

# Unstable Ground

## NOCM Adventure 1

### Part One

Recently, there was a minor earthquake just off the coast of Vodacce. While the damage to inland sites was negligible, a portion of the cliffs on Falisci Island has slid into the ocean, revealing a partially buried keep in the side of the mountain. The remaining cliff face in which the building is embedded is very unstable and is gradually crumbling away, sending chunks of the building crashing into the sea.

It is believed that this building was once the estate of Carlo Umberto Falisci, a nobleman who lived in the 14th century. It is rumoured that this man plundered several Synchron sites he had discovered upon the island, and that he stashed the artefacts in a vault within his estate. His keep later disappeared without a trace, leading to much speculation. He was supposedly attempting to use the secrets of the artefacts to create common weapons with special or magical properties. Now that the Falisci keep has resurfaced, everyone who knows of its background is scrambling to plunder its hidden treasures.

The Heroes should be on a real time two hour limit for this adventure. When time is up, the estate will plunge into the depths of the sea.

There are a variety of hooks one may use to fit this adventure into your campaign. A few Secret Society specific hooks are detailed below, as well as how to leave the heroes to their own devices:

#### *Hero's own devices*

The Heroes have heard rumours of the keep's re-emergence and have decided to plunder the site themselves for profit. The Heroes can sell off any items they find to the highest bidder, or keep them as they see fit. Of course, they may have some of the Secret Societies track them down in an effort to claim the artefacts.



#### *Explorer's Society*

The Explorer's Society knows that time is of the essence if they are to save the artefacts from diggers. They want the Heroes to reach the site as quickly as possible and secure all of the items and artefacts contained therein. Anything that is found must be turned over to the Explorers Society upon completion of the Adventure.

#### *Die Kreuzritter*

Die Kreuzritter are aware of the cache of artefacts contained in the Falisci estate and wish to protect them from the Explorers, and other vagabonds who won't let the past rest in peace.

The Hero is given actual descriptions of the artefacts which must be retrieved. Anything else the Heroes find may be kept if they so desire. The artefacts are to be given to a Vigilant who will meet the Heroes upon their return from the ruined keep.

#### *Sophia's Daughters*

A Fate Witch has foreseen that one of the artefacts contained within the ruins is very dangerous and, if it

falls into the wrong hands, could lead to the death of many innocent people. The Daughters want this artefact recovered for further study and possible destruction by their hands.

### ***Invisible College***

Carlo Falisci shared the same tenets as the Invisible College, and as such his work is extremely valuable to the order. The College wants any and all artefacts or objects of a questionable nature to be recovered and smuggled back to the order for study and classification. The College is also interested in any and all notes, notebooks, plans, or other remnants of Falisci's work.

### ***Rilasciare***

The Rilasciare are convinced that Falisci was using artefacts to further the cause of evil sorcery. Therefore, the artefacts are tainted and must be destroyed. The Hero has been assigned to find the vault containing the artefacts and destroy it with explosives. Of course, this is an extremely dangerous mission as the bomb will undoubtedly send the entire building plummeting into the sea.

### ***Knights of the Rose +Cross***

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are deeply concerned over the discovery of the Falisci estate. The Hero has been assigned to retrieve the artefacts for testing by the order. If the artefacts are deemed righteous, they will be incorporated into the order's existing collection to be used in the cause of justice. Otherwise they will be destroyed.

## PART 2

### ***The Voyage***

The first step for the Heroes is to gain passage to the island. If one of the Heroes owns a ship, then this will

be relatively simple. If not, they will need to charter a vessel. The GM may use his discretion as to how difficult this task is and how much the Heroes are charged. Note that the vessel should not have any cannons aboard.

