBS BENEATH THE TOWER OF DAVID

Only through absolute silence can you truly understand the universe, and death is the Ultimate Quiet.

Role and summary: Representative of silence and the unknowable void, anguish, suffering, and cruelty pull down the celestial energy that seeks to fill in the void that can only be caused by mass quantities of death.

Structure: Not a constructed “stage” like the four filters aboveground, nonetheless the catacombs beneath the Tower of David have been given a thorough treatment to secure the foundations of the ritual, if perhaps a bit more functional and less grandiose in appearance. Flaming braziers light every corner to prevent ambush and further heighten the terror of victims, with eyes forced open, and made to bear witness every laceration, asphyxiation, and burn taking place before their eyes.

Procedure: Undesirables, toddlers, women, and men, are sacrificed in a very particular order, and their cries are a symphony of screaming timed to the music written by scholars and astrologers for so many long months. Many of the victims were chosen by inauspicious birth dates, but as the day of the ritual approaches, Ioanna and the magi overseeing the ritual became considerably less picky. These poor souls are disemboweled, their screams amplified by pipes and chimneys constructed to reach the surface and their blood poured into the sewers.

Several torturers preside over the macabre dance of delayed death and release, harnessing the energy released from the ceremony’s “participants” as they live and die at the tender mercies of blade and fire. These deaths call down the attention of heaven, like a magnet causing a falling shower of iron fillings to redirect themselves in one direction. The force of this energy going straight down through the hole in the heavens created by the eclipse would destroy whatever lies at the center, as no one man could take in those energies unaided.

This is the need for the filters mentioned earlier. The stages of the four elements create a vortex of Quintessence that spins and diverts the energy, slowing it and filtering out the noise to a comprehensible purity that can be handled by extraordinary men such as Frederick II. The King will take in all of this energy, and the ecstasy of otherworldly sighs fills his human form and transforms him into something else.

Strengths: This is the most heavily guarded secret of Frederick II’s celestial calling ritual. The catacombs are heavily fortified against stealth attacks. Great efforts have been placed into hiding the outermost entries, and further in, veteran soldiers and guards protect the next layer against intrusion. Finally, the last ring of defense is manned by Ioanna’s most loyal trusted confidantes to ensure that the grisly butchery takes place.

Weaknesses: If discovered, exposure of this ritual may be enough to motivate the masses of Jerusalem, as well as more justice driven forces to rally against Frederick II. Even the magi overseeing the elemental stages have been kept in the dark about this task, and some of the more honorable magi, given enough





proof, could be swayed into going against their patron, particularly if the tides are turning against him. Given the secrecy and heavy fortification of the ritual, the defenders of the ritual are confident, but far from perfectly secure. This confidence could be the seed of their downfall. Their discipline is not as high as it could be, and the remoteness of the ritual adds another cloak of security. A significant offensive thrust with a healthy dose of surprise could prove effective, but if stalled at any location and the defenders become spooked, the trap will quickly snap and the turtle will prove quite impregnable.

FREDERICK, ENTHRONED IN THE TOWER OF DAVID

As the ritual progresses, Frederick sits on his throne in the highest room in the Tower of David, not in repose, but anxious, eager, eyes clear and full with the purpose of a madman. Frederick sits proudly, back erect and full of purpose, an imperfect man galvanized by a perfect vision of the world. He seeks power and knowledge as a tool, and to make himself his own instrument defined, pure purpose through the vessel of one man.

He is flanked by an honor guard of twenty burly and experienced soldiers. They are weapon experts, each well trained in the way of spear, bow, sword, and shield.

Beyond the elite honor guard, he is also accompanied by Ioanna herself. Additional guards are stationed around the base of the tower itself, ensuring none go in or come out until the ritual is complete.

AFFECTING THE OUTCOME

The players' magi have many paths through which to pursue, and push on the many pressure points that have been mentioned before. The Storyteller can assume that whichever way the players' magi are leaning, the other side is being bolstered and they will need to push harder to disrupt the opposing "status quo." No matter what happens, terrible things will be happening however as detailed below.

FREDERICK II'S "SUCCESS": RISE OF THE MARAUDER KING

This happens if the ritual as a whole succeeds. At least half of the filtering rituals must succeed, as well as the ritual that occurs in the catacombs.

