

Swashbuckling
ADVENTURES™

Explorer's Society™





Explorer's Society

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*Based on material previously published
in the 7th Sea™ line of products.*

Special Thanks:

TO MY WIFE; AS ALWAYS, SHE WAS VALUABLE BEYOND PRICE.

Dedication:

TO THE REAL SOCIETY OF EXPLORERS — THOSE HEROES
THROUGHOUT HISTORY WHO RISKED EVERYTHING TO GO
BEYOND THE HORIZON FOR THE REST OF US.

To use this companion, a Dungeon Master also needs the *Player's Handbook*,™ the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*™
and the *Monster Manual*.™ A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*.™

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ISBN 1-887953-84-1



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"Truth is not a privilege. It is a right granted us by Theus."
—Vincent Bernadore

Wonder and Terror Part I: A Patron's Favor

"Chairman Mokka..." Captain Hal Magnus sighed as he strode down the League building's corridor beside a man who could very well be the richest person in human history. "...surely you can't be concerned by this — this blackmail!"

"Hardly blackmail," Val Mokka replied evenly. "Politics are simply what they are. The Vaticine Church controls Castille and if they are willing to bend on the matter of the Guilder, we shall finally have the advantage over those tight-fisted, stubborn Vodacce."

Captain Magnus clenched his fist until the skin was white as he waited for the Chairman to finish. Val Mokka didn't like to be interrupted, and this expedition was too important to risk on impulsive outbursts. "Cardinal Verdugo is not the Vaticine Church and those blasted Cardinals will never side with us against the Princes. He is trying to use delaying tactics to weaken through intrigue what he cannot destroy with fanatical thugs!"

For a moment, Hal thought he saw the Chairman smile but the moment was gone before he could be certain. "Yes, your Explorer's Society has proven quite resilient. I understand that there are even a few small outposts on the Castillian shore that enjoy de facto immunity from the Red Hoods."

The tall blond Explorer grimaced. "With all due respect, sir, you're hanging the subject."

"Hardly, my emotional friend. Supporting an organization like the Explorer's Society is simply good politics." This time, Chairman Mokka did smile. It was faint, cold and razor-thin, but Hal was ready to take any advantage he could get. "Still, if the Guilder is adopted by Castillian merchants, the Trade War is all but over."

"Need I remind you," the young Captain noted through clenched teeth, "that five of the Cardinals are Vodacce? The Church is still the supreme power in Castille and those Cardinals have every reason to support Verdugo's obscene war on progress!"

Chairman Mokka's smile faded. He regarded the eager Vendel through eyes as clear and hard as diamonds. "Progress? I have nothing but admiration for the courage and genius at the heart of your group, Captain Magnus, but exactly how does the study of races long dead advance human progress?"

Hal fought back a smile. He is interested! he exulted as he fought to keep his features calm and thoughtful. "It sounds as though you have been... advised by our colleagues in the Invisible College. They may proffer disdain for some of our knowledge because of its source, but we do not. The Synchron races were all far more advanced than even our most forward-thinking inventors. Chairman Mokka, I have studied their technology. It may seem arcane and magical but I assure you, some of it is clearly based on scientific principles. They are merely principles we have not yet come to understand. If we can unlock even a fraction of this knowledge, we could advance Théan science by decades, if not centuries, and improve conditions in so many ways." Hal watched carefully as Chairman Mokka considered. I think that may have done it...

"Poppycock!" A bellicose voice echoed from down the hall. Magnus groaned as John Daylen, an Avalon "scholar," approached them. He had long regarded Daylen as a fop who rode upon the fame of his legendary relative Joshua, but had reluctantly begun to develop a

sneaking admiration for the large, outgoing Avalon. That was before the Explorer's Society received the Gallegos page — evidence that the College had deliberately deceived them. Now he had revised his opinion again, suspecting Daylen of being an agent provocateur for the Invisible College and far more dangerous than he appeared.

"My dear Chairman Mokka, I implore you, save your wealth for a cause more deserving," Daylen pleaded in his booming voice. "I, too, admire the Society's courage, but they study the past. Have you not made your well-deserved reputation by leading us out of the darkness of history to embrace a new and glorious future?"

"Spoken with as much flowery grace as ever, Daylen," Magnus replied dryly. "I would admire your craft more, though, I think, if you were not using it to perfume the stench of prejudice." Daylen began to sputter furiously as Hal turned back to face the Chairman. "Sir, you have written eloquently and at length about doing what we must to create a prosperous, more enlightened future. If we ignore the truth about the Synchron, how can we ever move beyond them?"

"Of all the superstitious nonsense! That's his wife talking..." Daylen began.

The Vendel's face reddened in outrage. "How dare you," he began in a low, deadly voice.

Chairman Mokka's voice cut through the high emotion. "Enough," he said firmly. "I am supporting the Iron Heart's expedition. Your commentary is appreciated, Mr. Daylen, and I will keep it in mind when determining future patronage. Captain Magnus is a national hero as well as an Explorer, however, and if he believes that this expedition will expand our body of knowledge, then I support it."

Magnus bowed. "Thank you, Chairman."

Daylen hid his scowl with a deeper bow. "Chairman, I bid you good day." As Val Mokka strode off, Daylen straightened and shook his head at Hal. "Honestly, my dear Captain, why you waste your time on such —"

"Cristobal Gallegos," Hal snarled back. "Do not let me see your face again." John Daylen turned as white as a Grimstadd winter and practically vanished before Magnus' icy blue eyes.

"Well?" Hal smiled at his skjæren wife, Freyalinda, as she queried him, her classic Vesten features placid. "Did the money-grubber go for it?"

"Chairman Mokka is a good man, my love," Hal replied evasively. "He just has tunnel vision like many of my countrymen."

Freyalinda sighed and folded her arms. "Do... we... have... a... sponsor?" she asked.

Hal kissed her impulsively. "Yes." His eyes bulged when she laughed in delight.

"I cannot recall if I have ever heard a skjæren giggle," he said in amazement.

The Vesten woman tried to look stern, barely managing to turn her laughter into a twitching smile. "It is something we do almost as often as we marry Vendel Explorers."

"Ah. I must impress this moment in my mind forever, then," he responded. He gazed at her, his eyes full of loving admiration. A moment later, though, he was deadly serious again. "Alas, finding a sponsor was the easy part."

She nodded. "If this Synchron 'Codex' of yours exists, every power-hungry villain in Théah will want it, and all who fear the Truth will want to see it destroyed."

Hal smiled ironically. "And how is that different from every other voyage we have taken, my love?"

Introduction

Théah is a world filled with fantastic artifacts, lost civilizations and secret wonders. It is also a world of dark, mysterious horrors, and there are many who would keep mankind ignorant of both. There is one organization, however, that refuses to accept ignorance and fear. One group of Heroes dares to believe that no one has the right to decide what others aren't "ready for." This courageous alliance of archaeologists, scholars, gadgeteers and swashbucklers refuses to descend to the level of their adversaries, instead upholding an ideal of Truth, Knowledge and Freedom. This group has no secret band of assassins or saboteurs, instead relying on courage, ingenuity and honesty to see it through. As a result, it has made enemies of nearly every secret power in the world, and its members have become Théah's most beloved heroes.

It is the Explorer's Society.

In less than a hundred years, the Explorers have gone from a small band of adventuring friends to a phenomenon that has taken Théah's imagination by storm. Explorers are the darlings of high society, novels about their adventures abound, patrons flock to their banner, and children from noble and peasant homes alike dream of high adventure in the name of knowledge. Explorers appreciate and foster this support, for without it the Society's very existence would hang by a thread. The Inquisition is merely its best-known enemy. Cunning mistresses of poison, murderous human shadows, violent anarchists, and even those they thought their closest allies have murdered Explorers in the name of secrecy. With every patron comes an enemy, from rival merchants to Vodacce Princes. And the most legendary monsters of the Seven Seas, from the Iron Butcher to Reis himself, have a preference for Explorer prey. It's enough to frighten away all but the boldest.

Perhaps that explains the Explorers' success. It's said that fortune favors the bold, and in a hostile world of deadly mysteries no adventurers are bolder than the heroes of the Explorer's Society.

This book goes beyond Théah, however. A brave alliance of adventurous explorers can fit into any fantasy campaign, and the Explorer's Society can serve as a unifying concept for any band of wandering treasure-hunters interested in more than profit. The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, **Veritas (Truth)**, recounts the origins of the Explorer's Society, its history, and its current place in Théan politics (or how it can fit into other worlds). Chapter Two, **Scientia (Knowledge)**, reveals the secrets and structure of the Society. Chapter Three, **Libertas (Freedom)**, details many of the places where Explorers can be found, whether planning their expeditions or conducting them. Chapter Four, **Adventure**, contains an essay for Explorer players and an extensive section for GMs, including a few of the Society's greatest heroes and several of its deadliest enemies, as well as some undiscovered places of wonder for Explorers to find. Chapter Five, **Survival**, explains in gaming terms the many weapons the Society can bring to bear, from subtle new devices to the awesome powers of Synchronizing and The Domae Art. Finally, an **Appendix** details one of the society's most important finds — the Isle of the Syrne — as well as the bloodthirsty pirate attempting to destroy it.

Welcome to the fight for human freedom, Explorer. The battleground is everywhere, and the enemies wage war on every front. Only the most brilliant and courageous are able to resist. Will you be one of them?



CHAPTER ONE:

*Veritas**Wonder and Terror
Part II: Into Death's
Arms, Laughing*

"Mother Ocean," Mary Dorset whispered as cold fear trembled through her entire body.

Two impossibly long tentacles had clamped onto the main mast as several smaller ones snaked up the sides of the Iron Heart. They had come out of nowhere.

"Kraken! Battle stations!" Captain Hal Magnus roared. The cannons barked in both directions and the sound of gunfire was everywhere. Around them, the air grew thick with the smell of spent powder. The beast seemed to pause for a moment, then continued its assault on the ship.

"Mary!" Hal shouted.

The young Avalon woman jumped half a foot into the air. "S-sir?"

"You're our scholar! These things have a weakness, right?" Hal pointed his saber at one tentacle tip as it reached for Mademoiselle Pierron, his bosun. The lunatic Montaigne woman laughed as she held her blade ready to duel the obscene thing.

"Villskap," Hal whispered. Lightning shot from the weapon's tip into the tentacle, which jerked back for a moment, then slapped the deck beside the Montaigne. Pierron actually leapt over it and stabbed down as she went.

Freyalinda had climbed to the crow's nest and began chanting for all their lives were worth to brew a storm above them. Fyodor, the Ship's Master, hacked at the tentacle's base with an axe as tall as he was. None of it seemed to work. Only the lightning had given the creature any pause, as if it had mistaken the brightness for something else.

"Fire!" Mary burst out. "Krakens fear fire!"

Hal grimaced. "But we will burn ourselves — and the ship — to a crisp!"

"No, no," Mary shouted back. "We should be able to drive it off safely. Tell the Master Gunner to load the cannon with hot coals."

Hal boggled at her. "Oh, is that all? Why don't we just load them full with gunpowder!"

Across the deck, Pierron shouted gleefully as she used a length of snapped rigging to swing over another tentacle and snatch a crewman from certain death.

Mary frowned. "That would be foolish. Coals, some cloth, a bit of oil... in principle, it shouldn't be much different from grapeshot — aieee!" Hal dived into her, which knocked her aside before another tentacle could snatch her away.

Magnus' lips pressed into a thin line for a moment as he disentangled from the Avalon Explorer. Then he shouted an order at her.

"Down below, at once, and tell Señor Murillo your plan, on my authority." He whipped out a strange rod from one sleeve and squeezing it with his hand. A thin jet of flame burst from the top. "GO!"

Mary dashed below to carry out the order.

Moments later, the Castillian stared at her incredulously. "You want me to what?!" he demanded as the ship shook around them. "This is not like firing a ship's sails, woman!"

"I believe that the tentacles must be flammable; otherwise the kraken would not fear fire so much. Load oiled rags into the mouth of the cannon to insure the greatest spread." Mary stared at him implacably. "On the Captain's authority, Señor Murillo."

Muttering curses about insane Avalon women and desperate captains, Murillo did as he was commanded. "We need to get our chance very ... there!" Murillo pointed suddenly. The trunk of a huge tentacle filled their sight. "Fire! FIRE!"

As the cannons roared, the gun crews splashed their ports with water in a desperate effort to keep them from burning. The beast shrieked — a sound none of them would ever forget. Massive columns of slime-covered muscle writhed and convulsed as they caught fire and burned. Mary ran back up to the main deck.

Magnus was standing with a bottle of rum in one hand and his tiny lens blade in the other. He smiled triumphantly as the kraken retreated, emitting an inhuman but very recognizable wail of frustration.

Mary smiled back. “So, Captain, how did I do?”

Hal laughed and passed her the rum.

Public Face

Of all the Secret Societies in Théah, the Explorer’s Society is unquestionably the least secret. While the average Théan may know that Explorers seek the truth about the Syrneth and promote a view of history without prejudice, anyone with the desire and resources can learn a great deal about the Society’s origins and current activities. This is all quite deliberate.

The Explorer’s Society has few secrets, and maintains those few for the safety of its own exploration teams. That openness is one of its most powerful weapons, as Inquisitors who target the world’s most popular adventurers soon learn. The Rose and Cross may be more directly heroic and Los Vagos more dashing, but the Explorers have captured the imagination of Théah with their style, daring and penchant for appearing everywhere at once. The quintessential member of the Society can seemingly outmaneuver Montaigne courtiers, fight off Castillian duelists, turn a profit while dealing with Vendel and Vodacce merchants alike, survive conditions that would have Ussuran *stelets* running for shelter and solve puzzles that would baffle the canniest Avalon scholars. At least, that’s what the stories say. The reality is a bit more complicated.

Beyond Théah: A Primer

This book is intended for those who want to know more the Explorer’s Society and those looking for an organization dedicated to knowledge, understanding and adventure to augment their swashbuckling/fantasy universe. With a little adjustment, the Explorer’s Society can fit into nearly any fantasy campaign.

In addition to the general information in this book, the “Beyond Théah” sections offer advice on altering Théah-specific information to make it more generic and allow the Society to be easily inserted into an existing campaign universe. When using the Explorers outside of Théah, keep the Society’s goals in mind. No matter the world, if there are villains and perils, there are secrets that go along with them. As long as there are horizons to explore, artifacts to research, mysteries to solve and past civilizations to excavate, the Explorer’s Society can be a source of endless adventures.

History

The early 15th century was a time of great expansion and curiosity. In one of the great ironies of Théah history, Castille led this era, perhaps in reaction to awakening from its own eternal introspection. A flurry of imitators tried to match their exploits in the Midnight Archipelago but proud Castille was not to be outdone.

Cristóbal Gallegos was one of the most celebrated navigators of his time — and either one of the most tragic losses of Castillian history or one of its most successful con artists. Personally sponsored by the monarchs of Castille, he planned to make the most ambitious journey of all time: circumnavigating the globe. His goal was to learn about the lands beyond the Great Western Ocean and claim them in the name of the Castillian Crown and the Prophets. Instead, he vanished without a trace.

Others followed in his wake. Those who ventured too far west also disappeared and those who survived returned with their lives in ruin. A few found their destinies in the Midnight Archipelago and its seemingly limitless wealth of wonders. (See *Islands of Gold: Midnight Archipelago* for further details.) In general, the attempt to sail around the world was regarded as such a disaster that exploration as a whole lost its appeal.

For over a century after the failed western voyages, the people of Théah were content to keep their eyes on their own continent where there was no lack of exciting developments, both scientific and political. It would take a Hierophant’s passion and a scholar’s imagination to re-ignite the passion for discovery.

The Discoverer’s Society

In addition to being a devout follower of the Vaticine Church, Cameron MacCormick was also a gifted scholar with a wide range of interests. It was, however, his interest in biology that altered the course of Théah’s fate. When Julius IV, a Hierophant renowned for his patronage of science and reasoning, asked Cameron to reconstruct the lives of the Prophets by tracing their footsteps, the young Avalon jumped at the chance. For over a year, MacCormick followed the trail of the first two Prophets on the very ground they had trod and even today, Church scholars use many of his findings in their studies.

Then in Sextus 1587 everything changed. Cameron was reconstructing some minor skirmishes from the Hieros Wars in southern Vodacce that the Third Prophet was rumored to have witnessed. The gifted investigator quickly concluded that the Prophet had not actually been in the area during the Wars and was preparing to leave the area when he came across the mouth of a cave, its entrance lined with amber. Intrigued, he went in for a better look.

Cameron MacCormick had just discovered the Thalusiai. Extensive caverns ran through these burrows, filled with hundreds of amber blocks that held bizarre insectoid suits of armor. He tried to reconcile these relics with Church dogma regarding the Syrneth, looking for ways to tie them to the single civilization believed to exist before humanity. During a visit to Eisen just a few months before, however, the Avalon scholar had examined the Syrneth ruins there first-hand. They were marked with enormous hieroglyphs, while the

Vodacce sites had inscriptions in an alphabet of curves, dots and dashes. The Eisen caverns were enormous with some ceilings over 30 yards high while the Vodacce tunnels were small, thin and cramped by human standards.

Most importantly to MacCormick, the amber-encased suits were unlike anything previously discovered by Church scholars; neither the blocks nor the armor in them were remotely like any artifacts he had ever seen or studied. With his background in biology, combined with his impressive understanding of history, MacCormick believed he had discovered a previously unknown facet of the past, possibly even a new species.

With sincere apologies to his host the Hierophant, MacCormick left the completion of his work on the Prophets' Journeys to Castillian scholar Alejandro Diega, a close friend and companion during his adventures. He then set out to unravel this new mystery. As he moved westward, he found similar caverns with the same types of writing and amber-encased artifacts. Following the Great River, Cameron had a bit of luck finding some fossils but flooding during the rainy season cost him a great deal of new evidence. In addition, dozens of commoners had accepted his offer of generous rewards for ancient artifacts. While Cameron acquired several fascinating pieces from them, the majority were frauds and fabrications. All too soon, he had been hoodwinked out of his fortune.

His family was singularly unimpressed with the state of his affairs and sent him a message that if he continued these expensive and fruitless endeavors his allowance would be suspended. Without a moment's regret or hostility, MacCormick turned to his scholarly colleagues for assistance. He sent almost 20 letters across Théah, asking for funding and assistance in return for the chance for undreamed-of discoveries and the opportunity to become part of history.

Five of his associates agreed to join, providing funds and adding their own skills to Cameron's cause. Alejandro Diega, who had recently completed the Prophets' Journeys study, was the first to reply and was soon followed by MacCormick's then-best friend, Allario Caligari. The Vodacce lord's patronage guaranteed the fledgling crusade effectively limitless resources since Allario was also Cameron's *richest* friend. Gern Luffwitz, an Eisen adventurer, and Darius Olaf, a Vendel merchant and scholar in his own right, also joined the endeavor. Finally, Cameron's sister Margaret, recently married in a political arrangement with the wealthy McOrin family, was able to provide funds and lend her own scholarship. Hers was not a love match, but she and her husband had become good friends so he was happy to indulge her. All five were eager not only to finance Cameron's quest, but also take part in it. In fact, each of them made their assistance contingent on being personally included on expeditions and so the Discoverer's Society was born.



In the first two years, they worked together (albeit with occasional friendly competition) sending information about all of their finds to Darius Olaf's home which became their headquarters. Septimus 1589 brought a revelation that shook the young Society to its core, however, when Cameron caught Allario Caligari selling Syrneth devices from the Society excavations. The others were furious, none more so than MacCormick who felt deeply betrayed. Caligari was ejected from the Society, which resulted in the Vodacce ceasing his funding and "reclaiming" many of the artifacts he and his relatives had found. The Discoverers soon found themselves in competition with mercenary treasure-hunters, whom Cameron derisively referred to as "diggers." The epithet and the rivalry both persist to this day. Allario's cousin, Prince Vincenzo Caligari, soon surpassed even his own family with his zeal for Syrneth artifacts, and eventually became the Society's most implacable foe.

The young Society soon developed other problems as well. Alejandro Diega was forced to return home when his father grew ill. Olaf's merchant ships were targeted more often than ever by raiders, Vesten and otherwise, costing the Discoverers both his genius and active support, not to mention some of his wealth. The primary expedition team became the driven Cameron, his learned sister Margaret and the formidable Gern Luffwitz. While they sometimes conducted less elaborate excavations, they increasingly relied only on each other, forming a pattern that served as the foundation for their successors. Cameron uses his experience and quick wits to find and neutralize Syrneth dangers, Margaret's brilliance and fantastic memory provided a living catalog of earlier knowledge and Gern's enormous skill in combat protected them from the various monsters and rivals that threatened them. The trio continued in this manner (occasionally with eager young students aiding them) for many years. Today Scholars, Field Scholars and Shield Men count Margaret, Cameron and Gern respectively as their founders.

The Explorer's Society

The Discoverer's Society ended in Nonus 1597 when a tragic accident in the MacCormick family shook the trio to their core. Cameron's brother Albert died in a hunting accident and the Discoverers' leader inherited everything. Despite his love of knowledge, the first Field Scholar was still devoted to his family and forced by his sense of duty to return home to manage his estates. Margaret and Gern also went home so the Society was effectively disbanded.

MacCormick's mind never stopped working on how to turn this change to his cause's advantage, however, and in Quintus 1598 he had a brainstorm. He sent letters inviting the other founding members (save Caligari, of course) to found chapters of what he now called the Explorer's Society. Cameron turned his ancestral home into the headquarters and official "university" of the re-christened organization, and asked his friends to do the same. Soon, chapter houses had been founded in Castille, Eisen and Vendel, as well as Avalon. Although none have ever matched MacCormick's university, all boasted impressive libraries and extensive laboratories for research.

Soon thereafter, the Society established a formal relationship with the Vaticine Church. Cameron, as the Explorers' first Headmaster, realized that the Church would view their activities as heretical unless it was a patron of the organization. MacCormick, still a devout Vaticine, wished to help reconcile the Society's findings with Church doctrine. In early 1602 the Avalon returned to Vaticine City where he worked for two months with his old patron Julius IV on an agreement that would satisfy both the Society and the Cardinals. In late Tertius, they reached a mutually satisfactory arrangement, and the Explorers were official scholars in service to the Church.

From there, the Explorer's Society began to take the form by which it is known today. MacCormick's old compatriots gathered at the University a few years later, becoming the first Department Heads. Gern Luffwitz started work on a style of combat that would serve the newly formed Shield Men in their task while Diega became the first head of Artifact Research and Olaf founded the Sea Exploration branch. Margaret became the Head Scholar as well as Society treasurer. Those early years were a heady time for the Society, with expeditions setting out regularly in search of legends and uncovering many fascinating sites. Several teams focused on the Midnight Archipelago and its many wonders to the point where some jokingly called them the "University Islands."

It was not long before they stopped laughing. Expeditions began to disappear and investigators sometimes found evidence of foul play. Other times, teams simply vanished without a trace. Although some deaths could be attributed to the terrible hazards found at Syrneth excavations, the number of disappearances increased dramatically — some were accompanied by threatening notes, one purportedly written with the blood of the dead Explorers.

When Darius Olaf and his entire expedition vanished in 1627, the Society was stunned. Although elderly, Olaf was one of the Society's most cunning and experienced members. The Society soon instituted new procedures to ensure expedition security and broadened Shield Man training to include a more equal focus on human foes. Excavation protocols were instituted to better preserve artifacts and excavators alike. The Society advanced steadily until 1639, when Cameron MacCormick died of natural causes.

His had been a long, productive life. There was no question that he had been happy with what he'd done, but without his leadership the Explorers began to lose direction. A series of mediocre successors kept the Society in a state of limbo for years, although ironically attacks against expeditions fell off considerably during this time.

The early 1650s saw the Society regain its focus with the help of the Royal Fraternity of Scientific Minds, a like-minded organization dedicated to academic progress, and a new Headmaster, Edwina Coleson. In 1656, Vincent Bernadore succeeded Coleson, and the Explorer's Society's fortunes rose even higher. Bernadore still oversees the Society today, and under his intelligent leadership and heartfelt devotion it prospered as never before. Cameron MacCormick was brilliant, but he was an adventuring scholar. Bernadore fell in love with knowledge and exploration, without losing his political and diplomatic skills — skills which proved invaluable when dealing with new developments in the Church.

The Rise of the Inquisition

Although the Society's relationship with the Vaticine Church has always been somewhat rocky, its leaders managed to maintain the Hierophant's nominal support with the polite fiction that they worked as an instrument of the Church. In so doing, they skirted the Third Prophet's edict forbidding investigation of the Syrne by anyone other than the One True Church. Despite that, the Inquisition never approved of the Society; for decades, it waited for the chance to eliminate this "scourge" from the face of Théah.

The first opportunity came during the War of the Cross in the 1630s. The Explorers were never especially welcome in Eisen, but as Objectionism spread, traditional bastions of Explorer patronage supported the movement's rise. The Vendel League and the Glamour Isles, perhaps the Society's two most eager allies, welcomed Objectionists wholeheartedly. The Hierophant saw guilt by association but refused to condemn the Explorers openly. Several important Vaticines, however, quietly rebuked the Society.

Queen Elaine's rise and the return of the Sidhe further alienated the Church. The Church of Avalon cemented its position as an independent entity, and many Explorers from the Glamour Isles converted. This time, the Society was publicly reprimanded but no sanctions were issued. Although the Church had provided no funding in quite a while, each side regarded the other as useful, at least until the Hierophant died.

Cardinal Esteban Verdugo, head of the Inquisition, became the most powerful member of the Vaticine Church. Although preoccupied with the Invisible College and other difficulties, Verdugo found time to issue edicts restricting the Explorers at every turn. He argued relentlessly in the Council to reject the Society, but was able to win only three Cardinals to his cause — Christina, Sergio Bilardo and the vile Beppo Mueso. Teodoro Ciosa blocked every effort Verdugo made, thereby keeping him from gaining other allies and Cardinal Christina, increasingly opposed to the Grand High Inquisitor, began to waver. The balance of power was tenuous, but the Society's Vaticine support, marginal though it was, remained safe for a time.

Year of the Syrne

For the Explorers, 1668 was a year of fantastic highs and appalling lows. In the space of twelve months, the Society learned more than it thought imaginable about the Syrne, human potential and its own enemies. Its greatest enemy, Vincenzo Caligari, was finally brought down. The mystery of the Great Western Ocean has been solved. The Society is even being credited with saving the world. A noble accomplishment indeed, if only the price had not been so high.

The MacCormick family produced more than one famous explorer. Cameron's great-great nephew Guy was once regarded as the Crown Prince of the Society. He led a number of wildly successful expeditions to the Midnight Archipelago and with his wife Amanda (a notable scholar in her own right) advanced knowledge about Syrne technology farther than anyone could believe.

It was Amanda's thirst for knowledge that brought the couple to a tragic end. She became obsessed with proving the existence of the 7th Sea to the point where she chartered a ship and sailed off, never to be seen again. When Guy learned the truth about her voyage, he was convinced that she had not died, but had in fact found the object of her quest.

His mission to find her began innocently enough. He uncovered evidence of six great Syrne Switches — key to raising an ancient Syrne island — and believed that activating them could lead him to Amanda. His study of the Switches had already revealed new information and his first on-site report was nothing short of astounding. Investigation of the third Switch revealed that it had been built with a combination of Syrne technologies: enormous Domae Stones, gigantic magnetic spheres, Thalussian amber and Syrne clockwork. The Society was stunned and a number of researchers led by Vesefe himself began investigating how Syrne technologies might work in tandem.

As he sailed on towards the East, however, he began to change from the kindly and optimistic adventurer to a dark and brooding madman. Nothing was too costly in his quest to rejoin his wife — not his ship, his crew or his own life. In his reports to the Society, he neglected to mention his alliance with a murderous pirate named Kheired-Din, who had his own reasons for raising the Syrne isle. As their captain became more and more deranged, they began to question the validity of their quest. When McCormack let the fearsome Crescenter abducted one of their own, they mutinied, taking command of the ship and forcing their obsessed captain to flee with Kheired-Din.

McCormick was not done, however. Together with the Crescenters' crew, he managed to activate the remainder of the six switches. The last was devastating — a mighty Syrne watercraft supporting the island home of the Caligari family. Though not directly involved, the two men played a pivotal role in its removal, obliquely aiding a band of escaped prisoners steal the watercraft and activate the final ship. The results sank Caligari's island (see *Swashbuckling Adventures* and the *Montaigne Revolution* sourcebook for more details), and raised another one from the depths of the sea. Cabora appeared in the center of the Mirror Sea like Legion himself summoned from the Abyss.

What befell McCormick and Kheired-Din there, none can say. All anyone outside the Society knows is that they apparently never found what they sought so relentlessly. McCormick was declared dead, his reputation in tatters and his standing that of a mad pariah. Kheired-Din has since reappeared, but he kept silent about the island... and killed anyone brave enough to ask him about it.

Beyond Théah

The details of a group like the Explorer's Society is ultimately less important than its purpose and ideals. Cameron MacCormick's thirst for understanding could be sparked by any important patron. Hierophant Julius can be replaced by any prominent leader, although to maintain a rivalry with a religious organization, a powerful cleric would probably be a good choice.

Likewise, most of the Society's history until the last few years involves internal matters. In worlds without the Syrne, equally ancient beings and mysteries can attract their interest. Explorer study can easily focus on dragons, elves and more bizarre entities. If there are mysterious lands far from the center of "normal" campaigns, those too will figure in Explorer history, either in the past or as recent developments.

HUNT.02

CHAPTER 1
VERITAS



Cabora itself presented a fantastic opportunity and a terrible danger. The island was clearly a treasure trove of Syrneth lore and arcane science. The entire place is also a deadly maze of damaged equipment and genuine traps, and holds some connection to absurdly dangerous forces. Those who witnessed its rise saw the 7th Sea itself, and enough information was gleaned from the sightings to know that the island unleashed something terrible. Whether Cabora somehow used the sea as a source of its power or as a weapon was unknown, but the danger was too great for *anyone* to tampering with it. The nations of Théah established a blockade around the island, and for once, the Explorers knew better than to challenge.

Despite their compliance in this matter, the rise of Cabora dealt a huge blow to the Society's reputation. Many believed that they has a hand in sinking Caligari's island — removing a threat while simultaneously revealing a priceless Syrneth site to explore. The Caligaris were on the run, their enemies in Vodacce hunting them to the ends of the earth, and suddenly the Explorers had everything in the world they wished. Circumstances looked suspicious to say the least. The Church responded most harshly. During the Council meeting on Nonus 2, 1668, Cardinal Erika Durkheim of Eisen stunned her colleagues by making an impassioned speech rejecting the Explorers and their goals. "They have destroyed an entire Vodacce island," she warned the council, "and replaced it with a horror unlike any the world has ever known. Who can say

what their tampering will unleash next?" Moved by her speech, the Vaticine Church formally renounced all ties with the Explorer's Society. By official Holy Writ, the Society and its activities were now forbidden access to all Syrneth sites.

THE GREAT RACE WEST

Something else came from the Cabora debacle however — something may Explorers felt was worth the price they paid. For centuries, expeditions who sailed west across the Great Ocean over the years returned with nothing, or else never returned at all. With the rise of Cabora, an explanation arose for these disappearances... along with evidence that the barrier to the west had been lifted.

One of McCormick's agents, Jacob Faust, was aboard the Syrneth water vessel when it left Caligari's island. During his report to the Society, he produced evidence from the vessel of a giant glittering wall of energy, stretched from the ocean floor into the sky in the far western seas. All who approached it were destroyed; even the sea creatures shied away from it. With the activation of the Switches, however, that wall had fallen, opening a passage into the Great Western Ocean

His report created a stir unlike any before. Little of Théah's landmass was left to be discovered, so only history remained as a true challenge for the Explorers. *This* was an opportunity unlike any other. It had to be embraced, not only for its exciting possibilities but also for the sake of whatever lay beyond the Great Ocean. The thought of someone like Caligari or the

Inquisition controlling that unknown territory was reason enough to set the Society scrambling for their ships. By the time the rest of Théah learned about the passage west, the Explorers already had several vessels at sea. Winter storms delayed their voyages, but they still launched enough expeditions to prevent their enemies from stopping them. In the great race, the Explorers seized the opportunity and achieved a significant lead on their competition.

1669 AND THE FUTURE

With the opening of the western seas, the Explorer's Society sees a bright future ahead. The stakes have increased, however, and the Society's enemies fear it now more than ever. Although their supporters still believed in them, most Théans have deeper reservations, fueled by the tragedy of Caligari Island and the betrayal of Guy MacCormick. If the Explorers can prove their worth, they will change Théah forever, but one more slip, and their rivals will gladly turn their quest for Truth, Knowledge and Freedom into a footnote of Théan history.

Private Agenda

The Explorers strive to make their agenda and efforts as open and honest as possible. Unfortunately, too many forces lurking in the shadows permit full disclosure of their activities or what they have learned. Today, the Society holds many secrets that they keep for their own protection and in some cases the protection of innocent people.

What sets them apart from other secret societies is that they are honest about their privacy. "We keep these secrets at the command of monarchs," they freely admit, "and for the sake of our quest." Surprisingly, most Théans accept this. Those who want to learn more, and are motivated by noble purposes, usually take the logical step of joining the Explorers. Those who find the Explorers' explanation dubious are often recruited by other societies or the Inquisition.

Relations with Other Groups

The Explorer's Society faces one of the most challenging periods in its history. Fortunately, they also have many powerful allies.

Nations

AVALON

As the home of the Explorer's Society headquarters and birthplace of its founder, Avalon is one of the Society's most important and valuable patrons. Many Avalon nobles donate generously to the Explorers. Carleon's docks are home to most of its vessels and nearly a third of its members are from the Glamour Isles. The few Inquisitors who haunt the island seem more concerned about the Invisible College than the Explorers, and all three monarchs have openly declared their support for the Society. (The O'Bannon also declared his support for the rights of the duck in the same breath, but the Inish don't seem bothered by this.) On the surface, Avalon seems like the perfect home for the Explorers.

At the same time, it holds significant dangers. Hidden wars take place throughout the docks and back alleys of Carleon, and at least one of the Society's enemies also makes its home in the Glamour Isles, although they have yet to discover his precise identity. The power of this secret enemy has stymied many expeditions before they ever left port, and he apparently holds considerable influence in the Avalon government, perhaps even as high up as Elaine herself. Other secret societies also target Avalon in an attempt to undermine the Explorers. Despite that, their popularity and ingenuity continue to serve them well, and their many allies in the Glamour Isles counter their enemies for the moment.

CASTILLE

The Explorer's Society walks a tightrope above the deadly politics in the home of the Vaticine Church — one slip could drop them into an Inquisition prison or worse. For now, however, the Church of the Prophets has more important enemies, and the race westward has made the Explorers popular among the people again. So the Inquisition waits and bides its time.

Meanwhile, the Explorers work hard to avoid giving the Inquisition any excuse. They emphasize their work delving into human history and global exploration while downplaying their interest in the Syrne. Syrneath artifacts are almost never brought into Castille and when they are, it is done with obsessive caution.

CATHAY

The Explorer's Society does not have formal relations with Cathay, which exasperates them to no end. They can recognize certain types of writing as Cathayan due to their studies, and certain properties (both mundane and magical) are sometimes shared by Cathayan items, but they know little more about this mysterious land. In spite of a long-term outpost in Breslau, they have learned virtually nothing about the nation hidden behind the Wall of Fire. More than one Explorer has lamented furiously that the Society knows more about extinct races than one of the nations of Théah.

CRESCENT EMPIRE

The Crescent Empire may not be as mysterious to the Explorers as Cathay, but in many ways it is nearly as unapproachable. Church embargoes and the Crescent people themselves make travel to the Empire a daunting task.

Fortunately, the Explorers are up to the challenge. Friendly Cardinals help enormously with the embargo and members from the Bernoulli family — who are exempt from the Church's embargo — can usually call off their Prince's watchdogs. The Crescents themselves are more problematic, since many of them consider the Syrneath ruins in their lands sacred ground. Although mistrust of *yavanci* (strangers) and religious fervor in some parts of the nation still hinder the Society, a few Explorers are making some diplomatic headway in their negotiations with Sultan Timur, the forward-thinking ruler of the Empire. Using the capital city of Iskandar as a base of operations, Explorers have been able to recruit a small number of Crescents to the Society in the past two years, which helps their overall credibility.

Kheired-Din remains their most implacable enemy in the region. Rumors persist that he blames the "meddling Explorers" for his apparent failure at Cabora. Members of the Society claim to have killed him but such has turned out not to be the case — twice.

EISEN

Only two Eisenfürsten care in the slightest about the Explorer's Society. Logan Sieger continues Trägue's policy of non-interference, allowing the Explorers to investigate Freiburg's ruins as they please. Trägue felt that too much interest was a trap and to a large extent Sieger agrees. Freiburg residents tolerate the Explorers, but do little to encourage them.

Stefan Heilgrund, on the other hand, remains one of the Society's most enthusiastic supporters. While not the wealthiest patron, he has risked the Vaticine Church's wrath by affording Explorers every courtesy and as much protection as he can provide. Within the borders of Heilgrund, that protection is considerable indeed. Heilgrund possesses surprising knowledge in arcane matters himself, even surpassing many respected members of the Society. However, rumors abound of Heilgrund's nightmarish dabbling in occult matters, and there's no question that his new *Schattensoldat* have turned the once-sleepy *königreich* into a realm of terror. The Society turns a blind eye to his obsessive interest, but this evil is another matter. Sooner or later, the two sides will come to blows.

The other Eisenfürsten just want the Explorers to mind their own business and keep out of things that do not concern them. Occasionally, Explorers must dodge local units of Iron Guards but for the most part the Eisen have far greater problems than mild eccentrics nosing around their dead land.

MONTAIGNE

The revolution in Montaigne has, ironically, changed things very little for the Explorers. The few peasants who gave it thought may have resented the vast resources the nobles lavished on the Society, but any ill will vanished on the day that Cristenne d'Asourne — a prominent member of the Society — appeared in the middle of a battle and drove off a loyalist counterattack with a modified Syrneth clockwork cannon. Although the nation's rulers continue to deny the Explorers access to the Charouse sewers and its ruins, in most other ways the nation continues to be somewhat hospitable. Naturally, Society members with Porté stay out of the country if they can help it.

The primary area in which Explorers have felt the repercussions of the Revolution has been funding. Bored Montaigne nobles formed the Society's second-largest source of donations, surpassed only by the Vendel League. With the nobility on the run, the Explorers have found themselves returning old favors by helping the sorcerers escape. While the rescued nobles have been grateful, most lost everything in the revolution. Though the Explorers have enjoyed increased access to Porté, money has become a real issue for the first time in a generation.

USSURA

Interestingly, the Explorers never had any trouble with Ussura. While Matushka makes no exceptions with Cabora, neither she nor the boyars interfere with Society expeditions as long as they behave themselves. For all their high-minded ideals, the Explorers are eminently practical — they have to be, to survive what they do — and the Ussurans respect that. Curiously, the elite Tyomny guards often protect Society members within the western territories, though the Gaius never explains why.

Ussura offers many chances for exploration. For the most part, the Society looks into Ussura's human history although they sometimes investigate the strange creatures that haunt the wilds. Such information can be invaluable to the Ussurans who know the importance of genuinely useful knowledge. A few sites draw more traditional Explorer interest such as Lake Vigil (see Chapter Three for details), but for the most part Ussura has few real mysteries... at least from the Society's view.

VENDEL

The Explorers have no greater, wealthier or more powerful friends than the Vendel League. It seems like an odd marriage, considering that the Explorers' primary focus is in the past and the Vendel look unflinchingly toward the future but both sides can see beyond first impressions. The Explorers and the Vendel ultimately have the same goal — a better world to hand down to those who follow them. This relationship only became official in 1669, but many private Vendel citizens have been among the Society's most generous patrons for decades.

Investigating Syrneth artifacts is a perfect example of how the two groups help each other. The Vendel fund the Explorers' Artifact Research division. The researchers then sell completely documented duplicate artifacts to the Merchant's Guild for extremely low prices which all but guarantees huge profits. They also share any new scientific insights they learn with other appropriate crafters, helping the Guilds stay ahead

Beyond Théah

The relations that an organization like the Explorer's Society has with other groups depends entirely on the comparison of goals. Due to their focus, Explorers naturally leave others alone unless their efforts are thwarted in some way. The sole exception is if someone has a valuable secret related to the Explorers' investigations. The Society then takes a keen interest in the secret in question until convinced to do otherwise. Violence is rarely a successful way to dissuade Explorers.

Nations generally react to Explorers based on their usefulness or danger. For example, the Vendel welcome the Explorers while most Eisenfürsten don't; to the Vendel, they are a useful asset, to the Eisen, an irritating nuisance. Internal organizations, such as religions or guilds, may have their own policy towards the Explorers, which sometimes runs counter to that of the larger nation. For example Castille would most likely welcome the Explorers, were it not for the Inquisition's power.

Societies and races will deal with the Explorers based on their agendas. Wizard guilds or sorcerers who specialize in tinkering may become allies or patrons in hopes of using Society resources to discover new artifacts, at least until they uncover something the sponsor wants hidden. Groups with valuable or unpleasant secrets are the Explorers' natural enemies, working to subvert their efforts to uncover Truth. Most evil groups will stop at nothing to destroy an organization like the Society, leading them to ally themselves with those who walk the paths of light. Paladins and other holy orders will find ready friends in the Society, as will those any who defend truth and seek to better humanity's understanding of the universe.

of the competition. When the Explorers' facilities are threatened (as they inevitably are), the League provides whatever aid is necessary to put a stop to it.

Several efforts have been made to disrupt the Explorer/Vendel alliance but each failure has only strengthened the bonds between the two groups. Although voices are occasionally raised regarding relations with the Vesten, on all other matters each can count on the other's support.

VESTENMANNAVNJAR

In the Vendel/Vesten war, friends of one automatically become enemies of the other. The Explorers are a huge exception, one over which the Vesten are uncharacteristically divided. On the one hand, the Explorers could not be closer to the Vendel if they tried. The Society works hand-in-hand with the League, which infuriates the Vesten. On the other hand, the Explorers work desperately to preserve Vesten lore, religion and knowledge before it is wiped out forever. The recently published *The Grumfather Cycle* in Théan, which had a considerable effect both politically and spiritually. The Society adamantly opposes Vendel persecution of the Vesten, one of the few issues on which they disagree.

Some Vesten, particularly among the raiders and warriors, scream for the heads of the Explorers. They swear to give no quarter or mercy to anyone who allies with the Vendel. Others, especially among the *skjæven* and *skalds*, insist that the good done by Explorers far outweighs their alliance with the Vendel. The Vesten, unused to controversy among themselves in recent years, are at a loss. Explorers usually act very cautious and polite whenever they cross paths with the Vesten, and travel Vesten lands well-armed.

In many ways, the Explorers are the single greatest conduit of Vestenmannavnjar teachings to the Vendel and the rest of Théah. If any group can reunite the two sides, it might well be them.

VODACCE

The Explorers have a tremendous saving grace among the Vesten, which protects them from instant hatred for their alliance with the Vendel League. Not so with the Vodacce. Explorers are idealistic adventurers who constantly poke their noses into places they do not belong, the Vaticine Church disapproves of them and their best friends are the Princes' worst enemies. Even after the fall of the Caligaris, Vodacce remains the most inhospitable nation for the Society.

On the other hand, politics make strange bedfellows and there may be none stranger than the Explorer presence in Dionna and Amozare. Both Prince Villanova and Prince Bernoulli know the importance of pragmatism, and each makes use of the Explorers in a variety of schemes. They serve the Princes' needs at times in exchange for (relatively) safe harbors when heading east.

Further, several prominent seagoing Explorers are Bernoullis themselves. For their Prince, this is not just pragmatism, it an issue of family loyalty... and good business. As the only Vodacce family officially permitted to trade with the Crescent Empire, they find numerous profitable opportunities by supporting Explorer Society excavations. However, they make it very clear that the Explorers are working for *them* while in Crescent territory, and more than one Explorer has chafed under the intense scrutiny of Bernoulli overseers.

Secret Societies

DIE KREUZRITTER

The Explorers know little about the "shadow knights" but most Society members doubt they are really the historical Kreuzritter. They also know that they have few enemies as implacable. This highly secretive organization marked the Society for destruction almost from its inception because they believe that the powers the Explorers investigate are unholy.

In turn, the Explorer's Society see *die Kreuzritter* as the embodiment of everything it opposes — a hypocritical secret force that claims the right to determine what humanity may and may not know while performing acts of dark sorcery and killing any who cross its path.

The Explorers made a few attempts to unveil *die Kreuzritter* agents, but their efforts often result in the death of innocents caught in the cross-fire. Now, they simply keep most areas as well lit as possible, post guards at all hours and keep a watchful eye on the shadows.

THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE

In spite of the disdain the College has sometimes shown Explorers, the Society always felt that the two organizations have much to offer one another. Explorers invited members of the Royal Association on many expeditions, offered shelter to threatened scientists and attempted to aid the College whenever possible. They felt that they had no closer ally.

Unfortunately, the College does not return the sentiment. Many members regard the Society as good minds wasted on bizarre junk that contributes absolutely nothing to better society or further knowledge of the world. Others within the College are jealous of the popularity the Explorer's have with the people. No one ever looks upon a College member as a washbuckling hero whose exploits are the stuff of legend.

The College is not above sabotaging Explorer efforts, as the Society found out in Primus 1669 when a page from Cristobal Gallegos' log book found its way to Society headquarters in Carleon. Thought to have failed in his effort to circumnavigate the world, Gallegos apparently succeeded — but it took him 200 years. His journal spoke of terrifying lands beyond the sea, and of magic unheard of in all of Théan history. Gismar Arnauld, a respected member of the Royal Fraternity, realized that this information could send the populace into a panic. He arranged for the destruction of Explorer's expedition who uncovered the journal, arranging the ship and the dead bodies in such a way that it would look like the work of a hideous Cathayan creature reputedly marauding the region.

He returned home with the logs and hid them in the Invisible College's vault where he and his colleagues could study them. Apparently someone friendly to the Explorers saw fit to alert them to the crime. Relations between the two groups have grown increasingly strained and College members might one day find themselves talking for their lives at Syrneth-made gunpoint, no less.

KNIGHTS OF THE ROSE AND CROSS

Of the many secrets the Explorers seek, the one held by the Rose and Cross is among the most tantalizing. They know that the Knights hold secret some fundamental Truth about humanity. The Explorers made a few attempts to learn this great Truth, but they have been universally rebuffed. For once, the Explorers accepted their failure with considerable grace. Although they suspect the Knights of occasionally working against them, the Rose and Cross' code of honor is well known, and the last thing the Explorers need is another foe.

LOS VAGOS

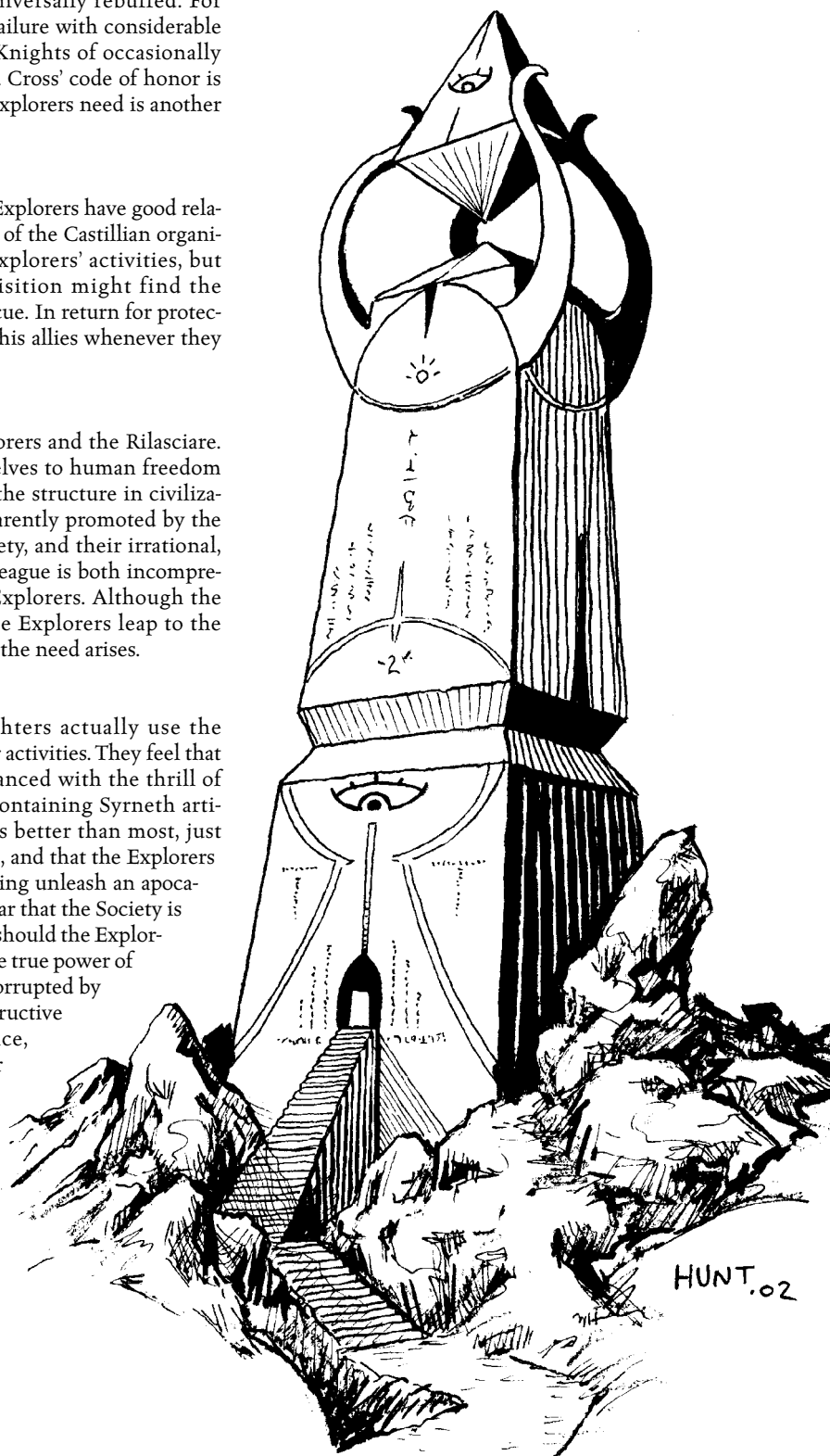
If there's one secret society that the Explorers have good relations with, it is Los Vagos. Members of the Castillian organization have little interest in the Explorers' activities, but anyone in danger from the Inquisition might find the masked El Vago swinging to the rescue. In return for protection, Explorers will aid El Vago and his allies whenever they encounter him.