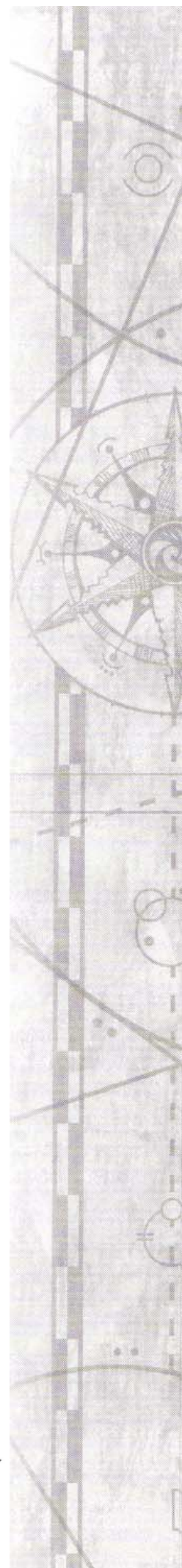
Once the Heroes set sail, their trip will be uneventful until they reach the coast of the island. Vincenzo Caligari has learned of the estate and will do anything in his power to get his hands on the artefacts within. He has dispatched his own group of men to uncover the keep's treasures, and sent a patrol ship to guard the waters from diggers.

When Caligari's ship, *Amo Stallis*, spots the Heroes' vessel, they will fire a few warning shots and then close to board. There are 5 brute squads aboard *Amo Stallis*. One squad will board the Heroes' ship per round and they will fight until they are all knocked out. When all five squads have been defeated, *Amo Stallis* will disengage from the Heroes' vessel and quickly sail away to report to Caligari. The *Amo Stallis* is faster than the Heroes' vessel, so a chase is futile.

### ***The Cliffs***

The Heroes will have to use row boats to cover the distance between the ship and the cliffs. There is no beach on this side of the island as the cliffs drop straight into the ocean. The Heroes will have to find a way to climb up the cliffs and into the estate, all the while dodging falling rocks and debris. The Heroes have the following options:

1. *Free climbing the cliffs barehanded.* It is 100 feet up the cliffs to the keep. Heroes may free-climb at a rate of 10 feet per round. They must roll Finesse + Climbing (keeping Finesse) with a TN of 25 each round they wish to move up. Failure indicates that the



Hero has slipped, although he may immediately make another roll to catch himself. If this roll succeeds, then the Hero is safe but does not move this round. Failure indicates that the Hero falls off the cliff.

**2. Using climbing gear to scale the cliff (if anyone remembered to bring any).** Heroes may move 20 feet up the cliff per round with gear. They must make a Finesse + Climbing roll (keeping Finesse) with a TN of 15 for each round they climb. Failure simply indicates that the Hero does not move for the round. Each round there is a 30% chance that a random Hero will be hit with falling debris. Heroes may use their Climbing skill as their Defense Knack to avoid being hit. Any Hero who is struck will take 1k1 Wounds and must immediately roll to avoid slipping.

## PART 3

### *The Estate*

Use the map of Seiger's Keep reprinted here from the Eisen Sourcebook to represent Falisci's estate. Heroes will enter the estate through the ruined east wall of the 3rd level tower.

Caligari's men have beaten the Heroes to the estate and are already scouring it for artefacts. There will be two brute squads in the 3rd level tower waiting for the Heroes; they will attack on sight and will not run. There are a total of ten brute squads within the estate guarding specific areas. The GM can feel free to throw these squads at the Heroes at any time while the Heroes are searching the estate. Luckily for the Heroes, the brutes are not looking for the items or artefacts, but are merely guarding the person who is. Caligari sent one of the few men he trusts, his cousin Vito, to actually search the estate and bring back its bounty. The Heroes will not meet Vito until the end of the adventure.

Be sure to keep the action moving and the tension high. Remember that the Heroes are in a very unstable location which is slowly slipping off the cliff face. During their search they will occasionally feel the entire keep lurch, throwing them to the ground if they do not pass a Finesse + Balance roll with a TN of 20. The entire place creaks as they explore, and dirt constantly sifts in through the roof. Debris from the ceiling will occasionally fall upon the Heroes as well. Any Hero hit by this debris will suffer 1k1 OR 2k2 Wounds at the GM's discretion, and will be knocked to the floor.

### **Rooms of the Estate:**

**1-3.** These areas are completely buried and cannot be reached.

**4. Main Gallery:** There are broken columns and debris littering the floor. A few paintings are still intact and may be valuable.