Frederick II cries and shrieks, the celestial knowledge boring into his body like a needle. Frederick transmogrifies himself into something beyond mortal ken, taking a form physically capable of absorbing the knowledge of human existence summoned by the ceremony. His eyes turn the color of solid sandstone, and his skin resembles flexible obsidian, a material strong enough to absorb the divine melody of "Heaven" that human flesh could not withstand.

His every movement causes cracks and splinters in the black glass-like material, and when his movement stops, his flesh melts back together into its original form. With this power, Frederick commences his methodical plan of reshaping the city to his new needs, before taking further inexorable steps to reshaping the world itself.

He emerges from the ritual with a new purpose diverging from his original human goals. He will make everything in his path in accordance with his wants. His goals will be to remake the city of Jerusalem into a kind of ideal unseen before in this world, an ideal of blending, of resilience, of strengthening. He seeks to "make things better." Right or wrong no longer plays a factor. He only seeks the results that make sense to him, that of intense strengthening. In short, the Commoner King Frederick II has become an immensely powerful Marauder.

THE HONOR GUARD AND THE COCOON

With a wave of his hand and an earthly utterance, his honor guard screams as they are twisted and turned "pure," the elements of their armor and the environment around them fusing into their bodies, turning them into automatons of metal, wood, and earth. Their souls are stripped away and suspended outside their bodies briefly before being shoved back into these new iron-skinned automatons, efficient guards and death dealers. They become representations of their chosen weapons, immensely tall and frighteningly lanky humanoid creations. They stand guard around their king and herald the approaching of a new world order, in a metallic, otherworldly voice.

Frederick's new form, for all of its newfound resilience and power, is still but a cocoon before the next stage of transcendence. This takes him an hour to summon, and each minute that passes he becomes a bit more protected. This is his moment of greatest vulnerability, and one particular chance for the players' magi to strike at Frederick directly.

A three layered shell, one wholly resistant to magic, another resistant to physical onslaught, and the last against mental intrusion. This cocoon, if not destroyed in twenty-four hours, will allow Frederick to become something much closer to omnipotent than this "first stage" of "transcendence," and he will bloom into something truly terrifying.

FIGHTING THE KING

Even the most mercenary (or particularly self-serving) magi, may perceive that there is no future with this "transcendent" body of Frederick II. Those already opposing him probably are galvanized in their desire to stop him, or perhaps they choose self-preservation. It will be no simple task on their own, but the status quo has shifted so drastically that strange alliances may take place, if only until this threat is removed.

AN ALTERNATE ENDING

If no one destroys the cocoon that protects Frederick within twenty-four hours, the cocoon splits open, releasing a wave of overwhelming cosmic energy. When the players' magi recover enough to look within the cocoon, they will find it empty. Only Frederick's crown remains. The players' magi (and the Storyteller) can interpret this in any number of ways. Perhaps the enormity of the knowledge consumed Frederick utterly. Perhaps the heavens deemed Frederick unfit to wield the power he obtained. Does Frederick even exist in the physical realm or the realm of the dead? Perhaps the cocoon has even allowed Frederick to ascend beyond the lunar sphere ... but to where?

Such a coalition could bring hope to the future of all magi to work together to further the magical arts. The players' magi can join or lead this coalition, bringing together the necessary talents required to break through Frederick's shell and eliminate him.

If successful in passing his guards, breaching the cocoon, and destroying his incredibly resistant form, there remains the matter of governance of Jerusalem and the Holy Roman Empire. The simplest path would be to put Frederick's regent into power with the claim that Frederick has gone on a pilgrimage to Rome to ask forgiveness from the Pope. From there, it is entirely plausible to claim that Frederick died on the journey and his body could not be recovered.

PROTECT AND JOIN THE MARAUDER KING

If the players' magi supported the ritual and saw it through to its completion, they find themselves in a remarkably precarious position. Simply going along with the king's whims would be a path of oblivion without adequate checking, as he would simply transform anyone who can't prove their immediate worth into something more functional. This will require a balancing act of presenting strength and confidence without outright insubordination. Still, temperance and reason could push the madder King to something somewhat aligned with the morals of the original World. Ioanna had this goal in mind from the inception of the ritual, though she had no idea of the scope of Frederick's transformation.

The best case scenario would move Frederick II to present himself to some semblance of what he used to be. This would require considerably less energy than reshaping the city and the memories of those in Jerusalem



on the day of the eclipse. In time, it might bring Frederick back from the brink of madness. Whether he will retain his Awakened state remains to be seen, but if he does, the ritual itself could be refined to enlighten Commoners one by one.