RILASCIARE

Little love is lost between the Explorers and the Rilasciare. While the Explorers devote themselves to human freedom and knowledge, they also feel that the structure in civilization is irreplaceable. The chaos apparently promoted by the Rilasciare sits poorly with the Society, and their irrational, unrelenting hatred for the Vendel League is both incomprehensible and impractical to most Explorers. Although the two societies rarely cross paths, the Explorers leap to the defense of law and justice whenever the need arises.

SOPHIA'S DAUGHTERS

Some members of Sophia's Daughters actually use the Explorer's Society as a cover for their activities. They feel that the Society has become more entranced with the thrill of adventure than with finding and containing Syrneth artifacts. The Daughters know, perhaps better than most, just how dangerous such findings can be, and that the Explorers though well-intentioned, my unwitting unleash an apocalypse. Some among the Daughters fear that the Society is weakening the Barrier even further; should the Explorers as a group begin to understand the true power of what they unearth, they may grow corrupted by it, and seek to use it for selfish, destructive ends. To prevent such an occurrence, the Daughters will take whatever means they deem necessary to halt or even destroy excavations and those working on them.





CHAPTER TWO:
Scientia

**Wonder and Terror
Part III: Mysteries
of the Syrne**

Fyodor looked uneasily at the dead monstrosity before him. Bosun Pierron (the madwoman, he thought in exasperation) wiped off her rapier as she grinned widely. Behind him, Captain Magnus put his lens blade away and Freyalinda leaned against the wall, holding her side. The beast had not liked the northern winds summoned in its face. The tiny Avalon scholar Mary Dorset peered at the creature owlshly to examine where Mlle. Pierron's killing thrust had struck home. "How intriguing. She didn't actually strike its spine. There appears to be a brain lobe at the base of its neck, here — see, that's gray matter coming out of the wound, not blood."

"With all due respect, Miss Dorset, I believe we have a more pressing matter to attend to," Fyodor said. He doubted she would leave the beast alone, but one could hope.

Captain Hal Magnus nodded, much to the Ussuran Shield Man's relief. "Fyodor's right. Time is of the essence, and we still have to get past —" he gestured head of them, "— that."

Fyodor groaned and looked past and above the beast. A great shifting set of scythe-like gears filled the passageway ahead of them, slowly moving with a hypnotic rhythm. Glorious, he thought sardonically. Get caught in that, and one is ground slowly to stew instead of quickly and mercifully torn to pieces. Some days, I think the Syrne were the greatest collection of sadists in history.

Magnus, of course, did not look concerned. He simply retrieved a few devices from the bag the porters carried, handed them to Freyalinda and Mary, and walked right up to the Setine meat grinder. The Explorer nodded. "Security wall. We would not want to set this off."

To Fyodor's surprise, even Pierron's eyes bulged at this simple statement. "Ah, Fyodor," she whispered, "how do we fight that thing?"

"Some battles we leave to the scholars and tinkers," the Ussuran replied with some trepidation of his own. Magnus was taking out his Thalusiai Armor. After a moment to check on Freyalinda, he slid into the sleeveless amber "shirt." As always, the amber became fluid, shifting to match Hal's form. Then it seemed to solidify again, except that now it moved with him. The Vendel paused briefly, then trotted to the Syrne ward's housing on the floor. Mary and Freyalinda went to either side of the device.

"Fyodor...?" Pierron blurted, clutching the hilt of her blade.

"Patience," the Ship's Master replied, his voice far more calm than he felt.

"Now!" Magnus shouted suddenly. With one coordinated motion, the Vendel, Mary and Freyalinda pulled on sections of the wall that became levers of some sort. In a flash, the moving circle of blades irised out and screeched to a halt as they locked with one another. Mary and Freyalinda stopped and leaped back, but Magnus kept pulling. Sweat dripping off him, he planted his feet on the wall near the ceiling and yanked harder. The mass of blades and gears shrieked in protest as it tried to pull back vertically but not horizontally. Then he let go and leapt back. The Setine defense groaned one final time, then shuddered to a halt with a final hiss of aether. Captain Magnus slowly relaxed, his Thalusiai Armor growing fluid once again as he removed it.

Fyodor gestured silently at the remaining blades.

"I had to get the mechanism to pull in below ground level," Magnus explained as he pointed to where a few blades just barely poked out of the floor. "Didn't quite finish the job, so mind your step unless you want to be a few toes short. Besides, I wanted to make sure that the whole thing locked into place." The Explorer stopped to breathe deeply, then continued. "Those levers are apparently an emergency measure, and the Setine probably added additional stop-gaps to ensure the withdrawal of the mechanism. Locking it like that required... improvisation. Nasty little toy."

Fyodor nodded again. Freyalinda did not look at the trap, however. She stared past it. "Hal, look."

The Explorers stared in wonder. A series of rotating rings, set into a floating clockwork device, themselves set with magnificent Domae stones, hung in space before them.

"We did it." Hal grabbed Fyodor's shoulder and shook him enthusiastically. "By Theus, we did it!"

"Fascinating," Mary added as she peered at the Codex. "Hmm, a ring appears to be missing."

"Mary," the skjæren sighed. "Not now."

Philosophy

The Explorers are unique among the secret societies of Théah because they hide neither their personal identities nor their basic (public) philosophy. Indeed, without the need counter their enemies, they probably wouldn't be a secret society at all. It is important to note that the Council never withholds information for political reasons, only to protect the people of Théah. Secrecy is the bane and ultimate enemy of the Explorer's Society; their goal is to vanquish darkness itself and usher in an age of enlightened truth. An ambitious goal, to be sure, but the Explorers have never lacked for ambition.

The Explorers' motto sums up their philosophy: *Veritas, Scientia, Libertas* — Truth, Knowledge, Freedom. Like the core exploration team of Scholar, Field Scholar and Shield Man, the three elements of the Society's objective support and defend one another.

Truth

The heart of the Explorers' mandate is *Truth*. Knowledge is valuable, but in the end it acts only as a map with Truth as the ultimate destination. When people understand their origins, when ignorance can no longer give birth to fear, when tyrants no longer hoard learning and philosophy, Truth can finally come to all of Théah.

This aspect of the Society's philosophy takes its strongest form in study of the Syrne. Many fear that the Explorers' tinkering and tampering will unleash something terrible. Others argue that such things belong to the past, that humanity must forget them and move forward. And yet, if *someone* does not make the effort to understand these ancient powers and what caused their downfall what will keep humanity from repeating those mistakes? Further, if the Explorers are prevented from understanding the Syrne, who will unearth these mysteries in their place? The Caligaris? Kheired-Din? Or even some ignorant soul who, in all innocence, awakens the downfall of the world?

Much of the time the Explorers are working with half a map and no idea where it leads. At least they have half, though, and they add a piece with each successful expedition. They carefully calculate the risks and believe they could eliminate them entirely if only their enemies worked *with* them instead of against them.

For every decent soul following the road of good intentions to the Abyss, however, five times that number of genuinely selfish villains wish to reserve Truth and its power for themselves. If Knowledge is power, Truth is godhood, and the Society battles tirelessly against those who would reserve it for themselves. If there is a single belief that makes the Explorers heroes, it is that Truth belongs to everyone, not just the privileged few. The Society intends to show the world what people are capable of when they understand the mistakes of the past and the promise of their own future.

Knowledge

Truth is impossible and Freedom impotent without the solid infrastructure of Knowledge. Every scrap of information the Explorers dig up from Setine clockwork to Domae culture to Numan intrigue to Poor Knights' alchemy gives them one more piece of the puzzle. No scrap of information is too obscure or tangential to ignore since no one knows for certain which piece of Knowledge will lead to the Truth.

Many Théans, including some of the Society's most ardent followers, are confused by the difference between Truth and Knowledge. Explorer scholars enjoy clarifying it:

"Truth is where the real importance lies, of that there is no question, yet it cannot exist beyond Knowledge. The most inspiring stained glass window consists of thousands of colored shards. Knowledge is the recording of a Setine word's meaning or the minutes of a session of the Numan Senate or learning which acids can melt Thalusan amber. Each piece of data is a shard of glass. When we collect all the pieces, build the window, and watch the sun shine through it, we see Truth. That cannot arrive without the meticulous collection of many pieces of glass. Each piece of Knowledge is beautiful in its own right, having its own shape and color. When collected and constructed properly, however, they transform into something far greater. As do we."

Given the opportunity, they will go on for several hours on the subject.

On a more practical level, Truth's power is an abstract, social concept. Knowledge can save an expedition in the moment between victory and death. The Scholar's ability to discern a Ruin Monster's vulnerability or a Syrne Tinkerer's talent for changing a Tesseran toy into a weapon may only be a hint of humanity's potential, but it gives them an edge that few of their rivals can match.

Freedom

Explorers have a reputation for poring over ancient tomes through libraries or swinging across chasms, but few consider them rebels or revolutionaries. In the end, though, Explorers believe fervently in freedom for everyone. Every time someone expands the horizon, fosters new learning, or cherishes noble truths, people become greater than they once were. The Society believes that peasant illiteracy has a very unpleasant justification; Truth and Knowledge lead inevitably to Freedom and free people cannot be controlled.

Many Explorers do not realize it but this understanding draws them into Théah's grand adventures. For example, Cristenne d'Asourne is a hero of the Montaigne Revolution, yet opposes the Frenzy's unchecked bloodshed. Hal Magnus and his Vesten wife Freyalinda struggle to make peace between the Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar. Dr. Jules von

Organization

Gregor risks Society influence and his very life to denounce Stefan Heilgrund's dark sorcery. Truth and Knowledge, they claim, are meaningless without the Freedom to act, and most Explorers bravely stand for causes they believe in.

Sine Timore

If the Explorers tucked away their vast lore, using it only to benefit themselves, the tyrants and sadists of the world would worry far less about them. This is why the Society has so deeply embraced the MacCormick family motto — Sine Timore, “Without Fear.” Despite their reputation, few Explorers are literally fearless. Survival depends on respecting the terrors they face, which involves a certain amount of fear. The trick, they say, is controlling that fear; Explorers confront evil, ferocity and deadly artifice with unsettling regularity and those who let their dread rule them often falter or fall.

The Unwritten Tenets

Adventure

Officially, the Society frowns on “adventuring” per se, but at the same time, many of their excavations are perilous enough to satisfy the most hyperbolic pulp novelist. Since most Explorers espouse strong ethical beliefs, they often intervene when villainy rears its ugly head. The Society does not approve of unnecessary risk-taking — swinging from chandeliers and dueling atop madly rushing carriages are discouraged — but despite their cautious demeanor, many members find themselves in the midst of swashbuckling derring-do.

Unofficially, most Explorers feel that adventurous activities serve a two-fold purpose. Daring exploits often contribute to the Society's popularity, so they behave accordingly when “swashbuckling” can achieve their goal and increase their standing in the public eye. A few Explorers actually enjoy the challenges that come from such risk-taking, an attitude the Society as a whole tries to discourage. Such enticement may push Explorers past their limit and reckless risk-taking too often ends in disaster.

Survival

Many Explorers have given their lives for their colleagues and sadly, many more will do so in the future. Too many Explorers have died needlessly, however. Lost teams means incomplete missions, an important point that elder Society members stress when discussing a particularly dangerous mission. Sacrificing one's life to ensure the safe return of a vital document is one thing; dying because the team was too busy or excited to follow expedition protocol is quite another. Explorer teams work closely with one another, and often grow very close. Emphasizing practical concerns is often the only way to prevent enthusiastic members from forgetting basic safety rules. The Explorers spend too much time and effort to waste valuable members on unnecessary risks.

The Society's hierarchy has created a system whereby equipment and weapons are well maintained in the field. Woe betide the Explorer of the Trade Sea who fails to make the necessary repairs while on an excavation; such neglect can result in terrible accidents or worse. At every level, expedition leaders must account for basic needs: shelter, warmth, and sustenance. It certainly does not bode well if an artifact makes its way to the chapterhouse but the team does not due to circumstances that could have been prevented. Sadly, saboteurs often target Explorer equipment with unfortunate success.

The structure of the Explorer's Society adheres to its academic roots in most ways, with a Headmaster, department heads and benefits similar to tenure as members rise through the ranks. The Headmaster's role and regalia (an academic robe) remain largely unchanged. Cameron MacCormick founded the Order. The Headmaster presides over a council of six senior members who are elected by their peers. Below them are seven ranks of Explorers, each named for one of Théah's seas. Recent events have drawn the Explorers closer together, and caused them to employ a more military organization at times, but the basic social and academic structure never wavers.

While the Explorer's Society places a premium on flexibility, they value methodical and well-organized thinking. Although the hierarchy is designed more for logistical purposes than for prestige, an Explorer's rank determines his overall standing in the Society, and how much knowledge he has access to.

Ranks

Seven ranks exist in the Society, each designated by one of Théah's seven seas. (In other worlds, they can easily be substituted with corresponding regions.) As Explorers rise in the organization, they learn more about the Syrne and the Society itself. Higher-ranked members also have greater access to Syrne artifacts. These ranks begin with the sea surrounding Avalon and continue counter-clockwise around Théah.

In addition, higher ranks grant access to the Society's store of artifacts. Not every item uncovered by the Explorers contains vital knowledge. Duplicate items or those whose purpose renders them unnecessary for further research often go to members for use in the field.

The Trade Sea (1 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

Explorers at this rank are usually either new recruits or apprenticed to more experienced Explorers. As with most apprenticeships, their duties involve more drudgery than excitement. They are responsible not only for their own equipment, but also for their room and board and income. Trade Sea members rarely if ever enter the excavations themselves, but rather work at cleaning and cataloguing items that more experienced Explorers extract. Trade Sea Explorers usually know little more than the average Théan about Syrne history although most have a university education or similar advantages. As part of their training, they attend courses at the various chapterhouses or learn from a tutor in the field. Naturally, all of them learn the proper way to record and catalogue Explorer findings.

Lore

7th Sea Explorers cannot buy Society Lore or Syrne Lore higher than the number of points they have in their Membership. Explorers using the d20 system should multiply the rank's value by four to determine their highest skill level available in Knowledge (Explorer's Society) or Knowledge (Syrne). Explorers created with the 7th Sea system who wish to use the d20 system should receive sufficient ranking in the Society to align with those who are newly-created.

Other members of this rank include wealthy patrons who wish to “buy” membership in the Explorer’s Society. While the Society rarely permits membership based on wealth alone, rich supporters can purchase a membership at the lowest rank if they possess a commensurate enthusiasm and a willingness to further the Society’s goals. These members are allowed to wear the insignia and call themselves “Explorers” but may only move up from the Trade Sea through participation.

The Frothing Sea (2 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

After successfully completing an apprenticeship, which includes participating in several digs, members achieve the rank of the Frothing Sea which allows them access to more secure areas. This is also the earliest rank at which Explorers are eligible to receive “unique” equipment, such as minor Syrneth artifacts and gadgets from friendly inventors. Frothing Sea members continue their education, learning more advanced field techniques.

La Boca (3 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

At the third rank, Explorers become much like graduate students: schooled the Society’s techniques, and ready to learn more. If not aware already, the Society formally teaches them about the Syrne: races far older than human which existed on Théah eons ago. As long as at least one Mirror Sea (5th rank) or higher member accompanies them, Explorers from La Boca may participate fully in excavations. Although still undergoing instruction, they may also publish works under their own name. Finally, they may conduct independent research at the chapterhouse to further their particular area of expertise.

The Forbidden Sea (4 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

At this rank, Explorers become full members and receive payment, room and board, and all of their basic equipment. They may organize their own expeditions, keep recovered duplicate artifacts for their own use (after they are examined and catalogued, of course) and conduct independent experiments. Nearly all Forbidden Sea members contribute to the Society full-time to compensate for these benefits, either through teaching or by providing other services such as captaining a ship. Forbidden Sea Explorers also learn about the Society’s secret agenda to prove the link between the older races and disprove the notion that the “Syrneth” were but a single race. Currently, the Vaticine Church actively suppresses evidence of such diversity and even the Objectivists are reluctant to spread such theories, preferring to debate its validity amongst themselves.

The Mirror (5 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

At this rank, most Explorers truly begin “adventuring.” Members from the Mirror have paid their dues, participated in many excavations and handled numerous Syrneth artifacts. Mirror Explorers are considered senior members who may propose expeditions in search of previously unknown sites, have a voice in determining Society issues, and even hold veto power on releasing or suppressing specific Syrneth Artifacts. They are also privy to the existence of the 7th Sea: that it can be visited and very well may hold the key to the origin and relationship of the ancient races.

Mirror members may also requisition any artifact in the Society’s stores, although truly large, powerful or dangerous items require an explanation to the Head Council before being handed over. Members must be at least 5th rank to learn Syrneth Tinkering or more detailed information about the Domae. Even at this advanced level, some secrets still remain hidden; their knowledge takes on a darker face as they learn about the Society’s attempts to discern the final fates of the ancient races... and the terrible possibility that these races may not be totally extinct. (see Theories, below).

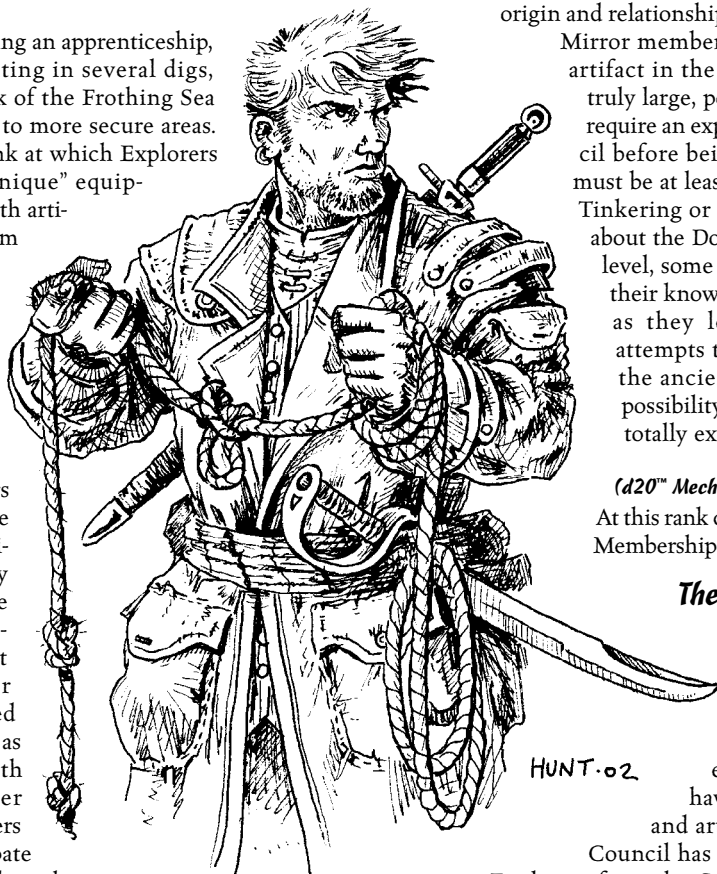
(d20™ Mechanics)

At this rank characters receive the Feat: Membership.

The Corridors of Flame (6 pt. Advantage) (7th Sea™)

Explorers who reach the 6th level are but one rank away from the Society’s “inner sanctum.” They have access to all information and artifacts, save that which the Council has reserved for its eyes alone.

Explorers from the Corridors of Flame are completely devoted to the Society and its goals, and may even advise the Council on various matters. Some are even tasked with constructing “fictional” logs and data from those who never returned from their expeditions. Now that the 7th Sea has been discovered, these researchers also participate in “public” voyages that mask their true purpose — to solve the riddle of the ancient races.



The Mirror

Beginning 7th Sea characters who purchase Mirror-level Membership receive the Archaeology Skill for free, and Syrneth Lore is considered a Basic Knack for them. D20 characters created prior to the release of this book can be assumed to have this rank if they have the Feat: Membership (Explorer’s Society). The actual benefits of the Feat should be discussed before character creation if the GM wants PCs to have a lower starting rank, and progression through the ranks after creation should be determined by roleplaying in either system.

The 7th Sea Council **(7 pt. Advantage; special)** (7th Sea™)

The ultimate rank in the Society belongs strictly to the Council of the Explorer's Society — the Heads of each respective branch and the Headmaster himself. The Council holds its secrets close but may, if the occasion warrants, take members of the 6th and even 5th ranks into its confidence.

The only department heads who do not coordinate one of the Society Branches are Brenden Stafford, Head of Sea Exploration (see Chapter 4) and Merin Zumer, Head of Finances. Merin is a no-nonsense Eisen who survived the War of the Cross, leaving her native country to delve into Vendel League politics. She nearly resigned after learning the truth about the 7th Sea, and only the eloquence of her fellow Council members convinced her to remain. Under her careful guidance, the Society's coffers remain relatively full even after their recent setbacks.

Society Branches

Five main branches comprise the backbone of the Society. Originally, the Society consisted of only three branches, but recent events and expanding knowledge have encouraged them to diversify further.

Artifact Researchers (7th Sea™)

The advent of Syrnych Tinkering (see Chapter Five) has transformed the Artifact Research branch from a niche for more narrowly focused Scholars and Field Scholars to the Society's most powerful resource. While not all Tinkerers belong to the Artifact Research branch, these wizards of Syrnych science are certainly the masters.

Their specialty is also not as limited as it appears. Experienced Tinkerers with access to Syrnych resources command a wide variety of gadgets and gizmos. Researchers learn to disarm Syrnych security devices, turning traps into raw material. Other Explorers keep a healthy distance from a Tinkerer working in the field, however: their efforts are notoriously unreliable, and can have disastrous consequences.

Franco Vesefe, a brilliant Vodacce Tinkerer, leads the Artifact Research branch. His genius and drive are the chief architects of Syrnych Tinkering as a formal discipline.

Field Scholars (7th Sea™)

When most Théans envision an Explorer, they think of the Field Scholars. Masters of archaeology, linguistics, athletics, trap evasion and more, Field Scholars usually lead expeditions or delve into wild uncharted regions of Théah. The archetypal Field Scholar is equal parts detective, adventurer, spy and saboteur. As a result of their broad mandate, Field Scholars comprise a wide variety of personality types. Some focus on a specialty, such as disarming the cunning machines they must face or the archaeology of ancient Syrnych culture. Others work hard to broaden their skills, particularly in small Explorer teams where quick thinking can avert certain death. Legends may portray them as superhuman daredevils capable of trouncing Swordsmen, swinging past Syrnych snares, decoding Numan ciphers, turning spare parts into Clockwork Cannons and unraveling Villanova plots, but the truth is, they often get by with nothing more than expedient

Artifact Researchers

Like most Explorers, 7th Sea Artifact Researchers rely on their Wits, but also need respectable levels of Finesse and Panache. Speed and agility will serve him when a clockwork machine begins vibrating on his desk. These Explorers rely on intuition as much as actual data when plying their craft.

For d20 Researchers, Dexterity and Wisdom are vitally important, although Intelligence should not be neglected. Alchemist and Wanderer make good starting classes for them, and the Archaeologist prestige class serves them in good stead. The Rogue class adds trap disarmament to their bag of tricks. Naturally, the most important prestige class for an Artifact Researcher is Syrnych Tinkering.

Field Scholars

In the 7th Sea system, Wits and Finesse are a Field Scholar's strongest Traits, and a respectable variety of Skills should be available to the character. In d20, Intelligence and Wisdom are the most vital abilities for a Field Scholar, with Dexterity also serving useful ends. A Field Scholar usually starts with the Rogue or Wanderer class and sticks with it unless adding a fighting prestige class. Some Field Scholars acquire levels of Archaeologist, though their duties often emphasize different skills.

Investigators

Investigators rely on their perception and charm, although sometimes they become embroiled in major brawls with saboteurs. 7th Sea Investigators require Wits more than any other Trait, but Resolve is also important for keeping cool under pressure, and Skills like Courtier and Spy invariably come in handy. D20 Investigators should have high Wisdom and Charisma scores, and start with classes such as Courtier or Spy (much as with their 7th Sea counterparts).

knowledge and a knack for seizing the right opportunities. Whatever their limits, Field Scholars are invariably clever and adept at improvisation. The Society's enemies often underestimate these heroes, to their ultimate sorrow.

The Head Field Scholar is Cristenne Elise d'Asourne, a fearless Montaigne woman who has pioneered several new excavation techniques and helped Vesefe develop Syrnych Tinkering. She also found the time to return to her homeland and become a hero of the Revolution, using Syrnych artifacts to aid the commoners' cause.

Modern Investigations (7th Sea™)

Modern Investigations is the newest branch of the Society, a direct result of recent discoveries and betrayals. Investigators work to uncover the Society's enemies and pursue what the Explorers call "current archaeology." The first duty essentially involves tracking known and suspected saboteurs, although some Investigators engage in preventive activities, and a few moles have successfully infiltrated enemy societies.

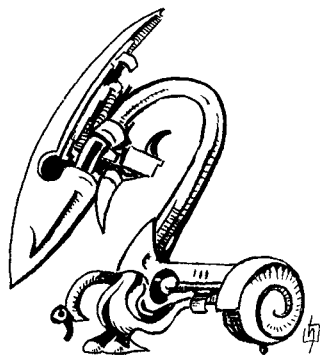
“Current archaeology” is more complicated. The phrase itself is more poetic license than euphemism, since it supports the other branches’ research. In practical terms, it means uncovering the Truths hiding throughout Théah. Investigators study governments, religions, secret societies and other social forces in an effort to learn what they are hiding from the rest of humanity. They have already learned many disturbing details about Théah’s past and present, which helped other branches of the Society in their research efforts. Sadly, their success comes with a terrible price. The “current archaeology” branch have a 50% casualty rate — members turn up in Vodacce canals, stabbed in back alleys, or sometimes vanish from the face of Théah. While the results have been disheartening for Society leadership, fresh volunteers always rise to replace their fallen comrades. Thrill-seekers are common to the Explorer’s Society, and for some, Modern Investigations holds more excitement than any other two branches combined.

Despite the flashy reputation, the Investigations branch is headed by the Society’s Chief Diplomat, Justice Sommer, a gifted linguist and charismatic statesman with a quiet talent for detective work. He is very careful to keep the diplomatic corps and Investigators separate (lest suspicions demolish his careful negotiations), although he occasionally recruits from one into the other.

Espionage

Explorer spies act much the same as any others. Trained in disguise and infiltration, they attempt to join other secret organizations and unravel their mysteries. Two primary differences mark the Society’s Investigators, however. The first might be considered a serious drawback in their line of work: a conscience. The Society’s leaders formally decided not to compromise the organization’s heart by using underhanded tactics, even though the moral high ground just makes a spy a better target. Moles receive more leeway than most, but even they have lines they never cross.

Fortunately, they also have first pick of the Syrneth artifacts available to the Society. Their agents often use masks that can turn them into shadow-clad fiends, and armbands that function as self-reloading grappling guns; even the Society’s one precious Thalusiai Seal is available if the need is great. Some Explorer agents approach their jobs with a flair normally unsuited to espionage, but succeed anyway through resolve and clever use of artifacts. Others become withdrawn and suspicious, certain that their targets are connected in one tremendous conspiracy to bury the Truth forever.



Scholars

7th Sea Scholars rely on Wits even more than any of their brethren, so they often focus on Skills like Archaeologist and Scholar (naturally). Scholars created in d20 depend on Intelligence and Wisdom almost exclusively, and tend toward the Wanderer class. Archaeologist is a perfect prestige class for them. If Wizard is an available character class, however, it’s ideal for the adventuring Scholar, adding firepower and versatility to the character’s quest for knowledge.

Shield Men

Shield Men need all the basic abilities of a warrior: strength, agility, resilience, training, and courage. *7th Sea* Shield Men should be well rounded, focusing on Finesse and Resolve without neglecting Brawn, and have respectable martial Skills and Knacks. D20 Shield Men should start with some sort of fighting class and have decent scores in Strength, Dexterity and Constitution. The Shield Man school was designed specifically for them, and members should learn the style as soon as possible in either system.

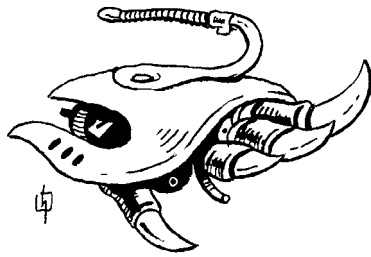
Syrneth Contact

A small faction in Modern Investigations believes that a few Syrneth are still alive in hidden corners of Théah. They hope to find these remnants and make peaceful contact with them. To that end, they have developed several hypotheses regarding methods of safely communicating with a truly non-human mindset without giving accidental offense. Their goal is laudable, but most Scholars consider their efforts hopeless. No one will ever know for certain if the Syrneth still exist until contact has been established — and the survivors report in.

Scholars (7th Sea™)

When it comes to excavations and quests, the Field Scholars reign supreme but in the chapterhouses and research buildings Scholars are the foundation of the Society. Others consider their work dull and tedious, but most Scholars have a boundless passion for their studies. Despite their bookish appearance, their courage runs true and deep. Many Scholars follow their more active brethren unflinchingly, while translating dead languages, providing vital information about ancient civilizations, learning the weaknesses of powerful monsters and discovering important patterns in Syrneth excavations that others would dismiss as trivial. Scholars are rarely useful in a fight, but a few occasionally apply their genius to abilities such as fencing or firearms.

The Head Scholar of this branch is a gifted if somewhat nervous Castillian named Figuero Calleras. Although subject to occasional fits brought on by exposure to an as-yet unknown Syrneth powder, he remains one of the most knowledgeable, brilliant and dedicated members of the Society.



Shield Men (7th Sea™)

While other branches have varied goals and intricate abilities, Shield Men are bodyguards, pure and simple. The branch requires skilled warriors with fast reflexes and nerves like Setine steel, able to defend not only themselves but their companions from hideous monsters, deadly alien traps and murderous rivals.

Until recently, Shield Men were generally considered above reproach. A few months ago, however, an Ussuran Shield Woman went mad, struggling against a Synchron force that possessed her very soul. Her desperate friends recoiled with horror when she told them how she had slain other expeditions under different aliases. Expeditions must now take at least two Shield Men and travel in groups of at least three.

Staver Mikochov is the Society's Head Shield Man; to call him "devoted" would be a massive understatement. The Society is his family and the Explorers his brothers and sisters. He takes every victory and defeat personally. The Ussuran woman's betrayal cut him to the bone (he is a Pyeryem Master himself) and he has promised to root out any other moles in the Shield Men himself.

Others (7th Sea™)

In addition to these formal branches, several types of Explorers do not fit into a specific category. Diplomats, sailors and even accountants all make important contributions to the Society, managing duties that many Explorer adventurers either would not have the slightest idea how to handle or would find terminally boring.

Security

The Society's many enemies make protection concerns a priority. This field is almost exclusively the province of the Shield Men, although other Explorers (Field Scholars in particular) are encouraged to share any observations they may have in the matter. Few published protocols exist for securing expeditions and excavation sites; each challenge is typically unique and "public" knowledge may rob the mission of success. This type of work requires cleverness, adaptability and common sense.

Basic protocols include protecting notes and artifacts, travelling in groups of at least three whenever possible, providing discreet sanctuary when necessary and using the Society's Casual Code when in public, especially outside Avalon or Vendel.

The Casual Code

So-called because it uses code words and phrases that can be used in casual conversation, this is the preferred mode of secret communication among Explorers.

CASUAL CODE KEY (LOCATIONS)

Code	Translation
Ava	Avalon
Constance	Castille
Catherine	Cathay
Christina	Crescent Empire
Esther	Eisen
Madeline	Midnight Archipelago
Marie	Montaigne
Ursula	Ussura
Vivienne	Vendel
Veronica	Vodacce
Claudia	Other

CASUAL CODE KEY (DIRECTIONS)

Code	Translation
Nannie	North
Sister	South
Aunt	East
Cousin	West

CASUAL CODE KEY (SECRET SOCIETIES)

Code	Translation
Cameron	Explorer's Society
Kurgen	Die Kreuzritter
Ivan	Invisible College
Ludwig	Los Vagos
Rolf	Rilasciare
Ross	Rose and Cross
Steven	Sophia's Daughters

CASUAL CODE KEY (COMMON MESSAGES)

Code	Translation
<i>How's the weather?</i>	Can we talk safely here
<i>storm coming</i>	dangerous/must leave
<i>delivering a gift</i>	artifact transportation
<i>under the weather</i>	I need information
<i>generous</i>	I have information
<i>portrait</i>	map
<i>a good place to eat</i>	safe house
<i>guest house</i>	chapterhouse
<i>interesting news</i>	new excavation
<i>shadows</i>	infiltrators/saboteurs
<i>getting cold</i>	I'm being followed
<i>Have you heard from a Field Scholar?</i>	I need help
<i>I know where a Field Scholar is.</i>	I can help

These phrases need not be exact, and are often combined. For example, "Has a Field Scholar been in touch with you? He asked me to bring a gift from my sister Madeline to Vivienne's guest home" means "I need help getting an artifact from the southern Midnight Archipelago to the Vendel chapterhouse." Since the Isle of Syrne is near the south end of the Archipelago, that also provides a hint to which island they mean.

A response might be, "I don't know, with this storm coming I've been catching cold lately. It's making me jump at shadows. Why don't we go get some warm food, there's a good restaurant nearby." which would mean, "It's not safe here because I'm being followed, and I think they're saboteurs, but there's a safehouse nearby, let's go."

Funding

None of the Society's efforts would be possible without the financial support of its members and patrons. Although the Explorers approach self-sufficiency thanks to the efforts of many members and the guiding hand of Merin Zumer, donations remain a vital part of financing and maintaining expeditions into the unknown.

Patrons

Most Explorers are not looking for fame or wealth when they join the Society. They hope to learn about Théah's rich history, unravel the secrets of the ancients and do some good while on their expeditions. Although some also look for excitement, having one's name on a series of pulp novels or pulling into port to an adoring throng is not part of their agenda. Explorers put up with the fame, however, because it increases the Society's popularity and means support from commoners, merchants and the nobility. Esteem for any group equals esteem for its patrons, making support of the Explorer's Society a way for the nobility to win points in the arcane games that they play. These patrons tend to be a bit more demanding when the initial boost to their standing has dimmed, so the Society keeps them happy with small Syrneth trinkets (harmless objects that glow or float are especially popular for their novelty.)

Other wealthy patrons are genuinely interested or supportive of the Society's efforts, and therefore less exacting in terms of physical returns on their donations. However, those with an honest desire to support expeditions often want to participate in them, which contains both benefits and pitfalls. Obviously, the Explorers welcome new members and manpower, but oftentimes, wealthy patrons insisted on accompanying expeditions without realizing the risks involved. Many well-meaning backers end up a liability to the missions they accompany, hoping to make a useful contribution only to inadvertently endanger themselves and their companions.

Selling Artifacts

In the meantime, the Society is steadily increasing its own income. The sale of artifacts makes for a the most profitable enterprise, and rich veins of Thalusiai amber provide a fairly stable resource (although the Society carefully regulates it, so as not to flood the market) and some types of devices are common enough to be sold with clear consciences. The prestige of owning a completely researched and catalogued Explorer's Society artifact presents viable competition with black market diggers who charge much higher prices. The Society also owns a number of ships whose captains happily engage in merchant trading while not on voyages of exploration. These resources, coupled with the Society's land holdings and continuing income from wealthy patrons, keeps the coffers full. Merin is confident that in three years, income from the Society's mercantile efforts will completely replace the funds lost due to the Montaigne Revolution.

Theories

In spite of nearly a century of excavation, investigation and adventure, the Explorers have few hard facts about pre-Numan Terra. Most Scholars feel that the Society's many advances are mere droplets compared to the ocean of historical lore just waiting to be uncovered. As long as mysteries exist, as long as questions remain unanswered, they have a reason to ask questions and explore the world.

The major areas of the Society's studies are detailed below.

Syrneth and Non-Human Races

Explorers are often accused of meddling excessively in dangerous business in their quest for Syrneth artifacts and knowledge. There is a small amount of truth to the accusation, although the Explorers do not act out of any desire for power or wreak havoc on the world. Even after studying Syrneth ruins more devotedly and completely than any other three groups combined, the Society knows almost nothing about these ancient races. Outsiders, however, rarely realize just how much the Explorers have yet to learn. Genuinely gifted researchers can manipulate Syrneth artifacts and read the occasional word in what appear to be their texts. Society museums contain models of Syrneth bodies, many of which show considerable insight into the species' physical structure. Society scholars have even begun to theorize a connection between the ancients and sorcery.

In spite of this progress, the Explorers remain frustrated at many levels. They know little about the culture of *any* Syrneth race, and the details of internal Syrneth biology continue to elude them. Even the extensively-studied Thalusiai can only be described as "insect-like." Few of the principles behind Syrneth occult practices are understood and Syrneth Tinkering is as much intuition and luck as knowledge. To date, no histories have been found for any pre-human societies, which is easily the most frustrating impasse the Society faces to date. Of course, this gives the Explorers more than ample license to theorize endlessly about the nature and fate of their predecessors. The Society believes that the Syrne as a whole were probably a loose collection of societies with a common cultural background, not unlike the nations of Théah themselves. Such theorizing is a major reason that the Explorers have fallen out of favor with the Church; the concept that non-human races could cooperate and thrive together directly opposes the doctrine placing humanity at the pinnacle of Theus' creation.

Explorer theories on specific Syrneth races are detailed below.

Domae

More than any other species, the Domae have captured the imagination — and sympathy — of the Explorers. Apparently a peaceful people for most of their existence, little is known about them other than their ability to infuse stones with certain powers. Based on information gleaned from a number of sites, Domae appear to have been victims of Tesseran aggression. The Explorers uncovered a few weapons at Domae excavations, indicating the race's willingness to fight if necessary, although such weapons generally lie at the top layers, hinting that they were a late development.

The Society believes that much of Domae society centered around their mental abilities, which were apparently considerable. While other Syrneth cultures apparently focused on their arcane sciences, the Domae seemingly gained power from their own minds and wills. Some Scholars even speculate that the Domae created Domae Stones solely by focusing on receptive materials (stones and gems) with their will. There are also indications that they could cause objects to float through the air without support. This didn't help them when the other Syrneth races attacked and destroyed them, however, or so the theory holds.

A somewhat darker hypothesis maintains that the Domae grew distant and self-absorbed at the end, and destroyed themselves in a bitter civil war. Little hard evidence supports this theory aside from a single artifact retrieved from the sewers of Charouse. Whether or not this item indicates a self-inflicted Domae extinction, the lesson is a sobering one in an era of increasing factionalization.

Drachen

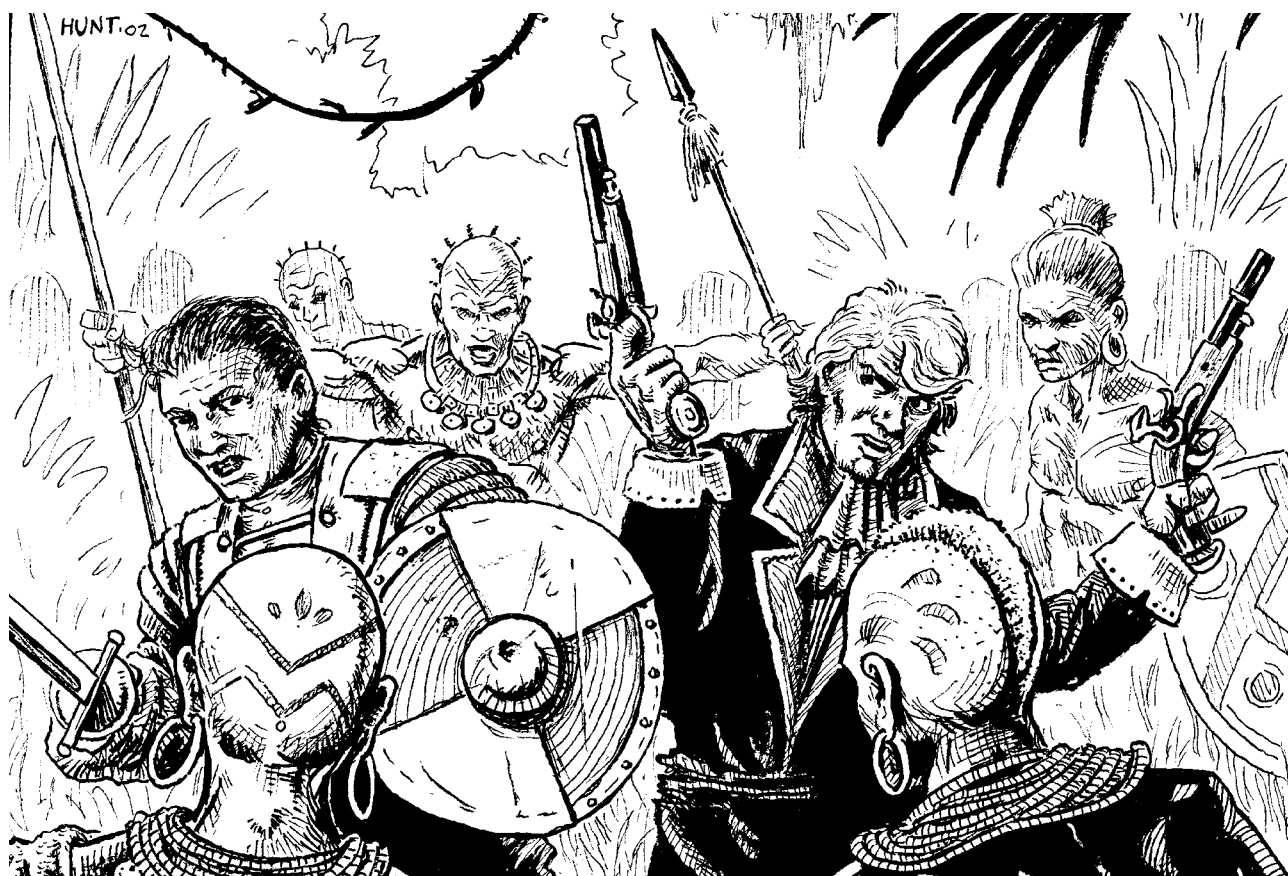
Explorers have only recently puzzled out the tremendous size of these enigmatic creatures, based largely on research conducted in and around the city of Freiburg, which contains numerous structures apparently built from Drachen remains. The sheer size of the structures suggests that the Drachen dwarfed even the largest Syrneth species. The locals are completely aware of the buildings' nature; at the end of a bridge that formed naturally from a fallen drachen's spine (which is itself wider than two wagons) is *The Drachen's Wing*, an inn built on — and into — one of the creature's shoulder bones. Currently, the Explorers believe that the ancient Drachen were sentient — as opposed to the cunning but animal-like drachen which still purportedly haunt Eisen — and most consider them entirely separate from the other "Syrneth races."

Setine

Domae may be the most well-regarded Syrneth race, but the Setine remain the most intriguing. By all indications, they lasted the longest and advanced further than any other Syrneth race prior to their disappearance. Indeed, "disappearance" seems to be the right word for what happened. Unlike most of the other Syrneth races, no indications of mass slaughter or terrible war mark the end of their time on Théah. The few Setine remains, while varied, show no signs of a long, slow decline. As with the other races, their development suddenly stopped, albeit without the corresponding annihilation other Syrne apparently suffered. The only current theory explaining their fate states that they simply... left. A few Explorers have even suggested that Setine civilization waits on the other side of the Great Western Ocean, that the great Barrier preventing westward expansion was simply a test to determine which race had progressed far enough to contact them.

Setine skeletons vary wildly in size, shape and even structure. Only one trait allows the Society to link their disparate forms together: all are light, hollow, strong and remarkably avian in structure. Setine artifacts, fascinating combinations of natural philosophy and occult principles, are considered the archetypes for Syrneth wonders. Such devices usually consist of fantastic shifting gears and/or containers filled with the mysterious vapor called *aether*. Setine arti-





facts are as diverse as the species itself, ranging from impossibly advanced spyglasses to mechanical “creatures” to replacement limbs.

Sidhe

Explorers classify the Sidhe separately from the Syrneath races, a distinction shared only with the Drachen (and even they are considered Syrne by a few eccentrics). The Goodly Folke remain a potent force on Théah and the Explorers are based in Avalon, meaning that the Society dare not lump them in with extinct fossils. Fortunately, the Society seems to amuse the Sidhe and at least one deigns to share information about her race with eager Explorers.

The Sidhe, according to this highborn Lady of the Fae, are Glamour. Flesh is to a Sidhe as clothes are to humans. What people perceive as various types of Goodly Folke are really the “suits” they wear when they are among humans. They rarely change those appearances, however, for the same reason an Avalon Lord never wears a dress and bodice to court; it simply isn’t done. They have existed for an eternity, and will exist after eternity’s end, for Glamour cannot die. At the same time, it is ephemeral and ever-changing, unable to hold any permanence without human perception to make it so. Eternal and yet short-lived — that is the paradox of the Sidhe.

Of course, the Explorers take all this “information” with a hefty bag of salt: the Lady also claimed that the Sidhe hung the stars in the sky and wiped out the Syrneath races for ruining the Queens’ afternoon tea. Still, one simply does not accuse a Sidhe of lying. Aside from being bad form, most Fae respond by turning the offender into something unpleasant — at the very least.

Tesserans

Curiously, the race most like humanity is the one about which Scholars know the least. The only clue to their appearance to date is a piece of art discovered at a Tesseran site. The painting, if that is what it is, depicts a very human-looking figure, although the details are reptilian in appearance. Students of the picture agree that the result looks like nothing so much as a person in a snakeskin. Unfortunately, there is no real evidence that the picture is actually Tesseran other than that it was found on a Tesseran site in the Midnight Archipelago.

Tesserans apparently had an obsession of some sort regarding the number 2. Most known Tesseran structures are designed or decorated in patterns that work out mathematically in powers of two. Scholars speculate that these Syrne used mathematics (or at least numerology) when constructing their artifacts, which continue to defy understanding. Even Syrneath Tinkerers must rely far more on guesswork and instinct rather than actual knowledge when dealing with Tesseran devices. The only common trait that these curiosities share is that each generates a magnetic field. Normal compasses are useless within three feet of any Tesseran apparatus. A few such artifacts might work based on magnetic principles; if so, those principles lie far beyond current Théan understanding.

Although the fate of the Tesserans is unknown, hints of terrible weapons exist in the other races’ (very sparse) records. If the Tesserans were aggressive, it is possible that the other Syrne destroyed them in self-defense. Unfortunately, the Tesseran perspective is lost to time — none of their writings have ever been found.

Thalusai

Ironically, one of the most clearly understood Syrneth races may be the least interesting to the Society. The Thalusai are neither as sympathetic as the Domae, nor as ubiquitous as the Setine, nor as enigmatic as the Tesserans. This mighty race was just... there.

The Thalusai were among the most powerful and widespread of the Syrneth races, and if they were not as varied as the Setine, they certainly achieved the same societal and political success as the masters of clockwork. Thalusai records appear at deeper levels than any other races, and only the Setine outlived them. Whatever else they were, the Thalusai were formidable in the extreme. They had an insect-like appearance, and scholars theorize that the "armor" found so regularly is actually an exoskeleton. Apparently, the Thalusai were also a warlike people. Explorers found evidence of rapiers made from lenses that project the sun's light, and amber armor as light as wood and as strong as steel. Some Scholars speculate that they destroyed the mighty Tesserans, and what little is known of their own demise indicates they were defeated through sorcery or guile but not strength of arms.

Numa

The ancient Numan Empire, founded in what is now Vodacce, is generally considered the beginning of human civilization in Théah. Although much of Numan history is well documented, the quest to understand their culture and science remains. Religious practices among the Numans were somewhat diverse, with a variety of faiths tolerated and oppressed at various intervals. Despite highly developed concepts of justice, they enjoyed barbaric games of blood and death with avid interest. Of particular interest to the Explorers, however, is the Numan artifacts which began appearing in the days before the First Prophet. Unlike those found at Syrneth excavations, most Numan artifacts operate by mundane scientific principles, albeit in ways that sometimes baffle even the most advanced scientific minds. A few Numan wonders are clearly sorcerous in nature, unsurprising since sorcery began with the Bargain by Numan Senators. Those proto-sorcerers must have known more about sorcery's principles than any other humans in history. Their truly remarkable accomplishments fused science and sorcery, a feat only known to have since been duplicated by the creators of the Montaigne Puzzle Swords. Few of these artifacts endured to the present day — and they were rare even in Numa's heyday — but they hold intriguing clues about the nature of sorcery, and are highly prized by Society Scholars.