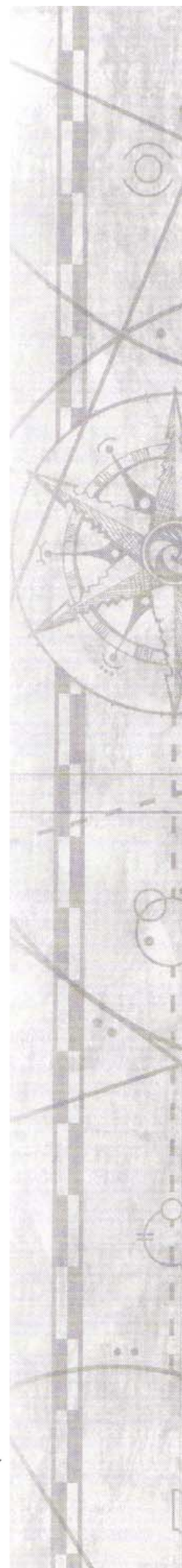
**5. Dining Hall:** Nothing of interest can be found here.

**6. Kitchen:** The room is a shambles and is completely barren.

**7. War Room:** This room is relatively empty except for debris and smashed chairs. The table is still intact and there is a skeleton partially buried in the debris. This skeleton is dressed in the manner of an advisor. He has a few small pieces of jewellery of little value, and a standard monocle clutched in his hand.

**8. Guest Chambers:** The middle room contains a skeleton wearing the garb of a swordsman and carrying a rapier. Any Hero who pulls the rapier from its sheath will discover that looks brand new with no signs of age or tarnish.

**9. Carlos Falisci's lab:** This room contains a variety of glass tubes, burners, chemicals, powders, etc. There is a



bizarre structure sitting upon the table in the centre of the room. The structure is a based glass globe, containing a weighted, mechanical gyroscope in the centre. This is the artefact Falisci was working on when the Keep sunk into the earth. He called it "The Globe." The far corner of the room contains several tubs of broken and bizarre scraps of an unknown origin. Any Hero who makes a Wits + Occult roll with a TN of 25 can determine that the scraps are remnants of damaged or destroyed artefacts. In the chair is a skeleton wearing the garb of a noble, and the signet ring of the Falisci family. Tucked within the drawer of the desk is a worn and damaged book which is hand written. This is Falisci's Diary.

**10. Falisci's storage room:** This room contains all manner of chemicals, fine tools, glass vials and tubes, flasks, and other trappings of experimentation. Most of it is broken and scattered about the floor. With the chemicals open to the air, it is unwise to remain in the room for more than a few minutes.

**11. Chapel:** This is a standard chapel; the only thing of value that can be found in the rubble is a jewelled Prophet's Cross. The cross is bent and badly tarnished.

**12. Main Staircase:** These stairs lead to the second story.

**13. Servant Access Hall:** There is a skeleton lying on the floor wearing the garb of a servant.

**14-15.** Buried, no access

**16. Ballroom Foyer:** Nothing of interest can be found in this room.

**17. Ballroom:** The skeletons of dozens of servants lay scattered about this room. They have nothing of value.

**18. Cistern:** The cistern is long since empty.

**19. Water and Grain storage:** These stores are empty.

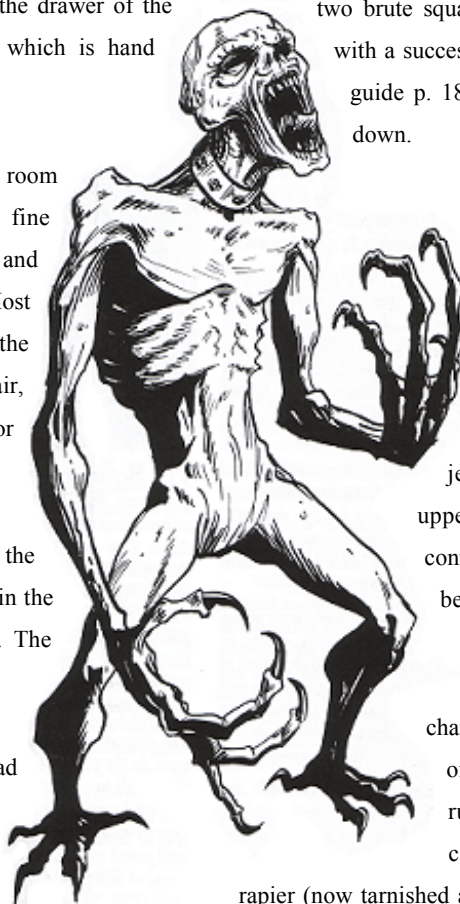
**20. Artefact Vault:** This vault contains several artefacts which Falisci had yet to destroy in pursuit of his experimentation. These items include a metal gauntlet, a small metal cube which is exceptionally heavy (75 lbs), and a three foot rod of twisted metal with a gemstone on each end. Vito Caligari is found outside the door to the vault desperately attempting to open it. He is guarded by two brute squads. The vault door can be opened with a successful Lockpicking roll TN 25 (GM's guide p. 183), or it can be chopped or beaten down.