FAILURE -

DARKNESS FALLS, DEMONS RISE

If the faction opposing Frederick succeeds, or those supporting him fail, this scenario takes place. The requirements for failure will occur if at least half or more of the requirements listed above are successfully disrupted or destroyed. It is up to the Storyteller to decide what determines “disruption” and “destruction.”

Frederick begins a gradual transformation, and he shouts in exultation, feeling the apparent “success” of the ritual pouring into him. His cruel face turns handsome, even joyous, for several painstaking minutes before a sudden “wrongness” can be felt by everyone in the Tower of David. This sensation spills out into the city of Jerusalem, clearing the streets as people rush to secure themselves in their homes or any available bolt-hole. Those who went inside and barred their doors during the eclipse desire to wall themselves in completely to protect themselves from what is to come. Even those within holy sites cannot repress a dread-filled shudder.

Suddenly, Frederick realizes that his form is unable to absorb all of the knowledge poured into his being. His body swells and grows like a berry bursting with juice in an attempt to have the bulk necessary to contain it all, but his bones creak and his skin stretches. Even with Ioanna’s help, the proportions of a larger human prove incapable and unsustainable. He gurgles and shouts, and his blood boils and foams through his pores until he explodes like a rotten tomato hurled against a granite wall. The unchained melody of ethereal sound permeates the city, with the “voice of God” speaking to many. Those who can hear it but are not strong enough to channel the power are susceptible to change. A gate opens where Frederick once stood and a demonic vanguard begins to make inroads onto Earth, seeking to make Jerusalem the first outpost from which to feed on the fools that call themselves humanity.

THE GORY DETAILS OF THE LATE FREDERICK II, AND THE RESULTING GATE

What was once a moment of untold glory has been cut short by a horrific splattering sound, painting the walls with blood and gore. The dispersed divine chorus has suddenly taken a turn from a well-ordered ritual into the embodiment of chaos. This discordant noise, now without focus or filters, is pouring into those nearby without any rhyme or reason. This is an unpleasant sensation to the disciplined and robust, but those without the will to resist are changed from their human forms into something else. The combination of suffering and celestial noise turns

the susceptible into monsters with a strong sympathy to either aid the demons entering from the gate that Frederick’s body and soul have turned into, or simply to create as much destruction as possible before being put down. These transformations occur in waves, centering on the dais of Frederick II. Those who were most blindly loyal to him are the mightiest demons, and leaders of the attack on Jerusalem. Those with Willpower 4 or less automatically transform, while those with Willpower 5 or higher must succeed at a Willpower roll (difficulty 10 for Commoners, difficulty 8 for magi). If the roll is successful, the target can stave off the effects and remain themselves. If the roll fails, they lose control of themselves. Those under the sway of the rampant magic must succeed on a Willpower (difficulty 10) to gain a moment of clarity and act of their own accord for one combat round. Five successful Willpower rolls to establish clarity will banish the demonic presence completely, as will the target’s death.

Due to the immense amount of suffering, the catacombs beneath the Tower of David, unless significantly disrupted by the players’ magi, are now a cesspit of demonic creatures. Those who were on the verge of death and the torturers steeped in the ritual all become twisted into demonic creatures and claw their way to the surface. If the filters were disrupted by demonic or spiritual corruption, they too become gates for demons to enter Jerusalem.

FORMING ALLIANCES

Given the immediacy of self-preservation, the surviving groups of Templars, magi, and citizens will either band together or trample each other in their rush to escape. The players’ magi may take a hand in pushing this in either direction, and Storytellers should play up the chaos of the holiest city in the world falling apart.

The most immediate concern is the neutralization of the immediate threat of the demons and the transformed people. The players’ magi can use magical means to either aid the transformed hordes in purging the demonic influence themselves or drawing the demonic entities out by arcane force.

Herding afflicted people into locations of immense faith will purge the demonic influence quickly. Add a number of dice equal to the True Faith rating of a given location to a target’s Willpower roll to regain their clarity.

CLOSING THE GATES

Once security has been established, the gates are the next line of concern. Immense arcane or sanctifying energies must be directed against the portals that have opened, particularly the gate in the tower and the gate in the catacombs where demons will continue to make their march unabated if left unchecked. The corrupted filters will similarly need to be dealt with. Clever players could make use of the surviving stages of the elemental conduits to amplify their efforts.