Sorcery

Until recently, the Explorers viewed sorcery as simply one more frontier to explore. Certainly, they took the Prophets' warnings into consideration, but they also noticed a significant difference between the powers granted by Numan bloodlines and the "Old Ways," such as Avalon Glamour and Vesten Lærdom. Further, a disproportionate number of Explorers do not follow Vaticine teachings, and thus take a more "open" attitude about sorcery. Recent evidence suggests a likely connection between the various Numan sorcery lines — Porté, Sorte, and *El Fuego Adentro*. Experimentation into the nature of Porté led to some fascinating hypotheses, although the implications are deeply disturbing.

A Modern Investigations team began investigating Porté in late 1667. Using Syrneth lenses, they attempted to peer into Porté holes to discern the nether region which lay beyond. The first three Explorers to actually peer through the lenses went completely insane. Luckily, the Society has experience dealing with artifact-induced insanity, and two of the Investigators eventually recovered. The cost of their recovery, unfortunately, was permanent memory loss — they had no recollection of what they saw. It was as if the vision had been completely erased from their minds.

A second experiment proved more successful, but the results were considerably less certain. This time, instead of Looking into the Portal, they decided to project images from within the Portal onto a wall. Using refraction theories pioneered by the Invisible College, the team sent a Porté sorceress into the hole wearing a Shining Belt (see page 76), and angling her body so that the light shone through it. One brave volunteer stayed in the room to watch the images projected (if any). A few moments after the experiment began, the volunteer called the rest of the team back with a shaky voice. The experiment appeared successful — images of horrific creatures flitted across the wall, almost as if pressing through it from some unknown dimension beyond. Claws, talons, hands and teeth rose and fell like a tide, occasionally catching on some unknown surface and puncturing a tiny hole. A small scream accompanied each rip. The creatures became more agitated the longer the Porté sorceress remained in the Portal, so the experiment was abruptly ended.

Society members have since debated the results endlessly. A few of the smaller creatures resembled insects, an all-too-disturbing similarity to the aggressive Thalusai. Larger ones seemed to rival the drachen in sheer menace, consisting of impossible collections of claws and fangs. It was easy to believe that seeing them in all their horrific glory would drive someone completely mad. Oddly enough, no Porté sorcerer has ever reported the sounds that this process uncovered, or felt any sort of claws or teeth while traveling through a Portal. Those who believe the experiment's validity maintain that no living sorcerer reports such sensations, but that does not discount the possibility of their existence. Either way, all Scholars agree that the data partially explains most historical admonitions against sorcery. Who could look upon such creations and not think them the hordes of Legion's Pit?

Further experimentation confirmed that Sorte rouses them to anger, albeit to a lesser extent, while Glamour used near Porté holes "calms" them. Given the difficulty (and potential danger) of running these experiments, the Society does not authorize them often, and information remains spotty.

Most Society Scholars also agree that whatever the experiments have revealed, the creatures within the Portal are hostile to humanity and may even be the source of sorcery itself. Explorers quietly refer to this danger as "The Threat Beyond" and have begun to look into methods of defending against it. The Society's first step has been to actively recruit Glamour mages, particularly those with the Thomas ability, in hopes that their powers could stymie any incursions by these creatures. Explorer Scholars have attempted to open a new dialogue about sorcery throughout Théah, and some have asked to conduct other experiments on different bloodlines, in hopes of revealing more information about sorcery in general. Their efforts have thus far been in vain.

Secret Societies

Although not the Society's primary focus, increasing difficulties have made it necessary to learn as much as possible about other Théan Secret Societies. In some cases, of course, they have more theories than facts, and in a few, they scarcely realize that the secret society in question exists.

Die Kreuzritter

The Explorers often endure mysterious attacks from this group, which supposedly represents an extinct order of Eisen knights. Attempts to flush them out have met with universal failure, and indeed, many deny that such an organization even exists. Explorers in the know — mostly high-level members — believe that their shadow-wielding enemies have no historical links to the venerable order of heroic knights, despite their penchant for wearing black crosses and skulking about on secret missions.

Knights of the Rose and Cross

Given the reaction of Fate Witches to the Knights and the seemingly impossible things they can do, some Scholars estimate that they have found a method of inner transformation. Confirmation has been impossible thus far, of course, and the Explorers don't wish to make new enemies by pressing too hard.

Sophia's Daughters

Passions tend to flare amongst Explorers when discussing Sophia's Daughters. Some claim that they are a group of villainous women hiding behind a vague platform of women's rights while others argue that the Daughters are noble heroines who simply keep a low profile. A few believe that they serve another faction or that another society is a front in service to *them*. Still others do not believe that they exist at all beyond the wishful thinking of a handful of frustrated and scorned Vodacce women. Those certain of their existence consider them formidable opponents, and refuse to engage them unless absolutely necessary.

The List

All expeditions have at least the following supplies, in order of importance.

Food: Easily preserved edibles and liquids, preferably to last the team twice its expected stay. Sabotage, spoilage and hungry animals often cut into supplies, making extra stores an absolute necessity. Standard issue equipment includes simple cooking gear, utensils, plates or bowls of some sort and canteens, as well as resources for cleaning, including salt used for seasoning, preserving, scrubbing utensils and removing stains. As a precaution, most Explorers learn rudimentary foraging and hunting skills.

Shelter: Small expeditions have tents as well as collapsible cots and simple bedding; larger teams usually bring at least one pavilion. Ropes, spikes and hammers are part of the standard issue. (One should not expect a Shield Man to donate the hilt of his sword for this purpose!) Basic shelter is sometimes more important than food, particularly in very cold regions. Standard procedure dictates that all expeditions establish a base camp immediately upon arrival.

Light: The Explorers spend a great deal of time underground, and some sites have features that only become evident at night. Lanterns are the recommended light source, although torches are acceptable substitutes. All expedition members carry flint and tinder, or other firestarting devices. Certain artifacts shed light more cleanly than a lantern, but they are usually employed as a last resort, since they may have hidden or unpredictable side effects.

First Aid: The Society provides antivenins, bandages and basic herbal remedies to all its expeditions in respectable quantities and mission leaders are admonished to store them safely. At least one member of every team possesses medical knowledge and is charged with maintaining a kit with basic supplies (bandages, ointments, etc.)

Clothing: Aside from personal cleanliness and protection from the elements, many sites pose unique difficulties that can be mitigated by a few basic wardrobe additions. Most teams receive sturdy gloves and boots for all members, as well as cloaks, which provide camouflage as well as warmth. A variety of hats and netting protect Explorers from small insects, which are especially prevalent at Thalusiai sites. Most Explorers also carry a basic sewing kit, which sometimes may have to double as a first aid kit!

Tools: Any preparation is useless unless it includes the tools of the Explorers' trade. All expeditions carry rope, shovels, picks and crowbars in sufficient numbers to equip all apprentice excavators. Recent innovations include ground screws for digging straight down, brushes (normal and wire) for more delicate work and most importantly small trowels for precision digging. Chalk and string are used extensively for marking areas of an excavation or trails in various underground structures. Some expeditions use ribbons to mark trails outdoors, although brightly-colored ones tend to attract thieving birds. The Society also stresses the need for sturdy boxes and cushioning material for transporting artifacts. Most expeditions carry such supplies as a matter of course.

Weapons: In addition to their person armament, Shield Men and Field Scholars will carry any additional weapons as determined by the site and its potential dangers.

Paperwork: The junior members of the team are responsible for the note-taking and mapmaking supplies. Senior members of the team are entrusted with existing maps and/or journals. In addition to writing implements, all expeditions carry basic cartography tools.

Personal Items: While Explorers learn to make do with very little, it never hurts to bring personal items, if space permits, such as a small chamber pot, towels, soap and other toiletry items. Note: PCs should discuss the contents of their personal pack with the GM prior to setting out on any expedition.

Methods

The Explorer's Society has developed a strong methodology since its founding nearly a century ago. In the early years, many finds were damaged or lost due to a lack of knowledge or understanding them. Excavation was often crude, performed with shovels, picks and sometimes bare hands in the hopes of avoiding damage to more delicate finds. Likewise, security amounted to a well-armed Shield Man and sometimes a few assistants with pistols, sabers or both. In some ways, it is miraculous that the Society enjoyed as much success as it did.

Today, things are different. With time and experience, the Explorers have perfected new ways of protecting their finds, as well as a solid blueprint for conducting themselves in the field. Specific examples include the following:

Archaeology

The field of archaeology contains the Society's most important developments. Exploration and excavation can be extremely hazardous, yet deaths caused by accidental triggering of Syneth defense have decreased slowly and steadily for the last fifty years. Another problem centers around the preservation of the artifacts themselves. All too often, tired excavators have swung a pick or shovel too wildly, damaging or destroying priceless artifacts. The Explorers responded to this by approaching buried artifacts with care and caution, allowing only the most experience excavators near, and stipulating which tools to use for specific occasions.

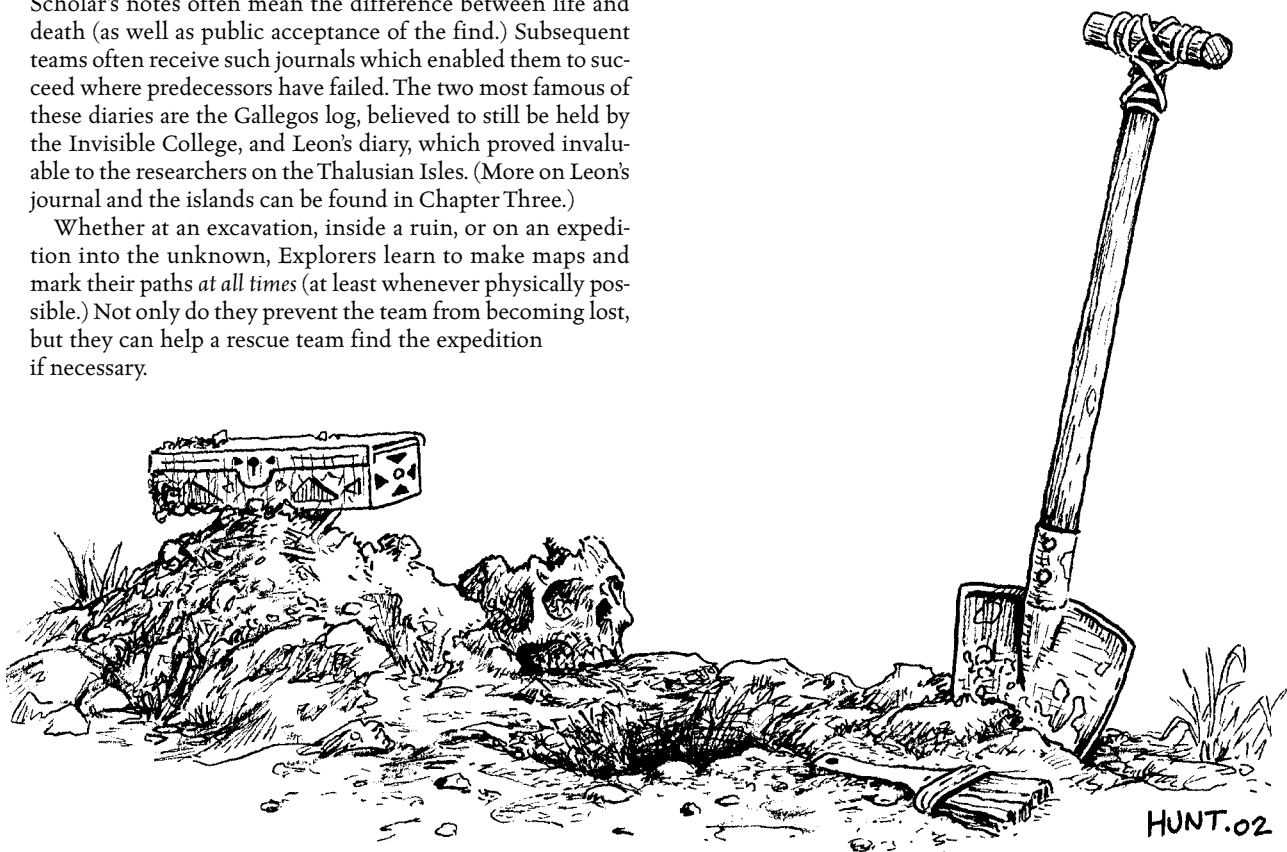
Chronicling the excavation remains a universal practice on all Society expeditions. Whether dealing with artifact retrieval, structure entry, a site's pitfalls or even navigation, a Scholar's notes often mean the difference between life and death (as well as public acceptance of the find.) Subsequent teams often receive such journals which enabled them to succeed where predecessors have failed. The two most famous of these diaries are the Gallegos log, believed to still be held by the Invisible College, and Leon's diary, which proved invaluable to the researchers on the Thalussian Isles. (More on Leon's journal and the islands can be found in Chapter Three.)

Whether at an excavation, inside a ruin, or on an expedition into the unknown, Explorers learn to make maps and mark their paths *at all times* (at least whenever physically possible.) Not only do they prevent the team from becoming lost, but they can help a rescue team find the expedition if necessary.

Strange creatures are a common hazard around Syneth ruins. While most Explorers are reluctant to take life, several varieties of these creatures are dangerous threats. As a matter of policy, Explorers assume that any beast which does not flee from humans is probably dangerous. When attacked, Shield Men are instructed to deliver killing shots. Although Explorers have encountered some apparently harmless creatures on their missions, approximately two-thirds of these specimens have later demonstrated some amazingly dangerous ability, such as poisonous spittle or spines that generate lightning. The Explorer charter requires Society members who feel compelled to befriend undocumented creatures to contain such creatures and have them transported to the University for study and approval. Otherwise, the creatures must be left in their native habitats. Members who do otherwise face censure or even expulsion from the Society. Of course, this does not stop expeditions from adopting small, bizarre creatures with amazing regularity, and the Council often turns a blind eye... as long as the creature in question behaves itself.

Excavation Protocols

The most detailed guidelines for Society members revolve around expedition and excavation protocols. While there are many esoteric dangers in the field, a dig will fail just as easily if the team lacks the basic equipment or underestimates the necessary amount of food, water and shelter. Expeditions begin with logistics, which includes supplies. The Society has developed a standard list over the years; many items on it are simply common sense, but between the excitement of new opportunities and fear of sabotage, it becomes all too easy for an expedition to miss something obvious.



Once the team arrives at the site and makes camp, Scholars and Field Scholars work together to delineate the areas covered by the upcoming excavation. Any structures readily accessible from the surface are noted, according to established protocols. When the expedition chooses a tract for excavation, junior members mark the boundaries and the chief Field Scholar selects a reference point. A reference point is usually a site corner, although occasionally a central point is more effective. From there, the Explorers lay out a grid in chalk or string, measuring each division recording it by its location relative to the reference point. This procedure allows Scholars to track patterns more easily by determining which items are found relative to the reference point and one another.

The Explorer's Society also has extensive safety guidelines whenever a solid object is encountered during the excavation. All activities within the grid immediately cease, and an experienced Field Scholar takes over to examine the object. Most of the time, it is a rock or other mundane object, which is diligently recorded and set aside. When they find evidence of worked material, however, all non-essential personnel clear the area and the senior excavators carefully uncover the find. Depending on the site, the discovery could be anything from a ceiling to a clockwork cannon; the Society demands that all findings be excavated with utmost care to avoid setting off potential hazards.

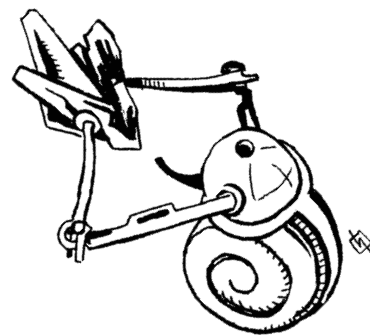
The Explorers record every find thoroughly, from entire buildings to shards of glass, starting with the item's location and orientation relative to the reference point. Accuracy is essential in these records, and Scholars keep records with extreme diligence.

Site Entry

Many laymen (and pulp novelists, apparently) consider ruin crawling to be the most exciting aspect of the Explorers' line of work, but with a few exceptions it is actually a fairly dull job punctuated by moments of tremendous danger. If the Explorers discover a building underground, the team reinforces it as much as possible before entering to avoid a cave-in and other possible (visible) threats. Once inside, teams follow a set of observation protocols to determine which items are more likely to present a threat, which are noteworthy and which merely infrastructure. Field Scholars are expected to know these protocols intimately, although all Explorers receive some degree of training.

Of chief importance are any instances of writing or other markings. If an Explorer recognizes the language, the team's linguist immediately works to translate it unless the Scholar already knows the language. If it is an unknown language, they replicate every marking as exactly as possible for later study. Rubbings are preferred in the case of carved markings, but only after the site markings are deemed safe to touch.

Artifacts are almost as valuable as writing. Explorers learn to handle Syrneth devices carefully. If none of the team members can determine the item's basic purpose, then they do not handle it. The team either calls in more experienced Explorers or the artifact is handled remotely, normally with tongs, although some Syrneth artifacts (such as Setine clockwork spiders and Thalusiai Claws) have been handled successfully with artifacts created by their respective species. Once retrieved, a Senior Explorer seals the item in a box or bag and prepares it for transportation.



Trap Disarmament

Field Scholars have their work cut out for them when identifying traps. Theoretically, anything can be a threat, even walking down a perfectly smooth corridor. The pursuit of Truth and Knowledge demands some risks, however. Many of the dangers in Syrneth ruins aren't traps *per se*, but only an expert can tell the difference between a clockwork blade designed to decapitate the unwary and damaged gears that *may* do the same thing. Scholars theorize that many of the dangers inherent in Syrneth ruins come from the ravages of time rather than deliberate intent. Unfortunately, this means that even the most innocuous Domae home can become a deathtrap if the wrong gear or device has collapsed.

Fortunately, the Explorers have noted some basic indications that an area might be trapped. They train their members to look for unusual patterns in the floor with raised or indented tiles, protrusions or etched geometrical shapes in walls, noticeable beams of light (reminiscent of sunlight peeking through clouds) and regularly spaced small holes in the walls or ceiling. Other, less dire indicators include the remains of creatures, stains on the floor or humming or buzzing sounds. A low, steady hum can be an ordinary machinery sound, particularly if it seems "healthy." Dissonant humming sounds, any sort of grinding or buzzing noises or any sound that grows louder as the party approaches are considered dangerous. Whenever an Explorer notes one of these warning signs, the team immediately retreats and the Field Scholar or Artifact Researcher may take a smaller group to investigate the source of the potential menace.

Once a trap has been identified, the Explorers must render it harmless. Fortunately, most traps rely on surprise so recognizing one is a significant part of winning of the battle. Explorers mark off pressure plates, stop up holes and instruct the rest of the team to avoid light beams. If the senior member cannot identify the nature of the trap's hazard, he may decide that it is safer to spring the trap deliberately — from a safe distance. Many traps only function once and many more are easy to disarm once activated (like rotating blades.) Obviously, Senior Explorers only set off the trap when they have some idea of the results.

In the case of a direct attack, all the Explorers can do is dodge and pray. When dealing with more insidious perils, logic and fast thinking are in order. A locked room slowly filling with water requires a different solution than a descending ceiling. In these latter cases, however, jamming whatever mechanism powers them can avert most disasters. Unfortunately, there are inevitably times when the Explorers set off traps unknowingly. In these cases, fast reflexes and quick wits are the only hope the team has to survive.



CHAPTER THREE: *Libertas*

Wonder and Terror Part IV: Clash of Iron

Colette Pierron, the Iron Heart's bosun, smiled at the man before her. "Shall we dance, monsieur?" she offered in her sweetest tone.

Arturo Caligari, the Iron Butcher, grinned back, his smile as cruel as a siren's kiss. "I am going to enjoy keeping you chained to my wall, chérie."

Colette blew him a mock kiss. "Vraiment? It is so nice to be wanted, non?" As the sadistic pirate's face contorted in rage, the Montaigne swordswoman crouched as if to spring. A Syrneath lash flew from his palm to ensnare her, just as she expected. She dove under the metal whip, rolled and slashed at her opponent's right leg with her rapier as she stabbed at his left with her dagger. The girl was on her feet again before the lumbering fiend could turn. "You may be quick, mon capitaine, but you are not fast."

As Caligari straightened, he tightened his grasp on the pistol in his left hand. The Syrneath whip uncoiled to the ground and dangled from his right palm. The Montaigne swashbuckler frowned; the man wasn't even limping. "I may not be fast, strega, but I am quite resilient. And you are not very bright." Before Colette could reply, the end of the Syrneath whip lashed out from behind her and wrapped itself around her rapier hand. He pulled Colette close enough that she could smell the rum on his breath. "No one can save you now, girl."

The Montaigne smiled back at him with far more bravado than she felt. "You will forgive me, I hope, for rescuing myself?" She plunged her dagger into his palm and wrenched it back against his ring of Setine metal. As the entire whip went slack, the swordswoman rolled onto her back and, with all her might, kicked both feet into the Vodacce's chest.

Although the villainous captain did not stagger back nearly as far as the girl would have liked, it was enough to permit Colette to spring to her feet. She quickly scanned the situation with her companions. Captain Magnus traded Syrneath gunshots with a Crescent about half Colette's height, bearing clockwork arms. Freyalinda filled the Iron Fist's deck with hail, while Fyodor had his hands full with a huge Castillian whose entire face was covered in a glowing tattoo. Colette looked around, and saw the sail and boom several feet directly behind Caligari.

"Freya!" she called out, pointing at the sail and at the Vodacce with her rapier. Freyalinda looked from the sail to Caligari, momentarily confused, then smiled grimly. As wind filled the sail it also thrust the boom forward with incredible speed. Colette dropped to the deck as Caligari, who had just regained his balance, was knocked through the air and back onto his own ship.

"Adieu, mon brave!" Colette sheathed her dagger and caught a loose rope in one smooth motion. "Capitaine Hal! If I may borrow that magnificent blade of light?" Without taking his eyes off his Crescent opponent, Magnus flung his lens blade. Pierron snatched it out of the air with her free hand and began to run to stern. As she reached the quarterdeck she leaped up, spun upside-down, grasped the rope with her legs, and swung across the span between the Iron Heart and the Iron Fist. Both crews watched in amazement as the Montaigne activated the lens blade, extended the burning sword as far as it would go, and cleanly cut away every grapple that attached the two ships.

Fortunately, the Vendel captain recovered first. "NOW, Mister Murillo!" he roared. The Iron Heart's cannons thundered and the pirate vessel shuddered under the assault. A moment later, the skjæren redirected the winds that seemed to send the mighty Explorer vessel speeding away at an impossible speed.

"MAGNUS!" Caligari howled as the Iron Fist quickly fell behind. "I will slaughter your crew, take your woman and EAT YOUR HEART!"

"Another time, perhaps," the Vendel captain muttered in response as Colette swung across the bow, deactivated the lens blade and threw it back to Magnus.

"You," the Vendel said suddenly, turning on the bosun, "are utterly and unquestionably insane!"

Colette laughed and hugged the captain as the crew cheered. "Merci, mon capitaine!"

Important Sites

The following Théan sites hold a great deal of importance to the Explorers society. The first section, "Chapter Houses," details the most important gathering places in the civilized world. The remainder constitute sites which are currently being investigated, or which may support and investigation should enterprising Explorer characters seek them out. Most of these sites may be transferred to non-Théan campaigns with minimal difficulty

Chapter Houses

THE UNIVERSITY

Until recently, MacCormick's old home was one of the most prominent places in the wealthy city of Carleon. The MacCormicks have earned much of their fortune from the port, which still serves as an excellent place from which to launch expeditions. The formidable ancestral manor continues to serve as both home and headquarters for the Explorer's Society. Although officially known as the University of Archaeology and Exploration (or simply "The University"), Society members affectionately call the primary chapter house "MacCormick's Place."

The building itself is largely unchanged from the transformation of Carleon, other than the addition of spires and a thorough exterior cleaning. By contract, the surrounding estate lands have changed drastically, like other areas of Carleon under Derwyddon's direction. Separating the family lands from the University complex makes the Society's headquarters seem grander and more magnificent, but some foreign Society members remain a bit wary of the building. If Glamour was used to create the building, they wonder what will happen if the Sidhe take their gift back?

Glamour may have enhanced the University's appearance, but the MacCormick manor was built in a time when kings faced attacks from brigands, so even now the structure is imposing. It consists of the original MacCormick home and two wings added since Cameron founded the Explorer's Society. The entire exterior stands four stories tall, and is built

Chapter Houses

The Explorer's Society boasts chapter houses in almost every nation in Théah. Its teams travel to the most fascinating and dangerous places throughout the known world. Transplanting these locations to other worlds is relatively simple. Each chapter house serves a particular purpose and dig sites are more important for they contain than where they lie on the map. The GM's primary concern should be maintaining relative levels of hospitable vs. inhospitable environments.

Relations with the Sidhe

As a major organization based in Avalon, especially one devoted to study of the Syrneth, the Society knows that it must handle relations with the Sidhe very carefully; nowhere is this truer than at MacCormick's Place.

Carleon lies at the heart of Avalon's power, and the entire city is a testament to the power of Glamour. A building dedicated to studying the Syrneth might be considered anathema to that symbolism, so the residents take great care to honor the Goodly Folke. As explained in Chapter Two, the Sidhe are an enigmatic presence in Avalon and seem to like it that way, so the Explorers take care not to "investigate" their business too deeply.

On the other hand, it would not do to appear too indifferent to them either. Discounting the presence (and value) of Legend would be almost suicidal. Fortunately, the University's charter includes an admonition to "educate the general populace whenever practical." The primary expression of this education is the museum, which has many artifacts on display (all non-functional) and several exhibits showing dramatizations of life, as the Explorers believe existed during various eras. The Sidhe have a section devoted entirely to them. It includes a few works of art including Sidhe, most notably the great painting *Elilodd Receives the Graal*, as well as several artifacts and "historical curiosities." The Sidhe were so impressed by the display that they offered a contribution to it, a special harp that plays peaceful music by itself during the museum's operating hours.

from stone a foot thick; no windows were added to the bottom two stories. To date, there have been only three successful thefts, none of which resulted in the loss of major artifacts. No attack has done real harm to the edifice or anyone within its walls. Out of respect for the MacCormick family, the estate's entrance remains unchanged. The MacCormick family's coat of arms is displayed above the great oak door almost as thick as the stone walls.

Currently, the central building serves as the Society's headquarters, and includes living quarters for all of the Department Heads and their assistants. Headmaster Bernadore lives here full time with his family. The Head Council meets in what used to be the receiving room, which has been converted specifically for that purpose. Two other sizable rooms host diplomatic functions and larger, important meetings. Some of the most pivotal expeditions have been organized in these halls as well. The main floor is now the official Society museum, and for a small fee anyone can visit for the day. Children and Goodly Folke are admitted free of charge. In lieu of direct sunlight or candle-guttering scones, several brightly glowing artifacts from the Thalusan Isles illuminate the galleries.

The east wing houses most of the University's official functions, most notably its library and classrooms. The Darius Olaf Library is one of the finest in the world, and the faculty considers it the pride of the Society. Certainly, few dispute its preeminence regarding books on history, and its wealth of Syrneth data is unsurpassed. As for the school itself, while the focus is clearly on historical and scholarly study, the University offers a complete curriculum to produce well-rounded

graduates. Avalon nobles study beside nascent Explorers and Vendel students have begun enrolling in increasing numbers. While a few classes are held in the west wing, most take place in here to take advantage of its variety of resources. The east wing also contains laboratories and research facilities. Artifact Researchers who visit MacCormick's Place are rarely disappointed in the quality of the equipment and materials available, and between Avalon's wealth and Carleon's prominence in trade the east wing is always well stocked.

The west wing is considerably more sedate. Most of the building consists of dormitories, with larger suites for important guests and visitors. It also holds the kitchens and other services as well as several classrooms that double as informal meeting places for younger members who are planning expeditions or discussing their opinions of recent events.

As with most universities, students and faculty alike form smaller organizations among themselves. For the past ten years, the largest and most popular has been the Glamour Association whose stated goal is to study Avalon magic, including the ramifications of its return and its effects on society both at home and abroad. A supposedly unintended side effect is that the Association increases Glamour's potency by spreading its fame and thereby strengthening Avalon as a result. Members of this Association have a few members from beyond the Glamour Isles, all of whom have a genuine curiosity about Sidhe magic; other foreign students consider the organization a thinly veiled effort to bolster Avalon's standing in the world. The tension rarely comes to a head, although tempers occasionally flare over the subject.

Another notable group on campus is the Tinkerer's Club. The average Théan has an image of gnomish Explorers Tinkerers huddled together in research labs, peering over bits of clockwork while speaking in incomprehensible terms. While Tinkerers do occasionally indulge in this sort of study, many are either Field Scholars or aspire to join them. As a result, they train in a number of varied activities ranging from "mad invention" contests to medieval-style tournaments in which they hone their survival skills in a safe and relatively friendly environment. The highlight is of each tournament is the pentathlon in which would-be Field Scholars use whatever talents they possess to bypass obstacles by climbing, dodging, leaping, swimming and swing-

ing. These tournaments grow in popularity each year, and the Club hopes to hold a public tournament by the summer of 1670. If successful, they intend to petition Queen Elaine in the hope that she will attend. If she does, the Club means to give her a show Carleon will never forget.

Whatever its internal factions may be, all University students band together when it comes to really important issues — like Tyro baiting. The Rose and Cross' Carleon House decided soon after its founding that the University made an ideal rival, and young Explorers have risen to the challenge with relish. University students in Carleon are advised to watch for "traps" such as buckets on doors and overly polished cobblestones, while Initiates and Poor Knights often suffer "attacks" from dropped rodents or ink-filled bladders. Master Thomas Lynn and Headmaster Bernadore quietly permit these antics as long as they remain harmless, reasoning that they are actually good training.

For all of the University's importance as a school, ultimately it is best known as the headquarters of the Explorer's Society, making it an important target for the Society's enemies. While MacCormick's Place was built with security in mind, Explorers know firsthand that the most cunningly built defenses are no substitute for vigilance and sharp eyes. Shield Men, trained at the Avalon House along with all other Explorer branches, take defense of the University very seriously. Other adventure-minded Explorers, while not part of the official security force, can be quite protective of the school and eagerly leap to its defense when the opportunity arises. Aside from a few minor incidents involving the school's alchemical study, the headquarters has the best safety record within the Society.

CHAPTER HOUSE: KIRK

Although the Kirk Chapter House has a reputation as an Explorer resort and vacation site, Society members know that a considerable amount of work is done there. As the original headquarters of the Discoverer's Society and home to the Artifact Research department, Kirk House is second only to the University itself in importance. Currently, Jenna Olaf, daughter of original founder Darius Olaf, runs the chapter house, continuing her enthusiastic support in her advancing years.



The original building has received several additions over the years. It is a sprawling three-story building that contains two wings (including over 30 bedrooms,) three laboratories, two impressive conference rooms, a library second only to the University's, a kitchen worthy of royalty, a magnificent courtyard in the center of the complex and an arboretum with pools of warm spring water for relaxation.

Darius Olaf built one of the wings himself which he decorated with light-sensitive artifacts unearthed on a dig. One side of the wing has glass walls that face the courtyard while the other side consists of a windowless stone edifice which forms an imposing barrier to intruders. Until recently, much of the new wing remained unused. With the discovery of several Domae Stones and Thalussian artifacts that "refuel" in sunlight, however, it has been reopened. Devices fueled by sunlight recover twice as fast when placed in the glass section. One of the laboratories is devoted to examining these Synchron devices.

The largest of the research labs at Kirk House is in the basement, which keeps damage from mishaps at a minimum. Here, Explorers perform the most advanced study of arcane Synchron principles; indeed, Franco Vesefe spends more time here than in his own home. Synchron tinkering was essentially invented here, and many masters of that art continue to conduct their experiments here. Various glowing artifacts illuminate the laboratory, which gives it an eerie feeling. However, these lights minimize both open flames and shadows, either of which can be dangerous when dealing with ancient equipment. The most common tools are similar to the ones for clock-making, mundane tinkering and chemical study. (Note: at the GM's discretion, characters using these labs for artifact study receive a +5 bonus in either system to all checks.)

While the meeting rooms host official conferences, during the brief summer, a fair amount of the Society's practical coordinating takes place in the courtyard. Displaying a combination of Numan Republic aesthetics and Synchron architecture, the courtyard is a delightful place in the pale light of a mid-summer evening. The *al fresco* atmosphere and fantastic decor lend themselves to a wide variety of events, from informal meetings to weddings.

Directly across from the courtyard stands the Arboretum, home to several magnificent trees and some of Théah's most unusual samples of flora, made even more remarkable by the contrast to Vendel's often inhospitable weather conditions. None of the flora is dangerous, though one variety has thorns that turn the skin of anyone who touches them light blue for a week. Explorers are familiar with these flowers, but one intruder was tracked down after falling into a Bluethorn bush and being mistaken for a frozen zombie. This conservatory is a popular place for casual meetings with visitors, as its beauty can enchant the surliest interloper.

Natural underground hot springs feed the building's spa baths, which are very popular among Explorers and their patrons. Truth be told, a number of less formal negotiations have been conducted here, where the hot steam puts everyone at ease.

The living quarters are quite mundane compared to the rest of the building, although they maintain Vendel's high standards for comfort. Each has a bedroom, a fireplace, a bath, a desk and the basic amenities occupants may require. Although Scholars are welcome to study in their rooms, no Synchron devices are permitted in sleeping areas. When the library overran the confines of the study it was expanded within the original house, making it easily accessible to most quarters.

Since the Kirk Chapter House opened, the study has also served as a museum. During the library's recent expansion, the museum is temporarily unavailable, and its artifacts and memorabilia are in storage. The building's fifth renovation is under way, with an anticipated unveiling in 1671.

Unfortunately, the Kirk chapter house's vaunted reputation has made it a popular target for the Society's enemies. Burglary attempts take place on a regular basis, and more destructive assaults are not unheard of. Arson, sabotage, and even open attacks have plagued the House's membership. All external windows have gratings, although after an arsonist's attack, hinges and latches have been added. Jon Magnus, the Vendel House's chief of security, has begun working closely with Kirk Lord Sheriff Ivar Dags in hopes of uncovering the Explorers' enemies in the city.

On a less dire note, while the Artifact Research department takes great pains to ensure basic safety, enough minor incidents have occurred to convince several neighbors to look elsewhere for housing. Occasional ground-shaking incidents, inhuman sounds and one memorable escape of a disturbing but harmless clockwork bird have made the nearby businesses less than friendly.

CHAPTER HOUSE: ALTAMIRA

Castille is not the most hospitable land for the Explorer's Society. Few Castellians can openly support the Society while in their homeland, especially now that Cardinal Verdugo has obtained an official church sanction against it. This makes the chapter house in Altamira more important than ever. Its founder, the forward-thinking Alejandro Diega, kept its existence a secret from the very beginning. When the Discoverers became the formal Explorer's Society, he realized that Church approval would only provide so much protection from the Inquisition. As a prominent Vaticine scholar previously favored by the Church, he remained singularly vulnerable to their scrutiny. So in Corantine 1603, he turned his estate into the Society's first secret Chapter House.

No other chapter house in Théah demonstrates the Explorers' "secret society" status so thoroughly. Señor Diega continued to lead excavations in direct service to the Church, while quietly ensuring that Synchron information and artifacts reached the Society; his successors continue his careful tradition to this day. Not only does the Society know about the family's efforts to maintain a careful balance, but for decades it has ensured that the Head Council is updated on every find and receives copies of all notes on items that the Church receives.

After a recent brush with the Inquisition, Don Alejandro's grandson Julio Diega, who currently runs Altamira House, has put an especially fine point on secrecy. The Casual Code is used extensively while communicating outside the Chapter House grounds and most activity on-site is performed in an extensive underground facility. Diega built only one entrance to these facilities, in a central room that the servants only know for the door that they never see opened. When Explorers visit the house, they ask to see the family's famed tapestry collection; servants then escort them to this room where Don Julio joins them. For safety's sake, several magnificent carpets of Crescent origin adorn the room. Although the Diega family has no sorcerous blood, their Crescent heritage is a closely held secret, especially in these troubled times. Beneath one of the priceless rugs lies a trap door that leads to one of the finest research facilities in the world. Although secret accommodations cannot be as extensive or complete as those two, Society scientists would be hard-pressed to find facilities as safe or efficient as Altamira.

Syrneth artifacts are the greatest danger in this endeavor. Concealing human Explorers is one matter; hiding a glowing amber staff as tall as a man is quite another. Don Alejandro instituted a number of safety protocols for handling artifacts when he built the house, and each successor has improved means of neutralizing such threats. No single accident has caused undue disruption thus far, and the locals are fond enough of the Diega family that they conveniently forget to mention the few unusual incidents to Inquisitors. Every occurrence adds to the estate's reputation, however, and enough oddities will eventually result in unwonted attention from Verdugo's cronies, so visiting Scholars are instructed to use extreme caution when dealing with artifacts.

The estate's library is insignificant compared to those in Avalon and Vendel, but the Altamira Chapter House doesn't need more because has close connection to Arciniega University, whose library surpasses even the one at Society headquarters. *La Ciencia* is also a short ride away, and the Diega family's standing allows discreet Explorers access to its resources.

Aside from the sub-basement, the estate is exactly what one expects of a Castillian nobleman. Don Diega's home is spacious and inviting, nestled on rich farmland that supports cattle, livestock and a variety of crops. The commoners working the land are treated exceptionally well and remain intensely loyal to their Don.

The Altamira Chapter House's other great resource is the Diega family itself. Aside from being a wealthy patron of the Explorers, Don Julio has followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, and become one of the most learned Scholars in the Society. His sister Marcela is also a gifted Explorer, and would be considered one of the greatest Field Scholars on Théah if knowledge of her membership wasn't restricted to Mirror-level members and above. Marcela, like her ancestors, operates under the auspices of the Church, which means that she usually does not work directly with fellow Explorers. To date, her exploits have been as wild as the most reckless Avalon Explorers and her fellow Castillians take great pride in the adventures of "their" scholar-heroine.

Despite the support from the people, the Inquisition presents a very real danger. Trained to ferret out conspiracies and suspicious almost to the point of paranoia, Verdugo's agents are a constant threat even to the masterfully concealed

resources of the Diega estate. One distracted Scholar is all it takes if the wrong eyes or ears get wind of his activities. Doña Arantxa Grijalva — an agent of El Vago — is an old friend of Don Julio's and from time to time offers the support of the local Los Vagos group to help "discourage" those who pry too deeply into private business. However, she has made it very clear that she is motivated by the desire to preserve freedom for her countrymen and not necessarily to assist the Society overall.

Dangerous Frontiers

VESTENMANNAVNJAR: THE SHATTERED LEGACY

The island of Klørbulg (The Raging Storm) has several claims to fame. Once almost as large as Oddiswulf, it is home to both Jarl Magnus Brynjulfrsson and the near-legendary Larsfolk tribe, and to Eldgrim Ulfsson and his band of Vestenmannavnjar extremists who are violently opposed to anything Vendel. Although Vesten tradition places the final battle between the Living Runes on Oddiswulf, one tale has Villskap delivering Krieg's deathblow on Klørbulg and another has the final blast burning through Krieg the Inhuman and striking the island. Both versions end with Klørbulg shattered.

Approximately two years ago, during a violent storm an enormous lightning bolt struck the hill above the village of Svalden. When one of the town elders arrived at the peak the next morning to make his daily prayers, he found Villskap, the rune of Fury, carved into the stone face. The elder gathered his fellow *skjaeren* and sat throughout the day in wonder. Then, as moonlight touched the rune, the edges of the monolith seemed to glow. It could only be a sign from the gods, they reasoned, meant to rouse the Vestenmannavnjar to reclaim their glory.

Once the island's largest fishing village, Svalden quickly became town, meeting place and holy site all rolled into one. However, Jarl Magnus only permits *skjaeren* to visit the sacred area, which does not sit well with Ulfsson's growing mob of axe-wielding anti-Vendel supporters who flock to Svalden almost weekly. Naturally, the site has roused a great deal of Explorer interest as well, but they have yet to navigate the dangerous political waters of the Vesten locals.

Meanwhile, on the great island of Oddiswulf, a full team of Explorers has been excavating high in the Hjallmar Mountains under the direction of Emily Harrison, Justice Sommer's protégé. Ever a cautious man, Kirk's Lord Sheriff Ivar Dags presented them with a list of conditions, foremost of which is that Explorers treat anything they found with the utmost respect and take every precaution to avoid damaging whatever might still be buried. Sheriff Dags has declared that Vestenmannavnjar may visit the site but always under supervision. Although tensions between the Vendel and the Vestenmannavnjar were somewhat less strained in Kirk, Dags does not want a situation like the one brewing in Klørbulg. Thus far no unpleasant incidents have occurred and Dags plans to keep it that way.

Before the serious excavations on Oddiswulf began, the Explorers and their patrons, the Vendel League agreed to negotiate the disposition of each item separately. Ostensibly, the League supported the excavation as a "historical documentation" of common ancestors. (The disposition of items with actual power, of course, would be another matter entirely.)



With their position secure for the moment, the Explorers on Oddiswulf left the comforts of the Chapter House in Kirk and headed up into the mountains. They found a variety of ancient tools and markings in the mountain caves. While the carvings are magnificent and mysterious, they tell little about those who created them. Each helmet, pot or necklace, however, revealed a bit more about the world of the ancient Vestenmannavnjar. A few Scholars argued that such study was a waste of time because the Vestenmannavnjar have worked so hard (and apparently successfully) to remain unchanging over the centuries. But other persist in exploring the site, stating that even subtle difference between ancient and modern Vestenmannavnjar could reveal much about the culture's progress and evolution.

Despite the weather, excavations on Oddiswulf are comfortable compared to those in the Midnight Archipelago. There are no ten-second beetles buzzing overhead or clockwork traps lying in wait to tear unwary Explorers to pieces. None of the few artifacts found thus far appear sorcerous nor particularly precious to the Vestenmannavnjar residents. The greatest dangers so far are the usual challenges of vertical excavation: landslides, falling rocks, and gravity.

The real challenge is dealing with the Vestenmannavnjar. Despite the relatively peaceful situation in Kirk, an increasing number of locals find the mere presence of the Explorer's Society blasphemous. The Society knows that conditions would be much worse for them on Klørbulg but that does not keep them from wanting to see the famous Villskap rune. They continue to negotiate with Jarl Brynjulffrsson but it is apparent that Ulfsson has his ear.

Everything changed a few weeks ago, however, when the excavation team moved a bit higher into the mountains. They were forced to take shelter in a cave to escape a fierce storm that rose out of nowhere. The thunder was deafening and hailstones the size of a man's fist fell from the sky so they retreated deep into the cave. As they followed the floor, it took them down a slope and into a huge cavern where they saw something that stopped them all in their tracks — a huge monolith with the rune of Villskap clearly etched upon its face.

Obviously this wonder presents a number of exciting but dangerous dilemmas. Which rune is the real one: the one on Oddiswulf or the one on Klørbulg? Or are they both authentic? Is this a sign of impending doom? If Klørbulg's rune is a fake, might that explain Ulfsson's fanatical resistance to the Vendel? Jarl Brynjulffrsson easily has the stronger power base, and his fame extends throughout the islands but Ulfsson has a silver tongue and a keen wit and attracts the more radical Vestenmannavnjar, not just on Klørbulg.

Emily Harrison maintains regular contact with the University, in case the situation explodes into violence and the excavators need a fast rescue. Her concerns do not seem overly dramatic, given the volatile nature of the Vestenmannavnjar people.

Thalusian Isles

BACKGROUND

Thousands of years before the rise of man, the Synchron race known as the Thalusai made their home upon Théah. According to what the Society knows, they were spread throughout the continent, and enjoyed the benefits of technology and social advancement (see *Chapter Two for more information*). For all of their apparent power and influence, however, they seemed to prefer strongholds that were off the beaten path, at least by the standards of a land-based species. The two most indicative examples of this are the finds in southern Vodacce and the islands that bear the race's name. Eleven remarkable islands sit placidly at the northern end of the Midnight Archipelago, forming a sort of archipelago within an archipelago. The only human known to have lived here before they were discovered several years ago was a shipwrecked Vodacce seaman named Leon (see *below*).

The Society made their initial discoveries on a trio of islands, which form the crux of their studies here. In addition, two more islands have opened up for investigation. The other six remain impassable due to massive swarms of insects, some of which are barely visible to the naked eye, while others are as large as human fists. Among these creatures are the infamous “ten-second beetles” so named because no one survives their bite for longer than ten seconds, and the “drunken clouds” which move with an inebriated unpredictability and afflict overwhelming disorientation on those caught within them. A rare few breeds are even larger than humans. (Note: Game Masters using the Roll-and-Keep system are encouraged to use the random Ruin Monster information on pages 159-160 in the *Game Masters Guide*, giving the results an insectoid appearance. Those using the d20 system should refer to the “Vermin” section of the *Monster Manual*TM.)

Despite the dangers the Thalusian Islands are considered true marvels, treasure troves of knowledge and an enigma to confound the Society's mightiest intellects. Although they may be the greatest finds the Society currently controls, they remain as mysterious as the race that inhabited them. The Explorers know them better than many of their other sites but unseen traps continue to claim the lives of the unwary.

Survival is the real trick on the Thalusian Islands. Lethal insects of every size imaginable and murderous devices placed seemingly at random throughout the catacombs keep Explorers on their toes. Cave-ins are common and more than a few incautious Explorers have been buried alive by collapsed tunnels. This terrible danger led Archibald Dunnet, the former Site Director, to limit Explorer groups entering the catacombs to no more than eight members. The current Director, Jacqueline Dumont, has maintained this policy: she received her appointment after Lord Dunnet was himself badly injured in an explosion.

In spite of the danger, Explorers continue to flock to the island chain. New discoveries are almost a routine occurrence in the region, and the Scholars on the Thalusians are closer to deciphering a Synchron language than any other unit in the Society. For many, the Thalusian Islands represent all the peril — and possibility — inherent in the Society's efforts.

The Islands

Islands are numbered from northwest to southeast, based on the rough column they form; each is named for an Explorer who contributed to their overall exploration. The initial three islands on which the Society made landings are Grimorias (the second island) Alvara (the seventh) and Stark (the tenth). More recently, an expedition has begun on Thane, the fifth island, and in the last several weeks a team has managed a landing on Coleson, the eighth island in the chain.

GRIMORIAS

Grimorias is still considered the most dangerous of the islands explored thus far. It houses the enormous Mt. Re, which is at least three miles high, although clouds obscure the peak, so it is difficult to accurately gauge the distance. This island has the greatest concentration of ten-second beetles in the area, and every cavern found thus far has killed at least five Explorers. Enormous scarabs the size of horses inhabit the island, and although they lack the horrific poison of their smaller cousins, their scythe-like mandibles and razor sharp forelegs make them a dangerous menace nonetheless. And for all the dangers the Explorers face, they have found little of value there. Several artifacts have been unearthed, but most are duplicates of items found elsewhere. Grimorias' secrets, it seems, still wait to be found.

Grimorias is known primarily for its five infamous caverns: The Abyss, Legion's Mouth, Martin's Doom, No Man's Cave and The Thalusian Grave. Society members at the chapter houses wince at the melodramatic names but Explorers on them appreciate the gallows humor. The Abyss has a chasm with no discernable bottom, which was found when the ground collapsed beneath an exploration team. The Society reopened the cave several months ago. Similar pits have subsequently been discovered, albeit without loss of life.

Legion's Mouth is a shallow cave heavily lined with amber. When the first Explorer team reached the center of the cave, small spheres of amber shot out like musket balls, cutting down several members before merging with the walls once more. Martin's Doom is the home of many ten-second beetles; the unfortunate apprentice who gave the tunnel its name in fact discovered the species. No Man's Cave is “haunted” by strange lights and the sight of the opening seems to cause an instinctive fear in most Explorers. Only one team has dared enter the cavern, and of those six only one returned; he died at the cave entrance, burned almost beyond recognition. Since then, the Society has forbidden any members from entering; they hope that further exploration of other caves will produce an answer to the mysterious threat, or perhaps a safer means of approaching it.

The Thalusian Grave is a large hollow at the end of a long, thin tunnel. The hollowed out area is the only known artificial structure on any island not lined with amber; instead, it pours liquid amber on anyone who enters the cave. The liquid is very warm, but cools quickly. It hardens as it cools, sealing nine Explorers forever in golden coffins. Three others escaped, although it took weeks to free them from the amber that flowed over various appendages. Remnants of amber-paved roads lead to the Abyss, Martin's Doom, and Legion's Mouth which seems to indicate that they once served a purpose besides killing Explorers.

ALVARA

The most important discovery on the island was not a Thalussian find. In an ironic twist that would satisfy the most hyperbolic bard, it was instead the diary of the shipwrecked Vodacce known simply as Léon. His diary was found in a small cave among a few tools and pieces of crudely worked amber. According to the journal (which contained meticulous details) his ship ran aground on the island in 1605. His observations warned Explorers of numerous hazards on the islands (though the Explorers found the journal too late to save the earliest expeditions), and he is are credited posthumously for saving scores of Explorer lives. Léon eventually escaped the island on a raft but his final fate remains unknown.