**21. Bedchambers:** These rooms contain a variety of small and non-valuable personal possessions and knickknacks. Possible items include: brushes, combs, clothing, old books, jewellery, utensils, etc. The uppermost room next to Falisci's contains a jewelled silver scarab brooch beneath the mattress.

**22. Falisci's chambers:** These chambers were once the very definition of opulence. Of course, they're now in rum. Falisci's personal belongings can be found here, consisting of his rapier (now tarnished and rusted), his armour, some small jewellery, tools for fine work, and a magnifying glass. In an over-turned dresser by the bed, there is a hidden ivory scrollcase.

**23. Balcony**

**24. Servant's Quarters:** These rooms mostly contain small non-valuable items of a personal nature. The middle room contains a loose stone in the floor. When removed, a hidden cache is revealed beneath containing a small ruby. Apparently the servants stole it long ago.



### 25. Watch stations

**26. Dungeon Cells:** Although most of the cells are empty, several contain skeletons which seem to have once been human, but were horribly changed somehow. The north-western cell contains something which is still alive. It is about 7 feet tall and very brawny. It has a vaguely humanoid shape but its limbs and face are twisted and deformed. When it sees the Heroes it will begin to howl and snarl viciously. Astute Heroes will notice a golden chalice in the back of the creature's cell.

**27. Torture Chamber:** This chamber contains a variety of large torturous devices, mostly broken. However, many utensils of torture can be found scattered across the floor. There is also a chemical rack near a restraining table, as well as a variety of tubes and needles.

**28. Warden's Office:** A skeleton can be found near the middle of the room. A set of keys which fit the dungeon cells is attached to his belt, as well as a broad sword. Any Hero who makes a Wits + Blacksmith or Weaponsmith skill roll with a TN of 20 will discover that the sword was forged from raw iron.

**29-30.** Buried, no access

### *Fleeing the Keep*

Regardless of whether the Heroes find all of the items and artefacts, at the one hour and fifty minute mark, the Keep will suddenly lurch forward and begin to slide off of the cliff. The Heroes will have exactly ten minutes to escape from the Keep before it is crushed on the rocks below.

The same rules for scaling the cliff are in effect with the following modifications:

1. There is a 50% chance per round of being hit with falling debris which causes a 2k2 Wound.
2. There is a 20% chance per round of being hit with a large chunk of building causing a 4k3 Wound.
3. Any Heroes still in the building, or climbing down when

it falls, will suffer a 10k10 Wound. This is a villain class event which can kill Heroes.

4. Characters who are using ropes and climbing gear may elect to move at double the rate of descent by sliding down as quickly as possible. They must make one Finesse+Climbing OR Finesse+Swinging roll with a TN of 20 in order to gain this benefit.

### *Items and Artefacts*

#### *Monocle (Room 7)*

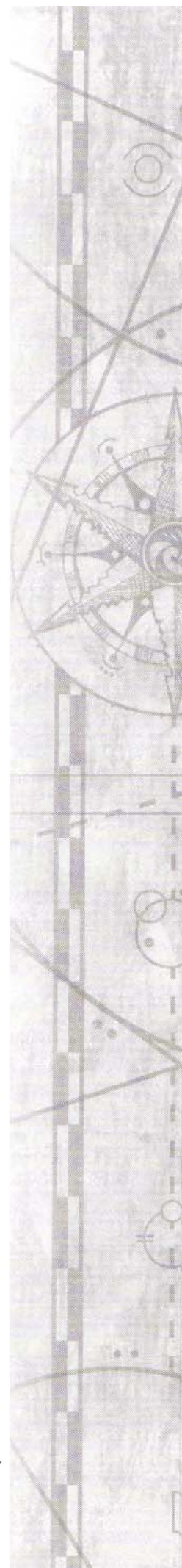
Anyone who looks through the monocle for more than 60 seconds will begin to see the faint outlines of fate strands. The Hero can sense the colour of the strand and can tell the difference between faint strands (weak connection), and vibrant strands (strong connection). Of course, most Heroes won't know what it is they are looking at. A Hero who gazes through the monocle for more than two minutes will begin to contract a massive migraine. Looking for more than five minutes will inflict a 1k1 Wound.