If all else fails, the players' magi could simply flee the city and call upon higher powers to quell the chaos. The gates of the city are clogged with chaos. The throngs of people make it harder to maneuver through the trying to escape and the demonic entities causing wholesale slaughter. The players need to make successful Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty 6) to take any physical actions in the throng of people, including passing through the streets once the chaos subsides. The Jaffa Gate is the fastest escape route from the Tower of David, but may also be the most crowded. Trying to escape through a city gate with a True Faith rating reduces the difficulty of the Dexterity + Athletics roll to 5.

NEW SYSTEMS

TRUE CELESTIAL KNOWLEDGE

(AL-ANBIYA ••, OR GAVRI-EL ••, OR PRIMUS ••; COSMOLOGY ••• ALSO REQUIRED)

With this rote, a magus meditates on charts and observations of the heavens, sharpening her knowledge and opening the path to greater inspiration. This provides a perfect understanding of celestial phenomena. This rote can be used to predict the positions of stars and planets, the length of days, and other ordinary phenomena. All educated people know that the Music of the Spheres sets Earthly events in motion, so this rote allows the magus to interpret the astrological significance of her predictions:

how they might affect people, settlements, and even entire nations. These interpretations are often clouded by ambiguous symbols, but at least provide a starting point.

System: For the purposes of casting True Celestial Knowledge, duration (see **Dark Ages: Mage**, p. 103) represents the period his predictions covers, starting from the end of his casting. The caster can predict one general category of celestial phenomena perfectly (such as planetary alignments, the positions of stars, meteor showers and upcoming eclipses), though within the Ptolemaic model. The magus can even predict upcoming celestial events (such as non-recurring comets) that cannot be foretold by mundane scholars.

The magus also learns about how these phenomena influence the world. The stars sway certain nations and individuals, and eclipses represent a celestial "lens" that presages some important event by focusing power or opening a hole in one of the spheres. This information usually manifests in the form of inspired writing or as a code in the stars that leads the caster to interpret peculiar passages from other texts. In any case, the Storyteller determines the type and clarity of information she will share, and may even introduce events derived from phenomena the caster wasn't looking for. Successive castings can be used to tell the player whether her prognostications are getting "hotter" or "colder."

Ahl-i-Batin, Messianic Voices and Hermetic magi (including Craftmasons) are capable of using this rote. Other Fellowships may possess equivalents learned through their own stargazing.



Dawn was still several hours away when Urte awoke with a start. the moon had set, but the sky did not yet show any hints of false dawn. For a moment, she was disoriented, unable to remember why she was sleeping on the cold stone floor of the village chapel. Then memory assailed her and she began to shiver with remembered terror.

The black sky took the village by surprise, but the real horror began when the monsters overran their village shortly thereafter. Urte sought shelter in the chapel along with about half of the villagers, somehow making it into the church without any light to see by. As the only building in the village made of stone, it seemed the logical choice. They scrambled to bar the door with the heavy iron candlesticks, then further reinforced the barricade by hurriedly shoving the benches into a pile against the door.

By then, the demons were wreaking havoc in the village itself. Howls mixed with the screams of villagers who hadn't made it inside. Several times the beasts tried to get in, their inhuman claws scrabbling at the windows, but the villagers fought back with pitchforks and torches and they did not persist. Even when the demons gave up on getting into the church, the screams continued for a long while afterward.

Smoke came in through the windows as the village burned around them. Urte and the other women hacked strips of cloth from their skirts, soaking them in the font of holy water and tying them around their faces to protect their lungs from the stinging smoke. Finally, after what seemed an eternity of terror, the darkness faded. Light returned, and the chaos subsided. Outside the church, the howling fell silent, as did the screaming.

Still, Urte and the other villagers remained behind the safety of their barricade while the village continued to burn, not knowing if the monsters would return. Come nightfall, they huddled together for warmth and comfort. Urte started in fear at every sound, sure that the demons were returning to finish what they had started. But the fiends did not return and eventually her fear was replaced with fatigue. Finally, she lapsed into an uneasy sleep troubled with nightmares of flames and claws.

Urte lay still in the dark for a long while. Her eyes burned from insufficient sleep and her body cried out for rest; her fatigue felt like a weight on her chest. But she couldn't dispel the hard knot in her throat, nor could she still her thoughts, which she knew would prevent her from further rest. Besides, she was of the Oculi Dei, an Eye of God, and she had a duty to honor.