Alvara's other notable cavern has been dubbed The Fiery Winds. Explorers uncovered several thin amber "books" here in the last year, which draw Scholars to the tunnels in spite of the danger. The books lack traditional pages. Touching the top of the tablet causes markings to flow upward, as if on a scroll; likewise, pressing the bottom causes the marks to flow down. A clever Tinkerer found a "blank" tablet, and has begun keeping a diary by inscribing it with a Thalussian Claw. The priceless books remain unusable, however, since the writing has yet to be translated.

The Fiery Winds earned its name when an explosion claimed the lives of twelve early explorers. Subsequent disturbances take place on an uncomfortably regular basis. Some of these explosions have since been attributed to the lenses first encountered on Stark (*see below*), although many are still unexplained.

STARK

The smallest of the islands thus far explored has yielded the most information about the Thalusai. The island's structures contain numerous amber spheres that float at a fixed height above any surface over which they are placed. Lens blades, Thalussian Claws, pistols, and other impressive weapons are routinely uncovered throughout the caverns. More samples of Thalussian writing have been found on Stark than any other two sites combined. Most impressive, however, is the Great Hall, a colossal structure which dominates the entire find. One enormous archway lies at the end of an especially wide, intact road, opening into the 500 ft. tall "Mouse Hill." This main corridor has several small tributaries leading into many small rooms, which run through the entire structure before branching in two directions.

The left passage opens into a huge interior arena with an enormous crystal in the ceiling extending out the top of Mouse Hill, which illuminates the room by redirecting exterior light into it. A team of apprentices keeps a fire lit on the Hill next to the crystal when the room is being examined at night. A large, low oval platform forms the room's base, and is surrounded by hundreds of holes, which range from a few inches above the platform to the midpoint between floor and ceiling. Each hole is almost exactly three inches in diameter, each spaced evenly some thirty inches from one another. The holes are perfectly identical, and five months ago a Field Scholar found crystalline detritus in one. The pieces are smooth and clear, and they might be a variant of Thalussian amber, or possibly shards of Domae Stone. If correct, that would lend considerable weight to the theory that the Great Hall was a meeting place for a united Syrneath civilization.

The right passage has just recently been cleared. During

the initial foray into the structure, an excavator touched a lens in the wall. It exploded, collapsing the corridor and killing the excavator along with two of his fellows. The society has asked for volunteers to properly investigate the passageway. All Society members are forbidden from touching lenses embedded in walls at Thalussian sites, though it has recently been discovered that anyone wearing a Claw of the Thalusai may handle a lens without detonation. (Any contact with non-Thalussian materials, however, causes the lens to explode, doing 7k7 damage in 7th Sea terms and 10d6 damage in d20 terms, making "blast lenses" potent if hazardous weapons.)

Bera Olrik, one of the team's more ambitious Scholars, recently made another amazing find. She had studied Stark's insect life for some time, and made extensive notes on the tunnels' design and architecture. On a hunch, she gathered several excavators and delved deep into the island. When she determined they were as far underground as exploration of the catacombs allowed, she ordered the group to dig straight downward. For five nights, they continued their experiment. Bera's efforts paid off on the sixth night, although she was nearly buried when the ground collapsed beneath her. As she suspected, more tunnels ran beneath Mouse Hill than had previously been discovered. After some exploration of the newly-found warrens and a few hasty calculations, the Scholar and her team returned to the surface with an amazing claim — all eleven of the Thalussian islands are connected by tunnels beneath the ocean floor.

Scholars throughout the islands declared her theory mad. Aside from the likelihood of flooding, such interconnection would either require tunnels far too deep for humans to discover in six years, let alone six days, or it would be necessary for all eleven islands to share a landmass. Modern theories about island formation lean toward the concept of underwater "mountains," meaning that discovering a common connection between the Thalussians would be equivalent to finding a single mesa as wide as ten mountains, with as many separate peaks. And yet, after several weeks of study, that is exactly what the Society found.

When the existence of the shared structure was confirmed, a brief flurry of wild speculation ensued. Sunken continent theories became popular for a short time, but cooler heads quickly prevailed. Absolutely no evidence of artificial structures have been found on the seabed. More recent theories lean towards a gradual buildup over time, much as ants will do to create towering hills. The undersea tunnels are so vast that the Society has only been able to explore the smallest portion of them, though a particularly large passage between Alvara and Stark is now commonly used for discreet travel. Needless to say, the Society has kept these revelations under wraps, lest the Inquisition use it to further fuel the fires.

THANE

The newest excavation on the island of Thane remains a mystery. Like the other islands, Thane has a mountain in the center, though not much larger than Mouse Hill. It has been affectionately named the "Rabbit Warren." The only findings of interest are several blast lenses, and more notably flat sections with indented outlines in some corridors and rooms. This is a new variation on the rounded items discovered on other islands so they have been studied enthusiastically, albeit without success. No other structures have yet been found.



COLESON

Coleson is named after the Scholar who defeated the guardian swarm of ten-second beetles, risking instant death to test his “sonic dispersal” theory. The Society knows even less about this island than Thane because several expeditions have only managed to secure a small clearing on the island. No artifacts or structures have been found to date, and the central mountain has not yet been reached.

Lake Vigil

Deep within Ussura lies a “lake” large enough to hold the entire nation of Avalon. Ussurans call it *Ozero Bodrustvovany*, and legend claims it is the home of the Vodyanoi, a race of evil spirits held in check by the goddess Matushka. This landlocked sea lies in the kingdom of a mad nobleman and the surrounding area suffers routine incursions from the mighty Kosar raiders. Fishermen harvest the miraculous *golomank* fish, whose oil is both a magnificent fuel for lanterns and a valuable healing aid. Small islands purportedly roam across the surface, floating like great earthen ships near the center. Other islands are said to move *beneath* the surface. All of this would draw Explorers inexorably to Vigil even if several Syrneth ruins did not lie within the sea, some just inside the shore.

Per an agreement dating back several decades, Explorers may examine these ruins once every five years. The ruling Gaius at the time claimed that Matushka herself gave her blessing to these investigations, which increased the Society’s standing in Ussura tremendously. The wizard Koshchei is rumored to be interested in the Explorers themselves, watching over them with his ravens and his magic.

The last Explorer team traveled to the city of Eniseisk, on Lake Vigil’s shore, in 1665, where they used the most advanced equipment then available to acquire a few artifacts from the ruins. Every piece was an example of Setine clockwork. Unfortunately one Scholar wandered off on her own, and was later found frozen in a block of ice. Although the team’s Ussuran guide assured them that Matushka was not upset with the rest of them, the Society has taken the hint. Members are forbidden from travelling alone, and those on the expedition may not journey beyond the city limits without at least two local guides.

Another expedition is being prepared for 1670, the next date when the Gaius will allow a trip. They are actively looking for adventurers to join the mission, since both the opportunities and dangers have risen dramatically. (The area suffers from Kosar raids and recent political instability.) New diving equipment from the Invisible College and recently discovered Setine masks will allow Explorers to remain underwater for unprecedented periods of time, hopefully producing a wealth of new information.

Some ambitious Explorers, particularly among those in Modern Investigations, believe the ideal solution to the various problems with Molhyna is to go to the source — Knias Vladimir v’Petrov, who rules the entire area. Since both usable roads in Molhyna travel through the Sladivgorod, avoiding the Oprechnina entirely may be impossible. Clearly, something sinister is happening in the heart of the province, and conspiratorial mysteries are the Investigators’ bread and butter. The primary obstacle on the road to Vladimir is his Chamberlain, Parigorii Kalenikov, who also serves as regent

and head of the Oprechnina. His reputation is one of utter ruthlessness and absolute devotion to the Knias, making him perhaps the one man in Molhyna who can claim to be so loyal. Kalenikov is clever and observant, but not one for guile or subtlety. Valdemir has recently gone stark raving mad, but Kalenikov's loyalty will not buckle. Attempting to form some sort of alliance with the man is not advised; though apparently not as horrific as Vladimir (who has begun to pick up some truly monstrous appetites).

Hopefully, the expedition will eventually reach Lake Vigil, where the real challenges await. Aside from the locations and rough sizes of the ruins, little is known about the giant lake, even among the locals. Legends of the Vodyanoi describe them as creatures of enormous power who control all the waters of Ussura and make their home in a grand palace in the deepest portion of the inland sea. The stories grant them the power to reach any other body of water in Théah by using secret passages, all of which travel underwater and lead back to Lake Vigil. Explorers are greatly excited by these stories, particularly in light of the findings from Cabora and the Thalusai Islands. After all, the Setine supposedly possessed similar abilities, which might account for the legend.

Current theory holds that the Vodyanoi, if they exist, are the last survivors of the Syrneth. The clockwork finds suggests that Vigil's residents are Setine, adapted to underwater life and protected from whatever destroyed the rest of their civilizations. Alternately, they could be living machines, like those rumored to exist on Cabora. If the tales of Vodyanoi were even partially true, that would mean a powerful and ancient race has been peacefully living alongside humanity throughout history. Ussuran folklore marks the Vodyanoi as villainous, yet few evils are attributed to them even in the stories. On the other hand, the Explorers have learned that legends often differ wildly from the truth, and there is no telling where folklore ends and Matushka's warnings begin. The team is encouraged to make contact with the Vodyanoi if possible, though extreme caution is advised.

Whether or not any intelligent life remains beneath Lake Vigil's placid surface, Setine machinery almost certainly does. The *golomanka* and the tiny water-cleaning *episura* (tiny crustaceans no bigger than a fingernail) suggest a unique ecology in the region, possibly engineered by the Vodyanoi themselves. This means that larger creatures may hide in the depths, and like most Syrneth sites, the Society expects to encounter numerous and varied death traps similar to those found at Cabora. If the team can brave these dangers and reach the moving islands, however, the Explorers will have an unprecedented opportunity to examine functioning Setine equipment in relative safety.

Mercifully, sabotage has yet to impede the Lake Vigil expedition. Other secret societies have made attempts to undermine previous expeditions, but Grandmother Winter takes her patronage very seriously. In 1650, during the long trip home to Avalon, the Explorer expedition found six men and two women frozen to death. The bodies were as cold as ice, despite the warm weather and the early afternoon sun shining upon them. Each corpse wore a black Cross of the Prophets on a necklace, and all eight crosses had cracked from the cold. The Society has not heard a hint of a threat since from their shadow-wielding foes on Vigil expeditions since.

(For more information on Molhyna, see pages 37-41, 75-79, and 83 of the Ussura sourcebook. Game Masters should also read pages 117-120 and 122.)

GAME MASTER SECRETS: THE SECRET OF THE VODYANOI

Society Scholars are correct in their theory that the Vodyanoi are a variety of Setine that survived the destruction of Syrneth civilization. The roving islands are also examples of functioning Setine clockwork, as hypothesized. However, most of their other suppositions are inaccurate.

Quite simply, Matushka keeps the Vodyanoi imprisoned in Lake Vigil. She has had many opportunities to destroy them but chose not to as would weaken her immensely to kill them. While Matushka can be ruthless when necessary, even she balks at flat-out genocide. Obviously, this means that the stories of great tunnels giving the Vodyanoi access to all the seas and rivers of Théah are patently false. Grandmother Winter is quite thorough, even in her mercy. Alas, most Vodyanoi do not share her compassion.

Scholars are quite correct in theorizing that the Setine were the most powerful, varied and widespread of the Syrneth races. Even the Sidhe could not banish the mighty citadel the Vodyanoi controlled, built as it was at the bottom of Théah's deepest valley. It took the power of Matushka herself to deluge the fortress and submerge the great city Chrysalis, although she had some help from the Setine's own defenses to seal them away. Unknown to all save Matushka and Koshchei, the Vodyanoi actively work to free themselves from their imprisonment and retake Théah.

For all of their hunger to escape, however, the Vodyanoi are very, very patient. They have made many efforts to escape Vigil, and ruins at the Lake's outskirts are in equal measure outposts that were destroyed in the initial flood and the wreckage of giant machines used in escape attempts. The Setine learn more from each failure, and their leadership believes that sooner or later, they will overwhelm Matushka's power. Current Vodyanoi estimates place "sooner or later" at approximately four thousand years, so humanity has little to worry about at the moment. And Matushka has some measure of patience herself.

The stories give Vodyanoi a varied appearance, having the bodies of either large fish or gigantic frogs, each as long as a human is tall, with human faces. Vodyanoi are in fact humanoid. They have scaled, light blue skin, webbed hands and feet, and fairly human faces, though they are completely hairless. They adapted to their new environment long ago, and now possess gills as well as lungs. Such alterations have made them vulnerable to dehydration, although in Lake Vigil that is hardly a problem. Typically, they wield clockwork cannons in battle, although there has been so such need in living memory. All Vodyanoi are extremely long lived.

Matushka, for her part, allows the Explorers to study Lake Vigil because she believes that humans learn best when they see truth for themselves. Koshchei was singularly brilliant and immensely learned before he came to her, and even he would not believe what lay beneath the lake until she showed him Chrysalis. If the Society learns about the Syrneth threat for itself, then its members will be that much more prepared for it. Recent studies into Porté and subsequent actions have proven the Explorers' good intentions to her, and their Syrneth tinkering shows skill in both scientific study and impro-

visation. All of this means they can be permitted to understand Setine technology. Ultimately, it was Synchrony hubris that doomed them, not science, magic, or cultural stagnation.

Grandmother Winter would never admit it, but she has another reason for allowing the Explorer's Society access to Lake Vigil. Not all of the Setine from Chrysalis are steeped in arrogance or hatred. Some legends tell of the creatures who serve the Vodyanoi, and the tales have significant basis in fact. *Golomanka* oil, aside from its uses among humanity, is an ideal lubricant for Setine clockwork machinery. More advanced creations exist, some of which are self-aware because the Vodyanoi wanted intelligent servants. The irony is that the only way the Setine could reliably create sentient life was by adapting their own kind. The slaves of the Vodyanoi are, in fact, Setine themselves.

Breeding a servile attitude was difficult, and like any beings with free will, eventually it occurred to some of these enthralled Setine to attempt escape. Matushka's slumber meant that the shield was implacable, however, and the Vodyanoi were too strong to overwhelm. At the same time, all-out war would have destroyed them all, so the Setine came to a compromise. The islands floating at the surface house exiled slaves, each one a roving Coventry for those tragic souls caught between the elitist Setine and Matushka's

imprisonment. Along with these escapees are a few Vodyanoi who developed something few of their peers ever have: compassion. They despised the ruthless enslavement of their fellows, and joined the exiles rather than continue to live in their corrupt home. Vodyanoi on the surface islands hope to reform Chrysalis some day, though Matushka and most of the servants are certain the cause is hopeless.

The floating islands are under the control of the exiles, who have been evading the fishermen to avoid Matushka's wrath. She has recently taken pity on them, and made those living on the islands an offer. They must take human form (she will give them *Pyeryem* for this purpose) and be bound by her magic never to speak of Vigil's secrets to any save a chosen few, but those who agree may leave their prison. A few have agreed. The Explorers will be their deliverers, and are among the few to whom they may speak of their situation.

It is important to remember that Vodyanoi, even those in self-imposed exile, will not betray their people by divulging their secrets and vulnerabilities, and slaves are not exactly entrusted with the knowledge of the ancients. Escapees can tell them of the danger the Vodyanoi represent and add to their basic knowledge of Setine lore, but they do not know Matushka's secrets or detailed information on technological artifacts.



Even Matushka does not know that the Vodyanoi leaders are aware of this plan, and are insanely jealous. Attacking a ship on its way to the center involves too many risks, but if the slaves kill a few humans in a misunderstanding, who will know the difference? A small band of warriors is prepared to eliminate the Explorers and put the servants back in their place. The islanders have learned to defend themselves, however, and a few human adventurers might be enough to make the difference.

(Note: If the GM wishes to avoid giving the Society too much information, those Vodyanoi willing to become human may not be literate in Setine.)

La Selva De Fendes

La Selva de Fendes or The Forest of Fiends has a dark reputation, used to scare countless Castillian children into going to bed on time. Parents tell stories of three-headed monsters and snarling shadows, just as their parents did and their parents before them. Mentioning these woods will touch a dark spot in anyone who grew up in Castille. Ask any of the locals who actually live near the woods and they will tell you something even more chilling. Scholars at major universities have theories about the origins of the stories but refuse to acknowledge a simple fact — there are beasts in that forest and they are all terrifyingly real.

Located on the northern border of Castille in Rancho Aldana, the thick forest stretches for hundreds of miles. Most local guides refuse enter the place for any price. People tell stories about a friend of a friend who heard a bold adventurer proclaim that he or she would discover the secret behind the dreaded *la selva*. Of course, the expedition never returns, and in some versions, a single survivor stumbles from the forest, bloody, mutilated and babbling incoherently. The ravaged soul dies that evening, but in the morning the body is gone. With such rich folklore surrounding the forest, sooner or later, the Explorers will call for an expedition into its mysterious heart.

SANTABLANCA

The closest town to the edge of the forest is a small village called Santablanca, “the White Saint.” During the day, it is indistinguishable from any other small village. Happy children play in the street, and the spicy aroma of Castillian cuisine fills the air. But as the sun edges toward the horizon, window shutters slam shut and doors are locked tight. If you arrive in Santablanca at sunset, you will find every building closed. Travelers may not leave their rooms at the local inn until sunrise. Even the *alcalde* remains in his house. In the eerie quiet of the evening, the only sounds that can be heard are the distant howls of wolves from the forest.

The graveyard next to the chapel has several small mounds of stones, each piled around a heavy Vaticine cross. Every time someone enters the forest and does not return, the local priest, Padre Hidalgo, adds another stone to the nearest pile. It has become a sad tradition, carried on by every priest who has served the people of Santablanca. Each priest begins a new pile and these mute monuments to the dark forest now fill the cemetery. Vaticine officials would be surprised to learn that several Objectionists number among the congregation attending Prophet’s Mass. Such is the dreadful power of

La Selva de Fendes that praying to Theus has brought the two faiths together under one roof.

Recently, two separate Explorer expeditions have arrived in Santablanca. These groups have nearly tripled the population and literally put Santablanca on the map. Despite the threat from the forest, every merchant, con man and mercenary in the region has flocked to the small town in search of work. When the *alcalde* threatened to fetch the militia to kick both expeditions out, Padre Hidalgo spoke on their behalf, pointing eloquently to the piles of stones in the cemetery. Their expedition could root out whatever evil lies beyond the forests’ edge. If that means marring the peace of their town for a while, so be it. A cheap price to pay for freedom from darkness.

SIENNA’S EXPEDITION

At the edge of town stands a small, orderly collection of tents surrounded by strange esoteric sigils and depictions of animals on posts which marks the first expedition to arrive in Santablanca, headed by Doña Sienna de Guzman del Torres. Doña Sienna is a cartographer from the chapter house in Altamira and has done a lot of research into the mysterious Forest of Fiends. She has drawn some interesting conclusions from her research into the legends of the *Schwartzten Walden* in Eisen which shares a similar stature as a “haunted forest.”

As soon as she arrived, she immediately talked to every villager she could corner and carefully wrote down the stories they recounted about the forest. She turned her notes into a collection of legends, against which she then sought every talisman she could find to ward her camp. Hers is the first expedition to enter the forest and return successfully — three times, in fact — and she is planning a fourth before the advent of winter.

Although this is her first field assignment, Doña Sienna makes up for her lack of experience with a passion and willingness to embrace all modalities regardless of how practical or “improper” they seem. A small woman, she seems to have enough energy to run the expedition on her own, and demands that all members of her expedition attend the Prophet’s Mass regularly.

Religious fervor is a rarity in the Explorer’s Society but Doña Sienna has incorporated it into her worldview. The world is full of mysteries that Theus has posed to His children. Uncovering and reasoning those mysteries brings humanity closer to Theus and His final reward. A graduate of the university in Altamira, she is detail-orientated and meticulous in her study of the forest and its oddities. She has recorded every story even remotely connected with the forest in her journals and has begun to write an extensive thesis of the similarities and connections between the stories of *La Selva de Fendes* and the *Schwartzten Walden*.

Despite her devotion to scholarship and the scientific method, she has also taken the folk magic and protective wards of the locals to heart. At first, she did this purely to study the methods and motivation behind the rituals but over time, she has slowly come to believe in their validity and protective qualities. While some of her colleagues scoff at these beliefs, those same colleagues also remember the disastrous first few months of the expedition.

When Doña Sienna first set up her camp on the outskirts of town, the locals would not talk to her at all. Even though she was Castillian, they saw her as an outsider poking into the mystery of the woods, threatening to bring the creatures out of the shadowy glens and rampaging through the village. Despite local diffidence, Doña Sienna pushed forward but soon found small mishaps befalling her camp. Supplies went missing. Pages disappeared from her journal. Weapons were ruined. Landmarks were moved and the first map she drew had to be scrapped due to inaccuracy. The first small expedition into the woods returned four days later than expected with wild-eyed stories of *something* following them in the woods. They never actually saw it, but it almost caused the expedition to end in a spectacular failure. Half-mad from hunger, fatigue and paranoia, the Explorers began to turn on each other. Doña Sienna had to draw her pistol and threaten to shoot anyone that would not follow her out of the woods. When she returned, the scholar sought the wisdom of Theus and prayed at Padre Hidalgo's chapel for guidance. Impressed by her faith, the old priest began to speak with her, telling her about the legends surrounding the forest. On his advice, she moved the camp to the outskirts of town and began to pay close and obvious attention to the villagers' stories. In the end, Castillian pride won out as the villagers saw the brave young woman's determination. She was one of them, after all, and they could not turn their back on a fellow country-woman.

The camp is shaped roughly like a Prophet's cross. The tents form a main aisle facing the town and then a semi-circle on the other end of the aisle. The main meeting tent stands at the center of the camp. Every morning, the only known map of the forest is unrolled, pinned to a large wooden table and guarded by two Shield Men at all times. This is the main reason Doña Sienna is here and if it were stolen, or destroyed, more than a year's work will have been in vain. There are about half a dozen other Explorers helping the Castillian and approximately a dozen mercenaries and Shield Men wandering the camp as guardsmen or waiting to make a trip into the woods.

WISCHE'S CAMP

A few months after Doña Sienna came to town, another Explorer camp was set up a few miles to the west. This camp had a more military feel to it with the sounds of firearm drills echoing from it at regular intervals. This camp was also tasked with exploring the mystery of the woods but its leader is a much different man who believed the origin of the legends was much more mundane in its origins.

Gregor Wische shares his name with the famous monster hunter of Eisen legend but that is where the similarities end. He is a veteran of the War of the Cross and has seen too many horrors perpetrated by humans to believe in monsters.

While he does not ascribe to the legends, he has researched the stories surrounding the forest, and discovered the similarities between this place and the legendary forest in his homeland. He knew, however, how legends can be twisted to serve mankind. During the war, a band of criminals made camp in the

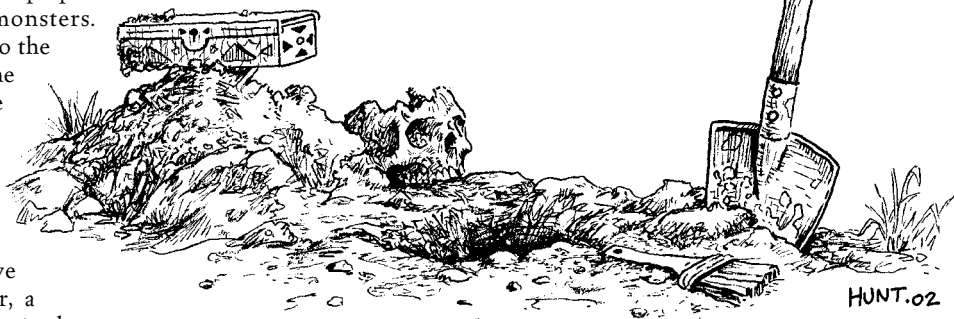
Eisen woods and preyed on the nearby villages by making their raids look like the doings of the shadowy forest creatures. Interlopers heading into the forest were never seen again. Only the chance arrival of an infantry company revealed the bandits and their plot. Gregor knows about this first-hand because he once belonged to the bandit band. He hates himself for the cruelties they inflicted and vowed to atone for his dreadful deeds.

When he first heard stories about the Castillian forest, Wische began to investigate the adventurers and Explorers who had come before him and noticed a pattern. Several of them were Montaigne soldiers sent to garrison the area near the town of Santablanca. Even Castillian members had some unfavorable connection with the war. He collected a few scholars and soldiers and set out for *La Selva*. Based on his experience, he believes that the "things in the forest" are just very clever people, taking advantage of an uneducated populace and letting local legend and active imaginations do their dirty work for them.

Wische has kept the purpose of his operation very low-key. Tents are arranged in military formation and he employs fewer than ten people total. He only interacts with the villagers when he needs to and never shares notes with the Explorers. He is an Objectionist as well, and only comes to town to hear the Prophet's Mass. He thinks Doña Sienna has been duped by the priest's stories and she thinks he is running an aggressive military operation with all the finesse of an enraged bear.

Wische has not gone into the forest as deeply as Doña Sienna because he knows it is a futile gesture. A camp like this needs to be able to pack up fast and fade into the background so that anyone sent looking for them will find nothing, so he has begun to employ another tactic. He sends his men into the forest to try and destroy the food that can be found naturally in the woods. They hunt every bird, every deer and every wolf, and drag it back to the camp. He figures if he can rattle and starve the people inside, they will make a mistake and he can catch them off guard.

The Eisen has two theories about the identity of the bandits. He has told his men they are looking for a Castillian band of patriots using the woods as a base of operations to strike at the remaining Montaigne in the country. The other theory he keeps to himself — that his old mates have reformed and moved to a new area to begin a new reign of terror.





Either or both of the expeditions can easily be replaced by expeditions headed by player characters.

Villanova Island

Vodacce has always been a tough nut for the Explorer's Society to crack. Between the machinations of the Merchant Princes and the rivalry with Vincenzo Caligari, Explorer expeditions always end up compromised, ruined or worse. Times, however, are changing. Caligari's Isle has sunk into the Forbidden Sea, and the ensuing power struggle has caused the previously introspective Princes to turn to allies wherever they can find them. The Explorers have discovered an opportunity for an unusual alliance that could forward their findings on the Syrne by leaps and bounds. All they have to do is trust one man.

Prince Giovanni Villanova.

THE VINEYARD

The tale of Villanova's Aviary begins a few years ago, with a simple farmer working on one of Vodacce's famous vineyards. The winery lay upon a small island a few miles to the west of Villanova's palace isle and supplied his private collection. As the farmer was checking the grapes to see which were ripe, he tripped over something sticking out of the ground. Curious, the farmer got some gardening tools and began to dig. He finally freed what he thought was an animal bone, but the bone was a strange greenish color and hollow on the inside.

He began to dig around the entire area and found more bones.

He excitedly called for his wife and they soon found enough bones to reconstruct an entire skeleton. Within days the whole vineyard was being dug up in search of more. They had heard about strange and unusual Syrne devices and knew that discovering one would fetch them a fortune from their prince or his collector cousin. When Prince Villanova sent some of his men to find out why his wine cellar was suddenly running low, the farmers beamed with pride and showed them their discoveries. Upon seeing the strange bones from the island, Villanova almost forgave the vineyard for stopping production. He had to move quickly before his cousin Caligari could send spies to the island, so he sent a message to the Explorers asking whoever was in the area to identify the bones and artifacts.

An Explorer known simply as Jelena arrived at Villanova's manor a few days later to view the collection. Within the first day, she had assembled the skeleton properly and told the prince it was definitely Setine. While examples of their technology were commonplace in ruins, remains of the actual creatures were few and far between. When she requested permission to initiate an Explorer's dig on the site, Villanova politely but firmly refused, telling her that he could ill afford to have his private vineyard disturbed by a massive dig. Villanova liked the vineyard because it was the one place he could be sure of getting poison-free wine. When Jelena tried to steal the map of the site from his bedroom, Villanova not-so-politely had her removed from his island. In a rare display of mercy, he even let her keep her hands.

Not one to give up, Jelena shook down a few of her contacts for the vineyard's location. She took a small ship and spied on Villanova's activities there. Just as she suspected, Villanova had begun his own dig in the area and recruited every freelance digger in Vodacce. She soon discovered one of the many reasons she was not allowed to dig on the island. Whenever a ship arrived to pick up wine, they dropped off several long boxes, which were then buried underneath the vineyard. When she crept into the vineyard and opened one of the boxes, she found the strangled corpse of a young nobleman: guest of the Prince just a few days earlier. The vineyard's soil, it seemed, held more than just Setine bones. She left the island and its secrets but vowed that someday, she would return.

THE AVIARY

Shortly after the sinking of Caligari's island, Villanova resumed his correspondence with the Explorer's Society. There was apparently more under the vineyard than he could have imagined, he claimed, so he offered to work with the Society to uncover the Setine mysteries. When the first team arrived, they were surprised to discover a massive excavation had replaced the vineyard. In the main central pit, they had already discovered an ornate portal, the outer circle of which held a series of weird unearthly glyphs. Despite having only a partial translation, the team managed to unlock the portal, and gazed in awe as the large door rumbled open.

Underneath the island was a massive chamber, subsequently termed the "Aviary" from the skeletal remains discovered inside. Many of them were hanging from the ceiling, which frightened the initial descent team. There were a dozen initially discovered in the ceiling and many more as the team made their way down to the bottom. The chamber

sank into the earth for almost half a mile before the Explorers encountered the cold stone floor.

The room was primarily cylindrical with several thick stone outcroppings jutting out from the walls, seemingly carved to serve as ledges. Explorers theorized the Setine used them as perches. The walls were decorated as well with pictograms near every ledge. Some depicted strange and hideous beasts, some were rough maps of the area around the site and some appeared to be pictures of the night sky. Unfortunately, there did not seem to be any pictures of the mysterious Setines themselves. However, the diggers are optimistic that such a picture could lie in an undiscovered antechamber elsewhere on the site. A few ledges contain small openings that lead to tiny chambers full of small collections of artifacts and skeletons.

The skeletons hanging from the Aviary's ceiling have proven some of the best examples of the Setine remains unearthed thus far, but they also present a strange problem. The skeletons hang from the ceilings and the undersides of the rock outcroppings. Unlike bats or other creatures, however, the skeletons' feet do not grasp the stones. Rather, they have been inserted into the rock — bound as if imprisoned or restrained — and thus cannot be removed easily. The Explorers believe that a release mechanism of some sort would free the skeletons without damaging the surrounding rock. They have not yet found the release mechanism but they have a few clues about the chamber's purpose. The size and placement of the chamber suggests that, rather than a prison or torture chamber, it instead served as a meditation chamber, a burial chamber, or perhaps a sleeping room. It also implies that the Setines could exist in this position for a long period of time, which might lead to some clues about Setine physiology.

Another peculiar thing about the Aviary is the lack of light sources on the wall. There are no Domae stones, sconces, lanterns or anything to indicate artificial illumination. The only light streams from the open door in the top of the site and it fades out about a quarter of the way down the passage. Torches serve little purpose on the bottom, but Domae stones are rumored to work much better at providing light. They glow brighter and hotter within the chamber, even the ones that don't normally glow. Perhaps the Setines, like bats, did not need conventional light to see. Or if this was some sort of storage area, perhaps they put things here that they did not need to access frequently.

Since being allowed in the site, a few Explorers have noted the lack of animals common to the region. Usually, bats, rats and insects plague deep earth digs like this but the Aviary is strangely devoid of such vermin. Even after the portal was opened, there have been no reports of even a single bat in the large cavern. Members of the site team subsequently noticed the silence that permeates the island above ground as well — not even birds chirping or crickets humming. They do not know whether this began when they opened the portal, or whether it existed before they came to the island. Unfortunately, the prince has refused to let them speak with the farmers who used to work in the vineyard.

Explorers who have studied the Aviary are still not sure about its purpose. If the Setine used it, that would confirm their ability to fly. The most popular theory is that it is some sort of burial chamber or perhaps even a religious site. The major flaw with the burial site theory is the unique nature of the find. A race as widespread as the Setine probably would not have had a single burial site. So far, no other site like it has

been found in Théah. According to previous research, burial sites would share a common theme and be fairly commonplace. The few Setine skeleton fragments they have found seem to be isolated. Similarly, the religious site theory doesn't take into account an apparent lack of a central god figure or an altar area to worship. While time may have destroyed such a piece, residual decorative carvings would point to a central altar or ritual area. No such evidence has yet been found.

Jelena thinks the Aviary may have been some storage facility and that Villanova plundered it in the time between the initial discovery and the point where he invited the Explorers back. But if that were true, he would need to enter the catacombs through some other means, since the portal on the top of the chamber had not been opened in centuries.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Shortly after opening the Aviary to the Explorers, Villanova offered them an unprecedented opportunity. He would allow them unlimited access to the site and the surrounding island if he could borrow a few members to catalogue and identify some artifacts he had recently acquired. The Explorers could keep anything found there on the island in exchange for helping him determine the function of his own artifacts. While the Explorers have not given him an answer yet, it has caused a stir within the Society. Some Explorers recalled seeing some of the artifacts in the hands of rival archaeologists while others apparently belonged to Prince Caligari, according to those in the know. Many members believed that the artifacts came from the empty site he now offered in exchange for Explorer expertise. Others believe Villanova has gotten his hands on a sizable chunk of the Caligari archives and wants to know just what his cousin was looking for in the arms of the Syrne. There are even a few Explorers who suggest misinforming the Prince and liberating the more dangerous items for the Society's study. The Society knows that getting involved with Villanova is a dangerous game; the question is whether the stakes are high enough for them to start playing.

Gregorskorn

Deep in the foothills of the northern Drachenbergen lies a twisting maze of canyons shrouded in perpetual mist. To the people of Eisen, it is a place of legend, a place of myth, where the valor of one of their greatest heroes was proven against one of the most horrifying creatures to ever walk the face of Théah. It is called Gregorskorn, named for St. Gregor, the favored Saint of Eisen, to commemorate the place where he slew the largest Drachen ever recorded.

After days of tracking the beast through the canyons, Gregor, carrying a dracheneisen shield given to him by the Emperor of Eisen, confronted it in its lair. After a long and tiring battle, only the shield kept the brave Eisen safe from the beast's deadly claws and teeth. In his hour of need and with his sword arm failing, Gregor prayed to Theus to show him how to slay the beast. Legend has it that the mists parted and a ray of sunlight shone down on the head of the Drachen, illuminating the one weak point in its natural armor. Inspired by the divine revelation, Gregor drove his blade into that point, mortally wounding the giant creature. In its dying spasms, the Drachen roared and twisted, trying to shake off the man who had killed it. As the walls of the canyon trembled Gregor was knocked to the floor and the great shield that had protected him from the beast was torn from his grip: lost forever within the misty labyrinth that would one day bear his name.

The area maintains much of its mystique and aura to this day. The mist rolling in from the high Drachenbergs would look quite beautiful on a summer day were it not for the fact that, with the high sides of the canyons, it reduces visibility to a mere few feet. The canyons themselves reflect noise deceptively. Travelers through Gregorskorn tell of hearing their own footsteps following them through the narrow gullies, seemingly seconds behind. Shadows and gusts of wind stir the passages, bending and twisting the mist into strange and disturbing shapes. Eisen adventurers and members of the Explorer's Society have often claimed that they have felt as though they were being watched in Gregorskorn — even tracked — through the bewildering canyons by forces beyond their reckoning.

Eisen is a land of superstition and fear where terror lurks out of sight in the darkness. Legends have grown up in the local villages of the wrathful ghost of the Drachen slain by St. Gregor centuries ago. They say that its dying breath became the mist which perpetually cloaks the region and that its ancient claws, long since reduced to mere bone, still hold the Shield of St. Gregor in an endless deathgrip. Many claim that Gregorskorn is haunted and tormented by the spirits of those whom the Drachen slew in its bloody rampage, unaware that St. Gregor avenged their deaths. Still others whisper, close by the tavern fires in the dead of night, that when the clouds cover the moon, the great Drachen's ghost remains, lost in the maze and searching for St. Gregor, cursing Theus for hiding the holy man from its wrath. Even the usually fearless Swamp Dogs — the Iron Guard soldiers of the local *königreich* — are unwilling to tarry in Gregorskorn after dark, claiming that the canyons are all but impossible to defend against the bandits who make their home there.

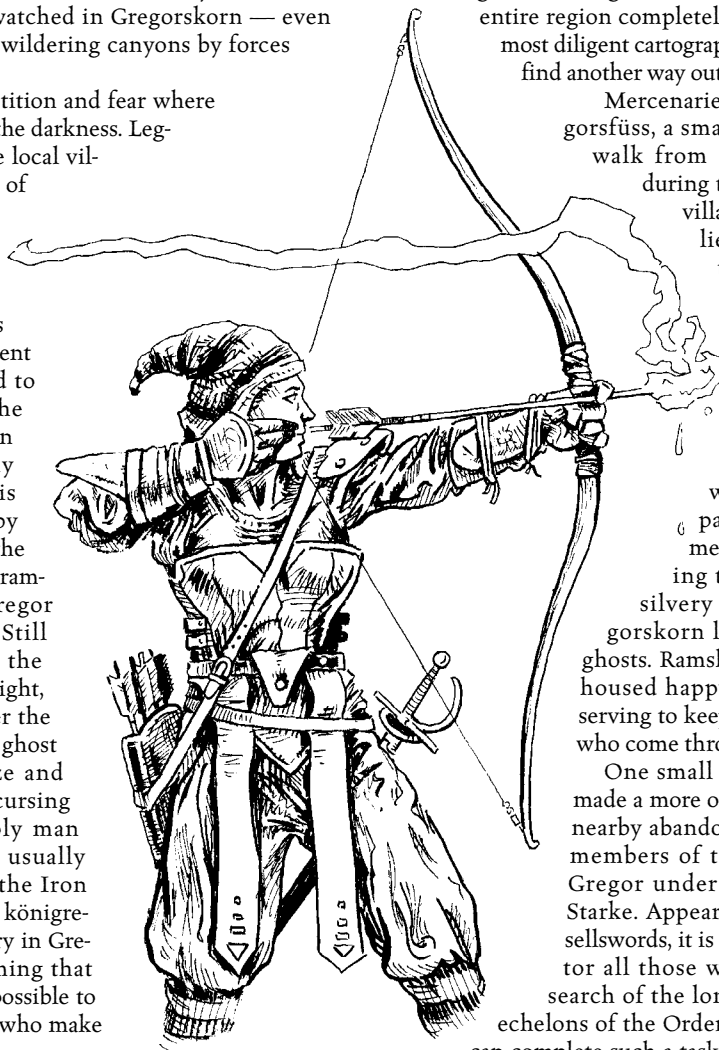
There is some truth to this; the nature of Gregorskorn makes it an ideal refuge for bandits, a fact on which those outside the law are all too willing to capitalize. The impenetrable switchbacks, carved by millennia of rainfall and geological stress, as well as the hidden lakes, underground pools and treacherous sinkholes, make handy escape routes should any outlaw hiding out in Gregorskorn need to avoid discovery. Only the most desperate gangs take refuge in the caves and canyons: hunted by the law of the Iron Princes, sought by mercenaries and bounty hunters, and hated by the poverty-stricken people on whom they prey. Still, mercenaries who brave the canyons to track their quarry have been known to find deserted campsites, blankets and tents torn asunder, along with copious bloodstains and signs of a struggle.

Pösen's Swamp Dogs, expert in tracking and killing Théah's more unusual animals, usually report such a site quietly to local adventurers or monster hunters. No ordinary beast, such as a bear or mountain cat, could wreak such havoc. Despite the lack of tracks or other such marks, the Swamp Dogs believe that Gregorskorn may be home to the last surviving Drachen in Théah. Not that Gregorskorn needs monsters to test the unwary. Sudden changes in the weather high in the mountains can have devastating effects, sweeping the canyons clean with flash floods or burying previously clear passes under a barrage of tumbling rocks. A bad storm can often leave the entire region completely rearranged, and even the most diligent cartographers will be hard-pressed to find another way out.

Mercenaries often congregate in Gregorsfüß, a small village less than a day's walk from Gregorskorn. Torn apart during the War of the Cross by the village's most prominent families, Gregorsfüß is far from the cheery Eisen village it once was. The few young people there depart as soon as they can, leaving the war and its bitter memories behind.

Those who remain are reluctant to make contact with the outside world, passing their days in almost mechanical silence and spending their nights watching the silvery mists flow through Gregorskorn like a river of whispering ghosts. Ramshackle dwellings that once housed happy families now lie empty, serving to keep the rain from the soldiers who come through the town.

One small group of mercenaries has made a more or less permanent home in a nearby abandoned farm — three former members of the knightly Order of St. Gregor under the command of Rudolf Starke. Appearing as nothing more than sellswords, it is actually their duty to monitor all those who brave the canyons in search of the long-lost Shield. The higher echelons of the Order believe that any one who can complete such a task could possibly become the Emperor that they and their war-torn nation are seeking. The three who watch Gregorskorn are in complete agreement — save that Starke, their leader, believes that Emperor should be him. Seeing his beloved nation torn apart by the arrogance and greed of the Eisenfürsten, he has nothing but contempt for any of the current crop who would attempt to rule his country, and believes only *he* has the foresight and devotion to reunite the country. If anyone else finds the Shield, Starke will likely murder the discoverer (and his two fellow watchers), then return to the Order with the Shield — making the unquestioned claim that he alone of his brave companions stands ready to assume the title of Emperor.



The twisting passages of Gregorskorn are more than difficult to navigate, even with a compass. The canyons have claimed many lives in their time, from simple mapmakers and treasure seekers to entire Numan legions. The inhabitants of Gregorsfüß used to light a beacon high above the village on dark nights in the belief that it would show the souls of those who had died in the canyons the way out. In recent times, the village population has dwindled and the custom has been forgotten.

To make things even more difficult, some unknown force ruins any man-made tracking device, from compasses to Invisible College gadgets. The phenomenon is thought by some to be a manifestation of high mineral content in the canyon walls and by others to be the result of an ancient curse. In actual fact, a little of both is closest to the truth. The Explorer's Society discovered that the ancient Tesserans, the least known of all the Syrnych races, harnessed powerful magnetic forces to hurl boulders at Gregorskorn with devastating force. The remains of the devices they used, while shattered and worn beyond repair, still emit powerful magnetic waves that manifest in unpredictable ways throughout the canyons. Normal compasses break, rock walls crumble with little warning, and even full-grown armored men can be thrown bodily away from the vicinity of the devices.

As if this were not enough, the last of the Drachen still make their home in Gregorskorn, where the narrow gullies and switchbacks serve as the last stronghold of their race. Degenerate and pathetic compared to the glory they once knew, their race has steadily swindled, and only rarely are young born to them. Careless travelers and treasure-hunters disappear in the misty crags and trails of Gregorskorn, and these feral remnants of the once-great Drachen although operating on naught more than instinct, are still the most fearsome predators in Théah. In the past year alone, three bands of adventurers have ventured into Gregorskorn, seeking to slay a Drachen and thus become heroes of Eisen. None returned, but it is only a matter of time before someone succeeds in driving a Drachen out of the maze and down amongst the townspeople.

Diggers who have ventured into Gregorskorn have often flippantly remarked that the canyons are too confusing to have been carved naturally from the rock, although they usually ascribe the bewildering nature as a grim joke from Theus or something far worse — a “gift” from Legion himself. The fact is that long before most of the Syrnych dwelled on Théah, the Drachen created the cavernous maze to protect their sacred meeting places. Allowing them a place of quiet contemplation which they regarded in much the same light as one would a modern Vaticine monastery. During their war with the Tesserans, the natural defensibility of the region made it a target for their mysterious Syrnych enemies. Gregorskorn was shattered by barrage after barrage of unthinkable might and the energies which remain, both Drachen and Tesseran, create an atmosphere of impenetrable confusion. Still, much is left that would grant anyone who looked a valuable insight into two cultures, and may serve to answer many questions about the Drachen and the Syrnych that the Explorers' Society has yet to ask.

THE SHIELD OF ST. GREGOR

Through the centuries, hundreds of treasure seekers have ventured into Gregorskorn hoping to find the Shield of St. Gregor, part of the Emperor's *Drachenshuppe*. Some returned empty handed; most never returned at all. One assumption they have all shared is that the Shield lies somewhere within the canyons. However, they are quite literally dead wrong. In

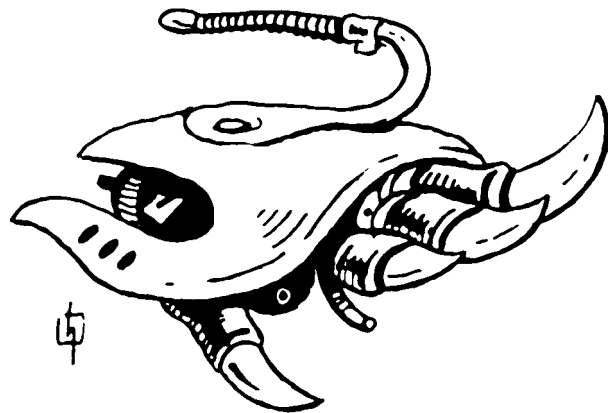
the creature's death throes, its final shrieks brought down much of the remainder of a cliff, opening a vast Drachen-built chamber that had remained buried for millennia. Here now the skeletal remains of the dead beast lie, only a few feet from the Shield that saved St. Gregor's life. With the collapse of the cliff, the chamber is both unstable and difficult to enter.

High above the canyons, a network of ledges leads to the only natural entrance: a tiny hole in the roof of the Drachen chamber, barely large enough for a human to enter. At noon each day, a shaft of light shines through the hole, casting its glow upon the Shield. With enough rope and the right equipment, a team could conceivably descend but it would be very slow work as they make their way down to the ledges that run underneath. The ground, almost two hundred feet below, is much too far for a simple drop-in descent: a fall from that height would almost certainly be fatal.

Effectively a vast dome hundreds of meters across, this mausoleum once served as a great meeting hall for the Drachen. If one looked around the chamber today with proper illumination, it would appear similar to a Numan Empire arena, but curved like the inside of an egg. Ledges dot the chamber sides and the two vast entrances that once admitted visitors have deteriorated over time, spilling stones and gravel onto the floor. The Drachen's bones are sprawled along the bottom of the slope that leads down to the ground and the once-magnificent Shield is dwarfed by the surroundings. Should anyone recover the Shield (and escape from Starke's watchful eye,) they will have great leverage in deciding the next Emperor of Eisen, although that fact in itself guarantees that getting the Shield will be the least of their worries.

(In the 7th Sea system, the Shield of St. Gregor gives its bearer a bonus of 2 unkept dice on the use of any Buckler knack, and adds +5 to the bearer's TN to be hit. Further, when borne by an Eisen or other appropriate nationality particular to the campaign, it confers 1 Miracle Die (see page 103, *Castille*) per session that does not turn into experience points.

For the d20 system, the bearer of the Shield of St. Gregor gains a +3 bonus to his or her AC with no Armor Check penalty due to its weight and craftsmanship. When borne by an Eisen or other appropriate nationality particular to the campaign, the bearer counts as being under the effects of a bless spell, and can cause fear in his enemies once per day by charging into battle.)



“Petit” Charouse

Beneath the breathtaking gardens and elegant townhouses of Charouse lies a different world, hidden from the light of day and the eyes of those who live and labor in Montaigne’s capital city. During construction of the original sewer system, workers found strange passageways of apparently non-human origin extending for miles beneath the city, a warren of tunnels running deep into the ground. The builders reported what they found to the architects; the architects in turn reported the peculiar tunnels directly to the King who ordered a team of men — the best cartographers and the bravest soldiers in Montaigne — to investigate further. Their preliminary reports, delivered from the tunnels closest to the surface, were promising. What seemed to be a maze of caves and tunnels was in fact a city, but a city no human hand could — or would — ever construct.

The further down the King’s men journeyed, however, the less frequent their reports became, and the less accurate their maps of the wondrous place. The cartographers claimed that the tunnels played tricks on their minds, confusing any attempt to recall them accurately on paper. The soldiers doubled the watch, feeling uneasy as they went deeper into the caverns. They reported a sense of being watched but could find nothing more substantial than their instincts. More runners were sent to the surface bearing wondrous devices both as proof of the increasingly wild tales of the expedition beneath the capital and gifts for the ruler of Montaigne.

Then the reports became even more irregular, and whispers of a curse laid upon the investigators began to circulate. The expedition told of unseen forces throwing fully-grown soldiers across passageways, and fire leaping unbidden from walls, severely injuring members of the team. At one point, a vast crystalline block sprang from the floor, crushing the leg of one Captain Guy Duvallier, who was rushed to the surface in excruciating agony. The injury, which never healed, ensured that Duvallier was one of only two survivors. The citizens believe that the passages were haunted and the trinkets sent back to the palace were as cursed as the tunnels themselves, but the King laughed at such ridiculous speculation and ordered the expedition to continue.