#### *Rapier (Room 8)*

The sword has been coated with a strange, protective liquid created by Falisci, and will never rust or lose its edge. The rapier allows the user to roll an additional unkept die when rolling damage.

#### *Falisci's Diary (Room 9)*

The diary is extremely worn with age and has been damaged by acid or chemicals. If it is not handled delicately, the pages will begin to crumble and fall apart. Most of the diary contains schematics and formulas for his failed experiments. The legible parts detail how Falisci was experimenting with artefacts in an attempt to create man-made items with similar effects. He also experimented on prisoners, using a variety of chemicals and artefact effects to replicate the artefact's powers in a human being. All such experiments were horrific failures. The final notes of the diary detail how he accidentally activated an artefact he calls "The Globe" and the resulting vibrations caused his entire keep to sink into the earth where his staff succumbed to dehydration and starvation.



### *Silver Scarab* ( Room 21 )

The scarab is about the size of a standard brooch and its jewels make it quite valuable. The brooch will gently vibrate if the Hero comes within twenty feet of danger (what constitutes "danger" is the GM's discretion).

### *Ivory Scrollcase* ( Room 22 )

The ivory scrollcase is delicately carved with ancient runes and symbols. Inside the Heroes will find a coded map of the surrounding area, including the location of the Syrneth sites Falisci plundered.

### *Golden Chalice* ( Room 26 )

At dawn of each day, the golden chalice fills with a sweet liquid. Anyone who imbibes this liquid will not have to consume any food or water for the entire day. The chalice was being used to keep the prisoners alive during the experimentation process in order to save food. When the Keep sank into the earth, the chalice rolled into the cage of the beast, and has kept it alive ever since.

### *Broad Sword* ( Room 28 )

This sword is a MacEachern Blade (Avalon Sourcebook pg. 91), used by Falisci and his warden to keep the Cell Creature in line.

### *The Globe* ( Room 9 ), *Heavy Cube*, and *Rod of Metal* ( Room 20 )

For the purposes of this adventure, the powers of these artefacts will not be defined as the Heroes will be unable to activate them.

### *Thalusian Gauntlet* ( Room 20 )

When placed on a hand, the wearer gains one extra unkept Brawn die for all actions; however, the gauntlet cannot be removed by anything short of amputation (Arrow of Heaven pg. 57)

## Important NPCs

### **Vito "Angel Eyes" Caligari** ( Henchman )

*Brawn* 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 3

*Reputation*: -15

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Talkative

*Advantages*: *Vodacce* (R/W), *Crescent* (R/W), *Thean* (R/W), *Keen Senses*, *Left Handed*, *Noble*, *Patron* (Vincenzo Caligari), *Pirate Trick* (Quick Draw, Sidearm)

*Criminal*: *Gambling* 3, *Quack* 1, *Shadowing* 3, *Stealth* 4, *Lockpicking* 2, *Pickpocket* 3

*Sailor*: *Balance* 5, *Climbing* 3, *Knotwork* 3, *Pilot* 4, *Rigging* 2, *Cartography* 2, *Navigation* 3, *Swimming* 3

*Captain*: *Strategy* 2, *Tactics* 3, *Ambush* 4, *Bribery* 5, *Gunnery* 4, *Leadership* 3, *Logistics* 2

*Dirty Fighting*: *Attack* (Dirty Fighting) 3, *Attack* (Improvised Weapon) 4, *Throat Strike* 2