She managed to extract herself from the other villagers without waking anyone. As tonight was the night of the moon-dark, they had lit candles against the darkness. She took one that had almost burned to a nub and padded silently into the church sacristy. It took a little fumbling in the dim, but she found the catch to the secret door hidden in the back of the wardrobe where the priest and his deacons hung their vestments. The secret exit wasn't something she was supposed to know about, but as an Eye of God, there were a lot of things she knew that were supposedly secret.

Urte slipped out the exit, careful to make sure that it latched behind her. Though she felt almost naked outside the safety of the chapel's stone walls, she set out for the secret meeting place. She was careful to keep the candle shielded as she moved silently throughout the village, her lips moving continuously as she prayed silently to the Virgin to shield her from unfriendly eyes.

Despite having a feeble candle as her only source of light, the young Eye had walked this path in the dark of night enough times that she easily found her way to the small forest clearing just outside the village. There was nothing about this spot to mark it as special; only another Eye would know that this was a place of any import.

Urte carefully set her candle down on a rock and pulled aside the weeds at the base of a large willow to reach into the small opening hidden in the roots. She had hoped to find the tokens that would indicate her fellow Eyes had been here, but the hollow was empty.

It was just then that her candle began to gutter. With a soft curse, Urte blew it out, then climbed into the branches of the willow. It was a rather clumsy operation in the dark and she earned more than a few scratches

for her trouble, but she managed to settle herself comfortably and trusted that the ancient tree's dense foliage would keep her hidden.

Urte began to shake, biting her lip to keep from crying out as silent tears ran down her face. She was alone. She stuffed her sleeve into her mouth to prevent the sound of her sobbing from betraying her hiding place. Despite being determined to remain awake until morning, she quickly cried herself to sleep.

It felt like she had just closed her eyes when she the light of dawn and the singing of morning birds awoke her. Feeling as though she was moving through molasses, Urte climbed foggily down out of the tree. Although she knew what she would find, she checked the hollow beneath the willow one more time. Still empty. Most likely the others were dead, then.

As she re-entered the village, she saw that half of the village's huts had burned to the ground, and of the rest only one or two looked to have escaped damage entirely. The door to the chapel was forced open slightly and villagers began to emerge, screaming and crying at the devastation they found there. A handful of people began to straggle in from outside the village, no doubt having found various hiding places in which to wait out the chaos. But none of them were Darijus.

Feeling numb, Urte shuffled toward her home. Like most of the rest of the village, it had burned. Only two walls remained standing, the other two having collapsed along with most of the roof. But she had little attention to spare for her ravaged home, because there, sprawled in the dirt in front of the burned hut, was Darijus.

She wanted to scream. She wanted to weep and howl curses against God, but she couldn't. Her lips moved, but the only sound she could force past the lump in her throat was a small whimper. Her eyes remained dry as she stumbled forward the last few steps toward Darijus' broken body. After yesterday, she had no tears left to shed, for herself or anyone. Urte sank to her knees, her hands trembling as she caressed Darijus' face. His chest and arms were rent with wicked claw marks, his throat had been torn out, and his dead eyes were wide with horror.

Without understanding what she was doing, Urte took out her small knife, cut another long strip from her skirt, and tied it around his neck like a scarf, not caring that it made her look even more ragged. The demon that had clawed his chest had torn his shirt as well, but she managed to re-arrange it so that the wounds themselves were hidden. Lastly, she closed his mouth and his eyes, erasing the frozen scream. This way, he almost seemed to be sleeping, as long as she ignored the blood that stained his clothing and soaked into the dirt around him.

Urte leaned forward, resting her forehead on Darijus' chest, and closed her eyes. Sweet, beautiful Darijus. She had loved him as long as she had known him. They had been married not even two months, and she had thanked the Virgin and the saints every day for her good fortune. Hoping that they might be able to start a family, she had been disappointed when her courses began a few days ago. He had held her, had reassured her that miracles took time and that surely God would bless them with a child in due time.

Urte had believed him, but now that promise was ashes, like the ruins of their village. She did not have even the hope of a child to remember him by, and that seemed the cruelest of all. That a man as gentle as her Darijus should be taken from this world without leaving any sons behind to continue his legacy felt like something fundamentally good had been removed from the world.

Urte sat up once more, clutching her chest against the sudden burning she felt as grief gave way to anger. Her oath as one of the Oculi Dei was that she would only watch, not act. She would report to her superiors the information that was needed to wage God's war against demons and monsters such as the ones that had destroyed their small village. But what good was watching without action? When did prudent observation become foolish delay?