A few days later, unknown forces deep in the tunnels wiped out most of the expedition. A solitary soldier made it back to daylight, his mind permanently unhinged by the experience, and died in a War Pensioners’ hospital months later, shrieking cries of defiance to unseen monsters. After a cursory reading of the final reports of the expedition, the King ordered that the tunnels be used as sewers for the city of Charouse, and the rudimentary man-made sewer drains were diverted into the great city. Time passed, and the great subterranean chambers gradually filled with the accumulated refuse of Montaigne. The fears were forgotten, and the people of Montaigne continued to live their lives quite happily without a thought for what lay beneath.

In the dark and patient depths of the sewers, sweeping arches and elegantly sculpted columns stand as mute testament to the existence of a civilization long since vanished, crumbled into ruin by the weight of the ages. Far beneath Charouse itself there were great caverns and unthinkably vast spaces littered with the Syrneth’s forgotten remnants. Intricate works of art lie where they have fallen, buried under the refuse of Montaigne’s great capital. Tunnels glow with a light that has no place in nature, a light created by hands long since perished.

Far from the cramped streets of the city proper, the tunnels widen somewhat; indeed, the further one journeys away from the center, the wider they become. At some of the widest entrances, carriages were driven into the sewers by people paid to harvest the sewage as soil fertilizer and to make sure that the tunnels do not become clogged with discarded trash. Teams of engineers have journeyed throughout the upper tunnels, finding and sealing any exit from the ancient city that may lead outside the walls of Charouse. Their work has kept the city safe from any potential invaders seeking to bypass the formidable walls of Charouse, but it has thwarted any plans the Explorers had to make use of unwatched tunnels on the outer edges of the Domae city. The King — who later declared himself *Empeur* — forbade the Explorers from investigating the tunnels, a policy continued by the Revolutionary government which deposed him.

As to the original purpose of the underground city, the Explorers have a relatively unified theory. Founded at the lowest point in a valley, fertile farmlands look down upon Charouse; the land under the city reaches deep into the center of Terra itself. The Explorers believe it served as the capital — or at least the most celebrated wonder — of the Domae civilization. This ancient race lived in peace beneath the surface of the world, creating devices that defy science and sorcery in their operation. Their technology centered around gemstones, although some of the Society’s most controversial scholars theorize that the stones were somehow grown by the strange Syrneth race. Such stones had been found for centuries in various sites, and were first recorded by scholars of the Numan Empire, who attributed their powers to the gods.

The Explorers of today like to think that they are capable of more educated guesses as to the source of the stones’ power, although they are little closer to the answer than the ancient Numans. Most Domae scholars maintain that the culture was primitive in most respects but may have possessed sorcerous powers far more advanced than any modern Théan.

The Domae were fascinated by the cycle of the sun, moon and stars. Many Domae stones change color, glow or develop even stranger powers in conjunction with the regular movement of the night sky. Despite their subterranean habitat, the Domae apparently became masters of astronomy. One of the most intriguing chambers in the City beneath Charouse is known as the Star Chamber, a great round cavern hollowed out from the earth by unknown means. The walls of the Chamber are covered with Domae stones of various sizes, which glow brightly at night, forming intricate patterns. A long bridge bisects the chamber, passing through the exact center.

The first Explorers to happen on the Chamber reported that it felt like they were hanging at the hub of the cosmos watching Creation abide silently in the firmament. As soon as the team could smuggle an astronomer into the sewers, their suspicions were confirmed. At least part of the Chamber was an accurate map of the night sky over Montaigne, although the portion that would be directly over Charouse did not correspond with the current night sky. Over time, it became apparent that the Star Chamber’s map portrayed the sky as it was over Montaigne at the time of the Domae, and they have since been able to corroborate much of the map.

Much of the night sky is still alien to the Explorers, although some are willing to consider the entire map to be accurate. Others still disagree, citing the lack of evidence of Domae settlement across the entirety of Théah, claiming that the Domae lacked the drive to explore which would have created an accurate map of stars seen from all points on the globe and claiming the map as a fiction. As to the purpose of the Star Chamber itself, the Society remains divided. Every debate, lecture and meeting generates more theories, and new ideas spring up every time a few are disproven.

Currently, the more conservative opinion within the Society considers it the finest achievement of Domae scientific thought and astronomy, while the more radical elements claim that the Chamber either caused the civil war that annihilated the Domae or somehow allowed some of their people to escape the madness that claimed their civilization. Lack of evidence to substantiate this claim insures that the theory remains buried in obscurity deep in the files of the Explorers.

Every expedition the Explorer's Society sends into the sewers beneath Charouse is admonished to take the greatest care, and travels with more than the usual share of Shield Men. Even an unguarded lantern can spell disaster for a team of Explorers, as pockets of sewer gas often become trapped in the chambers of the ancient city. The sewers have natural dangers enough that Explorers find it prudent to hire guides from among the poor who live there (although after the Revolution many of the inhabitants of Petit Charouse have left the sewers behind to live proudly among their fellow citizens). Rumor persists of a community of sewer-dwellers who chose to remain deep under the city, but the Society has yet to obtain any proof of their existence.

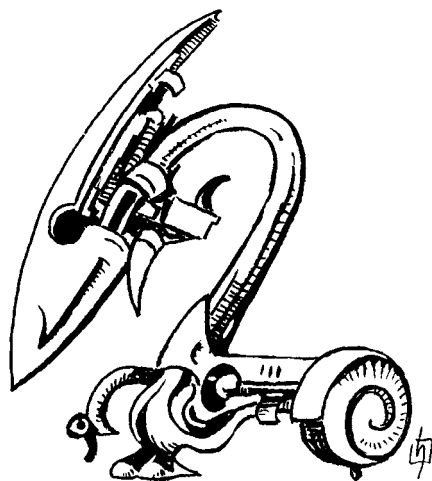
Aside from the dangers of gas, crumbling walls and sharp drops where sections of passage are eroded through, the problems of Montaigne society have seeped into the tunnels. Royalists frequently hide out in the sewers, plotting the downfall of the new social order and the restoration of the monarchy. They are desperate people, and have fired on more than one Explorer expedition out of fear that their location will be divulged to the authorities. Musketeers patrol the sewers, taking care that no threat to the security of Montaigne creeps unnoticed beneath their watchful eyes. Guards also patrol to keep the deeper tunnels of the sewers – the heart of the great City itself – free of interlopers, which includes the Explorer's Society. Expeditions have become very adept at dodging the authorities down here.

Furthermore, since the nature of the sewers became known, the Explorers have not been the only ones keen to visit the tunnels. Treasure hunters and opportunists of all colors flock to the sewers, braving traps, guards, unnatural monsters and the Explorers themselves in the name of personal profit. Greed makes a powerful enemy of such people, and an expedition last year found itself attacked by a gang of thugs as they attempted to exit the sewers with a full load of Domae gems.

Parlement has, for its own reasons, continued *L'Empereur's* policy of forbidding access to the sewers. When the Council of Eight took the reigns of government, the Society petitioned them repeatedly to be allowed to enter the sewers. They couched their arguments in the most persuasive terms they knew, but the Council turned the Society down without so much as blinking. They shared at least one opinion with *L'Empereur*: There were things in the sewers, which should never be disturbed.

Ghouls inhabit the sewers, feasting on the waste and occasionally preying on the weaker elements of Montaigne society. Ghosts, trapped and tormented by the inescapable Syr-neth maze they are cursed to roam, seek their vengeance against the living. It is whispered that the mad spirits of the Domae, turned against each other in life, carry out their civil war after death. Such a theory, regardless of how superstitious it sounds, could go a long way towards explaining the fate of an expedition in 1659 that turned on each other for no discernible reason.





The traps that guard the deeper passages operate differently from “standard” Synrath traps. Survivors tell of breathing walls, red stones set in the ceiling that steal a man’s soul, light that eats flesh from the bones and crystals that spring up without warning from the floor. Beyond the traps, specters and general danger of the sewers, the Council, like *L’Empereur*, fears that whatever caused the demise of Domae civilization still lurks there, waiting to consume Charouse.

Nor are all the threats inhuman in origin. All of Montaigne felt the injustices of *L’Empereur*’s reign, particularly those who lacked the wealth and influence to protect themselves. Many of Charouse’s poor were forced off the streets, lest they offend the eye of His Majesty. They dwelt beneath the streets of Charouse, cast away by the decadent nobles. In dark and dangerous tunnels, the underclass fought tooth and nail to survive while the aristocracy lived in luxury. No one above knew or cared about those who disappeared mysteriously when they strayed too close to the deeper tunnels. With the Revolution, the poor of Montaigne breathed a sigh of relief. The oppression that had forced them into the tunnels vanished almost overnight, and many were only too glad to turn their backs on the midnight caverns. Many, but not all.

In 1665, a man named Alain Louvain came to Charouse to visit *L’Empereur*. A provincial professor of natural philosophy from Vergogne, Louvain wanted to impress his monarch and secure funding by demonstrating his theory of flight using a balloon that harnessed the power of hot air. The display, initially the subject of much interest from the Court, ended in disaster when a strut holding the balloon in place collapsed (sabotaged by a courtier who wanted to embarrass Louvain’s supporters.) The balloon, not sufficiently buoyed by the hot air, pitched ponderously into the raging fire underneath it and was quickly consumed in a violent fireball. *L’Empereur* thought the entire business a hoax at his expense, and was furious at the waste of his valuable time. When he ordered Louvain’s arrest, those who claimed to be the scholar’s friend did not even look at the terrified scientist as the Lightning Guard dragged him away. Louvain was unceremoniously dumped in prison for “disappointing His Most Gracious Majesty” and promptly forgotten. The beleaguered professor, however, did *not* forget, and a few months later, slipped out unnoticed during a riot as the guards beat the more belligerent escapees back into their cells. With nowhere to go, he fled into the sewers, swearing vengeance against *L’Empereur*.

Life in the sewers was not easy for the scientist. The search for food was a constant struggle and the environment took a terrible toll on his already-weakened constitution. He was near death when he met two peasants wandering through the tunnels carrying armfuls of bread. He was barely able to plead for help, but they took pity and brought him to what amounted to a small shantytown under Charouse, where he made a slow recovery. Although he lacked physical strength, Louvain proved to be an organizational genius, and under his guidance the town grew. What had once been a group of lost and frightened individuals banding together for defense became a real community, supporting themselves and working together. Louvain became the leader of the group, and the people began to refer to him jokingly as the Marquis du Petit Charouse. Forgetting his vengeance, the “Marquis” settled into life as the head of his new community, even accepting his joke title with self-deprecating grace and pomp. Early in the spring of 1669, their group now healthy and relatively safe, Louvain decided it was time to continue exploring the deeper tunnels beyond his hidden community.

When he returned a few days later, he was a changed man. His manner was cold and abrupt, and he now took his title of Marquis very seriously. What began as humor between equals was now reminiscent of pre-Revolution Montaigne. Strangest of all was the fact that Monsieur le Marquis armed those closest to him with bizarre objects he had discovered on his “travels,” and insisted that the people under him begin excavations on the deep tunnels. His subjects whispered that he bore a gauntlet designed for some inhuman beast on his left hand — a gauntlet that slew anything it touched — and his hand inside was that of a dead man’s, cold and rotten.

Along with their fears of creatures said to lurk within the old city, the people now saw a very real and present terror in the Marquis du Petit Charouse. They were torn — after all, he had turned their lives from a struggle for survival into a time of comparative ease, when food was easily obtained from the city above through poorly patrolled tunnels. Sadly it became clear that it was safer if one obeyed the Marquis’s orders without question.

Within weeks after the deeper excavations began, accidents began to happen with disturbing frequency. Traps untouched in millennia claimed the lives of workers, causing delays which infuriated the Marquis and affected the harmony of the community. Louvain sent his most trusted lieutenants into the upper reaches of the sewers armed with inhuman devices and instructions to abduct the unsuspecting homeless of Charouse to work on his excavations.

Of course, armed with such powerful aids, they were less careful than they could have been about attacking only solitary targets. The sight of screaming people being hauled forcibly off into the shadows by an unseen force has been enough to make more than one beggar babble wildly about powerful ghosts and demons stalking the sewers. Such tales received little credence until two musketeers — who were questioning a woman as to whereabouts of a criminal — were astonished to see her fly backwards at great speed and dragged into a dark tunnels as she pleaded for help. Neither musketeer felt bold enough to pursue what was obviously a powerful monster into the dark and unfamiliar tunnels.

Meanwhile, the Marquis has doubled the guard on all prisoners working in the tunnels. His increasingly demented behavior is marked by a running conversation he seems to have with an unseen audience about being so very close to his goal...

CHAPTER FOUR:

*Adventure**Wonder and Terror
Part V: Homecoming*

Freyalinda chuckled as Hal leaned against the drawing room door and sighed. "I think I'd rather face the Iron Fist," the Vendel captain breathed.

"At least you don't have to wear one of these absurd dresses," Freyalinda replied, turning slightly to either side. She noticed Hal's reaction with a satisfied grin. "I see that it at least has the desired effect."

"Desired effect." Hal chuckled. "You mean like wearing the latest ballgown style, embroidered with the ancient runes?"

"Ha! The look on Daylen's face alone was worth that, love...but it wasn't exactly what I was thinking," she replied, smiling at him. Hal smiled back, with just the hint of a blush forming. "Freyalinda Reinnsdottir, are you suggesting what I think you're suggesting?" The skjæren ran her finger against the desk, then leaned back on it. "What do you think, Harald Mag- MOTHER!" she blurted, freezing in place. Hal sighed and covered his face as his wife glared at what appeared to him as empty space. Now is not a good time, mother. Unless we're in immediate danger—

You are! Assassins! From the shadows! The pale, translucent woman Freyalinda alone could see pointed frantically at a corner of the room.

"What?!" Freyalinda jolted upright, her fingers already tracing runes in the air.

Hal saw the look on his wife's face. "Trouble?" he said mildly, drawing a sword with one hand and his lens blade with the other. Four figures erupted from the dark corners on the opposite side of the room from them. Freyalinda saw her mother glare at them, then vanish instantly. "You tell me."

Three drew blades of their own, and one gripped nothingness, seeming to pull blackness itself out of the air. As three of the muscular, black-clad men moved toward them with practiced efficiency, the fourth formed the blackness into a dagger that seemed to eat light around it.

"Friends of yours?" Hal quipped softly, moving around to try and engage the wielder of the shadow blade.

"A bit quiet for my taste," she replied quietly. They were clearly remaining silent to avoid attracting attention, and Freyalinda knew Hal would do the same. If guards came to their rescue and saw this dark sorcery in action, they would receive a visit in the night later, along with Last Rites. These phony Kreuzritter seem very devout, for murderous hypocrites, she thought wryly. "I prefer my men with style and brains."

The tallest of the men grinned. "Didn't know your name was Jenny?"

Hal snarled. "Didn't know yours was Verdugo," he snapped.

All four sets of eyes went wide, then narrowed a moment later. They lunged as one, banter forgotten.

Freyalinda summoned the northern storm she'd been preparing and blasted it into the faces of the killers facing her. The other two tried to flank her, but Hal stepped in front of them in an instant. He parried one sword with the lens blade, neatly cutting it in half as he slashed at the other man with his rapier.

Reluctantly, the sorceress pulled her eyes away from her husband and concentrated on her own two enemies. He'll be all right, she insisted to herself, and I have to focus. "You should have expected a cold reception," she noted as they struggled to advance.

"You should have stayed with your people, witch," the man with the shadow dagger growled as he pushed his way forward.

Freyalinda snorted. "So says the man holding a dagger that isn't

there. Doesn't being steeped in hypocrisy ever bother you?" She had to admire his determination as he advanced, however. This one must be the leader.

Her opponent shrugged. "I am Vodacce."

The Lærdom Adept chuckled. "That would explain it." She frowned as he gripped the desk. The man was clearly about to lunge. A blur of motion came in from her right, and with confidence born of long experience she released the Nød and Kjølìg runes, thanking the gods for their aid as she did so.

"Ha!" The assassin saw his chance and leapt, shadow dagger flying toward her. A streak of light arced up to meet it, and in a flash accompanied by an inhuman scream, the dark weapon vanished in an explosion of black motes. "Wh—?!" he blurted as he clutched his hand.

Hal glared at the man, almost a living embodiment of Intensity himself. "You wield your darkness well, murderer," he hissed, "but darkness will ever flee before the light of truth!"

"How... dramatic," their adversary commented wryly, retreating. His own ally was huddled in the corner he'd emerged from, clutching himself against the cold. The other two were considerably the worse for wear. "Vanish." The other three men retreated to the shadows and melted into them without a moment's pause. "We will meet again, Magnus." With that, he joined his men.

"Now who's being dramatic?" Hal muttered, clutching his ribs.

"Hal?" Freyalinda looked him over. "You should have some ice on that. Now."

Hal shook his head (the stubborn man, she thought in exasperation) and straightened carefully, grinning back at her. "I love you too, my heart. But the whole point of not raising alarm is to avoid more trouble with those monsters."

Freyalinda sighed, then smiled and kissed him on the cheek. "It never ends, does it?"

"Never. Thank Theus," he added with a wink.

How to Play an Explorer

Assassins from the shadows. Schemers armed with honeyed tongues and hidden blades. Bomb-throwing fanatics. Streets turned red with blood and vengeance. This is how the Explorers view other "secret societies," and they want none of it. They live for adventure, for high-minded ideals, and for the excitement for broadening humanity's horizons. Among true Explorers, you will find no cowardly betrayers or bloodthirsty killers. Those who sink to such depths are brought to very public justice or at least expelled from the ranks of their peers. The Society is definitely embroiled in court intrigue and espionage — they have too many enemies who excel at duplicity to ignore these pursuits — such issues are a matter of self-defense, handled with as much honor and decency as possible. The Explorer's Society fights for a world in which Truth, Knowledge and Freedom are paramount goals. In that kind of war, there can be no compromises of duty and honor, or the future the Explorers fight for so dearly is lost before they begin. Their enemies have taught them that and it is a lesson the Society has taken firmly to heart. An Explorer may kill to save lives in immediate danger, but only when there is no other choice. An Explorer must never kill for expediency's sake and certainly not for revenge. Even in the quest to solve Théah's mysteries, the lives of innocents always mean more to them than the relics of the past.

In the end, Explorers are heroes, pure and simple which is why they are idolized and beloved, why they have survived everything the shadows can throw at them, why they never give up and ultimately why they believe they will triumph.

Part of a Larger Picture

Have you ever seen people whispering to each other and known that you were somehow the topic? Are you familiar with the feeling that comes from knowing someone just lied shamelessly to you? When you are reading, watching or listening to the news, do you ever sense that you're only hearing part of the story?

That's what Explorers feel like... all the time.

Powerful and cunning forces work constantly to hide the truth from the "unworthy," which definitely includes Explorers, and the Society knows it. They see it in the faces of the rich and powerful. They hear it in the whispers of their enemies. Corrupt nobles hide fantastic artifacts from public eye, squandering their abilities on petty entertainment. An intolerant Church denounces their efforts as heretical, while unseen bands of assassins plot to destroy everything they have learned. Secrets have a way of remaining hidden, and Théah holds more than enough organizations willing to kill to keep it that way.

There is, of course, an enormous problem with this strategy — the more you hide something from curious people, the more they want to know about it. By killing those who get too close, secret organizations create a sort of cultural crucible. The timid are easily cowed into abandoning their curiosity; the foolhardy simply die; what remains is the Explorer's Society.

Explorers have a wide variety of motivations, but all share an insatiable need to *know*. More than anything else, this is what drives them. There are truths hidden in every corner of Théah that could free people from ignorance and fear. Some people think that those truths should remain hidden, but definitely not the Explorers.

Imagine that you had the power and the skill to uncover what others work so hard to hide. You would have to take responsibility for that Knowledge but at least people would finally know the Truth. Imagine being able to change the world, and being ready to accept the consequences. This is what it means to be an Explorer.

Impossible Dreams

To be an Explorer is to fly in the face of odds that would sicken the most hardened gambler. The Syrne were as far beyond humans in development as humans are beyond monkeys. Indeed, many of their enemies accuse the Explorers of being apes with pistols. Apparently the Syrne themselves possessed a healthy paranoid streak, filling their strongholds with traps beyond the cunning of even a Villanova. Just getting to the dig site can be fraught with peril; between ruin monsters and Explorer hunters, many expeditions never reach their destinations.

Explorer sites need not be Syrne-related to be deadly, either. The Numans were as paranoid a culture as ever inhabited Théah and they backed it up with all the malicious fervor that only humans can inflict. So far, the Syrne seemed more interested in efficiency than horror. A Syrne poison dispatches its victim with all due speed. Numan traps have been

known to eat Explorers alive, from the inside, over the course of months. Admittedly, this gives the Society time to search for an antidote, but the Numans' goal — to terrify their enemies out of meddling in their business — is served well.

Finally, even the Explorers' enemies among the secret societies pale before their truly villainous rivals. Hired diggers, ruthless pirate gangs, vile cults and worse seek the treasures of the ancients for their own twisted ends. With goals like immortality, genocide and global domination, these fiends will stop at nothing to gain what they want. The loss of a few Explorers along the way does not bother them; indeed, they often find Explorers useful, serving as unwitting Shield Men who uncover traps and fight monsters. Once the prize is won, relieving the do-gooder Explorer is a minor inconvenience.

What could possibly motivate a man or woman to take these sorts of insane risks? Who would crawl into a maze of death to retrieve a priceless artifact, knowing that getting it safely to a chapter house is more than half the battle? Are Truth, Knowledge and Freedom really worth potential suicide or worse every time your ship sets sail?

Yes.

Heroes must be deeply motivated or they will not be Explorers for long. Naturally, motivations for such heroism come in all varieties. Some join the Society out of sheer idealism, captivated by the image of a future far grander than others believe. Some may start out looking for solace or redemption and find themselves in love with their Explorer "family." Thrill-seekers with a conscience join to experience the ultimate adventure. A classic motivation is raw, unadulterated curiosity to know Things We Must Not Know. The Society frowns on using the Society to gain revenge, but justice becomes a perfectly valid motivation in certain circumstances; many spouses, children, siblings, and friends of lost Explorers join to see that their loved ones did not die in vain. A few Explorer heroes have political motivations, believing that the Society's goals serve a greater good than immediate, short-term goals.

Finally, the Society has existed for long enough now that second and even third generation Explorers have lived their lives knowing what humanity is capable of — Truth, Knowledge and Freedom — and they will accept nothing less.

Types of Explorer Campaigns

The Wrong Hands

The Explorer's Society dedicates itself to unraveling the secrets of Theus' great puzzle. Every day, it strives to know more about the history of Terra, to increase the reserves of humanity's knowledge and perhaps even improve the lot of the average Théan. They are not alone in their quest although they are perhaps alone in their motivation. Desperate men, evil masterminds, ambitious princes, mad scholars, blood-thirsty pirates and deranged cultists all follow the Society with interested eyes, coveting those artifacts left by the Syneth for power, profit or other, darker reasons.

This style of campaign revolves around keeping just such a villain from procuring an artifact of unimaginable power. The purpose and composition of the device are important; for instance, can it fit into a pocket or is it fixed solidly to the interior of a hollowed-out mountain? What was it created to do and how can the forces of evil abuse it? Does it work properly or does its fearful power come from untold ages of disrepair? Is it unknown in the modern world, or do legends, however cryptic, tell of it?

The beginning of the campaign should introduce the players to the villain, give them at least an inkling of his nefarious intentions, and provide a reason for his interest in them (although not necessarily the correct reason). For example, the players are aboard ship, along with material and supplies, on their way to replace a friend's team at a site. When they arrive, the site is nothing but a smoking ruin, strewn with the bodies of the dead and dying. Some on-site investigation might provide hints about the perpetrator, leading the players to give chase.

Alternatively, the players might be at a dig themselves, only to find the site under attack from the villain's henchmen. As the party ducks for cover, they notice that the minions are scouring the site deliberately — too deliberately for an ordinary raid. Unable to find what they seek and believing the Explorers to be dead (or sufficiently dissuaded), the minions torch the site and leave. Uncertain of their adversary and what he or she seeks, the players have little to go on. That is when they spot the small copper tablet half-buried in the muck near the hiding place. Now all they have to do is make it back to civilization and translate it...

Much of the campaign should concern itself with learning more about the artifact, all the while racing, dodging and hiding from the villain and his minions. The villain serves as a background menace, sending henchmen and other threats after the players, beating them to crucial information, and cursing when they snatch ancient tomes that offer clues to the artifact's location from his clutches. It may profit the villain to learn as much about the adventurers as he can, which may provide another level of harassment for the Explorers.

With a sufficiently cunning nemesis, the players may find themselves under pressure from the local authorities, the Church, or even the Society itself to cease their quest. Do not be afraid to let the players fail a few times; each defeat they suffer only heightens the peril that the villain will eventually unleash. There should likely be a great deal of travel in this part of the campaign, as the players dash across the world, chasing rumors in unlikely places, meeting untrustworthy informants in smoky dens of iniquity and trying to gain passage across some very hostile borders.

The climax of the campaign should be centered on the final struggle to gain the artifact itself. Who will succeed, the players or the villain? This is the moment of confrontation as the players strive to defeat the villain's minions and put the device's power beyond his use forever, at which point the villain makes himself known. Whether the device is recovered safely by the Society or destroyed for the good of humanity can only be determined after the villain has been dispatched.

Like a Syneth maze, this story should not be without its twists. Perhaps the players have discovered much about the device, braving ruins and trap that would fell lesser adventurers, and kept such knowledge from the villain's henchmen. After considering the matter, the villain discovers someone a player cares about — a family member or significant other,



perhaps — and offers a simple solution: find the device and hand it over or the loved one pays the price. Perhaps the perceived villain is in reality a henchman working for the players' superior in the Society, and they discover to their horror that they have been betrayed at the last moment! In such desperate times, only the greatest of heroes can hope to triumph, and save humanity from the clutches of a madman.

Ancient Secrets Revealed

The Explorer's Society has sworn to throw open the ancient doors, sealed since time immemorial, wherein lie the remains of inhuman cultures that lived and died long before humanity's rise. They have pledged to throw the shining light of knowledge on the ignorance of Terra's past. Some things, however, are not meant to be uncovered.

In this campaign, the players accidentally unleash some sort of ancient and forgotten evil on the world. Possibilities include the activation of a Synchron automaton driven mad by millennia in captivity or the possession of an NPC member of their team by some sort of ancient spirit. Possessed by the newly awakened soul of a mad entombed king, the creature begins to chant an incantation, calling forth some accursed item or unleashing a deadly plague against which only those within the chamber are immune. This type of campaign lends itself equally well to horror or high adventure, pitting the players against a merciless foe that they have brought into the unsuspecting world. Hopefully they will feel honor-bound to put an end to the menace their carelessness has wrought, but should be in little doubt after their first encounter that they stand no chance of defeating it as they stand.

After the opening episode, the players should be aware that they face some deranged monstrosity that probably predates humanity entirely. The enemy may strive to carry out some sort of agenda of which it alone is aware. It may seek to bring a curse upon all members of a specific bloodline (or possibly

sorcerers). It may return to whatever its task was prior to the events that left it incarcerated. If it had to be immobilized, however, the chances are its task was not beneficial to those who trapped it. It may seek information about the new world it has returned to, that it may subjugate society to its monstrous will. In short, the players can spend a great deal of time discovering what precisely they have unearthed, and how to lay it low permanently before it can seriously threaten the rest of the world.

Finally, equipped with the knowledge of how to defeat their enemy, they should confront and defeat it. Do not be afraid to stage the final battle in perilous circumstances (in the midst of a whirling maze of cogs beneath the desert sands, on a bridge of stone over a river of lava or at the top of a mountain during a terrible storm), and let the enemy unleash every possible horror it can on the heroes. Remember — there is a reason ancient evil gets buried where no one can find it.

Possible twists include the involvement of other Secret Societies. Perhaps *die Kreuzritter* or some similar organization kept vigil over the site, and the Knight involved is now tracking the players, believing they released the thing on purpose. Or perhaps the Knights of the Rose and Cross become involved after the enemy endangers the lives of innocents, pledging their swords to help destroy the source of the evil. Such external forces can alternately serve as friends or foes in the campaign, perhaps both at the same time.

A Secret War

Despite their public nature, the Explorers are also a secret society with their share of skeletons in the closet. They have hidden goals and often encounter difficulty in pursuit of their lofty ideals. Many regard the Society as fools and meddlers, or children who have found a cache of extremely dangerous toys. Shipments of artifacts go missing, maps are

destroyed and ships are sabotaged just before setting out on expeditions. The Explorers are not historically used to cloak-and-dagger espionage, but they have taken more active measures as traitors begin to appear within their own ranks — Inquisitors, spies for rival artifact hunters, and darker agents who disappear without a trace when pursued. As a group of scholars, the Society is ill-equipped to deal with such subterfuge but that does not mean that they cannot adapt. Extraordinary threats to demand an extraordinary response. That's where the player characters come in.

The Explorer's Society has often been the victim of covert attacks, and is only now beginning to fight fire with fire. Small teams of Explorers, drawn from among the ranks of their most inconspicuous members, are given new identities quite different from their own. They work far from the halls and dig sites Society, although they may only be stationed in the building next door. They build new lives with the intention of protecting the Society against the machinations of those who would harm it, and when their work is done, they melt into the crowd and disappear — until the next threat arises.

The primary focus of this campaign is intrigue. The players fight threats to the Society in a somewhat less than orthodox manner. The Society has little experience in dealing with these threats, and the player characters will have quite a bit of leeway in accomplishing their mission. Their superiors will be all but unreachable, and would certainly disavow all knowledge of the players' activities. Any aid from the Society is likely to come in the form of small favors from friends on the "inside," so to speak... and of course some surreptitious artifacts.

With a campaign like this, it is up to the players to determine how to deal with any threat to the Society. They may be sent to deal with a particular threat, but most of the time they must decide how to eliminate it themselves. For example, if the Explorers believe that a forthcoming expedition is in danger, the Society leaders may send the characters to uncover and foil the Inquisitors behind the plot. Depending on the success of the venture, the party may remain "outside" the Society to deal with future problems.)

The campaign's overall plot may lead the players down any number of paths. Perhaps they simply protect the Society from the Inquisition, and end up in deadly combat with a High Inquisitor as he sets his men to destroy an expedition returning in triumph. Perhaps they foil threats from many groups, only to discover a common thread that leads them to an organization hidden from the eyes of the world, such as Sophia's Daughters or *die Kreuzritter*.

Other than considering the nature of the threat (i.e., whether you want the players to defend their fellows against many threats or one, public threats or secret ones), you must consider the feel of your campaign. Whether they are the secret avengers of the Explorers, hidden away from their only friends and allies, or regularly briefed and loaded up with the latest Synchron gadgets, every campaign of this type will feel different. You must decide whether your players prefer showing the villain that they're aware of him over a gentlemanly game of cards or infiltrating his organization and defeating him with guile and subterfuge.

When creating missions of this nature, keep in mind also the idea of Exploration: The Society gains new ground every day in their quest for knowledge and the players are forging ahead on a parallel course as bold new spies, completing a task no less important than the discovery of a major new

archaeological site or comprehension of a Synchron artifact. Keep a feeling of newness in the players' minds — of secrets uncovered and hidden knowledge reveals — to mix with a somewhat more traditional concept of the espionage campaign.

Remember — the *players* may have seen cloak and dagger material before, but it is something entirely new to the Explorers' Society. While competent spies may know the courts of Castille or the mean streets of Freiburg like the backs of their hands, the Explorers are more at home on the trackless wilderness of Ussura or the shifting sands of the Crescent Empire. This type of campaign should let the players take their first tentative steps into a large and dangerous world, where no one is who they claim to be, and the decision to trust the wrong person will kill you as surely as the most intricate ancient trap. Perhaps it can end with the players establishing a permanent branch of the Society, dedicated to keeping it safe from enemies it cannot see. Alternately, it can be used to bring outside characters into the Society, or allow those players with different styles of play to take part in an Explorers campaign.

Adventure Seeds

The following are a series of brief adventure ideas centering around the Explorer's Society. Though the particulars are set in Théah, they can easily be adjusted to fit any campaign you wish.

The Setine Soldiers

Much of the Synchron weaponry found across Théah can be traced back to the clockwork machinery of the Setine race. The few examples of Setine remains suggest that they were a fragile race, yet the weapons they left behind point to their martial prowess. If the Setine could not fight these battles, who did? Some Explorers have theorized that master gadgeteers built an army to do their fighting for them. If an army of clockwork weapons were still functioning, someone who could control it could march across Théah unopposed.

The man behind this theory was Frederick Kovel, one of the founders of the Kirk Chapter House. During a dig in northern Vendel, Kovel's team stumbled upon a small circular chamber with a perfect sphere mounted on a pedestal in the middle of the room. As Kovel approached the sphere, he saw a dim light shining through it. He removed it from the pedestal, and noted six small notches on it. An amazingly accurate astrological map was carved into the chamber walls. Of particular note were what appeared to be planets; larger than the surrounding stars and each sporting a different color. When Kovel collected the sphere from the room, it turned the color of Volta on the wall.

Intrigued, Kovel poured over his notes and consulted the top astronomers in Vendel. He pursued each lead he found as if it would lead to his greatest discovery. There were a few scattered mentions of other spheres like the ones he had discovered and vague descriptions of their location.

As Kovel dug deeper, legends began to surface: battlefields during the War of the Cross where both sides died mysteriously, stories of surgeons who attached clockwork limbs in place of those lost to battle or disease and other chambers with similar gems and similar maps. Slowly, he began to pull

these elements together. At the same time, mysterious accidents began to befall the members of his team. His Shield Man was trapped under an iceberg. His linguist mistranslated a native gesture and was strung up as an infidel. One by one, his colleagues died or disappeared until he was the only one left. No one wanted to work with “Cursed Kovel” but that suited him just fine. He locked himself in his office and pushed himself to a breakthrough. When he had everything in place, he gathered his fellow scholars at Kirk and told them his theory.

The spheres were the keys. Each chamber at the site was located the same distance from the next and some were cleverly rigged to prevent interlopers. Each sphere represented one of the planets. Gathering the sphere and placing them in a large machine in the central chamber would open a large chamber and reveal the Setines’ last legacy — a clockwork army ready to take over the world!

Kovel’s colleagues waited almost thirty seconds before laughing him out of the room.

The next morning his office was empty except for a single handwritten paper, half full of cryptic clues about locations of the other five spheres and the central chamber. The paper has since been framed and hung in the foyer of the Kirk Chapter House as a reminder of what happens to a man who pursues legends too much.

Kovel’s Final Note

Iolus: In the Senator’s bosom, under the Sun. Follow the notes of her Aria but play it backwards. Speed is his watchword. The messenger of the Gods dare not dally, lest he is burned by that which he chases.

Re: Two lovers enter her embrace, but only one leaves. Through the thick jungles of hair, up the curve of her neck, a wise suitor must choose the correct path, not the right one from anyone’s viewpoint. Once, she has been wooed, her jewel is yours. Beware the wrathful father.

Terra: Deep in the mud has this seed been planted. While the gate lies inside the tower, the key is in the belly of the beast. Beware the mermaid’s kiss and your virtue will be rewarded.

Mer: The monsters lay slain high here. Look to St. Gregor for guidance. His bravery is visible through the window of his home. While he slew the great beasts, they have returned and hunger for warm flesh in their icy stomachs.

Sette: Rings within rings. Songs within songs. Kings within Kings. The Seat of this sphere lies at the center of this web. Remember who Theus favors in this case.

While the notion of a “clockwork army” is ludicrous, the site may hold enough technology to cause considerable mischief. . . regardless of whether Kovel finds it or not.

The Thalussian Chamber

This site was only seen once but the Explorers have little reason to doubt its authenticity. It was rumored to exist underneath Caligari’s Island before its destruction. If there is any truth to the story, it could allow the Explorers to view a unique example of still-functioning Syrneth technology. The Society learned about it from Guiseppe Vecini, a respected member of the Knights of the Rose and Cross.

When Caligari kidnapped his Domini, Vecini went to the island to rescue him. He managed to reach the bowels of Caligari’s Isle before it sank and discovered its secret. After walking past what seemed like miles and miles of unfathomable machinery, he came to a large chamber filled with a pair of huge devices that jutted up from the floor and an eerie orange fog creeping from them. Between the machines there was a set of controls of some sort.

Vecini got one of the doors open. Inside was a large piece of amber, much like the ones discovered at other Thalussian sites. This amber, however, had a human inside of it. Vecini opened the other machine and found his *Domini* trapped inside a piece of amber. He tried to free his mentor but soon found himself in the middle of a fight with the guards and subsequently forced to retreat. He quickly made his way through the bowels of the island but not before noting a room stacked high with other such pieces of amber, each of which contained a person. He had barely made his way off the island when the Forbidden Sea began to devour it.

As soon as he could, Vecini approached the Explorers with his story, hoping that they had heard of such a device and could possibly reverse the process. He wanted to spearhead a mission under the sea to explore the strange tunnels underneath but the technology simply does not exist to provide such long-term undersea exploration. If there was a way to raise Caligari’s Isle or reach the ruined corridors (which may still have pockets of air), the Society could get its hands on a wealth of knowledge at Vincenzo Caligari kept to himself for almost a century.

Although Caligari’s Isle has slipped beneath the waves, some Explorers believe that other such preservation chambers lie elsewhere in Théah. If such machinery exists, could it preserve a human? Is there a reversal process that these chambers have to “thaw” out the amber? And what other strange machinery was lost with the rise of Cabora and the fall of Caligari?

A Far, Far Better Thing

The Montaigne Revolution has brought the bright light of liberty to the darkest corners of the Sun King’s realm. It has also seen many nobles, whether guilty of any crime or not, led up the steps of *le coiffeur* for their final appointment. More than a few Ducs and Vicomtes were patrons of the Explorers in happier days, which places the Society in Montaigne in a somewhat thorny predicament. While they refuse to court the wrath of the revolutionary government, they cannot in good conscience turn their backs on those who supported them for many years.

Although they play a tricky and dangerous game, brave Explorers sneak into jails, steal prison wagons and attend executions to rescue nobles who have done great things for the Society in the past. The road out of Montaigne is fraught with peril at every step. The Explorers and their disguised noble charges will be subjected to great scrutiny by the soldiers and musketeers they pass, and agents of the Committee for National Welfare will be scouring the land, searching for any privileged head that would dare to defy the people’s justice. A life lived as fugitives until they can safely reach Avalon, Vendel or Eisen is a small price to pay for saving lives, but the Explorers who snatch the nobles from beneath the blades of *le coiffeur* often wonder if they are doing the right thing. The price the Society will pay if the Committee for National Welfare ever implicates them in the rescues will be dreadful, and

more than one Explorer might climb those steps in their patron's place. Who would be willing to save them?

If the adventurers decide to play this lonely and thankless midnight game, they should be ready for moonlit chases through heavy forests on horseback, ducking shots and branches, all the while keeping their charge (who probably never physically exerted himself so much in his life) safe from harm. They must be ready to disguise themselves beyond recognition and deceive the authorities with greater skill than they ever thought possible, overcoming obstacles at every step as agents of their enemies in the Committee close off the roads, cancel ferries, impound ships and block passes in order to find them. Do they have what it takes to escape the blades of the Revolution?

Oh, What a Lovely War

The past few years have seen some catastrophic changes in the fabric of Théan society — the sinking of Caligari's Island and the subsequent political upheaval in Vodacce, the invasion of Castille, and the War of the Cross to name but a few. Wars do not care about history. The generals look only to the future as their armies march ever onward.

A solid adventure can arise if one of those wars intrudes upon the characters' dig. The exact time and place depends on the specifics of your campaign, but suffice it to say, the march of armies threatens to destroy months of work. The distant rumble of artillery is a pertinent reminder to get what they can as quickly as possible. They have possibly a day at most, probably only hours, before the main forces arrive. Scouts, skirmishers and outriders may be seen around the site, creating problems as the sporadic fighting that precedes the clash of armies begins. Cannon fire crashing into the ground nearer the site may hurl debris at the players, as well as collapsing sections of the dig and panicking members of the team.

Problems they may face as the armies draw close include fear, flight or open revolt by other Explorers or hired hands. The character may be forced to quell such troubles by charismatic oratory or a hasty duel. Furthermore, if a section of tunnel collapses and seals any of the team inside, there will be precious little time to work on rescuing them, forcing the characters to decide what the highest priority is: the work on the site or the rescue of their colleagues. A decision either way is bound to spark further tension within the team.

To further complicate matters, one army or another may send troops to "escort" the Explorers from the battlefield, forcibly if necessary. On the other hand, if one commander believes that the Explorers hold a secret that could grant them victory (even if that secret is simply intimate knowledge of the local terrain — no general can ever be too prepared), they will stop at nothing to secure it. If both generals decide that interrogating the civilians would be useful, the Explorers may find themselves a hunted fox among the hounds.

Regardless of the complications, once the Explorers abandon the site, they will still have to make their way through a confused battlefield, dodging shot, shell and saber, until they reach friendly territory with their bounty. All they can do is pray to Theus and keep their heads down!

Throw Me the Idol!

Betrayal is an ugly word, but far from the eyes of civilization, in long-forgotten temples rotting in steaming jungles, it sometimes happens. The Explorers know all too well how deadly such turncoats can be. Seemingly loyal guides can turn out to be in league with bandits or worse, abandoning the Explorers to the elements. Team may risk life and limb to uncover valuable knowledge, only to have it handed over at gunpoint to thieves and scoundrels interested only in selling it to the highest bidder.

Losing a precious artifact of early human or pre-human origin should make even the most timid and scholarly Explorers give chase to the thieves. Being vastly outnumbered, the adventurers have only one weapon against their enemies: their wits. An adventure along these lines could begin with the procurement and theft of an artifact (something of great historical value without any sort of power that cannot be explained scientifically). From there, it can proceed to tracking the thieves and trying to determine where they are hiding the stolen artifact and what their plans are for it (melting it down if it is made of gold, selling it, using it in some bizarre ritual, etc.).

From that point, it really is up to the adventurers how they retrieve the item. They must know the layout of the bandits' hiding place and the gang's approximate strength even if they must observe the den of thieves from outside. The fact that the villains' plans for the artifact will be finalized within the next day or so will add to the tension, of course.

Allow the adventurers' plan to dictate your response. For instance, if they concoct a break-in plan timed to evade the guards, and they have already disguised themselves as bandits, let them find it substantially easier than if they run through the main gate in broad daylight, guns blazing. Regardless of how well thought-out their method of retrieval is, always allow a complication or two to slip in, just to keep them on their toes. If they manage to sneak through a bandit fort without making so much as a peep, and then ready themselves to slide down over the outside wall, it won't hurt to have one of the players drop something brittle, which will of course raise the alarm and ensure a breakneck chase from angry bandits.

If they fail to steal the artifact back, then they must track down the buyer and attempt to separate him or her from the precious item...

Before I Kill You...

The Explorer's Society is beset on all sides by dastardly foes, who will stop at nothing to discover the secrets of the Society and use that information to further their own vile goals. If their enemies were to seize the adventurers, incarcerate them in the deepest dungeon, bombard them with questions and finally decide they are useless, they might reveal their nefarious scheme before ordering the guards to carry out a cruel and bizarre execution. And *that's* just the beginning.

It is incumbent upon the adventurers to escape whatever warped trap the villain has set for them. It would be best if the trap is quite simple to escape; after all, you want swashbuckling action, not a short messy death. By the time the party escapes, the villain's plan should be well underway, far too late for the soon-to-be-dead Explorers to do anything about it. Or so they think.

Using guile, charm, bravado and the occasional stolen uniform, the Explorers can escape from the villain's den, disoriented and confused — and aware that they have precious little time to stop the villain from harming their Society friends and colleagues. Using whatever methods they can, from horse theft to raising every local constable and backwoods musketeer they can find, they must race against the villain, possibly only confronting her in the last critical seconds of her plan. Perhaps they find her in the catacombs beneath the cathedral with the fiancée of one of the adventurer tied to a bomb, gloating as she prepares to make her escape.

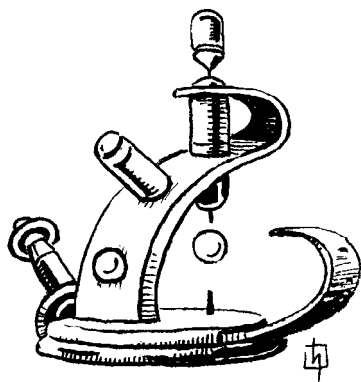
Of course, she could just as easily unleash her loyal knuckle-dragging henchmen which would buy her the time she needs to flee and plot her revenge. And imagine how awful it would be if the Explorers become the unwitting instruments of her fiendish scheme: that their escape actually facilitated some truly horrible form of evil...

Dueling Subcultures

The Tinkerer's Club is not exactly making their ambition to win Queen Elaine's approval secret. Unfortunately, the Glamour Association (see the *Avalon Chapterhouse*, page 30) feels that the Tinkerers have overstepped their bounds, so they have subtly suggested that perhaps the Tinkerers should take things slowly. As with most scholars, the Tinkerers rarely pick up on subtle hints (unless they involve Synchronicity study, of course).

Soon, the tension rises to a thinly disguised rivalry. While the player characters are on campus, the Tinkerers' mascot, a clockwork spider named "Reggie," vanishes. The Club members search frantically for the machine, terrified at the thought of a Setine device running rampant across Glenayre. Alas, when the Association brags publicly about the theft, the budding Tinkerers have absolutely no sense of humor about it. Three days later, the president of the Association is found hanging from the bell tower by her ankles, wrapped in what appears to be a metal spider web. A gauntlet has clearly been thrown.

If this were merely a friendly rivalry, the Headmaster would just smile and give each side a quiet lecture. However, the Club feels deeply slighted by Reggie's theft, and the Association thinks that the responding prank was a step too far. Vincent Bernadore himself approaches the more experienced adventurers in the hopes that the alumni among them might defuse the situation by thwarting further pranks, finding Reggie, or otherwise convincing the combatants to settle down.



The Sixth Rune

It was bound to happen. The Explorers on Oddiswulf (see page 33) have uncovered another rune, similar to those found elsewhere.

(Note to the Game Master: Based on the nature and make-up of the adventurers, select on one of the following runes.)

— The *Kjølig* or Hatred rune also represents Night. Once the rune is uncovered, temperatures in the area plummet. The rune rests at a five-degree incline and the relatively forgiving soil around it has yielded a few interesting finds. Field Scholars are growing excited about the site's potential and so far are not terribly concerned about their safety although a band of renegade Vestenmannavnjar living in nearby caves has launched several forays against the team. Luckily, the Shield Man contingent on the dig outnumbers the rest of the team combined.

— Bearsarks have claimed the rune of *Sinne* as their own. The Anger rune that the Explorers uncover is surrounded by jagged rocks above the surf; the water below seems constantly agitated. Aside from constant minor mishaps, the excavation is fairly straightforward. Explorers are inclined to blame Vestenmannavnjar sabotage for these regular annoyances. Some skjæren, however, claim the rune is increasing the team members' strength subtly — unused to the added force, they cause these problems themselves. The truth of the matter has yet to be determined.

— *Lidenskap's* rune glows clearly and brightly, so this area tends to have more comfortable temperatures than elsewhere: even in winter. A number of fiery romances are attributed to the area, although before the discovery of the rune a great stone spire located nearby was thought to be responsible. At least one disastrous Explorer/ Vestenmannavnjar relationship has formed and collapsed at this excavation. The area surrounding the rune is fairly ordinary aside from the lack of ice, and several artifacts have been found intact here as well.

— The mighty rune of the Warrior, *Krieg's* rune, has everyone treading carefully. The Explorers have found numerous ancient Vestenmannavnjar weapons intact which will give the Society considerable insight into the culture's metal smithing methods. The entire area makes everyone nervous and edgy, however. They hear strange, almost metallic pulsing sounds at night, and animals avoid the region like the plague. Vestenmannavnjar legend attributes *Krieg's* death to a blast of lightning, so the rune shares some of that reputation. Whether there is more to its unnerving effect than legend remains to be seen.

Fox and Hounds

After years of careful study and examination of the Thalusiai islands (see page 35), a Scholar claims that she has puzzled out a significant portion of the Thalusiai language. Analysis of the markings in certain areas, particularly archways and large chambers, seems to corroborate her findings. Ecstatic, the team prepares to send a ship back to Avalon House with the preliminary translations.

Before the week is out, the entire chain of islands is under siege. A small army has appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, to invade the Society's encampments. The attackers strike without warning and retreat to areas of the islands that only they seem to know. A number of other enemies could be behind the attacks, including Unseelie Sidhe, scheming Montaigne nobles or even a pocket of survivors from the

island's original inhabitants. Whoever they are, they clearly don't want the Thalusiai language to reach Théah intact, and will destroy the entire expedition to protect the secret.

Regardless of who the enemy is, the adventurers have their work cut out for them. They face a guerilla war against a foe that knows the terrain, can pass through any barrier and wields powerful weapons. One possible tactic is to retreat into the catacombs and lure foes into trapped areas. Using the natural wildlife against them is also a possibility, although any invading force is almost certainly aware of the many deadly insectoid creature that inhabit the Thalusians.

Once the threat has been identified, the Explorers must decide how to deal with it. Even if the expedition's original leaders survived the first onslaught, the player characters may find themselves making command decisions. Do they try to negotiate with the attackers in hopes that there might be reasonable members among their leadership? Should they take the offensive, and if they could, do they want to engage in such a bloody conflict? If retreat is the best option available to them, how do they get the Scholars and excavators safely to sea when the enemy will go to such lengths to ensure that no one leaves the archipelago alive?