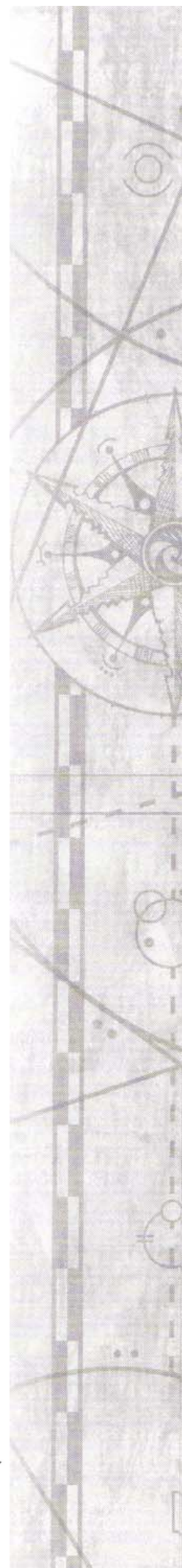
*Fencing*: *Attack* (Fencing) 5, *Parry* (Fencing) 1

*Firearms*: *Attack* (Firearms) 5, *Reload* (Firearms) 5

*Rogers* (Apprentice): *Bind* (Fencing) 3, *Corps-a-corps* 2, *Disarm* (Fencing) 4, *Exploit Weakness* (Rogers) 1

Vito Caligari is the captain of the *Amo Stallis*. He arrived at the Keep a short while before the Heroes and disembarked, sending his ship back to guard the island. His orders were to crack the artefact vault first, then recover any items which may be lying around the keep. When the Heroes discover him, he will be frantically trying to open the lock on the artefact vault with his two remaining lockpicks, having already broken three others. Upon seeing the Heroes his first reaction will be to draw his pistols (using his Quick Draw advantage) and open fire. If necessary, he will draw his cutlass and fight them, but will surrender or flee if he has no chance of winning.

Although Vito Caligari is of noble birth, he is a simple man, preferring the hard life of a privateer captain over the pampered life of a nobleman. He has sailed all over Theah, and has seen almost all she has



to offer. He currently works for his cousin, Vincenzo Caligari, as a privateer. Vito tracks down artefacts and other treasures for Vincenzo, and handles his dirty work as the need arises.

Vito is a man of average build with dark, medium length hair, blue eyes, and a thick bushy moustache. He dresses no differently than the standard sailor save for his captain's hat, and always keeps his two sidearms handy. Although he is proficient with his cutlass, he seldom uses it, preferring the power of his pistols over the clumsiness of a blade.

Vito sports a feature uncommon in Vodacce: he has brilliant, bright blue eyes. A survivor of the first ship Vito ever plundered recounted that his vessel was robbed by a pirate who had the eyes of an angel. Much to his disdain, the nick name "Angel Eyes" has followed him ever since.

### **Caligari's Men** ( Brutes )

*Threat Rating:* 2

*Usual Weapons:* Cutlasses ( Medium )

*TN to be Hit:* 15

*Skills:* Attack (Fencing) 3, Balance 3

*Description:* Caligari's men are standard sailors and almost all are natives of Vodacce. They have been with Vito for quite some time and are fiercely loyal to him.

*Special Abilities:* Caligari's men always roll at least 3 dice, no matter how many men are left standing.

### **Cell Creature** ( Villain )

*TN:* 20

*Brawn* 5, *Finesse* 3, *Resolve* 4, *Wits* 2, *Panache* 2

*Attack Roll:* 4k3

*Damage:* 5k2 (Claws)

*Skills:* Sprinting 4, Leaping 3, Lifting 5, Grapple 4, Bear Hug 3, Break 3

*Advantages:* Sidhe Blood (Slow Ageing, Iron Vulnerability), Toughness

*Description:* The Cell Creature is a twisted mockery of a human. It resembles a vaguely humanoid male which has been horribly mutated in some fashion. It stands about 7 feet tall and is very thin, with tough, leathery, and pale wrinkled skin. The creature's head is too large for its body and is covered in large irregular lumps and protrusions. Its arms are twisted and wiry and end in terrible 4 inch claws. Sidhe blood flows through the its veins, and Falisci was conducting experiments upon the wretched beast in an attempt to capture the magic of its Sidhe heritage. The creature has been getting its sustenance from the Golden Chalice.

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