The other Eyes of her village were dead, and who knew how long it would be before one of her superiors even thought to send someone to take her reports? By then, the trail would have faded to nothing, the monsters would have vanished, and there would be no way to find them again. Urte could not permit that to happen. She could not permit Darijus' death to mean nothing. His blood cried out for vengeance, and she would be the instrument of that vengeance.

Urte kissed Darijus' forehead gently. "Goodbye, my love," she whispered. "We will meet again in the life that is to come."

Though their hut had been all but destroyed, Urte had found a heavy cloak that was intact, even if it now reeked of smoke. She gathered what few small things that had survived and would be useful on a long journey, leaving the rest behind. She doubted she would ever see her home again and didn't much care.

Vogelsang Castle was a quarter-day's journey up the road from their village. Ordinarily, the fear of encountering wolves or highwaymen might have prevented Urte from making such a journey alone, but after the events of the previous day, these seemed like petty concerns.

She intended to beg the assistance of the detachment of Teutonic Knights that were stationed there in tracking and slaying the monsters that had destroyed her village. The trail of devastation that they had left was quite clear. Urte had learned some tracking when her father had taught her how to set snares as a way to augment their larder during the lean fall and winter months. But even a child could have followed the destruction that led back to the forest. Whatever the monsters had been, they had traveled in a large pack.

What she saw when she crested the last rise overlooking the castle was not what she had expected, however. It looked as though the catastrophe had taken the Teutonic Knights quite by surprise, judging by the level of chaos that she could see. Knights and squires buzzed around the castle like a swarm of agitated bees. And against the outer wall was a huge fire, on which still burned the remains of several creatures not quite human. This might prove harder than Urte had first thought.

Steeling herself, Urte walked through the open gates, approaching a large knight who seemed to be directing the goings-on. He ignored her, continuing to give instructions to two junior knights while she waited impatiently. At last when they were sent off on their errand, she cleared her throat and stepped forward before he could be off somewhere else.

"Please," she said quickly. "Are you Conrad van Landsburg?"

The knight frowned. "I am his second, Gaufrid."

"I need to speak with the Commander about Gmund and the monsters that attacked it." The knight frowned even more deeply. Urte sighed. "Please, it is very important," she added, making the small hand sign that the Eyes of God used to recognize one another, on the off chance that this man might be a well-placed agent in the Oculi Dei.

Unfortunately, no recognition flashed across Gaufrid's face. He simply snorted, his disdain clear. "We have no time for the silly complaints of a woman. We are preparing for a campaign in the field. Begone."

Urte wanted to come back with a witty rejoinder, something that would prove that she had the trust of people far more important than he would ever be and shame him into doing as she had requested. But the fury she felt at being summarily dismissed drove all wit from her mind and she could only stammer, temporarily unable to muster an intelligent response.

Gaufrid snorted again, turning and stalking off to another part of the castle courtyard, though not before she heard him mutter something about useless women under his breath.

Urte stood there with clenched fists, longing to chase after the arrogant bastard and land a good punch square on his jaw. However, she had dealt with his type before and knew that it would likely end badly. The Teutonic Knights were fanatics; anyone who opposed them was the enemy, and she knew that laying hands on a Knight would probably end in her being declared a pagan witch. At best, she could expect to be sold into forced labor. At worst, she might find herself burned as a servant of Satan.

She was seized with momentary despair, not knowing what to do. Urte had been counting on gaining the assistance of the Knights, but if they weren't going to help her, she was just going to have to help herself. Urte began to recite the Hail Mary, calling upon the Virgin once more to turn all attention from her. Once she was sure that she would pass unnoticed, she began to search for the things she would need.

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Finding and gaining access to the armory had been easier than she had thought it would be. The Knights seemed to be preparing for an extended campaign, and squires were scurrying to and from the armory on a variety of errands. Once inside, Urte didn't dare spend too long examining her options, lest she draw attention to her odd behavior. The protection of the Virgin would falter if she were to make it obvious she didn't belong there. She took a short sword, not wanting to take anything that would be too large for her to wield easily.

From there, she found a place to hide so she could remove her cloak, strap the sword to her back, and put the cloak on again, trusting it to hide the sword. Now she just had to acquire a horse.

This proved to be the most challenging task of all. Urte had worked with plow horses before, but she had never ridden a horse before and hadn't the faintest idea of how to go about saddling one. She wound up wedging herself in a corner of the stable, where she would be out of the way but could still see everything going on, and settled down to wait.