The Queen's Court

While exploring the undersea tunnels of the Thalusiai islands (see page 35), the player characters discover an enormous oval chamber. At first it appears to be nothing more than a waste dump of pale, crunching detritus all about them. A central platform, however, quickly indicates far greater importance. The platform is roughly proportional to the chamber, with a wide basin in the center still cushioned with a layer of gelatinous amber held in place by a thick membrane. Arranged around the basin are six circular indentations that seem to mark places. Scholars probably will not take long to make rough comparisons between the room and the queen's lair in an anthill. If none of the party names the place, an Avalon colleague quickly dubs the room the "Queen's Court."

The find makes instant (if minor) celebrities of the team among their fellows. Scholars are fascinated by the implications of the discovery and begin exploring the deeper tunnels with the hope of similar luck. However, there is no guarantee that a Thalusian "queen" used the room. All other findings thus far indicate that the Thalusiai resembled upright crickets more than ants, in direct contrast to the Explorers' discovery. More disturbing is the subsequent unearthing of a few fossilized eggs from what appear to be the shards of the rest. Opening an egg may give some insight into the matter, but the eggs themselves have value to Scholars.

Shield Men quickly step up security efforts after both the room and the eggs are revealed; Thalusian digs always attract more secret enemies than any others. Perhaps the most unsettling matter of all, however, is that one of the eggs (while definitely not viable) had not yet hardened completely. Who knows what might yet hide in some secret corner of the vast catacombs, waiting to be awakened...

Ussuran Games

Viacheslav Tchernivich, Eniseisk's boyar ruler, is deeply worried about his wife Palladia. She is a younger woman renowned for her grace and stunning beauty, and the pride of the entire city. Sometimes the Oprechnina, Molhyna's secret police, collects "tribute" from boyars in women as well as

money. Viacheslav intends to honor his agreement with the Society (see page 37) come what may, but if a band of Explorers is willing to travel to Eniseisk in advance and help protect the Lady Tchernivich, the boyar has promised to provide every resource at his disposal to assist the expedition. Eniseisk, as the center of the *golomanka* trade, is the wealthiest city in Molhyna, so Viacheslav has access to many resources. Unfortunately, the region's instability may make the job much more difficult. They must endure Kosar raids, inclement weather, and worse in their efforts to transport the noblewoman to safety.

Furthermore, agreements the Gaius, high-ranking boyars and even Matushka mean nothing to the Kosars. Jyrgal Timurbek, one of the greatest Kosar leaders ever known, has united these legendary warriors as never before and together they have claimed a section of land along the southwestern border of Lake Vigil. Their ferocity will cause an expedition considerable difficulty in reaching Eniseisk. Worse, at least one ruin lies within Timurbek's newborn "nation" of Kosara. The Explorers will need skilled negotiators to ensure peaceful relations with the Khan. The team has permission to unofficially acknowledge the new nation's existence, as well as make concessions to the Kosars and pay reasonable tribute. Acknowledging the nation officially is out of the question, as the Ussuran Gaius, Ilya the Terrible would massacre every Explorer within his border for the insult.

The Frozen Explorer

As mentioned in the Lake Vigil section (see page 37), a Scholar left the team there to do some investigating by herself, and paid dearly for it. The Society has taken a hint that was not actually meant for them. The woman belonged to Sophia's Daughters, and against Matushka's decree was trying to sabotage the expedition. Matushka intended the warning for the Daughters; Lake Vigil does not belong to them, and their expeditions to the inland sea (detailed on page 47 of the *Sophia's Daughters sourcebook*) are as much at Matushka's discretion as the Explorers'. If they cannot play nicely with the other guests, they will not be allowed onto the field at all.

NPCs

Vincent Bernadore

Life as the fifth son of a minor Montaigne noble is not very glamorous. Vincent Bernadore spent his early youth learning to be a courtier and playing with the brother and sister nearest him in age. Largely ignored by his family, he did not even learn about his parents' death until nearly a month after it occurred. He was almost relieved when two years later, his oldest brother Eugene (who had inherited everything) suggested that perhaps it was time for him to leave the estate and "find his own destiny" elsewhere. The future Headmaster of the Explorer's Society was 17 years old.

For the next three years, young Vincent lived by his wit and charm among the hopefuls at the Montaigne court. He was always welcome, for even among the extremely social Montaigne he possessed remarkable charisma and good humor. One night he met Vera, an obviously wealthy Vendel woman. Intrigued by her manner and impressed by her prosperity, Bernadore worked hard to make a good impression in

hopes that she might spend some of those guilders on him. Vera, only a few years older than Vincent, saw potential in the handsome young Montaigne and when her business in Charouse concluded, invited him to join her on a “little expedition.”

That foray almost cost Vincent his life. Vera, a member of the Explorer's Society, took them underneath several Vodacce islands and through catacombs below the water line to examine relics older than humanity. After surviving drowning, a cave-in and evisceration at the hands of furious Caligari henchmen, Bernadore decided that this was the life for him. Vera had shown him more excitement in a few days than he had ever known, and all in pursuit of a genuinely noble cause. He returned with her to Kirk, determined to become an Explorer himself. Their relationship was platonic for several more years. It was not until Bernadore vanished for a week on an expedition to the Crescent Empire that they both realized how much the other meant. The Headmaster never speaks about what happened during that week in 1645, except to insist that he never actually ended up in the Empire.

Vincent and Vera married the next year

Bernadore's star continued to rise and when the previous Headmaster announced her retirement in 1656, there was no question about who would replace her. Today, the Society credits much of its success is credited to the current Headmaster. Bernadore now has three children, but still finds the time to run the University, organize the Society as a whole, coordinate with the Department Heads and personally guide and support particularly promising students. Perhaps his most famous is Etienne Deneuve, who scandalized polite society when she founded the Montaigne Chapter House with money intended for her dowry. The Headmaster still occasionally accompanies expeditions, but his duties keep him in Avalon. Bernadore and his beloved wife have recently started talking about taking “one last great adventure,” which would presumably involve naming a replacement.

Vincent Bernadore (120[™])

Vincent Bernadore, Montaigne Noble 7/Archaeologist 9: CR 16; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d8 plus 9d4; hp 59; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk: rapier (+11/+6/+1) melee (1d6), pistol (+11/+6/+1) ranged (1d10); SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +16; SA Ancient Lore, Archaeologist of Truth, Commanding Presence +2, Evasion, Extraordinary Luck, Font of Wisdom, Friends in High Places, Great Knowledge, Greater Ancient Lore, Improved Evasion, Limitless Knowledge, Lucky, Seduction, Skill Mastery, Taunt; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 16; AL LG; Skills: Appraise +11, Balance +2, Climb +3, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (astronomy) +8, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (law) +5, Knowledge (philosophy) +5, Knowledge (science) +8, Knowledge (Syrneth lore) +14, Profession (sailor) +6, Read Lips +6, Ride +5, Speak Language (Avalon, Castillian, Crescent, Eisen, Montaigne, Théan, Vendel, Vodacce [alternately, any eight languages from your campaign]), Swim +2, Tumble +2, Use Rope +6; Feats: Alertness, Expertise, Friendly, Iron Will, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Membership — Explorer's Society, Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Gather Information)

Vincent Bernadore — Hero (7th Sea[™])

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 104
Background: None
Arcana: Friendly
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian, Crescent: tikaret-baraji (R/W) and tirala-biraji, Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Théan, Vendel (R/W), Vodacce, Appearance (Above Average), Connections (many), Linguist, Man of Will, Membership (Explorer's Society/7th Sea Council), University
Archaeologist: Artifact Evaluation 5, Occult 5, Research 5, Society Lore 5, Syrneth Lore 5, Trap Lore 5
Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 3, Gaming 2, Gossip 4, Lip Reading 3, Memorizing 4, Mooch 1, Oratory 2, Politics 5, Scheming 3, Seduction 2, Sincerity 5
Sailor: Balance 2, Climbing 2, Knotwork 2, Rigging 2, Sea Lore 1
Scholar: Astronomy 4, History 3, Law 3, Mathematics 3, Natural Philosophy 4, Occult 5, Philosophy 3, Research 5
Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Leaping 2, Lifting 1, Long Distance Running 2, Rolling 4, Sprinting 4, Swimming 2, Swinging 2, Throwing 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1
Rider: Ride 2

Vincent Bernadore's Secrets

Bernadore is a man with few secrets. Like most Explorers he believes firmly in honesty, although he is careful to protect the Society's business. The matter with the Crescent Empire is an example of this; he would gladly have told his colleagues, but the incident involved an encounter with a Kreuzritter Vigilant, and knew that sharing his tale would make them all targets. The Headmaster knows a fair amount about die Kreuzritter now, and he is a major reason that the Society can defend itself so well against them.

His biggest personal secret, and only one of note, is the fate of his family after the Revolution. Although his brother Eugene was killed during the initial uprising, most of the others were rescued by a new society called the Rye Grin (see pages 82-85, *The Montaigne Revolution™* for details on this organization), and they have asked him to remain quiet about their success. The Rye Grin can do better by keeping a low profile, so Bernadore respects their wishes

Brenden Stafford

Some say that Brenden Stafford was born a sailor. From a childhood spent fishing to his time working on Vendel merchant vessels to becoming a captain in his own right, he has always lived on or by the sea. Many sailors spend their lives this way, but Brenden is clearly something special. The rumors insist that he has a touch of faerie blood; at 48 he now looks about half his age. More recently, some Explorers have begun to suggest that his time as a captain was spent on the notorious *Roger's Lady*, a pirate vessel that preyed on Montaigne ships before Elaine's return. Stafford denies being part Sidhe, but is tight-lipped about his past. Aside from his youthful looks, Stafford's smooth skin, fair hair, and brilliant blue eyes make him nearly irresistible.

In spite of his many quirks, no one questions Brenden's dedication to the Society or his phenomenal skill. As the Head of Sea Exploration, he has more than tripled the size of the Society's fleet. Stafford doesn't just *build* ships, he regards each craft like his own child. If a crew shows early signs of scurvy, crates of oranges and lemons appear in Carleon as if by magic. Should a captain have trouble requisitioning an artifact needed for the ship's safety, the Head Council sends a request to expedite the matter. Stafford performs these minor marvels with astonishing regularity, and most crews love him for it.

Brenden Stafford (420™)

Brenden Stafford Avalon Glamour Mage 13/Pirate 5/Captain 3: CR 21; SZ M (humanoid); HD 18d10 plus 3d6; hp 100; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex); Atk: rapier (+18/+13/+8/+3) melee (1d6), pistol (+19/+14/+9/+4) ranged (1d10); SV Fort +9, Ref +16, Will +14; SA Ambidexterity, Cunning Plans, Glamour Checks +6, Legendary Leadership, Legends (Blackcloak, Green Man, Jack, Mad Jack O'Bannon, Thomas), Motivational Speech, Pirate Feat, Roguish Style, Seasoned, Two Weapon Fighting; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 16; AL NG; Skills: Balance +12, Climb +10, Concentration +4, Craft (strategy) +8, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +11, Knowledge (archaeology) +10, Knowledge (Syrneth) +10, Perform +11, Profession (sailor) +15, Profession (shipwright) +21, Profession (tactician) +6, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne, Vendel [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +11, Swim +12; Feats: Alertness, Appearance — Above Average, Dangerous Beauty, Iron Will, Keen Senses, Leadership, Membership (Explorer's Society), Pirate Trick (sea legs), Skill Focus: Profession (tactician).

Spells: *alter self, break enchantment, charm person, dancing lights, emotion, enthrall, fabricate, false vision, ghost sound, invisibility, rainbow, sculpt sound, silent image, veil.*

Brenden Stafford — Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 4, Finesse: 5, Wits: 5, Resolve: 6, Panache: 5

Reputation: 62

Background: True Identity

Arcana: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne, Vendel (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Dangerous Beauty, Keen Senses, Large, Membership (Explorer's Society/7th Sea Council), Sidhe Blood (Slow Aging and Immunity to Disease; Smell Glamour)

Archaeologist: Occult 3, Research 2, Society Lore 5, Syrneth Lore 4, Trap Lore 1

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Gossip 3, Oratory 2, Seduction 1, Sincerity 4 Glamour (Master): Blackcloak 5, Green Man 5, Jack 5, Mad Jack O'Bannon 5, Thomas 5

Merchant: Carpenter 3, Shipwright 6

Sailor: Balance 3, Cartography 4, Climbing 3, Knotwork 3, Navigation 3, Rigging 5, Sea Lore 4, Swimming 3, Weather 5

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Swimming 3, Swinging 1, Throwing 2

Captain: Ambush 3, Bribery 4, Cartography 4, Diplomacy 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Logistics 5, Strategy 4, Tactics 3 Fencing: Attack 3, Parry 4

Pugilism: Attack 4, Footwork 3, Jab 2, Uppercut 3

Brenden Stafford's Secrets

The rumors are true. Brenden was a pirate captain for several years before Elaine's ascension. However, that is not his deepest secret. Brenden wasn't born part *Sidhe* — he's entirely *Sidhe*. Or at least he was.



Lord Bren Maeldan was once one of the High Faerie, and spent a frozen eternity in Bryn Bresail. As the time for the Sidhe to return grew closer, he began looking into the human world with ever-increasing regularity. He even mimicked curiosity and fascination quite well, yet, though like his peers, he did not truly feel the emotions he portrayed.

Then he discovered the Explorer's Society. Humans were always doing absurd, dangerous things with their brief candle-flame lives, yet this was extraordinary even by their standards. A tiny group of them wished to understand the Syrne — not for power or glory, as so many before had done, but simply for the sake of knowledge and truth. Lord Bren watched them for years... and by Sidhe standards, suffered a horrible fate for it. His curiosity became real. Like all Sidhe caught "infected" with emotions, he was banished to the human world, stripped of his immortality and locked in mortal guise. If the truth be told, he did not mind much at first. Emotion was unlike anything he had ever experienced, and the rush of genuine feelings was intoxicating. Mortality soon caught up with him, however. Wisely, he started "young," and carefully fabricated his life as Brenden Stafford almost exactly as described above.

Aside from his stint as a pirate captain fighting the Montaigne, his life on the sea made him an ideal member of his beloved Society, and he has come to love Mother Ocean as much as any true Avalon sailor. Romance was merely something he discovered along the way, although he has become quite fond of that as well.

Today, he hides his secret simply out of habit. Brenden knows more keenly than most Society members why secrecy is such a terrible enemy; he longs to reveal the truth, but fears his colleagues' reaction. He does not think he would face prejudice as a former Sidhe, but now more than ever the Explorers are touchy about hidden lives. To complicate matters even further, he has fallen madly in love with Head Field Scholar Cristenne d'Asourne. Her beauty, drive, courage and passion have enchanted him in a way Glamour never could, and Brenden (who hides his feelings with absolute resolve) wonders if perhaps he is going mad.

Worst of all, he has finally found a way to beat the clock. His version of the O'Bannon Knack will restore him to youth when he dies of old age if he wishes. But now, eternity without his beloved seems far worse than mere oblivion.

Rutger Güttingen

Rutger entered the world three days after the War of the Cross started. He was one of the lucky ones, born in north-eastern Pösen to healthy baueren parents. His father lived peacefully for ten years afterward, until he was conscripted, and eventually killed in the fighting. His mother raised the boy, and his sisters and younger brother as best she could, but Rutger's childhood ended quickly.

The indomitable young Eisen soon took the place of his beloved father. He had always been a serious lad but he quickly turned into a formidable young man. Somehow, he managed to find the strength to help his mother run the farm, do twice his share of the chores and learn how to fight. When a band of brigands attacked his home, he killed all three of them with his father's rusty old pike. Baron Pösen,

the local ruler, learned of this from the soldiers pursuing the scoundrels, and decided to sponsor the lad at the Gelingen Academy. He sent a messenger to the farm; he returned several days later, reporting that Rutger had been unfailingly polite but insisted that his first duty was to his family and his land. Roaring with laughter, the Eisenfürst made a trip to the farm himself.

Pösen offered to hire three baueren to replace the boy, but in exchange for this additional consideration, Rutger would have to serve Pösen for at least five years, a condition that actually did not give the young *bauer* a moment's pause. He went on to learn both Gelingen and Eisenfaust schools at the academy, slaying (among other things) several ghouls, a handful of kobolds and three sirens during the course of the war. Güttingen even sparred with the Eisenfürst's daughter Fauner once, barely managing a draw. He served his five years with distinction, fighting valiantly during the war and protecting many families from Eisen's vicious beasts. Alas, he fell in battle a mere three days after his term ended, fighting a monster twice his size.

Or so the world believes.

The powers that be within the Explorer's Society consider this man one of the order's worst enemy's. He has been positively identified by the survivors of several expeditions whom he attack and wiped out almost to a man. Why such a courageous and honorable warrior would seek the Society's destruction is unknown. Only two Explorer teams have survived his efforts against them and it is anyone's guess how many expeditions the Eisen has actually destroyed. Descriptions say he appeared from the shadows and wore a small black cross around his neck. Many consider him the Society's deadliest foe and less experienced Explorers are advised to retreat at the first sign of his involvement.

Rutger Güttingen (A20™)

Rutger Güttingen, Eisen Fighter 5/Eisenfaust 5/Gelingen 5/Nacht Sorcerer 3: CR 18; SZ M (humanoid); HD 13d10 + 39 plus 5d8 +15; hp 150; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+1 Dex. +12 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atk: nightblade (+21/+16/+11/+6) melee (1d8 +4) panzerhand, (+21/+16/+11/+6) melee (1d6 +4) pistol (+18/+13/+8/+3) ranged (1d10); SV Fort +18, Ref +1, Will +11; SA Attacking Through the Shadows, The Dark Paths, Favored Prey (Théan Ghouls, Théan Kobolds, Théan Sirens), Focused Training, Off-Handed Training, Retaliatory Blow, Sneak Attack +2d6, Sunder, The Waiting Game; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 12; AL LN; Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +4, Heal +4, Gather Information +12, Hide +12, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Syrneth Artifacts) +10, Move Silently +10, Ride +4, Search +12, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Avalon, Castillian, Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel [alternately, any six languages from your campaign]), Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +8; Feats: Academy, Brawny, Expertise (panzerhand), Iron Will, Large, Linguist, Membership (Die Kreuzritter), Nightblade, Parry, Continuous Parry, Power Attack, Toughness, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Intermediate), Weapon Proficiency (panzerhand).

Rutger Güttingen — Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 5, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 0
Background: Dead to the World
Arcana: Willful
Advantages: Avalon, Castillian, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel (R/W), Academy, Indomitable Will, Large, Linguist, Membership (Die Kreuzritter), Nacht, Nightblade, Toughness
Archaeologist: Artifact Evaluation 3, Occult 5, Research 3, Society Lore 2, Syrneth Lore 5, Trap Lore 4
Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Gossip 2, Oratory 2, Scheming 3, Sincerity 4
Doctor: Diagnosis 2, Examiner 5, First Aid 3, Veterinarian 3
Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 3, Cryptography 4, Disguise 4, Hand Signs 3, Interrogation 4, Poison 3, Shadowing 5, Sincerity 4, Stealth 4
Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2, Underworld Lore 4
Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 2, Long Distance Running 3, Rolling 4, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3
Commander: Ambush 5, Bribery 3, Leadership 4, Strategy 2, Tactics 4
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 4, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 5, Throat Strike 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 4
Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload 2
Gelingen (Master): Exploit Weakness (Bear) 3, Exploit Weakness (Boca) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ghoul) 5, Exploit Weakness (Griffon) 4, Exploit Weakness (Kobold) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ruin Monster) 5, Exploit Weakness (Siren) 5, Exploit Weakness (Wolf) 2
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2
Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 1
Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 3, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 5
Rider: Ride 3

Rutger Güttingen's Secrets

Near the end of his term at Gelingen, Rutger saw a man not much older than he stumble out of a shadow with a hideous claw thing gripping his arm. The grim-faced monster hunter cut the arm away with his broadsword, then pointed his blade at the fallen warrior and demanded an explanation. Realizing that he owed his life to the young fighter, the man told Rutger about die Kreuzritter. The Eisen was not shaken by the revelation. After a lifetime of facing ravenous monsters and human savagery, notion of a secret band of knights fighting a hidden war was merely a part of his daily reality. The knight offered to make Rutger a member, but Rutger said that he *had* to complete his service to Pösen first; he had given his word, after all.

Rutger is as efficient a Black Knight as he was a monster hunter, fighting the enemies of humanity with skill and drive. No one realizes that Güttingen was obsessed with destroying monsters well before he joined die Kreuzritter. He clings to the belief in Humanity's innate goodness and does not shirk from his duties. Legion's creatures cause corruption and evil and must be eradicated forever.

Rutger finds the Explorer's Society tragic. He *knows* they are heroes. He *knows* that they are just and good, but their efforts unwittingly lend strength to the dark forces he fights. Nothing has ever stopped Rutger before, not pain or fear or grief so he certainly is not going to let sympathy for a band of naïve do-gooders stop him now. The Society must be destroyed for the sake of humanity.

The determined Eisen has learned to make his Nightblade grow as long as a broadsword, a skill he has neglected to tell the Order. (This has no game effect, other than allowing him to use it with his Eisenfaust style; since the blade is still immaterial, he cannot use his Parry or Beat Knacks with it.)

The Iron Butcher

The Caligari family has long been the Society's greatest rival, their conflict born from the original split between Cameron MacCormick and Allario Caligari and cemented by Vincenzo's hunger for Syrneth artifacts. One of the Prince's most determined servants was Arturo Caligari, a distant cousin lured into the family business by dreams of power and immortality. After commissioning the *Iron Fist* built from the keel up and choosing a crew from the most ruthless swabs ever to raid a merchantman, he became one of the deadliest mercenaries on the Seven Seas. Given the Society's large number of enemies, it was easy to find work destroying expeditions; the artifacts he retrieved would go to the Prince for "analysis."

During the down periods, the Vodacce took other assignments to cover his tracks and make extra money. He discovered that he was quite good at his work — good enough to realize that perhaps he didn't *need* Uncle Vincenzo. He knew that his dear uncle had no intention of sharing his successes with anyone, and furthermore, that the *real* information could be found at the sites themselves. Most of the known Syrneth artifacts were mere trinkets compared to the true power of the ancients.

When Cabora rose and Caligari's Island fell, the *Iron Fist* turned pirate without captain or crew batting an eye. After kidnapping, interrogating and abandoning an Explorer scholar, Arturo immediately set sail for Cabora. The scholar was rescued but not in time to prevent the deadly Vodacce from finding what he sought. While the ship lay anchor, Arturo ventured ashore alone. When he returned a few days later, the captain appeared unchanged, but it was soon clear that he had become virtually indestructible. Swords, guns and even cannon fire caused him no apparent damage, though occasional rents in his skin revealed what look like clockwork implants. Such damage always heals by the time the *Iron Fist* makes another attack.

If anything, apparent immortality has only increased Arturo's appetite for riches and conquest. He revels in his ever-increasing reputation, and may have allowed the Explorer who named him "Iron Butcher" to escape just so his new identity would spread. Although the fiend seems to have achieved the invincibility he sought, Caligari still hunts for Syrneth artifacts and takes special joy in tormenting the Society. Some scholars theorize that the Butcher needs certain types of devices to maintain his powers, although most think he is driven by simple human greed.

When his clockwork innards are hidden, Arturo is not an unattractive man. About average height, he looks like a typical Vodacce with swarthy skin, narrow brown eyes, a long, thin mustache and goatee, and wavy, shoulder-length black

hair. The Iron Butcher appears unnaturally “solid,” however, due no doubt due to his Setine modifications.

The Iron Butcher (420[™])

Modified Construct: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 19d10; hp 105; Init: +0; Spd 30 ft. (cannot run); AC 28 (+18 natural); Atks cutlass (+14/+9+4) melee (1d6), pistol (+14/+9+4) ranged (1d10); SA Electrical Discharge, Electrical Storm, Breath Weapon; SQ Illusory Disguise, Construct; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 26, Dex 10, Con -, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 1; AL LE; Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +5, Craft: Strategy +10, Decipher Script +8, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Syrneth artifacts) +20, Move Silently +5, Perform +7, Profession (shipwright) +4, Profession (tactics) +9, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne, Théan, Vodacce [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]); Feats: Iron Will, Leadership, Pirate Trick: Death From Above, Evil Reputation, Skill Focus: Profession: Tactician, Toughness.

For more on Syrneth Constructs (including a description of special abilities), please see page 84.

The Iron Butcher — Villain (7th Sea[™])

Brawn: 7, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 1

Reputation: -71

Background: None

Arcana: Focused

Advantages: Avalon, Castillian (R/W), Montaigne, Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Area Knowledge (Cabora), Evil Reputation, Island Hideaway (3 pts.), Pirate Trick (Death From Above), Syrneth Artifact (several).

Special: *Clockwork Automaton.* Arturo is considered indestructible for normal damage purposes. However, his clockwork body can be paralyzed. On a successful attack with a TN of 40, a blade or arrow can be wedged between gears, causing one effective Dramatic Wound as long as the weapon is in place. Removing the weapon requires ten Actions, but “heals” the Wound. When Knocked Out, the automaton is rendered immobile. Caligari is effectively immune to diseases and poisons, and has the Able Drinker Advantage. Punches and kicks do 9k2 damage. His Setine “whip” does 6k4 damage; do *not* add his Brawn to this damage. Clockwork Automatons are described in greater detail on page 86 of *Waves of Blood*.

Archaeologist: Artifact Evaluation 6, Occult 5, Research 3, Society Lore 2, Syrneth Lore 5, Trap Lore 4

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 2, Politics 3, Scheming 4, Seduction 1, Sincerity 4

Criminal: Ambush 3, Cheating 3, Gambling 2, Shadowing 1, Stealth 3

Merchant: Shipwright 2, Appraising 3, Hagglng 4

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 1

Captain: Ambush 3, Bribery 2, Incitation 2, Leadership 4, Logistics 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Kick 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 2, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 4

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry 1

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Whip: Attack (Whip) 5

Zepeda (Journeyman): Bind (Whip) 5, Disarm (Whip) 4, Tagging (Whip) 4, Exploit Weakness (Zepeda) 4

The Iron Butcher's Secrets

Arturo has one enormous but unsurprising secret — he is no longer human. His research led him to discover the secret of the Clockwork Automatons of Cabora and their vulnerability to powerful Arcana. With his impressive body of Syrneth knowledge, he deliberately allowed an Automaton to absorb him. The Iron Butcher's Arcana, combined with his preparations, allowed him to defeat the mechanical being and take control of his new body. He even has a few of the machine's memories, giving him unprecedented knowledge of Setine technology. Unlike his Uncle Vincenzo, he does reward his followers with the benefits of Syrneth powers. The Iron Butcher suffers no loss of human “physicality” so he can enjoy all human pleasures. The depth of his villainy is entirely by choice.

What Caligari *does not* know is that his control system is slightly imperfect. The clockwork intellect remains, influencing him to hunt Syrneth artifacts. It can also take control for very short periods while he sleeps, and has been stockpiling a few choice artifacts for its own use. Arturo believes that one of the crew is stealing artifacts from him and when he finds out which, he plans to squeeze the fool's neck until his head pops off.

Isolde von Haelbroeck

It is a good thing that Isolde Haelbroeck was born a Vendel rather than a Vodacce; it would have been such a tragic waste of talent otherwise. Hailing from a prosperous upper middle-class family in Kirk, Isolde received a very traditional education in both the domestic arts and rudimentary courses in business at the University. At 16, she married Herr von Haelbroeck, a wealthy merchant some years her senior. Although Vendel girls may marry whom they please, Isolde knew that a good business deal was better than a good marriage. Herr von Haelbroeck, not a particularly handsome man, was delighted to have such an accomplished and pretty wife to manage his accounts and warm his bed. As much as he enjoyed doing his husbandly duty, his heart swelled with pleasure then he watched Isolde bend over the account books, her full rosy lower lip caught in her teeth as she tallied and counted.

When Herr von Haelbroeck died, his young widow genuinely mourned his loss. She threw herself into the management of the business with a remarkable determination. Sadly, the couple had not been blessed with children. Perhaps that is why she became a patron of charitable causes in Kirk. She endowed an infirmary for children, gave generously to the hospital and even more to the University. Every Voltadi, von Haelbroeck would sit in the front pew of the Objectionist Church, her head bowed in devout prayer. One of the leading portraitists in the city recently completed a painting of her entitled “The Angel of Kirk.”

For all of her domesticity, there was no more astute businessperson in all of Kirk. Merchants and salesmen alike knew better than to cheat her. She had an uncanny ability to spot a fraud or a short order with a glance. A merchant intent on deceiving her feels his heart sink when she narrows her eyes even slightly. She not only has the eye for business; she has strong connections with the Vendel League. Cheat on her and your career is definitely over.

Suitors have never stopped knocking on her door, but she refuses them all with gentle courtesy. She favors every offer with a soft-spoken apology, but between her charity work and the business, she really does not have time to be a good wife.

Some years ago, the Explorer's Society caught her attention, and she soon became one of the Society's greatest patrons, supporting expeditions and sponsoring one young scholar every year who specializes in the study of ancient Apocalyptic religious texts. Her proudest moment came in 1668 when she was inducted into the Society as an Explorer of the Trade Sea. Everything about her is utterly calm, placid and precise; in other words, distinctly Vendel. She never loses her temper or raises her voice. Her household adores her and is strongly supportive of her activities. Like a good Vendel housewife she does not tolerate sloth or dirt.

Isolde Haelbroeck (d20™)

Isolde Haelbroeck, Vendel Noble 12; CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 12d8; hp 45, Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atks dagger (+9/+4) melee (1d8); SA Commanding Presence +3, Friends in High Places, Iron Glare 2/day, Seduction, Taunt; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will+11; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 16; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +7, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +15, Innuendo +5, Knowledge (bureaucracy) +15, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (law) +14, Listen +5, Profession (merchant) +15, Sense Motive +13, Speak Languages (Vendel, Avalon, Montaigne, Vodacce, Théan [alternately any four languages from your campaign]); Feats: Deceitful, Faith (Secret Sect), Iron Will, Indomitable Will, Membership — Explorer's Society, University.

Note: Frau von Haelbroeck is a proper Vendel widow so when she leaves her home, she is always accompanied by one household man-at-arms (5th level fighter).

Isolde Haelbroeck — Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 1, *Finesse:* 3, *Wits:* 5, *Resolve:* 5, *Panache:* 2.

Reputation: 65.

Background: None.

Arcana: Deceitful.

Advantages: Vendel (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W) Montaigne (R/W), Academy (Training – Eisen), Connections (Influential Friend), Faith (Secret Sect), Indomitable Will, Inheritance, Membership (Explorer's Society), Servants, University.

Courtier: Dance 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 5, Politics 5, Scheming 5, Sincerity 5.

Merchant: Accounting 5, Appraising 5, Dyeing 3, Hagging 4.

Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 4, Research 4, Occult 5.

Servant: Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 5.

Spy: Bribery 2, Shadowing 4, Stealth 3.

Firearms: Attack (Pistol) 1, Reload (Pistol) 1.

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1.

Rider: Ride 2.

Isolde Haelbroeck's Secrets

Sadly, the Angel of Kirk is not as she appears. When Frau von Haelbroeck sits in church, her head is bowed in reverent prayer but it is not Theus to whom she is praying. Her passion for business is nothing compared to her fanatical devotion to an ancient sect and its goal — to eradicate all religion in Théah and pave the way for the Syrneath to return and claim what is rightfully theirs. She has dedicated her not-inconsiderable

resources to the cause, secure in the knowledge that her earthly reward will come when the ancient ones have returned. She believes that the Explorers can unwittingly help her in her cause, and keeps a close eye on their activities, hoping to guide them in the right direction. She keeps in close contact with a group of like-minded individuals in Montaigne, and the scholars she sponsors all assist her in moving closer to her goals. As a result of consorting with dark and powerful forces, Frau Isolde is quite mad.

Augustus von Erich

Augustus von Erich is the third of five brothers born to a minor Eisen noble family. He was unlike his siblings who were brash, healthy and always getting into fights, while little Augustus kept to the neglected library in the basement of the family's manor house. A sickly child, he often became bedridden due to chills he caught while immersed in his studies, but he never stopped reading. His oldest brother, Aldus, mocked his desire to attend university instead of attending the Drexel Academy like the rest of the men in the family. Augustus shocked the entire clan by challenging him to a duel.

The night before the duel, Augustus crept into his brother's bedroom and woke him by firing a pistol into the wall just above his head. He then calmly explained that there would be no duel. He could kill his brother whenever he wished, and no amount of security of preparation could stop him. If Aldus insulted him again, Augustus promised a swift and honorless death. Since that day, no one in his family has challenged any of his decisions Augustus.

Augustus attended the university at Durchsetzungburg where he found people searching the same things he did. Although he had read about the Syrneath and discussed it with visitors to the von Erich manor, he had not seen any artifacts until he took a course on antiquities. He traveled to an Explorer dig site and came face to face with the wonder of the ancients. As soon as he touched some of the weird writing on the cavern wall, he knew that he had finally found the purpose of his life.

Unfortunately, fate intervened. During his absence, the von Erich lands were seized and his family rendered destitute, and Augustus found himself quickly running out of money. His friends in the Explorer's Society, while sympathetic to his problem, could not foot his tuition so Augustus was left to his own devices. He began to apply his intellect in whatever way he could, even making contacts in the underworld. He went so far as to approach the Inquisition about aiding them in exchange for remuneration. While the enterprising Eisen made progress, it was hardly enough. Fortunately, he stopped just short of breaking into the local Chapter House and selling the artifacts on the black market.

Strangely enough, the day he would have been forced to withdraw from the university, a short letter arrived for him. A wealthy merchant had apparently learned from "mutual friends" at the university that the bright young man was in some financial trouble. The merchant placed funds in a trust for him so that Augustus could finish his studies.

Since graduating, Augustus has achieved a reputation as one of the few experts on archaeology who is not working exclusively for the Explorers or Caligari. Others consider him bold enough to do whatever it takes to ensure that his clients receive their artifacts, no questions asked. Of course, Augustus is not above lying, cheating, coercion or threats, but he draws the line at murder. He has been both an ally and adversary to many Explorers and even those who dislike him

respect his tenacity, his peculiar code of ethics and his success rate. Augustus always seems to be one step ahead of the competition with the vital piece to the puzzle or the small shred of knowledge needed to put it all into place. Even in those rare instances in which others beat him to a site, he knows that sooner or later, he will repay the competitor in kind.

Augustus von Erich has a slight, wiry build. He wears glasses, which he has a penchant for polishing while he talks. He has short blond hair and a thin face. He stays well dressed even in the field. The Eisen always treats his adversaries as equals — he disdains false bravado — but is otherwise devious, unrelenting, and deadly in all things. Nothing matters to him but the prize at hand. Nothing.

Augustus von Erich (420™)

Augustus Von Erich, Eisen Spy 9/Durchsetzungsburg Swordsman 1: CR 10; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d6 + 1d8; hp 32; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex,+2 cloak); Atks Rapier (+7/+2) melee (1d6); SA Alias, sneak attack +4d6; SQ Brilliant getaway, contacts, face in the crowd, pinpoint accuracy; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15; AL NE; Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +11, Climb +8, Craft +10, Diplomacy +11, Disable +10, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +10, Gather Info +11, Hide +10, Innuendo +10, Sense Motive +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +11, Read Lips +11, Search +10, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne, Théan, Vodacce [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]) Swim +8; Feats: Adaptable, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Linguist, Tagging.

Augustus von Erich — Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: -40
Background: Debt
Arcana: Adaptable
Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Connections, Linguist, Noble, Patron
Archaeologist: Occult 4, Research 4, Society Lore 2
Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Lip Reading 1, Mooch 2, Oratory 3
Spy: Shadowing 4, Stealth 4
Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 4, Occult 3, Philosophy 3, Research 3
Durchsetzungsburg (Apprentice): Riposte 3, Tagging 3, Wall of Steel 2, Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungsburg) 2
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 2

Augustus von Erich's Secrets

Augustus would give anything to find out who paid for his education. He grew up learning that the prompt repayment of debt is the mark of a gentleman, and good business to boot. He is not proud of some of the things he did as a student and would prefer to know who has access to that information. He has some suspicions about his shadowy patron but wants to be absolutely certain before he initiates a direct confrontation.

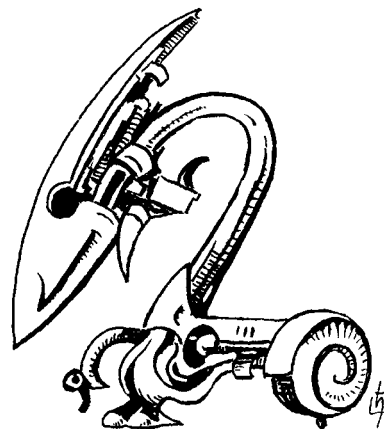
Captain Rudolf Starke

Even in organizations with the noblest aims, something rotten may lurk at the core. The knights of the Order of St. Gregor scour the land of Eisen, looking for someone fit to be Emperor, someone who can heal their shattered nation. Unfortunately for them, one of their number believes he has found the perfect candidate.

In 1659, Rudolf Starke was one of the most promising officers in the Eisen army. Raised in the town of Stärke, he was sent to the Unabwendbar military academy by his family after his father's death in the war. His mother never recovered from the loss, but Rudolf learned well at the academy — perhaps too well. Realizing that his father's death was but one cog in the machine of the war, he made his way into General Wulf's ranks, rising swiftly as his razor-sharp military mind brought the young officer victory after victory. As the War of the Cross ground on, Wulf perished, dragged from his horse to die in the mud. A series of spirited victories by the Vaticine General Gietl saw him placed ever higher in a fragmenting chain of command. The collapsing Objectivist front forced the young strategist closer and closer to the combats he had once so clinically directed from afar.

Sitting in his tent one night, reviewing the reports of enemy troop movements with a mug of warm beer in his hand, Starke came to the realization that changed his life. In a few days he and all of his men would die and their deaths would serve no purpose. Leaving his tent, he called his men around him and spoke to them. He told them that he had had enough of the war, the killing, and the horror. He spoke movingly, and his men were shocked. This was a side of their cold, rational captain they had not seen before. As he finished, he ordered the unit to disband, but asked them to remember him, and when the time came for Eisen to stand again, he would seek them out. By morning, his camp was deserted.

In the years that followed, Starke worked for whoever paid him. Watching quietly from the sidelines, he saw how the Eisenfürten acted. He saw his own nation dragged even further down by greed, insanity, ruthlessness, pride, ambition and negligence. It was while in the army of Georg Hainzl, a southern baron and raving lunatic, that Starke came to the realization that no-one in a position of power within Eisen was fit to lead. Not Hainzl, and not any of the other would-be rulers... none of them deserved the responsibility of the office they held. He laid down his sword then and there, and walked away without looking back. He made his way to the Matthiast Monastery outside the city of Prachtig, where he



was contacted within the year by the Order of St. Gregor, a band of knights dedicated to enforcing justice throughout Eisen. While Starke watched the Eisenfürsten, soldiers in the Order had been watching him. They were curious why he had served under so many Princes, only to simply walk away one day. They recruited him into their ranks, seeing a man driven only by the good of Eisen, a man determined to unite his country once more and bring it out of the darkness. Perhaps, at one time, they might even have been right.

During his time in the monastery, Starke sought guidance. He prayed and fasted, beseeching Theus to show him the path he must take. No answer came, and the days became weeks as Starke contemplated what lay ahead. He never heard the voice of his god, although he wished he had. Turning from theology to his pragmatic philosophy, he pieced together what he saw as the truth, and discovered the only logical conclusion: he could not find an Emperor because he was not looking in the right place. The Iron Princes did not care about Eisen. He did. They showed no ability to command. He did. They could not, must not, be allowed to rule over Eisen. He should. He spent the next few months planning the steps he could take with the resources he had to achieve his goal. It began with allowing the Order of St. Gregor to find him. The next step was building up a loyal core of followers within the Order, some drawn from the ranks of his old regiment. In the space of a few short years, Rudolf Starke has moved his agents, like pieces on an *ajedrez* board, into positions where they can be useful to their commander. The Order does not suspect that Starke has a goal they do not share.

Rudolf Starke (d20™)

Eisen Fighter 6/Unabwendbar 5/Drexel 2: CR 13; SZ M (humanoid); HD 13d10 +26; hp 95; Init: +0 (+2 Dex, minus armor penalty); Spd. 30 ft.; AC 17 (+7 half plate); Atk zweihander (+15/+10/+5) melee (3d4), crossbow (+15/+10/+5) ranged (1d8); SA Apprentice Level Training (Bittner, Metzger), Concentration, Improved Initiative, Lead by Example, Schooled in Command, Take and Give Orders; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 13; AL LE; Skills: Climb +4, Intimidate +6, Jump +4, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (philosophy) +6, Knowledge (war) +10, Move Silently +4, Perform +3, Profession (Commander) +7, Profession (Strategist) +7, Profession (Tactician) +6, Ride +5, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]), Sense Motive +8, Swim +5; Feats: Academy, Alertness, Cleave, Commander, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Zweihander), Great Cleave, Improved Critical, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Scholar, Toughness, Track, Willful.

Rudolf Starke — Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 4, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: -22
Background: None
Arcana: Willful
Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Avalon, High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne, Vendel, Academy, Eisen Accent (North), Toughness.
Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 4, Politics 4, Scheming 3, Sincerity 5.
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 4,

Research 2, Theology 4.

Spy: Shadowing 4, Stealth 3, Cryptography 3, Interrogation 3.

Athlete: Footwork 4, Climbing 3, Leaping 3, Lifting 3, Sprinting 2, Swimming 2, Swinging 2, Throwing 2.

Commander: Ambush 4, Incitation 3, Leadership 5, Logistics 3, Strategy 5, Tactics 5.

Dirty Fighting: Attack 3, Eye Gouge 3, Kick 3, Throat Strike 3.

Drexel (Apprentice): Disarm (Heavy Weapon) 3, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 2, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 3, Exploit Weakness (Drexel) 2. Stances: Bittner, Metzger.

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 4.

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2.

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5.

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2.

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 4, Parry (Polearm) 3, Set Defense (Polearm) 3.

Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 2.

Unabwendbar (Master): Advance 5, Envelop 5, Hold Ground 5, Regroup 5, Set vs. Charge 5, Trim Line 5.

Starke's Secrets

Currently, Starke waits outside Gregorskorn ostensibly on behalf of the Order. However, he actually plans to either kill anyone who recovers the Shield of St. Gregor or recover it himself. He does not believe in legends, but he knows their power over the people of Eisen. If he were to take the Shield back, he believes he will take a big step towards becoming the next Emperor. Should the Knights of St. Gregor discover his plan, the resulting conflict between them and Starke's men would most likely destroy the ancient knightly order forever. Explorers searching for the lost Shield may unwittingly ignite a firestorm.

Danior Fahlani

Zaharia Fahlani of Vodacce realized quickly that her third son possessed a curiosity and intelligence far above that of her other offspring. She taught him all she knew about the traditions of their people — the wandering Cymbr, Vodacce's nomadic travelers — and the vast world through which the caravans traveled. His father, Bavol, often scolded Zaharia for keeping Danior with her and his little hands occupied with women's work.

"The boy should be with his brothers learning to cut stone, woman, not sewing dresses. He needs to learn to fight, to be a man," Bavol raged at Zaharia when he had been too long at his drink. Zaharia would merely smile and refill his cup — the sooner to put the angry bear to sleep. "You already have two fine sons to help you. Theus has other plans for Danior. You mustn't stand in His way," she always answered.

Through the years, Zaharia did all she could to further Danior's education within the confines of their nomadic way of life. She made him ride with the caravan masters to learn the ways of the road, direction and cartography. He accompanied her into the villages where she offered her talents as a seamstress, while allowing her son to play with the village orphans, who did not care that he was Cymbr and an outcast amongst genteel folk. He quickly learned languages and customs, and by the time he was eleven he could rapidly negotiate terms for work and payment for his Cymbri tribesmen throughout Vodacce, Eisen and Castille.

Then came the day for which Zaharia had been praying. One fine spring morning in Castille, Danior watched a crew of stonemasons laying the foundations and stem walls for a new addition to the local cathedral. A high ranking priest spotted the boy watching them and noticed the look of concern on the boy's face.

"Have these men offended you in some way, child?" the priest asked.

"No, sir. The rock in this foundation will not support walls more than fifteen feet high. Your drawings call for much higher," Danior answered.

Within the hour, with Danior translating between priests and Cymbri, the Castillian stonemasons found themselves answering to a new master. Zaharia saw her chance to get Danior the education he needed. As the stone walls went up strong and straight, she offer to let Danior served the priest in exchange for an unusual education.

Father Ricardo, agreeing with Zaharia about Danior's gift, took him under his wing and privately taught him to read and write. He sometimes found the boy missing in the early morning hours, but rarely chastised him, knowing he had crept down to the library. During Father Ricardo's lectures on history, language, religion and medicine, Danior was careful to sit in his servant's corner and look bored or pretend to be asleep. The local nobility would not stand for a Cymbr peasant receiving an education with their sons. In the evenings, Danior stood in the shadows behind Father Ricardo's chair and listened intently to discussions of such things as sorcery, the strange beings called Syrneth and an "Explorer's Society," which searched for powerful relics from this ancient civilization. This hunt, this quest for knowledge, fired Danior's Cymbr blood more than any ranting by his father.

At fifteen Danior found himself in Charouse where his father's growing reputation as a master stonemason made him much in demand. Unfortunately for Danior, the Montaigne priests would not grant him the same considerations as the Castillians had. He was too old, they said; if he wanted an education, he should become a priest. Instead, Danior helped his mother by day and took to the streets by night. He led other Cymbr youth through the fabled tunnels beneath the city looking for treasures. Once they were nearly caught by the guard when Danior finally found the wondrous "Star Map" (see page 46) and stayed too long burning it into his memory.

Several years later, he was returning to his early home in the mountains of Vodacce when he chanced upon a party of half-starved Explorers. In exchange for food and a good map, the Explorers shared with him their important notes and artifacts, which they thought would impress the wandering Cymbr. They were greatly surprised when he pointed out errors in their translations and flaws in their scientific deductions and theories. They asked him to join their organization, but he smiled and politely refused. At some point he disappeared into the night, but left tantalizing thoughts elegantly penned in their rough journals.

Danior Fahlani has since followed the path of twinkling stars. He believes the purpose of his life was to bring the knowledge of a thousand books to light, to help those who seek the truth, but not to let them dictate his fate. He belongs to no prince, to no society, but to the world. He is Cymbr. He appreciates the Explorer's Society, and the goals they pursue, but would never give up his Cymbr lifestyle to formally joined their ranks.

Danior Fahlani is a striking young man with angular features and jet black hair, which he wears in a ponytail at the nape of his neck, or combed in the latest Vodacce or Castillian fashion — whichever suits his purpose. The gray color of his eyes seems oddly out of place given their almond shape and the darkness of his skin. His body is lean and agile and he wears a long dagger at his hip. He is at ease alone in a mountain cave, or leading a lady across a dance floor. His speech is flawless in no matter which of the five or so languages he speaks. In polite company, he rarely speaks the language to which he was born, Cymbr.

Danior Fahlani (d20™)

Danior Fahlani, Vodacce Wanderer 10: CR 10; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d8; hp38; Init: +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atk rapier (+7/+2) melee (1d6), dagger (+7/+2) melee (1d4); SA Evasion, Tradesman, Uncanny Dodge (Can't Be Flanked), Wanderer's Knowledge; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 14; AL CG; Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Climb +5, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +13, Heal +8, Innuendo +10, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (Crescent lore) +13, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (mathematics) +3, Knowledge (philosophy) +10, Knowledge (Syrneth) +10, Knowledge (theology) +7, Listen +6, Perform +6, Ride +6, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Castillian, Crescent, Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately any five languages from your campaign]), Swim +3, Wilderness Lore +13; Feats: Adaptable, Indomitable Will, Keen Senses, Linguist, Scholar, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Worldly.

Danior Fahlani — Hero

Brawn: 2, *Finesse:* 2, *Wits:* 5, *Resolve:* 2, *Panache:* 2.

Reputation: 15.

Background: None.

Arcana: Wordly.

Advantages: Vodacce (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Crescent (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne, Allies (many), Indomitable Will, Keen Senses, Linguist.

Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2.

Scholar: History 5, Mathematics 1, Occult 5, Philosophy 4, Research 2, Theology 3.

Streetwise: Lore 4, Scrounging 2, Socializing 2, Street Navigation 2.

Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Side-step 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3.

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2.

Rider: Ride 2

Danior Fahlani's Secrets

Danior knows much about the world, but he has few personal secrets. He honestly enjoys his wanderer's lifestyle, and wouldn't think of abandoning his Cymbr heritage for anything. He does love the Explorer's Society, however, and will help members if their paths ever cross. He might even establish a communication system with Explorers he is particularly fond of (i.e., the player characters), allowing them to contact him and/or arrange for a meeting if they require his advise. Though he is often difficult to pinpoint, he's willing to make the effort if it means increasing his store of knowledge.



CHAPTER FIVE: *Survival*

Wonder and Terror *Epilogue* **Equipment**

From a dimly lit corner of the celebration, a tall man dressed entirely in black watched Magnus and his skjaeren wife Freyalinda rejoin the party. They spoke briefly with Chairman Mokka, then joined in the next dance. He wished he could make himself hate them and their meddling in ancient things, but that was impossible. A Vendel and Vesten trying desperately to reunite their nation, end the pain, heal the wounds — how could an Eisen soldier who survived the War of the Cross hate two such crusaders? They had triumphed over their own prejudice with love, courage and honor.