An hour passed. By now, Urte's lips were dry and cracked, her throat parched from the continuous litany of Hail Marys. She longed to stop for even a sip of water, but didn't dare. Finally, the Virgin smiled on her. There was a tremendous commotion at the castle gates as a small party of knights returned with one of the beasts, dead,

being hauled behind them. Everyone's attention turned toward the party at the gates, and the squires and stable hands dropped what they were doing to gawk.

Knowing that she would never get a better opportunity, Urte grabbed the reins of a horse that had just been saddled and led him out of the stable. She did her best to appear casual, though her heart pounded and she felt short of breath with anxiety. The walk to the gates felt like the longest walk of her life. But she needn't have worried; the returning party of knights was enough of a spectacle that no one paid her the slightest bit of attention.

Not a one of them remained unscathed. Two of the knights looked about half dead, secured in their saddles with the crude expedient of rope. As Urte passed through the gate, she finally got a good look at the monster. What she saw made her blood run cold: a giant beast, half man, half wolf, that was at least eight feet tall.

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Though she had been half-convinced that she would be discovered, no outcry was raised. Once safely away, Urte mounted the horse somewhat awkwardly and rode back in the direction of her village. The pack of wolf-men had come from the east and had left a clear trail going into the forest to the west of the village, so she would follow the trail until she found them. Then she would call upon the blessings of the Virgin and the saints to help eliminate their taint from the earth.

Urte knew that her plan was entirely mad. If an entire party of knights had barely managed to take down one of the wolf-men, what could she do about an entire pack of the demonspawn? She shivered, wondering for a moment what she had gotten herself into. But the image of Darijus' face frozen in its final, awful rictus banished her fear. She would kill the pack leader, at least, and as many others as she could before they took her down. So what if she died? She had known what her fate would be when she left Gmund. Without Darijus, she had nothing to live for anyway. At least this way her death would have meaning.

Her mount seemed to know that she was an inexperienced rider as she had been unable to force it into anything faster than a quick walk. But she was able to cover more ground at that pace than she would have on foot, and she hoped that her horse would be able to outrun the wolf-men if she were prematurely discovered.

Rather than ride through the village, Urte circled around the outskirts. The trail had proved as easy to read as Urte had expected. The monsters had been too intent on destruction to pass with care; a wide swath of underbrush had been trampled, the soft forest earth churned up with many large paw prints.

The trail she followed slowly transformed before her. The frenzy of an initial stampede gradually gave way to a more orderly egress, and her progress slowed as she found herself having to look more carefully for signs. She rode for several hours in a state of increasing misery as late morning gave way to early afternoon. Her head ached from lack of sleep, throbbing in time with the movement of her horse. Even worse, her legs began to ache from the unaccustomed strain of being so long in the saddle. Having never ridden before, she'd had no idea that it could be so much work just staying on a walking horse, but after a few hours, she knew that she would have sore legs for a day at least.

When Urte finally stopped for a rest, it was an hour past midday. Much as she was desperate to continue, she kept slumping forward in the saddle, unable to keep her eyes open. How many hours of sleep had she gotten since the attack? Two? Perhaps three? Reluctantly, she decided it was better to stop for a bit of a rest than risk missing a vital clue.

Urte half-dismounted, half-fell, groaning at the pain in her legs. Walking stiffly, she led the horse to a nearby tree and tied the reins to a sturdy branch. Not more than a few feet away, there was an inviting looking hollow beneath an ancient oak. She laid down her cloak and collapsed upon it, almost instantly unconscious.

...

After a few hours' rest, Urte pressed on, wanting to take advantage of the daylight she had left. The trail was faint enough that she decided to lead the horse rather than ride, wanting to make sure she could see it clearly in the dimming light. Just when she had started to look for a good place to spend the night, the trail vanished right as she stepped into a large forest clearing.

The remains of two huts stood side-by-side. They had been badly damaged by fire, like the homes in Urte's village. The clearing had obviously been the home of a small group of trappers; there were several frames on which furs were being stretched, some of them still intact. A man and a woman were pulling apart the more damaged of the two structures. And in the middle of the clearing was a patch of freshly disturbed earth. A grave, freshly dug, and distressingly small.

Without saying anything, Urte tied up her horse and started to help them in their task. With three pairs of hands, the work went a little faster. At sunset, another couple returned with several children in tow, each carrying a brace of rabbits. The oldest child joined in helping to dismantle the burned hut and they all worked in silence while the others set to skinning their catch and preparing a stew. By nightfall, the structure had been mostly dismantled, with the salvageable wood set aside to repair the other hut. It was only then that terse introductions were made and Urte was invited to share their meal as they sat around the fire.

What had happened here was largely the same as what had happened back in her village, with the saving grace being that most of them had been out checking trap lines at the time. When one of them murmured a small prayer of thanks to Laima, Urte realized her hosts were pagan. Once she would have been upset by this revelation, but now she felt as though grief and pain had left no room in her heart for smaller hatreds.

Haltingly, Urte told them the bones of her story, though she chose not to specify where she had gotten the horse and the sword. One of the women, Sofija, laid a comforting hand on Urte's knee. "Laima gives many gifts, but she can be cruel as well. Who can fathom her ways? We can only hope for better things to come."

Urte shook her head, unable to understand such fatalism in the face of great loss. "But what of your child?"

Sofija shrugged. "I will mourn my son. He will live in my heart always. But I am not old. There will be other children."

It was a moment before Urte could force any words past the sudden lump of grief in her throat. "For me there will be no children. My husband was taken from me too soon, and I will not marry again." She clenched her fists hard enough that her nails cut into her palms, but she scarcely noticed. "I'm tracking the beasts that destroyed my village and I will have my revenge."

The trappers exchanged looks amongst themselves, unsure of how to react to Urte's pronouncement. Sofija leaned forward, her brows knit together as she stared into Urte's eyes, and Urte had the feeling that she was being measured somehow. At last, the older woman nodded. "I know where they lair. It is very close. For the sake of our shared loss, I will show you the way tomorrow."

...

As close as she was to her goal, Urte thought her excitement would keep her awake. Instead, she found that she fell deeply asleep and remained sleeping until Sofija shook her gently awake the next morning.

Sofija had been telling the truth when she said it was not far. Half an hour's journey saw them to their destination: a large limestone cave in the middle of the forest. Urte turned to the other woman to ask what they should do from there, but Sofija had already thrown her head back and uttered a creditable imitation of a wolf howl.

The howl was shortly echoed, coming from all around them. Urte froze in sudden terror as wolves appeared all around them, some coming out of the trees, and a few coming from the cave itself. Quickly, Sofija slipped away, taking her place beside a large black wolf and resting her hand easily on its head.

Urte had time only to register the briefest stab of betrayal before a large she-wolf, muzzle greying with age, walked forward until she was only a few paces away. The wolf's form blurred as it began to shift form, several of the other wolves following suit, and Urte closed her eyes against the strangeness of it all.

When she opened them, Sofija now stood arm-in-arm with a man Urte recognized as her husband, and before Urte stood an old woman with sad eyes. "Our sister has told us your story and that you have business with us," the crone said, indicating the trapper. "I speak for our pack. It is I that you seek."

Something in her snapped. Urte pulled the short sword free of its sheath, intending to charge the old woman. But she moved faster than Urte would have thought possible, growing taller and more muscular as she stepped forward and knocked the sword from her hand with one powerful blow.

The sword flew off into the trees, and somehow that only amplified Urte's madness. She rushed forward, pummeling the old woman with her fists. Although she knew she scored a few good hits, the target of her rage stood still in the face of her attack, not so much lifting a finger to defend herself.

She was suddenly struck by how foolish this all was. How had she ever thought she could best demons this powerful? Worse, they weren't even going to kill her. All of the anger ran out of her in an instant and she fell to her knees. Or she would have, except the old woman gathered Urte against her like a small child, stroking her hair softly.

Cruelty or savagery Urte could have faced, but she found herself undone by the old woman's kindness. Helplessly, she sobbed Darijus' name into the old woman's shoulder, while the wolves around her howled their sadness to the forest breeze.

Dark Ages

DARKENING SKY

THE OATH-TRUE FELL WITH THE DARKENING SKY

In May, 1230, an eclipse overwhelmed the sky, blurring the lines between day and night. What does this mean in the Dark Medieval World? Ask five people, expect ten answers.

Darkening Sky is a series of five stories for the Dark Ages game lines. You'll find a story for **Fae**®, **Inquisitor**®, **Mage**®, **Vampire**®, and **Werewolf**® inside, each with a unique twist on the 1230 eclipse.

DARK AGES: DARKENING SKY INCLUDES:

- Each story is a fleshed out toolkit for exposing players to the horrific events surrounding the eclipse.
- Play these stories as part of existing chronicles, or use them to launch dark new epics.
- Each of these stories offers tools for running the game in the other four game lines.