Rutger Guttingen knew his duty too well to let his feelings interfere, though. No matter their motives, Explorers were a danger to all of humanity. No matter their skills, they were no match for the deadly and ancient cunning of the Strangers. No matter their courage, no one could be allowed to tamper with the powers of the Syrne. No one.

They would have to die.

Eventually.

Another time, Explorer, he thought grimly.

With that, he left the building and vanished into the night.

Rules

Many rules pertinent to the Explorer's Society were printed in early *7th Sea* products. We have collected and republished them here — gathered in one place for your convenience — along with a few new rules, described below.

Cameron MacCormick used to say that an Explorer's most important tool is his minds, but he'd better have a good shovel on hand as well. Most Explorer activities simply would not be possible without plenty of strong backs and basic equipment.

Digging Tools

An excavator's (the Society disdains the term "digger") most basic piece of equipment is still the shovel. Although crude and imprecise, nothing equals a shovel for getting large amounts of ground out of the way. Many Shield Men have also become quite adept with them in combat because shovels are readily available at the site. In the *7th Sea* system, shovels are Improvised Weapons and most are smaller than man-sized; in the d20 system, they are blunt weapons that do 1d6 damage with a critical multiplier of $\times 2$.

Picks are rarely used any more because shovels are usually more effective on large-scale excavation and involve far less risk of either damaging artifacts or setting off traps. Sometimes, though, only a pick can break through a barrier without explosives. In *7th Sea*, picks do 2k2 damage and can be used with either the Improvised Weapon Knacks or the Heavy Weapon Skill. In d20, use the stats for a heavy pick and impose a -2 attack penalty on anyone without proficiency in Improvised Weapons.

At most sites, the most important digging tool is a trowel, a small hand shovel typically used in gardening, that allows careful and precise excavation. The primary drawback of trowels is that their size does not allow for much leverage. They can't penetrate exceptionally hard ground or solid

rock although one Syrneath Tinkerer is trying to develop a trowel with a lens blade edge. (The loss of a finger has not slowed his efforts). Trowels do no more damage than a human fist and can also be used for parrying with the use of appropriate feats or Knacks.

Explorers use brushes for more delicate work. In most cases, they are both safer and more precise than the human hand. Most members use wide-edged exterior painting brushes to clean away light, loose debris safely and gently. Recently, the Society has developed wire brushes which are safer than trowels and stronger than paint brushes only a few such brushes have yet seen use in the field. The Society hopes to build more in the near future.

Some excavators are experimenting with tools they call "ground screws:" basically a long spiraling blade attached to a shovel handle. Ground screws enable Explorers to dig straight down without disturbing the surrounding land. The wielder twists the handle while pressing down, then pulls the tool back up to loosen the dirt. Ground screws do not normally see common use except in certain areas where a shovel is too wide to gain purchase. In combat, they are treated as picks.

Encoding Device

While the Explorer's Society is fairly forthcoming with its activities, matters of secrecy do occasionally crop up. The Society handles such matters through the "correspondence code," hiding information about dig locations and Explorer progress. The untrained eye sees an unremarkable chatty missive about the weather or the family. An Explorer, however, gathers information by decoding the names or topics. Unfortunately, recent developments called the safety of the correspondence code into question. Digs were raided, artifacts stolen and personnel endangered. The Society's enemies and rivals obviously caught on to the secrets contained within those letters, so a new method of hiding secrets was needed. The solution came, not surprisingly, from the Invisible College.

The encoding device is often hidden in a small knick-knack like a music box or a lady's make-up box. A hidden switch opens a false bottom in which the Explorer can hide a set of letters by pressing them up against the box. A small trail of paper is fed into one side of the device which the machine inside the box pushes through while the simultaneously imprinting the paper with the message.

There are two general types of encoding device. The original design exists primarily in music boxes, taking advantage of the musical cipher the College uses. The crank handle moves the paper through the device as the messages are encoded by punching holes. When the coded paper is run back through the machine in the opposite direction, the buttons on the other side pop out and imprint themselves on another piece of paper, forming the encoded words.

After seeing one of his colleagues use this device, Explorer Carel Voorhees took the same principles and invented his own design which incorporates some of the Society's Syrneath artifacts. Currently these devices are often built by members familiar with Setine clockwork which was Dr. Voorhees's specialty. Rather than punching holes in paper, the Society devices act like miniature printing presses that use a special ink invisible to the human eye. Many times, false letters are

written in the correspondence code on these "blank" pieces of paper to misdirect anyone familiar with the correspondence code. When the paper is brought to a chapterhouse, it is bathed in the light of a Domae blackstone which renders the ink visible to the human eye.

Each device has its advantages and disadvantages. The College-designed encoder can be used for more detailed messages but requires another music box device to decode it. These messages are often written in the Invisible College's musical cipher, but the shredded bits of paper can also be detected by those familiar with the design. Members of the Inquisition know about the cipher, although they have been unable to crack it so far.

The Voorhees-designed encoder is more limited in what it can print on a single piece of paper, overzealous searchers will easily ignore blank parchment sheets and most chapterhouses have blackstones on hand. Of course, an Explorer who doesn't think to check the letter for an invisible message could miss vital information. Currently, the smallest encoding device is built into a snuff box, the largest into the clock tower at the Kirk Chapterhouse which can churn out several pages of secret messages.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Music devices require a Use Device Roll at a DC of 15 to send and receive messages. The Voorhees Device has a DC of 10 +2 for every five words in the message.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Music devices can send unlimited messages but require a Wits + Cryptography roll of TN 20 to encode and decode a message properly. The Voorhees Device takes only one roll during encoding; the base TN is 15 +5 for each five words used in the message.

Artifacts

Some Explorers disdain the actual use of Syrneath equipment, feeling that it lowers them to the same level as "diggers." However, they are a small minority. Most Explorers find the artifacts of the ancient races too fascinating to leave untouched and for some, the chance to play with the toys of gods is reason enough to join the Society. The insane risks some members take in the pursuit of Truth and Knowledge pay off in more ways than lore and study. Items found at Syrneath sites range from the mundane to nothing short of miraculous, and many teams of Explorer adventurers learn to use their artifacts to considerable advantage.

Of course, Syrneath artifacts are not toys. Although a handful of Explorers may treat them as such, the Society frowns upon it. Casual treatment of these ancient glories is a good way to die badly, and wise adventurers treat the power of ages with care and respect.

There is no formal "system" for assigning artifacts. Many Explorers keep duplicate artifacts they find, and the Society can be quite cavalier about loaning minor or duplicate items out to its members. Those which come from the Society's vaults, however, are carefully tracked, and signed out to specific members. Those who do not return the artifact within a reasonable amount of time are usually fined or reprimanded. Very powerful or rare artifacts (such as Thalusiai Claws) will not be released unless the need is great.

The following artifacts are known and often used by the Explorer's Society. Many of them appear in previous *7th Sea* books which are currently out of print; we've gathered them here in one place, and reprinted the pertinent rules for your convenience. Some items are too powerful or rare to be given out casually, but may be available in extreme circumstances. Others are quite common, and may be assigned to any Explorer who has good reason to use one. Still others may (at the GM's discretion) be undiscovered, waiting in some hidden locale for the characters to find. Unless stated otherwise, rules are for the d20 system; *7th Sea* rules are usually included in parentheses. The book in which the artifacts originally appeared is listed in parenthesis after each entry.

References

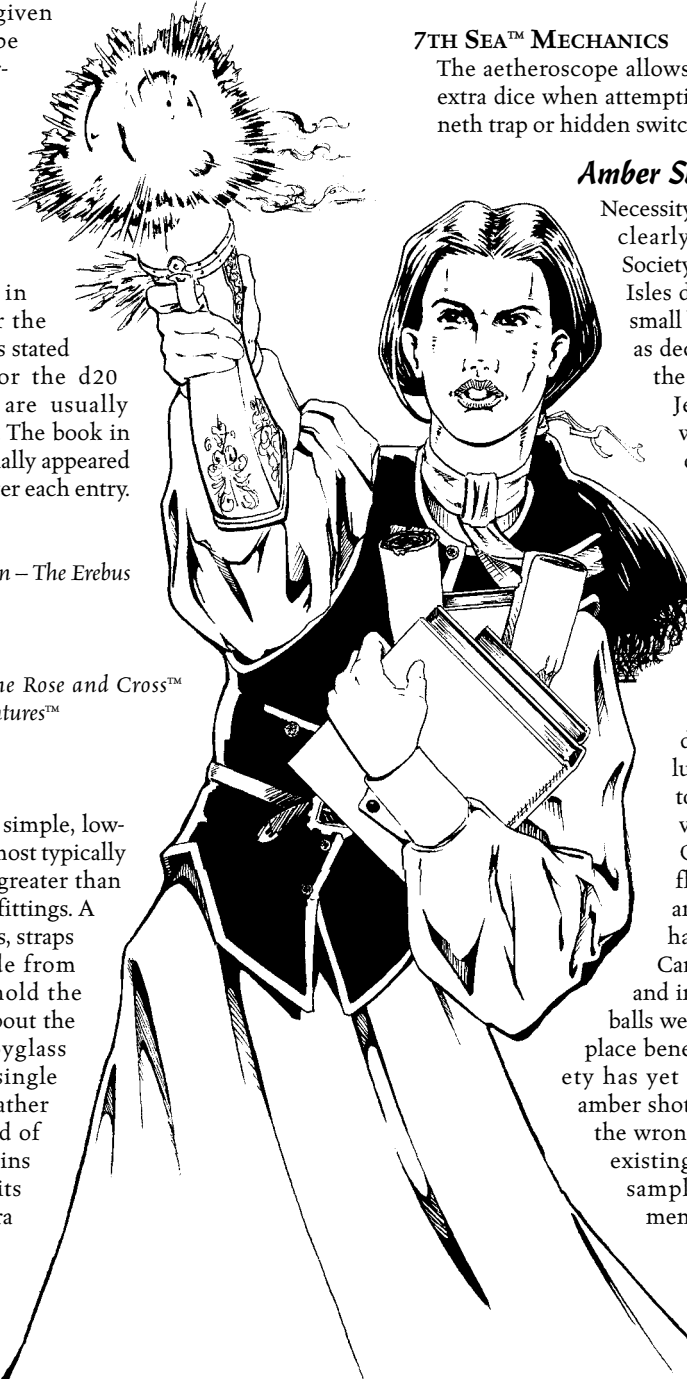
- AoH = *The Arrow of Heaven – The Erebus Cross: Part Three*TM
- DK = *Die Kreuzritter*TM
- PN = *The Pirate Nations*TM
- R&C = *The Knights of the Rose and Cross*TM
- SA = *Swashbuckling Adventures*TM
- WoB = *Waves of Blood*TM

Aetherscope

This device consists of a simple, low-magnification spyglass (most typically magnify at 3 to 4 times greater than human sight) with brass fittings. A complex series of buckles, straps and fastenings protrude from the tube, designed to hold the aetherscope securely about the wearer's head. The spyglass itself is fashioned in a single piece, and fixed with leather seals at each end. In and of itself, the spyglass contains no unusual properties; its contents provide the extra kick.

During its creation, the aetherscope is filled with gaseous Aether. Although not well understood, the Society discovered that when glass contains aetheric fumes, the user can view aetheric emanations in direct line of sight, including hidden mechanisms of the Syrneth, lines of energy strung invisibly across a corridor and pressurized switches that would otherwise go unnoticed by the naked eye.

If the aetherscope is damaged, it is rendered permanently useless, and the wearer may suffer from Aether inhalation.



D20 SYSTEMTM MECHANICS

In d20 terms it allows its wearer to *detect snares & pits* relating to any Syrneth technology or (at the GM's discretion) *detect magic* of any type appropriate to the campaign.

7TH SEATM MECHANICS

The aetherscope allows its wearer to roll and keep 2 extra dice when attempting to detect or avoid any Syrneth trap or hidden switch.

Amber Shot

Necessity is the mother of invention, as is clearly demonstrated by this item. A Society dig on one of the larger Thalusiai Isles discovered a cavern littered with small balls of amber, apparently serving as decorations. When pirates attacked the expedition on its return voyage, Jemima Thorpe, a Field Scholar who had been idly examining one of the balls, snatched up her musket and scrambled up into the rigging. In the heat of battle, as the tide turned against the Explorers, Thorpe loaded the musket without looking and took a desperate shot at the pirate captain.

The shot went wide, smacking harmlessly into the deck by the stern. Cursing her luck, Jemima began to reload, only to drop it as the rear of the pirate vessel was engulfed in flame. Only later, after the pirates had fled to their stricken vessel in fear and confusion, did she realize what had happened. Upon her return to Carleon, she promptly filed a report and insured that the remaining amber balls were carefully stored in a cool, dark place beneath the chapterhouse. The Society has yet to discover further sources of amber shot and dreads what will happen if the wrong people get their hands on any existing stores. They refuse to dole out samples to any but the most trusted members.

D20 SYSTEMTM MECHANICS

Amber shot deals damage as an ordinary musket shot, though anyone firing it suffers a -4 penalty to his attack roll. When

fired, roll an initiative check for it; it will explode as an 8d6 fireball on its phase during the next round.

7TH SEATM MECHANICS

Amber shot deals damage like ordinary musket shot, although anyone firing it rolls and keeps one less dice to hit. The round after it is fired, it explodes on a randomly determined phase as a 5k5 explosion.

Black Prisms

Made from a very hard, obsidian-like rock, the prism emits a low-pitched growl that only creatures with less than human intelligence (and particularly sharp-eared characters) can detect. Those who fail must move as far from the prism as possible and may not act; they cower and cover their ears. (SA 175) (R&C 79)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Any creature within 100 ft. of the prism must make a successful Wis check (DC 20) to resist the *fear aura* of the prism.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Any creature within 100 ft. of the prism must make a successful resolve roll, TN 30.

Campfire Crystals

These fist-sized reddish crystals give off the same heat as a campfire for up to eight hours after being struck a sharp blow, after which they are useless. The crystals give off no light, and this allows the user to have a campfire that cannot be spotted. The heat of the crystal can be used to keep warm or cook, or even to start a fire if activated and left among flammable materials. (SA 176) (DK 76)

Claw of the Thalusiai

Though the Explorer's Society has catalogued six of these strange artifacts, more almost certainly exist. The Claws resemble nothing so much as oversized bird claws which easily fit over either hand. Anyone proficient with the use of a gauntlet as a weapon may use a Claw properly, but despite its wicked appearance, it is otherwise no different from a dracheneisen panzerhand. Unlike the panzerhands, the Claws still allow for fine manipulation, but the Claws also carry a curse: the shadows themselves hunt the wearers. Incorporeal foes may affect the wearer of a Thalusiai Claw as though he himself were incorporeal, though the poor victim cannot return the favor. (SA 177) (WoB 71)

Crimson Cutlass

The blade of this cutlass can duplicate an earlier move used against an opponent to similar effect. (SA 177) (PN 97 as "Reddish Cutlass")

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Once per day, after you hit and deal damage to an enemy with this cutlass, you may use your next attack (once it's valid) and activate the cutlass' power. The cutlass imitates the earlier attack exactly, including the attack roll and damage roll (assuming that attack roll hits again, only the rolls are the same, the bonuses are determined by the current attack). This cutlass is otherwise a standard +1 cutlass.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Once per Scene, after you hit an enemy with this cutlass, you may use your next Action (once it's valid) and spend a Drama Die to imitate the earlier attack exactly, including the Attack Roll and Damage Roll.

Domae Stone

"Domae stones" are some of the most desired artifacts in all of Théah. The stones have their own individual color, but when four of the nine types are placed in proximity to each other, they lose their color, appearing to be diamonds. The stones also change color at the rising and setting of the sun. Finally, some stones have dangerous effects when placed together, as you will soon see...

Domae Blackstone: Blackstone is, without a doubt, the most dangerous Domae stone. When placed next to another Domae stone, both begin to vibrate. As they are brought closer, the vibrations become highly violent. Finally, if the two stones touch, they explode (1d6 hit points, 5 ft. radius or 1k1 Wounds from the same radius).

Domae Bloodstone: During daylight, bloodstone is a milky clear color with "veins" of red. As the sun sets, the veins thicken and a "heart" appears in the center of the stone.

Domae Bonestone: When the sun sets, this stone becomes almost pure white.

Domae Diamond: Domae diamonds actually look nothing like mundane diamonds. They are green in color with speckles of blue. However, the stones earned their name from their hardness. Domae diamonds are the hardest substance found on Théah, the only material that can cut the other Domae stones.

Domae Moonstone: There are two types of "moonstone" in Théah. The first appears much like smokestone. This is the second. Domae moonstone has many similar qualities to bloodstone; it is milky white during daylight hours. However, as the moon rises, its color fades to translucent with a dim glow. The glow is enough to recognize in the dark, but not bright enough to see by.

Domae Rainbowstone: Rainbowstone is highly desired by the nobility for its wide range of colors that seem to change depending on who wears the stones. Many scholars have studied the stones, attempting to make sense of the colors, but no pattern has made itself evident.

Domae Smokestone: As nighttime approaches, smokestone grows darker and colder. At midnight, smokestone is so cold it burns human flesh.

Domae Sunstone: Sunstone is a pale yellow with shards of bright orange. As the sun rises, the orange shards begin to glow with the same radiance as moonstone.

Explorers have used both sunstone and moonstone to create "Domaedials." The small jeweled time pieces have both moonstones and sunstones, and are used while underground to keep track of day and night. Experienced explorers can look at the brightness of both stones and tell the time of day to the hour.

Domae Waterstone: Waterstone grows dark blue as storms approach, a quality that makes it very valuable on ships. (SA 178) (AoH 57).

Domae Whetstone

This peculiar item looks like nothing so much as a plain rock with a V-shaped cut running deep into its center; tiny veins of crystal sparkle in the cut. If the stone is, as is surmised, a whetstone, it is uncertain what the Domae used as weapons: any blade sharpened by it becomes both fiercely sharp and terribly fragile.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Any weapon sharpened with it rolls an additional 1d6 on all damage rolls (this extra damage is not increased by critical hits), but its hardness and hit points are reduced by 2.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A weapon sharpened with a Domae whetstone keeps an extra dice of damage (0k1), but any attempt to break it has its TN reduced by 10.

Drachen Rod

This enormous rod topped is with man-sized pictographs, made of lustrous gray stone and weighing several tons. When a character touches the correct pair of pictographs at the same time, he ceases to age for next five years, although the only noticeable effect at the time is that of energy being transmitted through the character's body. After it's been used once, the rod cracks and is useless. (SA 178) (AoH 56)

Flash Rifle

The Flash Rifle is actually a regular Théan musket with a hollowed cylinder of a bone-like substance mounted directly on the musket's barrel. It looks like a solid white or gray alchemical tube on the end of the musket, and does not affect the gun's weight or balance. The normal effects of musket fire include a loud noise and a bright flash of fire. With the cylinder attached, the gunshot is louder and the flash is hotter, larger, longer and brighter. (SA 178) (R&C 77)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

When fired the Flash Rifle produces a flame that extends almost a foot from the barrel and at its end is nearly 6 in. wide. The rifle does more damage than the average musket, 3d6. The flame is so hot, that for the rest of the round almost anything but stone or metal that makes contact with the barrel will catch fire and burn. A character that has fired one has his AC increased by 3 until next round, due to the incredible heat produced. In addition, the character may attack with the weapon as a musket with a bayonet. Anyone struck with the flame suffers 2d6 hit points heat damage. The flame lasts until the player's next turn. The Explorer's Society owns a small handful of these, and several more belong to the Knights of the Rose and Cross. The Society usually only issues them to Shield Men or similar members.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

When fired the Flash Rifle produces a flame that extends almost a foot from the barrel and at its end is nearly 6 in. wide. The rifle does more damage than the average musket, 6k3. The flame is so hot, that for the rest of the round almost anything but stone or metal that makes contact with the barrel will catch fire and burn. A character that has fired one has his Passive Defense raised by 15 for the next three phases. In addition, the character may attack with the weapon as a musket with a bayonet. Anyone struck with the flame suffers 4k2 points of heat damage. The flame lasts for three phases. The Explorer's Society owns a small handful of these, and several more belong to the Knights of the Rose and Cross. The Society usually only issues them to Shield Men or similar members.

Glowing Stones

These palm-sized rocks cast a greenish light illuminating up to 6 in. away. This allows their carrier to work in the dark without attracting unwanted attention. (SA 179) (DK 76)

Golden Marble

This is a simple golden marble. If you tap it with your fingernail, carry it somewhere else, and then drop it on the ground, it begins to roll back towards the place where you tapped it. It only "remembers" the last place it was tapped, and the marble never "forgets" a location as long as it isn't tapped again. When rolling, it moves back along the path it has traveled since then at a slow walking rate. It is possible to pick the marble up while it is retracing its path, take a break, and then drop it and have it resume its journey later. If the marble reaches water, it stops at the edge, and if carried across and dropped again, will continue on its way. (SA 179) (PN 96)

Gray Powder

Gray powder has no scientific name yet; it burns quickly and hot, like phosphorus, and explodes in a bright flash of white light. (SA 179) (R&C 78)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

If used instead of gunpowder it increases the weapon's damage by +1d6 but the wielder suffers a -3 penalty to hit. In addition, the powder damages the firearm, increasing the likelihood of destroying the pistol or musket when it is fired. The chance to destroy a firearm the first time gray powder is used in it if the wielder rolls a 1-2 on the attack roll; the second time if the wielder rolls a 1-4 on the attack roll, and so on. If the powder destroys the weapon, it explodes in the user's hand (4d6 damage, Ref save (DC 20) to take half damage).

If gray powder were used as an explosive charge in a grenade or keg, the explosions damage is increased by +3 for each die of damage rolled (thus an explosion of 3d8 would be 3d8+9 damage).

If it is cut with an approximately equal amount of ash or charcoal, the powder smolders and burns slowly, lasting eight hours for every pound of gray powder consumed. The mixture burns slowly and emits gray smoke, lighter or darker depending on the admixture proportions and how tightly packed the powder is.

Gray powder can also be cut with talc or chalk. The talc/gray powder combination is strange and benign. Again the powder burns slowly, but with talc it emits a sickly, yellowish-gray smoke with a pungent, bitter odor akin to dirty feet or old clothes. When inhaled it induces sleep (Fort save (DC16) to resist) and in some cases nausea. Those that succumb to this powder's smoke will sleep for 1d4+1 hours. Those that are not affected will cough and sputter for 1d10 rounds until they acclimate to the smell.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

If used instead of gunpowder it increases the weapon's damage by 2k1 but the TN to hit is increased by 10. In addition, the powder damages the firearm, increasing the likelihood of destroying the pistol or musket when it is fired. The chance to destroy a firearm the first time gray powder is used in it if the wielder rolls a "1" on a ten-

sided die; the second time if the wielder rolls a 1-2, and so on. If the powder destroys the weapon, it explodes in the user's hand (4k4 damage, Panache roll TN 20 to avoid).

If gray powder were used as an explosive charge in a grenade or keg, the powder increases the Explosion Rating by 3 for an equal amount of gunpowder.

If it is cut with an approximately equal amount of ash or charcoal, the powder smolders and burns slowly, lasting eight hours for every pound of gray powder consumed. The mixture burns slowly and emits gray smoke, lighter or darker depending on the admixture proportions and how tightly packed the powder is.

Gray powder can also be cut with talc or chalk. The talc/gray powder combination is strange and benign. Again the powder burns slowly, but with talc it emits a sickly, yellowish-gray smoke with a pungent, bitter odor akin to dirty feet or old clothes. When inhaled it induces sleep (Resolve roll TN 40 to resist) and in some cases nausea. Those that succumb to this powder's smoke will sleep for 1d4+1 hours. Those that are not affected will cough and sputter for 1-10 Actions until they acclimate to the smell.

Green Bracelet

This ordinary-appearing bracelet flashes green whenever its power is activated. (SA 180) (PN 96)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

While this bracelet is worn, the wearer ignores the first 5 hit points that they take during a day (they are healed as a free action). At sunrise, its ability to instantly heal wounds recharges and can be used again.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

In 7th Sea terms, it heals the first 10 Flesh Wounds inflicted upon the bearer per Scene.

Grinning Armband

If the character wears this armband — set with a small silvered animal skull — and tenses his arm rapidly two times (a free action), the skull's mouth opens and a bony hand, trailing a thin silver cable, fires out of it. The hand can extend up to 50 ft. and tightly grabs anything it hits. After the hand has a firm grasp, the cable retracts, swinging you over to where the hand is hooked. This operates like a grappling gun, except that it is simpler to use, and you never need to worry about slipping and falling off the rope. (SA 180) (PN 96)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

As grappling gun, except DC 10 instead of 15

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

As grappling gun, except TN 10 instead of 15

Heavy Knife

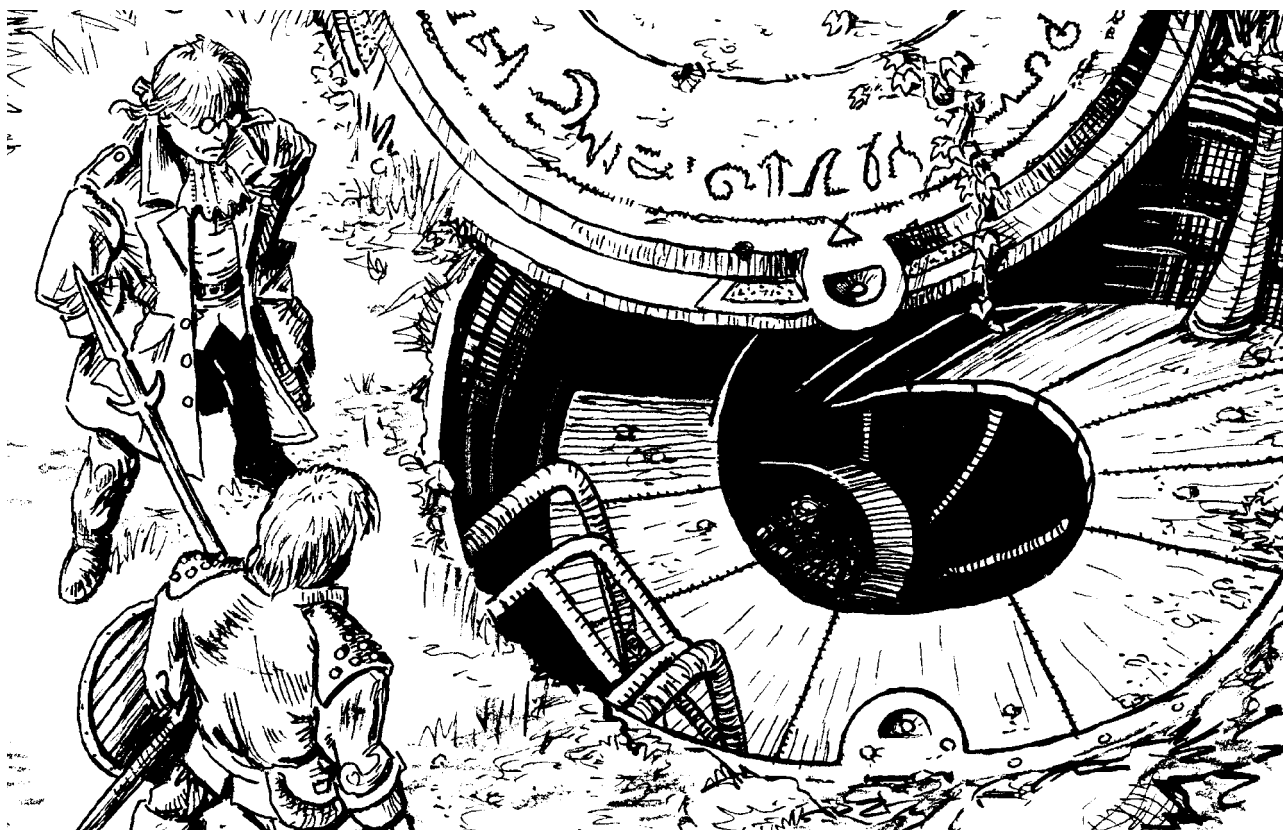
This strange gray knife feels heavier than its normal counterpart, as if weighted with lead. (SA 180) (PN 96)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

These knives possess the *wounding* effect and produce +2 damage when they inflict wounds on an opponent.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

This knife inflicts 3 additional Flesh Wounds whenever it hits.



Ivory Spyglass

Despite the name of this Synchron artifact, the spyglass itself is of unidentifiable make — the color suggests bone, but the texture steel. (SA 180)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

When using the ivory spyglass, ignore any penalties for distance or circumstance that are less than the viewer's Spot skill.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

It reduces the TN of any attempts to spot objects through it by 10.

Mechanical Hand

This hand is composed of a strange reddish metal. When pressed against the stump of an amputated hand it attached itself to the stump. It has proven to be no stronger or more dexterous than a normal hand, but it never gets tired. It can be damaged as easily as a real hand, but it repairs itself after a few days (GM's discretion), and if it gets cut off, it can be reattached. Attaching the hand takes one standard action. (SA 181) (PN 96)

Metal Rod

This hard metal rod, about the size of a dagger, appears inconspicuous. When the rod is slapped hard, the ends jut out quickly to a length of 8 ft. and short spikes extend out of the top and bottom. The rod can be pushed slowly into almost anything. Once inside the rod will hold firmly for one hour, at which point it folds up to the size of a dagger again and falls to the ground. While extended the metal of the rod is warm (body temperature) and hums softly. (SA 181) (R&C 78)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The rod can be pushed into any surface with a Str check (DC 5+Hardness of the object).

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

It requires a Brawn roll TN 15 to push the rod into something.

Ornate Glove and Throwing Knife

The silver filigreed glove has a concealed dagger sheath which contains a bluish knife, balanced for throwing. Whenever you pull your gloved hand back as though you were about to throw a knife, the dagger appears in your hand. If you attempt to throw the knife again before it hits its target, it returns to your hand before hitting its target. In addition, the knife must be left in its sheath at least two hours every day, or it loses its returning property until being recharged in that manner. The glove itself seems to draw its energy from being worn. You must wear it at least ten hours a day, or the dagger stops returning to the glove until it has been worn for ten consecutive hours. (SA 181) (PN 96)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The dagger is a standard +1 weapon of its type.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

It has no bonuses.

Seal of the Thalusiai

Within the presence of a Seal of the Thalusiai, magic and even other Synchron items (including dracheneisen, which grows soft) cease to function. These seals usually guard fearsome, destructive artifacts; damaging them typically unleashes enough disaster to destroy those who attempt it. The Explorer's Society has removed only one Seal intact, which they keep in their storehouse in the city of Kirk; they will only give it out in the most dire circumstances; other examples may exist elsewhere, however. (SA 182)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Within the presence of a Seal of the Thalusiai, magic and even other Synchron items (including dracheneisen, which grows soft) cease to function, as per an *antimagic field spell*.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Seal of the Thalusiai cancels out all sorcerous Knacks, Sidhe magic, Synchron item effects and the like in a radius of 10 feet.

Setine Clockwork Cannons

Clockwork weapons are sometimes found in Setine sites. They are usually incomplete and require repair from a skilled weaponsmith. When operational they deliver a blast of energy unlike anything seen on Théah. Currently, the Explorer's Society knows no way of recharging clockwork cannons. (AoH 59)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Clockwork weapons usually incomplete and require repair from a skilled weaponsmith (typically a Profession (weaponsmith) check (DC 20) required). When operational they deliver a blast of energy unlike anything seen on Théah. They cause 4d10 points of damage, have a range increment of 150, and require 3 full-round actions to aim; their Critical rating is ×4. It may be moved at a rate of 10 feet, weigh 1/3 of a ton, and have a hardness of 12 and 60 hit points. The weapon usually only has 3d6 charges before it becomes completely useless. Currently, the Explorer's Society knows no way of recharging clockwork cannons.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Clockwork cannons require a Wits + Occult and Wits + Weaponsmith check (both TN 30) to repair. They are fired using Finesse + Firearms, and deliver 5k5 Wounds of damage. Their effective range is 300 feet.

Setine Aether Compass

These famous artifacts vary greatly in appearance. They always point north, except when the holder is pointed north. Then, it spins and points south. (SA 182) (AoH 59)

Setine Clockwork Eye:

This mechanical device may be placed in an empty eye socket, where it attaches itself and serves as a replacement eye. (SA 182) (AoH 59)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

It requires a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30) to attach. If successful, the wearer gains Darkvision, but takes 1d4 hit points of damage for every hour he is exposed to direct sunlight.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Setine Eyes require a Wits + Occult roll, TN 30, and a Wits + Surgery role, TN 30, to attach. If successful, the wearer can see perfectly well in the dark, but takes 1k1 Wounds for every hour he is exposed to direct sunlight.

Setine Clockwork Hand

These devices appear as vaguely humanoid hands, composed of alien clockwork technology; only three are currently known to exist, though more may be out there. (SA 182) (AoH 58)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Attaching the hand to a stump requires a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30). If successful, the recipient gains a +2 competence bonus to all attack and damage rolls when using the hand bare handed. Unfortunately, as long as the hand is attached, he suffers a -1 penalty to all Wis and Wis-based skill checks. The hand may be removed simply by pulling it out, causing 1d6 points of damage in the process.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Setine Hands require a Wits + Occult roll, TN 30, and a Wits + Surgery role, TN 30, to attach. If successful, the wearer gains 1 unkept bonus die to all Attack and Wound rolls involving that hand. However, as long as the hand is attached, he loses one Rank of Resolve permanently, and the highest Resolve he can ever have is 3.

Shining Belt

When clasped around your waist, this segmented belt begins to glow with a pale white light that illuminates 20 ft. in all directions, and leaves your hands free. Once the belt has been fastened, only the wearer can remove it. The belt stops shining when exposed to direct sunlight or unclasped. (SA 182) (PN 97)

Silver Thimbles

These two small silver thimbles can be worn on a finger and a thumb. When struck together, they make a clicking sound that affects all locks within 5 ft. of them. If they are locked the locks unlock, and if unlocked they lock themselves. This only works on non-magical locks, and the sound is audible up to 30 ft. away. (SA 183) (DK 76)

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

When struck together, they make a clicking sound that affects all locks (max DC 30 in d20 terms, max TN 25) within 5 ft. of them.

Silvery Box

Only the box's owner may open the box. When the box is without an owner (due to death or abandonment by purpose) the first one to pick it up becomes the new owner. The box has proven impervious to all ordinary attempts to force it open or destroy it, though perhaps another Synchroneth artifact could accomplish the task. The box's inner cavity measures 4 in. x2 in. x1 in. (SA 182) (PN 97)

Sounding Beads

These one-inch diameter beads come in sets of two: a black bead and a white bead. Whenever noise is made near the black bead, the white bead reproduces it perfectly — provided it's within 50 ft. of the black bead. (SA 182) (DK 77)

Spine Sword

These unique weapons have recently turned up at various Explorer sites. At first, the society thought they were bones of another unidentified creature. However, during an attack by an unknown creature in the Midnight Archipelago, an enterprising Shield Man picked up a bone and found out just what it could do.

"Spine swords" measure about the length of a longsword but are much lighter. They look like the spines of a large animal, seem to be made of some cartilaginous material that can parry blows from the toughest weapons. The sword is fashioned from small segments instead of one continuous piece. The pieces adhere to each other very well and a trained fighter can turn the sword into quite a deadly weapon — which also contains a nasty surprise.

The segments are also connected through the middle by a long cord. A small release on the handle releases the cohesion keeping the blade segments together. In this mode, the weapon becomes a nasty serrated whip that can entangle opponents and slash through flesh and bone. Explorers who use these weapons enjoy such flexibility, noting that the "whip mode" works well on the beasts lurking in Synchroneth sites.

Naturally, all spine swords discovered to date belong to various Shield Men who have begun to develop a peculiar new fighting style around the weapon. Someone familiar with a spine sword should be able to switch between the rigid and whip modes fairly easily, thereby keeping his opponent guessing until the end of the fight.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

A Spine Sword has the statistics for both the longsword and whip. Switching modes is considered a free action, but requires the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Spine Sword) Feat.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A spine sword is considered a Fencing Weapon while in rigid mode and a whip while in whip mode. Switching between modes takes a single action, or conducted in addition to an attack by adding +10 to the TN. Spine swords can be used to parry while in whip mode. A sword in whip mode provides a Free Raise on all Bind attempts.

Synchroneth Crystal Eye

Though it bears resemblance to a gilt opal, Synchroneth Crystal Eyes are favored tools of dignitaries and those who prefer words or implied threats. (SA 182)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The deep, incandescent beauty of the eye gives its user a +2 inherent bonus to Charisma, and an additional +2 enhancement bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks. The eye itself allows for milky vision at best, however, imposing a -2 circumstance penalty on all Spot checks.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The wearer reduces the difficulty of all social-related rolls by 5 TN while wearing the Eye. However, all attempts to search or spot hidden items while wearing the eyes have their difficulty increased by 5 TN.

Syrneth Navigator

A shifting series of balances and counterbalances surrounding a palm-held compass, these devices lock into place when held, and the wearer can only remove them after five full rounds of manipulation.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

While the navigator is grasped, the user gains a +4 insight bonus to his Intuit Direction checks. While wearing a navigator, the user's off-hand is incapable of any other action.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

All rolls involving the Navigation or Piloting knacks have their TN reduced by 5.

Temporal Refraction Lens

The Society discovered this device approximately seven years ago while on a dig in Montaigne. Since then, three more have been unearthed. It appears to be an oval piece of crystal, and was initially put aside for description and cataloguing until a Scholar accidentally discovered its purpose. When held to the sky and looked through, the Lens shows an accelerated vision of the weather over the next 24 hours. It only works in the open air, and when trained on the ground shows only what the viewer could see normally (although it appears slightly bluish, as if seen by moonlight). The viewer may (20% chance) experience nausea and disorientation, similar to seasickness following a viewing.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The viewer can predict the weather over the next 24 hours accurately in any area of open sky viewed, but is considered Shaken for one hour after use.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The lens accurately predicts the weather over the next 24 hours in any area of open sky viewed, but the viewer's TNs are increased by 5 for one hour after use.

Tessera Coin

This is a coin-sized metal disk with blank facings. Whenever it's dropped, it always lands on its edge. (SA 184) (AoH 56)

Tessera Heater

The heater appears as a curved and pointed device with two gemstones set into the top and side. This device's original intent may never be discovered, but its current use is sufficient enough. When the stones are touched, the device begins to hum and vibrate. Then, in the span of six seconds (1 round), an intense magnetic field fills the room, causing all metal objects to vibrate and hum at the same frequency. Both the device and the metal objects begin to heat up, until after a minute, they burn any flesh in contact. If contact with the object is not broken by the time 60 seconds (10 rounds) have elapsed, it will cease to function until reactivated. (SA 184) (AoH 56)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

Burn damage 1d6 hit points.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Burn damage 1k1 Wounds.

Tessera Needle

This is a small needle. When placed inside a lock, it warms up, then pops the lock open. This takes one round (6 seconds). (SA 184) (AoH 56)

Tessera Rod

These rods are small but exceptionally powerful magnets, and little can keep them apart. Typically found in sets of three (two smaller and one larger) their powers remain dormant unless the two smaller rods are brought into proximity and the magnetic force is exerted on the larger rod. The small rods are light enough to be worked into the fingers of a glove, usually the index and ring fingers, and the larger rods have often been inserted into items (usually their preferred weapon) which a Shield Man in the field will then wear at all times. When the smaller rods come into contact with each other, the larger rod (and whatever it is attached to, usually a heavy weapon or fencing blade) leaps into contact with them. The smaller rods do not possess any attraction to each other, and the fingers of the glove do not attach to each other upon activation.

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The user may retrieve a disarmed weapon equipped with the rods (usually worked into the hilt), as a free action.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

If the user has been disarmed, he may retrieve his weapon and attack with it on the same action (as per the Pirate Trick Kick Up).

Thalusian Amber Rod

This appears as long, thin, twisted piece of amber. It's a perfect shaft for a polearm or even just a walking stick. (SA 184) (AoH 57)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

It has a hardness of 15 and 25 hit points.

Thalusian Gauntlet

This appears as a strange, alien gauntlet with a gem inset slightly above the wrist. When placed on a hand, the gauntlet shuts tight around the skin and the wearer can feel a slight "sting." He'd better like the gauntlet, because it's never coming off short of amputation. (SA 184) (AoH 57)

D20 SYSTEM™ MECHANICS

The gauntlet may be used as a panzerhand and the user gains a +1 Enhancement bonus to all Str and Str-based skill checks. The user of a gauntlet hand may declare at the beginning of the round that he is using the panzerhand defensively, in which case the user may not attack with the gauntlet but gains +1 to their AC as if the gauntlet were a buckler. When attempting to disarm an opponent, the user gains +5 to the roll if using the gauntlet. The gauntlet is otherwise considered a standard +2 Panzerhand.

7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The wearer of a Thalussian Gauntlet simply has one extra unkept Brawn die for all appropriate actions.

Topaz Pendant

These tiny gems are not truly topaz, but merely passably similar. When worn or faceted into an object, they lie dormant, waiting. The next time the wearer fails a roll, the pendant cracks, and the user may reroll, accepting the new result. Cracked pendants are useless and rather ugly, but few beneficiaries complain. (SA 184)

Random Artifact Generators

(The following rules originally appeared in the *7th Sea* Compendium, which is currently out of print. They are reprinted here for your convenience, with d20 rules included). If the characters discover a Syrnych artifact, and you aren't quite sure what you want it to do, you can roll on one of the charts below. They are grouped by the artifact's original creators. If you aren't sure which species created the artifact, roll on the last chart.

For each artifact, roll once on the powers chart, and once on the flaws chart. If you receive results that you don't like or that don't make sense to you, roll again or simply choose whichever entry appeals to you. For more powerful artifacts, increase the number of times you roll on each chart, re-rolling duplicate effects.

Since artifacts are unpredictable and fragile, they may stop working at any time, particularly after being dealt a hard blow. Adventurers who do not treat their artifacts with care will quickly learn this. Once an artifact is broken, it is typically beyond the capability of Théan science to repair it (though non-Théan campaigns may have some form of magic which will correct the problem).

You should make your players aware of the danger of using Syrnych artifacts early on, so that they aren't surprised when they finally get caught by a long-lasting or permanent effect.

Note: These charts are intended for the GM's use only.

Swordsman Schools**Shield Man School (7th Sea™)**

The Shield Man School originally appeared in the *7th Sea* module *The Arrow of Heaven*, which is currently out of print. It is republished here for your convenience.

Country of Origin: Avalon (Explorer's Society)

Description: Less of a school and more of a philosophy, the Shield Man school teaches its students the arts of improvisation and quick thinking. No ruin monster is the same as the last, and shield men must use anything at their disposal — salt, sugar, sulfur and even spring water — to dispatch the threat.

Apprentice: Shield Men learn to turn anything into a weapon. You may ignore the off-hand penalty when using an improvised weapon. In addition, if the weapon breaks during combat, roll a die. On an even number, you have managed to avoid the breakage.

Journeyman: Protecting the lives of others is the fundamental goal of all Shield Men. You may use your Active Defense in order to protect others at no penalty. In addition, when making Avoid Rolls to dodge the effects of a trap, a Shield Man may push one other person out of the way with only one raise instead of the standard two (see the *Game Master's Guide*, page 197).

Master: The very best Shield Men develop lightning reflexes. Whatever Trait you are using for Active Defense or Avoid Roll (typically Wits), it is considered one higher for the attempt. In addition, you may spend Action dice for Active Defense attempts as if they were 2 phases lower (minimum 1).

Syrnych Tinkering School**(7th Sea™)**

Extensive study of various unearthen sites revealed that the major Syrnych societies were able to create fantastic machines by combining artifacts from different Syrnych races. Recent advances in Syrnych language translation, as well as amazing developments in artifact research, have led the Explorers to what may be their greatest leap to date in understanding the arcane practices of the Syrne races. Previously impossible tasks — repairing mechanical hands, removing Thalussian Gauntlets, modifying Aether Compasses and even “refueling” one-shot devices — have become more viable options, thanks to the knowledge now known as “Syrnych Tinkering.”

Even with extraordinary advances of the Society's Artifact Research department, meddling with devices beyond human understanding involves terrible risks. Syrnych Tinkerers take their lives into their hands every time they touch an occult item. Thus far, there have only been a few deaths from their arcane investigations. Minor incidents occur regularly, ranging from the embarrassing (one Researcher spent three days wrapped from head to toe in a series of Tesseran bands she had been trying to modify) to the painful (Franco Vesefe himself broke his arm while trying to merge Setine clockwork limbs with Thalussian armor.)

In the classic *7th Sea* system, Syrnych Tinkering functions like a Swordsman School, available only to Explorers. It costs 25 points during Hero creation or 50 XP for existing characters. Game Masters should strongly consider giving a discount to players who have already spent large amounts of XP on the Archaeology and Scholar Skills.

Basic Curriculum: Archaeology, Scholar

Tinkering Knacks: Domae, Drachen, Setine, Tesseran, Thalussai

Apprentice: Students of Syrnych Tinkering have learned to repair Syrnych equipment. The TN for most repair work is 30 if all the necessary parts and tools are available. Add one Raise for each missing piece of equipment. The GM may declare that repairs are impossible if more than two items are missing.

Apprentice Tinkerers have also learned that some artifacts, use a sort of invisible “fuel” to function, much like a lantern. The most common example is that certain Setine devices are not powered indefinitely by aether, but use it up. If a fuel source is available, the Tinkerer may refuel a “one shot” device by transferring the element. Apprentices have a TN of 40 to accomplish this, Journeymen have a TN of 30, and Masters have a TN of 25. Should a refueling attempt succeed, the artifact is considered “refreshed,” and may be used the cited

DOMAE SITES (POWERS)

1d10	System	Powers
1	<i>d20:</i>	Artifact grants a +10 competence bonus to all Climb checks.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When worn on hands and feet and activated, the artifact adds 3 unkept dice to any Climbing Checks.
2	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact allows the user to reroll his initiative at the beginning of combat, if he wishes. If he makes the second roll, however, he must abide by the results.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When active, the artifact allows the user to re-roll one Initiative Die per Round if desired.
3	<i>d20:</i>	When rubbed along a blade, that blade becomes a +1 weapon, and radiates light out to a distance of 10 feet. These effects last for 24 hours.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When rubbed along a blade, the blade acquires a pale luminescence (radius 10 feet) and the blade does one extra kept die of damage. The effect lasts for one Scene.
4	<i>d20:</i>	The gas inflicts 1d10 damage to every living creature except the holder within 10 feet.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When squeezed, the artifacts releases a gas that inflicts 4k3 damage to every living creature except holder within 10 feet.
5	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact casts <i>fireball</i> as a 6th level wizard.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The artifact shoots a spurt of flame up to twenty feet. This flame inflicts 6k6 Wounds to anything it hits the first round, then 3k3 wounds each round thereafter until extinguished.
6	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact casts <i>lightning bolt</i> as a 6th level wizard.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	Ten seconds after being twisted, the artifact unleashes a burst of electrical energy that deals 3k3 Wounds to all living things within ten feet.
7	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact functions as the spell <i>water breathing</i> when worn; it only affects the wearer.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When worn over head, the artifact provides air to wearer. Useful for exploring underwater. Doesn't work below depths of 100 feet.
8	<i>d20:</i>	Damage inflicted on the wearer by non-magical fire is reduced by 1d6 hit points. Non-magical fire is extinguished after inflicting damage more than once on the wearer.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When worn and active, the artifact reduces damage inflicted by fire by one kept die. In addition, the fire automatically extinguishes after the second round of dealing damage.
9		When placed over the eye, the artifact allows the wearer to see in the dark (Darkvision).
0		Incidental, but interesting effect. (Smells nice, changes shape periodically) Do not roll on Flaws table.

DOMAE SITES (FLAWS)

1d10	System	Flaws
1		The item ceases to operate after a single use.
2-3	<i>d20:</i>	The item inflicts 1d6 points of damage on the user every time it is used (or every round of constant use).
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The item inflicts 1 kept die of damage per use (or for every Round of constant use).
4		If worn, the user is unable to remove the artifact without destroying it.
5		The item is destroyed if exposed to alcohol.
6-8	<i>d20:</i>	When used, the artifact reduces the user's Strength by 3 for one hour. If this brings the user's Strength to 0, he dies. This occurs for each use, or every round of continuous use.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When used, the artifact causes the user to lose one Rank of Brawn for one hour. If this brings the user below a Brawn of 0, the user dies. This occurs for each use, or Round of continuous use.
9-0	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact casts lightning bolt as a 6th level wizard.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	Ten seconds after being twisted, the artifact unleashes a burst of electrical energy that deals 3k3 Wounds to all living things within ten feet.

DRACHEN SITES (POWERS)

1d10	System	Powers
1	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact heals all damage when activated
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The artifact heals all of the user's Wounds and Dramatic Wounds (excluding scars) when activated.
2		The artifact purges the user of all poisons (including alcohol) when activated.
3	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact increases the user's Dexterity by 2 points for one day (ignoring normal maximums) after the artifact is activated.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The user's Finesse is increased by 1 Rank for one day (ignoring normal maximums) after the artifact is activated.
4	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact increases the user's Strength by 2 points for one day (ignoring normal maximums) after the artifact is activated.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The user's Brawn is increased by 1 Rank for one day (ignoring normal maximums) after the artifact is activated.
5	<i>d20:</i>	The user inflicts 1d10 points of damage to the next creature he touches after activating the artifact.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The user deals 3k3 of damage to the next living creature he touches after activating the artifact.
6	<i>d20:</i>	The users adds 5 to his next skill check after activating the artifact.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The user rolls and Keeps two extra dice on his next Check after activating the artifact.
7-8		The user ceases to age for 5 years after activating the artifact.
9	<i>d20:</i>	The next time the user suffers an injury inflicting 10 or more points of damage, that injury glows bright red and is instantly healed.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	After activating the artifact, the next time the user suffers a Dramatic Wound, it glows bright red, and is instantly healed.

0	Incidental, but interesting effect. (Causes pleasant dreams, sparks violently when touched). Do not roll on Flaws table.
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DRACHEN SITES (FLAWS)

1d10	Flaws
1	The item ceases to operate after a single use.
2–0	Item weighs in excess of one ton. Whenever it is activated, roll 1d10. On an even number, the device is used up and ceases to work.

TESSERA SITES (POWERS)

1d10	System	Powers
1		When activated, the object levitates steadily upwards with 200 lbs. of force at a rate of ten feet per Phase (100 feet per round in d20 terms). When turned off, it falls to the ground.
2	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The item functions as the spell <i>water walk</i> while it is worn. When worn on the legs, the item allows the wearer to walk across liquids.
3	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The item increases the wearer's AC by 3 against metal weapons. The item adds 10 to TN to be hit versus metal weapons (including pistol and rifle shot) while worn.
4	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	When wrapped around the hilt of a blade, the artifact add +1 to all to hit and damage rolls made with that blade. When wrapped around the hilt of a blade, the artifact adds one Rank to the wielder's Swordsmanship Knacks while it remains in place and operational.
5	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	When worn, the artifacts heals 1d6 points of damage every turn. When worn, the artifact heals 1 Wound every Phase.
6	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The item increases the wearer's AC by 1 against metal weapons. Ten seconds after being twisted, the artifact unleashes a burst of electrical energy that deals 3k3 Wounds to all living things within ten feet.
7	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The item functions as a <i>ring of warmth</i> . While worn, the user is kept comfortably warm, even in the coldest of blizzards.
8		When worn, the item allows the wearer to sense magnetic north at will.
9		When worn, the item allows the user to detect large deposits of ferrous metal within 500 feet at will.
0		Incidental, but interesting effect. (Points in one direction, hovers an inch above the ground, hums quietly) Do not roll on Flaws table.

TESSERA SITES (FLAWS)

1d10	System	Flaws
1		The item ceases to operate after a single use.
2		The item magnetizes nearby small metal objects when used.
3	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The item functions as a fear spell cast by a 7th level wizard, affecting any creature of the Animal or Beast subtype within range. The item spooks nearby animals when used.
4	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The user loses 3 point of Strength for every year he possesses it and uses the artifact at least once. This loss is permanent. If it reduces him to Strength 0, he dies. The user loses one Rank of Brawn for every year he possesses it and uses the artifact at least once. This loss is permanent. If this brings him below Rank 0, he dies.
5		The artifact activates at random intervals.
6		The artifact only fits very thin, tall people.
7	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	It takes 1d3 rounds to turn the item on or off. The artifact's controls operate seemingly at random. It takes 1–5 Actions to turn it on or off.
8		If worn, the artifact cannot be removed without destroying it.
9	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	The artifact subtracts 2 from the roll for any check involving Dexterity or Dex-based skills. The artifact induces a slight dizziness in its user when operational. The user cannot Keep his highest die when making a Check involving Finesse.
0	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	After one month of the dreams, the user gains 3 ranks in the Knowledge (mathematics) skill. Other effects are left up to the GM. The user begins to have strange dreams, which stop if he gets rid of the artifact. After one month of dreams, he permanently gains one Rank in the Mathematics Knack.

THALUSAI SITES (POWERS)

1d10	System	Powers
1		The device is filled with 1–10 ten second beetles (<i>see page 184 of the Game Masters' Guide, or page 171 of Swashbuckling Adventures</i>). Ten seconds after being activated, it opens up and releases them, where upon they attack anyone within ten feet. This item automatically has Flaw #1 on the Flaws table below. Do not roll for another flaw.
2		When activated, artifact produces one gallon of a sap that hardens into an amber-like substance after one hour. During that hour, it has the consistency of clay. It can be shaped into an object approximately one cubic foot in area. When hardened, the material has a hardness of 5 and 10 hit points.

3	<i>d20:</i>	The shell allows the user to inflict 1d6 damage with barehanded attacks.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	When activated, artifact melts and coats user's hand with a chitinous shell, allowing barehanded attacks with that hand to inflict 0k2 damage. This is permanent and cannot be removed. Do not roll for another flaw.
4	<i>d20:</i>	The blindness lasts for 1d6 rounds.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	A lens apparatus on the artifact produces an intense flash of light that blinds anyone looking at it for 1–5 Rounds.
5	<i>d20:</i>	The light inflicts 2d6 points of damage.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	A lens apparatus on the artifact projects a hot beam of light that inflicts 3k2 damage.
6		The artifact has a 2 inch by 2 inch cavity. When an object is placed in it and the artifact is activated, an illusion of the object approximately 6 feet tall appears above the artifact.
7	<i>d20:</i>	The artifact grants a +1 dodge bonus when worn.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The artifact adds +1 to the user's TN to be hit while activated.
8		The artifact resonates when activated. All insects within one mile rush to the artifact and cover it, attacking anyone holding the device. The device shuts off automatically after 3 rounds. This includes giant insects, but not arachnids.
9		While activated, no insect will approach within 10 feet of the artifact. If backed into a corner, the insect will flee past the holder of the device in terror. This includes giant insects, but not arachnids.
0		Incidental, but interesting effect. (Glow, opens only in moonlight) Do not roll on Flaws table.

THALUSAI SITES (FLAWS)

1d10	System	Flaws
1		The item ceases to operate after a single use.
2–3		The artifact's controls are so convoluted that they require two people to operate. The device can operate for one use or one hour of continuous use, and then it needs one hour of rest to recharge.
4–6		There is an odd looking lens on the device. If it is touched while the device is active, the artifact explodes in a radius of 20 feet with a Rank 4 explosion (6d6 damage in d20 terms)
7		The artifact only works when exposed directly to bright sunlight.
8–9		The artifact must be allowed to sit in sunlight for one day after each use, or hour of continuous use in order to recharge.
0	<i>d20:</i>	The poison inflicts 1d6 damage each month until death occurs. Avoiding the trap requires a Disable Device check, DC 25.
	<i>7th Sea:</i>	The device ceases to operate after a single use. In addition, it is trapped to deliver an injection of a slow-acting poison (1k1/2 months/Unlimited) unless the user makes a Wits Check against a TN of 25. The poison slowly turns the infected area black. Currently, there is no known antidote.

OTHER SITES

1d10	Sites
1–2	Roll on the Domae Sites table.
2–3	Roll on the Drachen Sites table.
4–6	Roll on the Tessera Sites table.
6–8	Roll on the Thalusiai Sites table.
8–0	Unusual artifact. Roll on the Unusual Artifact table.

UNUSUAL ARTIFACTS

1d10	Artifact
1–2	Old Race Remains. Roll on Remains table.
3–4	Artifact reveals some information about an Old Race language. (GM's choice, or roll on Other Site table, ignoring results of 9–0)
5–6	Valuable work of Old Race art. It is worth 1d10 times 1,000 G.
7–8	The "artifact" is an unusual fixed magical phenomenon, such as a pool that heals those who bathe in it, or a gateway to another world.
9	Artifact is in reality part of a larger, more powerful artifact, but will not operate on its own.
0	Artifact is broken and useless, (but don't tell the players that).

REMAINS

1d10	System	Remains
1–2		Carapace usable only for decoration. Worth 2d10 × 1,000 G if sold.
3–4		Unbreakable bones of varying size. They cause 3k2 damage if used as weapons (they are considered Heavy Weapons).
	<i>d20:</i>	The bones function as +1 heavy maces.
5–6		Ocular globe. If peered through, it allows the wearer to see in total darkness. (Darkvision).
7–0		Early human or monster remains. No material value beyond anthropological interest.

number of times before requiring refueling. Should a refueling attempt fail, however, that particular artifact may never be refueled again.

Syrneth Tinkerers do not receive membership in the Swordsman's Guild; instead, they receive one free Rank in a Tinkering Knack.

Journeyman: Tinkerers may now attempt to modify devices, which includes the ability to merge artifacts from differing Syrneth races (such as using a Domae Stone as a power source for a Thalussian artifact). Select one artifact to use as the "base;" the rolls use the Knack for that particular type of artifact. The TN for cosmetic modifications is 30, which results two artifacts being merged into one, complete with the effects and abilities of both.

Add one Raise for each additional device being merged, as well as one for each additional type of Syrneth artifact (Domae, Setine, etc.) beyond the first being used in the process.

Master: Tinkerers may now attempt to create devices from non-functional Syrneth resources. This is otherwise identical to the Journeyman ability, except the starting TN is 40. If successful, the device works; the Tinkerer may select one ability and roll for one flaw from the appropriate Syrneth artifact chart in the Random Artifact Generators section. Adding additional abilities requires two Raises per additional ability beyond the first, plus one additional Raise for each type of Syrneth science involved (Domae Thalusiai, etc.) beyond the first.

New Prestige Classes

The Shield Man (d20™)

This class was originally printed in the *Swashbuckling Adventures* handbook. It is reprinted here for your convenience.

Requirements

To qualify as a student of the Shield Man school, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Membership: Explorer's Society.

Game Rule Information

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d10.

TABLE 5-1: THE SHIELD MAN

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Improvised Weapons, Focused Training, Off-Handed Fighting
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Bonus Feat, Exploit Weakness
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	The Fundamental Goal, Out of the Way
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Bonus Feat
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Developed Reflexes

Class Skills

The Shield Man student class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex). See *Chapter 4 in Player's Handbook™* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Shield Man school.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A shield man is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armor, medium armor, and shields. Note that wearing armor heavier than leather imposes a penalty to the skills Climb, Hide, Jump, and Move Silently. Swim checks also suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 lbs. of armor or equipment carried.

Focused Training: Students of this school receive the feats: Improvised Weapon, Weapon Focus (improvised weapon) and Weapon Specialization (improvised weapon).

Off Handed Fighting: At 1st level, when fighting with a small improvised weapon in their off-hand, they can fight with two weapons as if they had the feats Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting.

Bonus Feats: At 2nd level, a student of this school gets a bonus feat as a fighter of the same level. He gains an additional bonus feat at 4th level.

The Fundamental Goal: Protecting the lives of others is the fundamental goal of all Shield Men. At 3rd level, when the student fights defensively, he may apply the +2 AC dodge bonus to one adjacent friendly character as well as himself. If this character declares a total defense, then the adjacent character may be granted a +4 AC dodge bonus.

Out of the Way: At 3rd level when the student makes a successful Ref save to avoid a trap, he may push one friendly character 5 ft. in any direction to avoid the trap as well.

Developed Reflexes: At 5th level, Shield Men develop lightning fast reflexes. When the student fights defensively, he may reduce the base attack penalty by 2 (i.e., the -4 penalty becomes a -2 penalty, instead). In addition when declaring a total defense, the Shield Man may attack with a -4 penalty, once during his turn.

The Syrneth Tinkerer (d20™)

The Syrneth Tinkerer is adept at repairing and upgrading Syrneth devices. Normally, such artifacts are beyond human ken, but previously impossible tasks — repairing mechanical hands, removing Thalussian Gauntlets, modifying Aether Compasses and even "refueling" one-shot devices — have become more viable options, thanks to these stalwart gadgeteers.

Requirements

To qualify as a Syrneth Tinkerer, a character must meet the following criteria:

Membership: Explorer's Society.

Skills: Craft (Syrneth devices) 6 ranks, Knowledge (Syrneth) 4 ranks.

Game Rule Information

Alignment: Any.

Hit Dice: d6.

TABLE 5–2: THE SYRNEATH TINKERER

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Repair Device
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Modify Device
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Build Device

Class Skills

The Syrneath Tinkerer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Appraise (Wis), Concentration (Con), Craft (Syrneath devices) (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (Syrneath), Listen (Wis), Profession (weaponsmith) (Wis), Search (Int), and Use Rope (Dex). See the *Player's Handbook*TM for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are the class features of the Syrneath Tinkerer:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Syrneath Tinkerers are proficient with all simple weapons, and light armor.

Repair Device: Syrneath Tinkerers — and only Syrneath Tinkerers — may use their Craft (Syrneath devices) skill to attempt to repair Syrneath equipment. The normal DC for such an attempt is 25, though the GM may adjust it up or down, depending on the circumstances.

Furthermore, Syrneath Tinkerers — and only Syrneath Tinkerers — may use their Craft (Syrneath devices) skill to “refuel” a one-shot artifact, allowing it to be used a second time. The normal DC is 25; should the attempt succeed, the artifact will work a second time before requiring refueling. Should it fail, however, that particular artifact may never be refueled.

Modify Device: At this level, Syrneath Tinkerers — and only Syrneath Tinkerers — may use their Craft (Syrneath devices) skill to merge artifacts from differing Syrneath races (such as using a Domae Stone as a power source for a Thalusan artifact). The DC for cosmetic modifications is 25; success results two artifacts being merged into one, complete with the effects and abilities of both. Each added function beyond the first increases the DC by 5; each additional type of Syrneath artifact (Domae, Setine, etc.) beyond the first being used in the process also increases the DC by 5.

Build Device: At this level, Syrneath Tinkerers — and only Syrneath Tinkerers — may use their Craft (Syrneath devices) skill to create devices from non-functional Syrneath resources. This is otherwise identical to the Modify Device ability, except the starting DC is 35. If successful, the device works; the Tinkerer may select one ability and roll for one flaw from the appropriate Syrneath artifact chart in the Random Artifact Generators section. Adding additional abilities increases the DC by 10 per additional ability beyond the first, plus an additional 5 DC for each type of Syrneath science involved (Domae Thalusi, etc.) beyond the first.

Syrneath Tinkering: Mishaps

The greatest weakness of Syrneath Tinkering is the potentially hideous danger involved in its use. Whenever a Tinkerer rolls a natural “1” in d20, or misses a TN by more than four times his Wits in 7th Sea, a potential disaster has occurred. Roll on the chart below using 1d20 in d20 or 2d10 in 7th Sea. GMs are encouraged to come up with their own disastrous results as well.

Note: all results in 7th Sea that involve the reduction of a Trait can never reduce the Trait below 0.

Clockwork Automatons

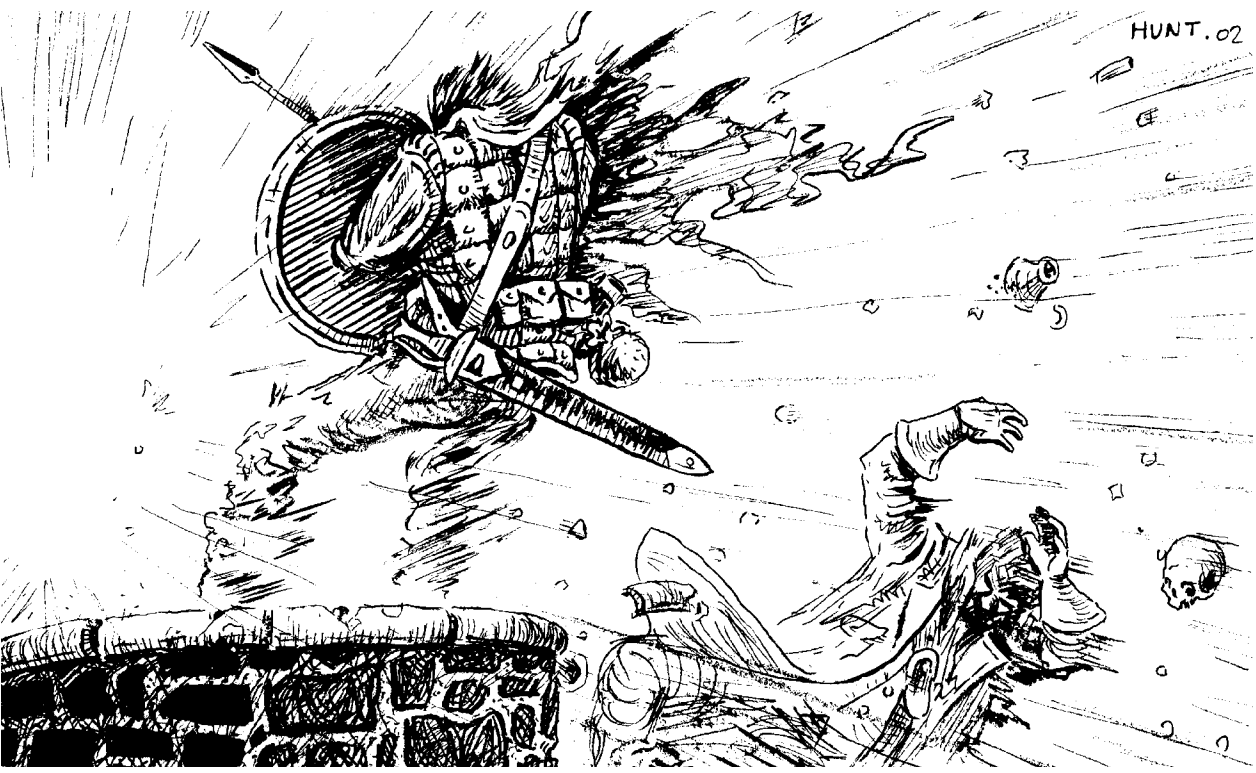
Clockwork automatons are the remnants of Syrneath technology, used to assist them in various endeavors. These creatures possessed great strength and intelligence, and could make intuitive decisions. Most were destroyed, but a few survived, largely on the island of Cabora. A few others may exist, however, and are presented here to bedevil unlucky Explorers who stumble across them. The original rules were published in the *Waves of Blood* sourcebook. They are reprinted here for your convenience, along with their d20 variants.



SYRNETH TINKERING: MISHAPS

1d20	System	Mishaps
1	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Ouch! Wild energies burst out of the device, draining some of the Tinkerer's vitality. The character loses one level, although the PC can choose which character class suffers the loss. Restoration magic can be used to undo this effect. This result is not possible for <i>7th Sea</i> characters
2-4	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Explosion! All items involved are destroyed. Tinkerers and everyone else within 25 feet take 8d6 damage, or the damage the most powerful device involved could inflict, whichever is worse. Tinkerers and everyone else within 25 feet take 6k6 damage, or the damage the most powerful device involved could inflict, whichever is worse.
5	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Bad Visions. The Tinkerer sees something no one else can see. The Tinkerer suffers a loss of 4 Intelligence and 4 Wisdom for 2d10 days. The penalty is halved if the PC makes a Resolve + Occult roll, Will save with a DC of 30. Once a day, while affected, the PC must also make a Resolve + Occult roll, or a Will save with a DC 30 to avoid reacting to the voices. There is no actual game effect if the roll fails, but the character's friends probably start to worry. The Tinkerer suffers a loss of 2 Wits for 2k2 days. The penalty is halved if the PC makes a Resolve + Occult roll, TN 25. Once a day, while affected, the PC must also make a Resolve + Occult roll, TN 25 to avoid reacting to the voices. There is no actual game effect if the roll fails, but the character's friends probably start to worry.
6	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Look at the Pretty Colors. A burst of multi-colored light flares out for a full minute. Everyone within sight of the effect must make a Will save, DC 20; those who fail lose 4 Wisdom for 1d10 days. All artifacts involved are useless for 2d10 days, and any with limited uses are considered to be fully discharged. Everyone within sight of the effect must roll Resolve + Occult, TN 30; those who fail lose 2 Wits for 1k1 days. All artifacts involved are useless for 2k2 days, and any with limited uses are considered to be fully discharged.
7	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Tinkerer in Distress. The object dissolves into a wild tangle of metal bands, amber cords or strange yet tough threads that bind the Tinkerer fast. All artifacts are lost, consumed in the transformation. If the PC can make a Reflex save, DC 20, only the arms or legs (player's choice) are entangled, restricting the use of those limbs. Otherwise, the Tinkerer is completely helpless until freed. If the PC can make a Finesse + Leaping, check, TN 25, only the arms or legs (player's choice) are entangled, restricting the use of those limbs. Otherwise, the Tinkerer is completely helpless until freed.
8	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Stench. A foul-smelling gas shoots out in all directions from the artifact. Everyone within 10 feet of the Tinkerer must make a Fortitude save, DC 20 or suffer a loss of 4 Strength for the next 1d10 days. If the first check fails, make a second check, using a second Fortitude save, DC 20. If the second check fails, the character retches and is unable to act for the next minute. Everyone within 10 feet of the Tinkerer must make a Brawn check, TN 25 or suffer a loss of 2 Brawn for the next 1k1 days. If the first check fails, make a second check, using Resolve TN 20. If the second check fails, the character retches and is unable to act for the next minute.
9	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Discharge. A beam of heat/sound/lightning emanates from the device, firing at the Tinkerer and anyone in the same general direction. Any involved artifacts with limited uses are considered fully discharged. To dodge, make a Reflex save check, DC 20. Those who fail take 2d6 damage. Roll Wits + Footwork, TN 25 to dodge. Those who fail take 2k2 damage.
10	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Like Wading Through Molasses. Unknown energies course around everyone within 10 feet of the artifact. Any involved artifacts with limited uses are considered fully discharged. PCs within range must make a Will save with a DC of 15 or be <i>slowed</i> as the spell, for 1d10 hours. PCs within range must make a Resolve check at TN 20 or suffer a loss of 2 Panache for 1k1 hours.
11		Broken Toy. One artifact involved (typically the least important piece) is completely and permanently ruined. There is no other effect except extreme disappointment.
12	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Like Wading Through Molasses. The artifact(s) grows six legs (except for those that already have legs). All involved artifacts make a frantic attempt to escape. Artifacts have a Dex 25 an AC 30, a hardness of 15 and 20 hit points. The objects are completely harmless (even if they started out deadly) and will return to normal in 1d10 hours. Artifacts have Finesse 4, Panache 4, and Footwork 5. The objects are completely harmless (even if they started out deadly) and will return to normal in 1k1 hours.
13	<i>d20:</i> <i>7th Sea:</i>	Bugs in the System. Harmless insect-like creatures (Domae — moths, Setine — miniature clockwork flies, Thalusian — tiny beetles, Tesseran — microscopic fireflies, only seen by their light) emerge from each artifact. These are more of an annoyance than anything else and cause no physical harm to the PCs. Insects number 10d10 and create conditions identical to dense fog in the area for 1d10 Rounds. All devices involved refuse to function for 1d10 minutes. Insects number 10k10 creating conditions identical to dense fog in the area for 1k1 Rounds. Devices involved refuse to function for 1k1 minutes.

- 14 **Flying Free.** All artifacts float to the ceiling or to a height of 30 feet, whichever is lower. They move at one foot per round until they encounter resistance equal to a permanent structure, but nothing the PCs can do will pull them back to earth for the next several hours (*see below*). At the end of the time period, they float gently back down.
d20: 3d10 hours
7th Sea: 3k3 hours
- 15 **Tough Love.** All artifacts latch onto the Tinkerer and refuse to let go.
d20: The Tinkerer takes 1d4 damage from the sudden attention. The Tinkerer suffers a -4 penalty to all checks for as long as the objects are stuck; they fall away 2d10 hours later.
7th Sea: The Tinkerer takes 1k1 damage from the sudden attention. The Tinkerer suffers a loss of 2 unkept dice for as long as the objects are stuck; they fall away 2k2 hours later.
- 16 **Tantrum.** A randomly chosen object screams. Loudly.
d20: Everyone within 30 feet takes 2d6 damage; a Fortitude save, DC 20 will halve the damage. If the check fails, the characters will also be deafened for 1d10 hours.
7th Sea: Everyone within 30 feet takes 2k2 damage; a Resolve roll, TN 25, will halve the damage. If the check fails, the characters will also be deafened for 1k1 hours.
- 17 **Cold Shoulder.** One of the artifacts suddenly tries to absorb heat from the Tinkerer. Regardless of the outcome, the artifact shatters.
d20: The Tinkerer must make a Reflex save, DC 20, or take 2d6 damage from the cold.
7th Sea: The Tinkerer must make a Panache + Leaping roll, TN 25, or take 2k2 damage from the cold.
- 18 **Device Gone Wild.** Artifacts without moving parts fly around uncontrollably for three rounds, while machinery lashes out wildly for the same amount of time.
d20: Each round, the Tinkerer and one other person for each additional artifact (if applicable) must make a Reflex save, DC 25, or take 3d6 damage.
7th Sea: Each round, the Tinkerer and one other person for each additional artifact (if applicable) must roll Wits + Footwork, TN 30, or take 3k3 damage.
- 19 **Whirlwind.** All artifacts fly up and begin churning the air. One round later, they have formed a small tornado. A roll must be attempted each round until every affected character succeeds, with damage inflicted after each failure (*see below*). The artifacts must be disabled or destroyed to make the whirlwind stop; details are up to the GM.
d20: Everyone in a fifty foot radius must make a Reflex save, DC 25 to escape. Those who fail suffer 1d10 damage that round.
7th Sea: Everyone in a fifty foot radius must make a Finesse + Sprinting roll, TN 30 to escape. Those who fail suffer 2k2 damage that round.
- 20 **Dubious Breakthrough.** After the Tinkerer finishes building the device, it immediately starts altering *itself*. When done, it is a roughly man-shaped creature with the statistics and mind of a Clockwork Automaton (*see page 84*). It attacks until damaged, then attempts to flee for Cabora (or any applicable location in your campaign).



Clockwork Automaton (d20™)

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 19d10 (105 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (cannot run)

AC: 28 (+18 natural)

Attacks: +14/+9+4 or 2 slams +14 as a standard action

Damage: Slam 2d10+8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Electrical Discharge, Electrical Storm, Breath Weapon

Special Qualities: Illusory Disguise, Construct

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills: None

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4) or brigade (10-20) or army (100-1,000)

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: 20-25 (large), 26-29 (huge), 30-35 (gargantuan), 36+ (colossal)



Combat

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Magic Immunity: Clockwork Soldiers completely resist most magical and supernatural effects. They are completely immune to all magic other than magic that deals damage that has the acid, or fire energy type, which deals normal damage. Further, they suffer half damage from spells that deal cold damage.

Electrical Discharge: Some of the soldier's internal gears build up a strong electrical charge, which can be released through the soldier's fists. Once every 1d4 rounds, a successful slam attack releases internal electricity, which jumps around on his fists before and after it is released. A successful melee attack deals 1d10+10 points of electrical damage, in addition to the soldier's normal damage. This ability is used automatically and counts as a free action.

Electrical Storm: Twice per day, as a standard action, 10 soldiers (which must be within 10 feet of each other) can allow their internal electrical energies to resonate, causing an electrical burst to explode, dealing 4d10 points of damage to everything within 50 feet of the group of soldiers. Those in the burst are allowed a Reflex save (DC 18) to take half damage. Clockwork soldiers are immune to this damage. This ability can at most be used once per ten minutes. This ability activated itself automatically whenever ten soldiers are within 10 feet of each other and are in combat. Any individual soldier can only participate in the use of this ability twice per day (once per ten minutes during that day.)

Breath Weapon: The internal gears and clockworks that drive the soldier can also be harnessed as a sonic scream. Once every 1d4 rounds, the soldier can launch a sonic scream attack. The attack is a 30 ft. cone that deals 2d10 damage and deafens for 2d6 rounds. This attack is a free action.

Illusory Disguise: The soldiers are covered with illusions of Setine soldiers, and they appear to be wielding long swords and carrying shields. Creatures are allowed a Will save (DC 16) to recognize the illusion.

Clockwork Automaton — Villain (Hero) (7th Sea™)

Points: 200

TN to be Hit: 40 (as victim)

Brawn: 7, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 1

Attack Roll: 9k4 Syrneath Lash, 8k4 strike

Damage: 9k2 strike, 6k4 Syrneath lash

Skills: As victim (no sorcery), OR Syrneath Lore 6, Attack (Lash) 5, Artifact Evaluation 6, Trap Lore 5, Ambush5, Disguise 5

Description: The “average” Clockwork Automaton looks like a painfully thin humanoid made of the strange metal that most Syrneath clockworks are constructed from. They can run at great speeds (as fast as a swift bird), but move with deliberate care when taking action. When disguised, the body shifts and expands to take on the appearance of its victim. Their only purpose was once to protect the creations of the Setine, but time and age have driven some of them insane, and they now seek to perpetrate any number of horrible acts on those who they encounter.

Special Abilities: An Automaton has a wide variety of abilities. Primarily, it is invulnerable to any known force. However, by sticking a blade or arrow into the right place (musket balls are too thick and imprecise) the gears can be jammed. On a successful hit against the default TN of 40, the weapon is stuck in the Automaton, but it suffers 1 Dramatic Wound for as long as the weapon is left in place. However, after it's Knocked Out, an Automaton can't be killed, only hidden safely away somewhere. Fortunately, removing a weapon from the Automaton takes ten Actions.

The second of its abilities is the Automaton's Lash, a lengthy piece of alien cable which it can expand and retract from any portion of its body. It can use this weapon in the same manner as the Journeyman ability of the Zepeda School allows (see the *Castille sourcebook*, page 98). In essence, the Automaton can use its Attack (Lash) ability for the Break Fall, Swinging, and Grapple Knacks. Exploit Weakness (Zepeda) may be used against a Clockwork Automaton fighting with its Lash at half value (rounded down).

Finally, an Automaton can actually remove the skin of a victim and "wear" it, using the Lash in some strange sorcerous way to extract the memories of its target. So long as it wears the skin, it apparently takes damage normally until the first Dramatic Wound, at which time it "retracts" the skin for repair and reveals itself as something inhuman. It essentially becomes the target, with all attendant Advantages and Skills. Only the creature's Traits remain unchanged. (The sudden reduction in Panache is one of the few ways to tell an Automaton from the original.) When it retracts its disguise, its original skills return. In the case of Heroes and Villains with Arcana, it gains that as well — along with something else.

With Villainous Arcana, the Automaton gains a crude soul of sorts — the soul of an utter Villain. Why has it wasted an eternal existence serving a dead race, when it can have so much fun tormenting its lessers? The direction of this villainy is determined by the Arcana. Be creative and nasty. Heroic Arcana, however, give Automatons true, full-fledged humanity — and unending remorse for destroying so noble a being. The new Hero dedicates its life to defending the innocent, though if it has a Hubris, its outlook may be oddly skewed.

Ships of the Explorer's Society

Since their founding, the Explorer's Society has always possessed a small fleet of vessels. With their particular field of endeavor, they need ocean-going ships. After all, it is difficult to get to the edge of the horizon if one has to walk all the way there. However, most of these vessels were commissioned and owned by various aristocratic Explorers and patrons, few of whom felt that the Society could get away without owing them something for their generosity. Also, as ships were bought over time at various shipyards, commissioned from a great diversity of shipwrights, the small Explorer fleet had nothing even approaching structure. Sometimes an offended or whimsical patron would withdraw his ship from the Society's use, leaving expeditions ruined before they even left port.

In 1659, Brendan Stafford became Head of Sea Exploration, and things started to change. He let it be known that the Explorers were looking for ships and, working with a small team of exceptionally competent and creative shipwrights he began to build a fleet of vessels that exactly matched the Society's needs. Beyond the basic requirements Stafford has established, individual captains have some leeway to use their own imagination. Enterprising captains have altered basic designs with common-sense improvements (such as reinforcing the masts) or with Synchron technology (the light but deadly Clockwork Cannons or an Aether Compass which always points unerringly to Carleon). Thus, no two Explorer ships are exactly alike. With a growing navy and fearless crews, the Explorers intend to discover new lands and lead humanity to a brighter future.

The following is a brief overview of several Society ships, which form a rough template of the sorts of vessels used by the Society. The players are welcome to select one of their use if the GM wishes, or to modify a template to fit their own designs

The Island Hopper

The *Midnight Sylph* is a typical example of the smaller ships the Society uses. Constructed less than a year ago, this sleek little vessel is not designed to leave coastal waters around mainland Théah. Instead, the *Sylph* keeps to the waters around the Vodacce Islands, using its slight draft and narrow keel to cleave to the coast and move virtually unseen at night. The *Sylph's* cargo space can accommodate small amounts of valuable cargo in hidden compartments beneath the captain's cabin, only accessible through the surface of the chart table. A favorite type of vessel for more daring Explorers, the *Sylph* cannot stand toe-to-toe with larger ships but she can be outfitted with two Setine Cannons on broadside. Adolphus Grieg, the shipwright responsible for her creation, was once the most notorious smuggler in Vendel before becoming "respectable" by joining the Society. Of course, many of the *Sylph's* cargoes make money for the Society through somewhat less-than-legal activities; naturally Carleon never finds out about these.

The Island Hopper (420")

Base Cost: 20,000 G
Cost per Additional Level: 2,000 G
Length: 40 ft.
Width: 12 ft.
Draft: 1
Cannon: 2
Masts: 1 (30)
Oars: 0
Movement Rate: 5
Cargo: 4 Tons
Rudder: 2
Crew: 12
Armor Class: 12
Hull Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 550
Starting Feats: Smuggling Compartments

The Island Hopper (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 1, **Finesse:** 3, **Resolve:** 1, **Wits:** 3, **Panache:** 3
Modifications: Smuggling Compartments (3)
Flaws: Cramped (4)
Draft: 1
Crew: 2
Cargo: 1

The Shield Man

Barnabas Von Kaster is one of the Society's most favored shipwrights. Blessed with a gift for economy, Von Kaster is a second-generation Eisen immigrant, born on the crossing from Eisen. He learned his craft from his father while growing up on the docks of Carleon in a home made from their old ship, *die Adler*. Despite his Eisen heritage, he has a pronounced Avalon accent, which often surprises people when dealing with him.

To save the Society money on laying down new keels, he traveled the length and breadth of the Triple Kingdoms, eventually returning with four derelict, barely seaworthy vessels. One of these, an ancient cargo flute with a distinctive beak-like prow and elegantly curved stern known as the *Leviathan*, was transformed by his men in a matter of months into a new vessel: a guardian capable of protecting a convoy of Explorer ships. Possessing a wry sense of humor, Von Kaster named her the *Mikochov*, in tribute to the Society's senior Shield Man.

With its tremendous power, the *Mikochov* has already won a name for herself by reducing the pirate vessel *Tempel-Herr* to splinters while the scoundrels attempted to board a ship under her protection. Her crew hauled the drenched pirates from the water and took them to face trial in Carleon. However, despite her sheer size and power, the *Mikochov* is rather sluggish and clumsy in the water, and to the crews on the gun decks, it can seem like an eternity before the broadsides come to bear on their target.

The Shield Man (d20™)

Base Cost: 64,000 G
Cost per Additional Level: 8,000 G
Length: 85 ft.
Width: 20 ft.
Draft: 8
Cannon: 36 guns
Masts: 3 (45)
Oars: 0
Movement Rate: 4
Cargo: 25 Tons
Rudder: 4
Crew: 168
Armor Class: 10
Hull Hardness: 6
Hit Points: 2,700
Starting Feats: Prow Ram

The Shield Man (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 8, **Finesse:** 5, **Resolve:** 8, **Wits:** 4, **Panache:** 4
Modifications: Prow Ram (1), Overgunned (2), Sturdy Hull (2)
Flaws: Small Rudder (2)
Draft: 8
Crew: 5
Cargo: 8

The Blockade Runner

In Montaigne, they call it *Le Fantôme*. In Castille, the Inquisitors curse it under the name of the *Lucky Day*. Prince Giovanni Villanova has posted a substantial reward for information leading to the capture of the vessel *Falschspieler*. She is known by many names, but registered in no port. She passes through the Crescent Blockade, the Montaigne Fleet and the Castillian Armada with equal ease. No ship has ever caught her, and if the crew of this mystery ship has any say in the matter, none will.

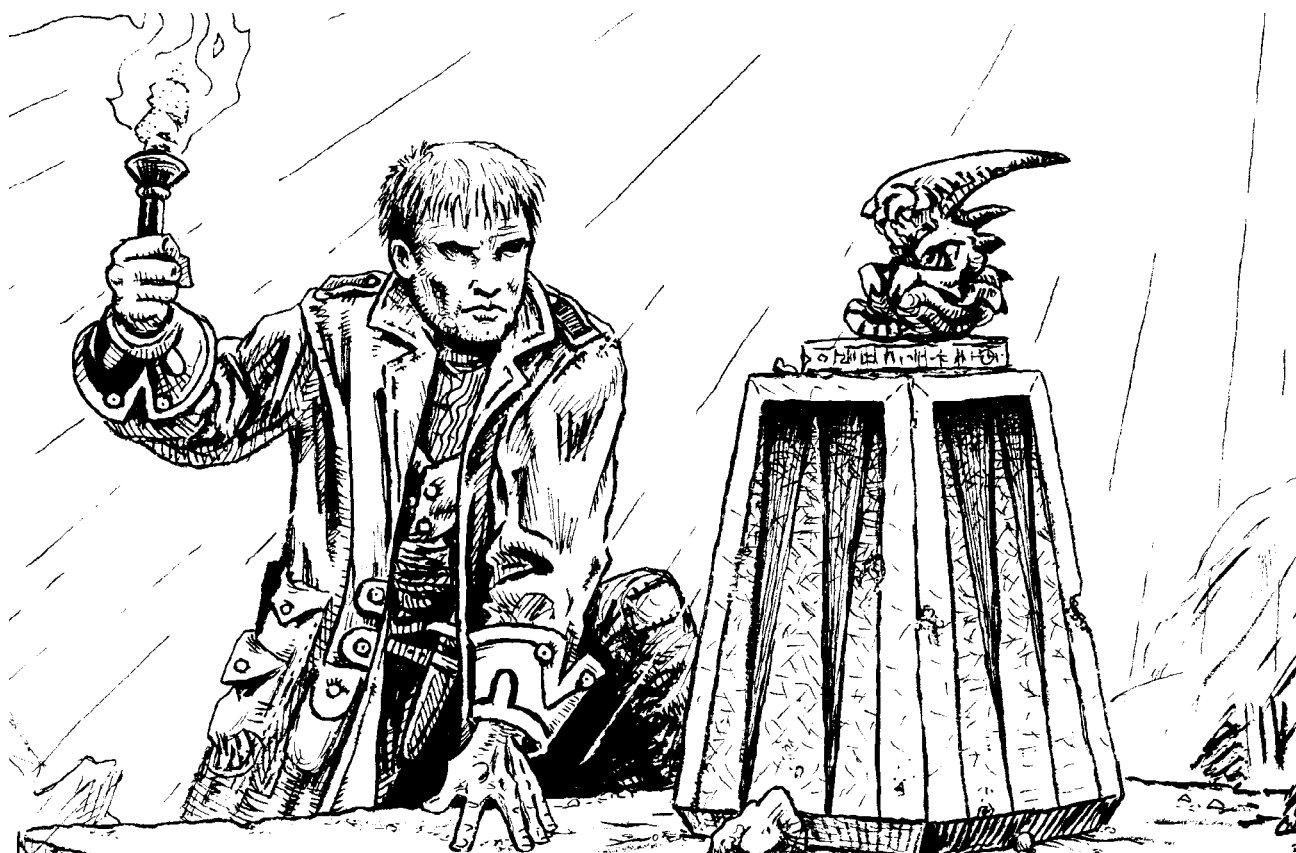
Wreathed in anonymity, the *Intrepid* would get the Explorers into a great deal of trouble if it were ever discovered. Designed to get through any sort of blockade without resorting to violence, the *Intrepid* relies more on the wits of her crew and an impressive selection of forged documents and disguises than on cannons and sails. Without vessels like the *Intrepid*, the Explorers would not be able to reach many areas where they operate, such as the Crescent Empire.

If pirates discover the location of an Explorer dig on a remote island, ships like the *Intrepid* retrieve the beleaguered Explorers without the pirates ever discovering they have left the island. Another of Grieg's creations, the *Intrepid* was chosen to receive a Domae stone that produces a bank of dense fog when exposed to moonlight; its dangerous work made such an artifact a priority.

Grieg, however, was never one to trust trinkets before people. Thus, he took it on himself to personally carve no fewer than five plaques, each bearing a different name for the vessel. Contacts in Carleon's seedier taverns forged enough authentic papers of ownership and ship's charters to earn it safe passage through any waters. His pirate friends furnished numerous naval and national flags, as well as appropriate signal flags. A small wardrobe of uniforms sewn by professional friends of the former smuggler made the illusion complete, and while the *Intrepid* left the docks at Carleon, the *Marteau* checked in with the Montaigne blockade on Castille, the *Benediccion* made port at Tarrago and the crew of the *Morning Bloom* conversed lazily with the dockhands at the Castillian naval yards.

The Blockade Runner (d20™)

Base Cost: 25,000 G
Cost per Additional Level: 1,500 G
Length: 45 ft.
Width: 15 ft.
Draft: 2
Cannon: 4 guns
Masts: 2 (30)
Oars: 0
Movement Rate: 5
Cargo: 10 Tons
Rudder: 2
Crew: 30
Armor Class: 13
Hull Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 700
Starting Feats: Wide Rudder



***The Blockade Runner* (7th Sea™)**

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Wits:** 4, **Panache:** 4
Modifications: Wide Rudder (2)
Flaws: Small Keel (2)
Draft: 2
Crew: 3
Cargo: 2

The Discovery

The *Discovery* is the fourth ship to bear the prestigious name since the days of Cameron McCormick. She was once captained by the founder's descendant, Guy McCormick, before his single-minded quest to find his wife caused him to put his crew's safety at risk. A mutiny saw him flee the ship — and the Society — forever. Despite her former captain's actions, however, the *Discovery* continues to remain the Society's paradigm for naval construction. Using the plans for a Merchantman designed to haul cargo from Vendel to Montaigne, Brendan Stafford easily altered the ship's structure to better suit the Explorers' purposes. He designed a greater cargo capacity to allow longer periods at sea, a sturdy keel and good draft to weather the storms and enough guns to defend herself if caught far from home by those who would rob them of their precious cargo.

As of 1669, the *Discovery* is heading west under the captaincy of Cosette St. Clair, the former first mate under McCormick, to investigate the possibility of lands unexplored in beyond the Great Barrier. Currently, there are three vessels in various stages of construction in Carleon based on the original design of the *Discovery*, and it is hoped that they serve the Society as well as the first of their kind.

***The Discovery* (d20™)**

Base Cost: 55,000 G
Cost per Additional Level: 5,000 G
Length: 55 ft.
Width: 19 ft.
Draft: 6
Cannon: 12 guns
Masts: 3 (40)
Oars: 0
Movement Rate: 5
Cargo: 33 Tons
Rudder: 3
Crew: 60
Armor Class: 13
Hull Hardness: 6
Hit Points: 1,800
Starting Feats: Extra Cargo Space

***The Discovery* (7th Sea™)**

Brawn: 5, **Finesse:** 9, **Resolve:** 6, **Wits:** 7, **Panache:** 7
Modifications: Well-Trained Crew (2)
Flaws: None
Draft: 6
Crew: 8
Cargo: 6

The Giant-Killer

A lifelong hatred of dishonesty and lawlessness, as well as a love of the sea, were enough to make Captain Charles McLennan the most feared pirate-hunter in the Trade Sea. He and his ship, the *Hawk of Culzean* (pronounced "Cullane") brought many a pirate to justice in their day, often defeating vessels much larger than they. After a near miss with a cannonball left him without his left leg, McLennan turned his mind to ways in which he could continue to battle the piratical menace. After hearing about the sinking of the *Endeavour* at the hands of the pirate Reis in 1666, he journeyed to Avalon to present his services as shipwright and naval advisor to the Explorer's Society. McLennan has a keen mind and an unsurpassed knowledge of naval tactics.

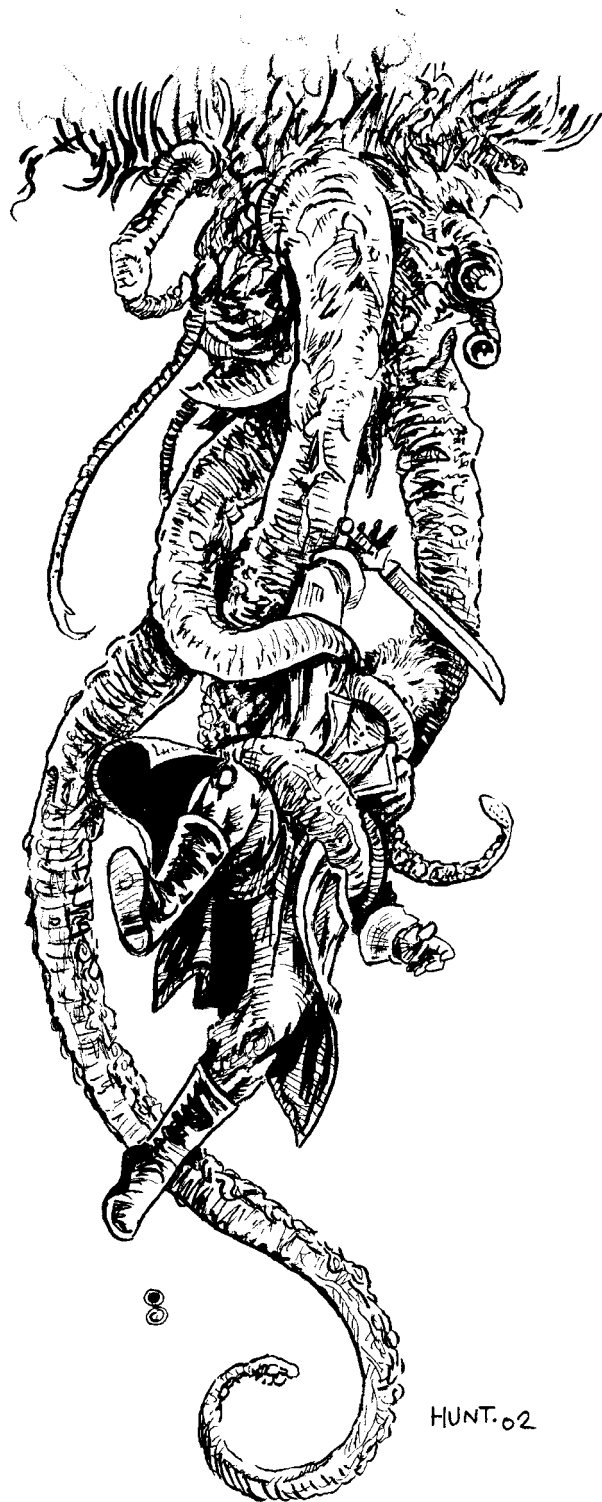
Working in collaboration with the Society, and using his own *Hawk of Culzean* as a model, he has laid down four keels for Explorer vessels. His designs are small ships, built for one purpose only: to survive and win confrontations with much larger vessels. Constructed for defense, the *Hawk's* sterncastle rises high above the deck, a rallying point for the small ship's crew. The boarding cannons are loaded with grape and clipped onto swivel mounts, enabling them to be lifted by two crew and sweep the deck of an enemy vessel with the full force of its guns. Concealed gun ports allow the small pirate-hunter to seem like nothing more than an ordinary Society sloop, flying the Explorers' colors. McLennan believes that the first volley launched in staggering unison from the gun decks is enough to cripple any vessel greedy enough to take it on. In all his years of pirate hunting, he was never wrong. The *Giant-Killer* is the first of his newly christened vessels, and it certainly won't be the last.

The Giant-Killer (120^m)

Base Cost: 40,000 G
Cost per Additional Level: 4,000 G
Length: 42 ft.
Width: 15 ft.
Draft: 3
Cannon: 16 guns
Masts: 2 (30)
Oars: 0
Movement Rate: 6
Cargo: 12 Tons
Rudder: 2
Crew: 66
Armor Class: 13
Hull Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 1,500
Starting Feats: Concealed Gunports

The Giant-Killer (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 6, **Finesse:** 6, **Resolve:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Panache:** 6
Modifications: Overgunned (2), Concealed Gunports (2)
Flaws: Awkward Cargo Space (4)
Draft: 3
Crew: 6
Cargo: 2





APPENDIX

The Isle of the Syrne

The Isle of Syrne is the site one of the Explorer's Society's most important excavations. Recently, however, it has come under attack from a brutal foe, who has no inkling of the destructive forces he threatens to unleash.

Annual Progress Report
Professor Joseph McTavish
Isle of Syrne Site Director

To Headmaster of the Explorers, Avalon Chapterhouse:

The events of the past few months exceeded my wildest expectations. We made several discoveries of mind reeling importance and came upon setbacks that may doom the Syrne project entirely. However, let me start at the beginning with an overview of the island.

The Isle the Syrne lies due west of Castille near the Meridian. This makes the climate humid and extremely warm throughout the year. Vegetation is lush, dense, and rocky shores dominate the beaches around the island. Its geologic composition is volcanic and two dormant volcanoes dominate the center of the island. While these two volcanoes, Captain Johnson and Councilman Bernard, smolder and rumble, they have given no signs until recently of entering an active phase. The island measures approximately fifteen miles by five miles. The only inhabitants prior to our arrival six years ago were seagoing birds, crabs and the osprey who make it home. These winged snakes offer no violence unless provoked.

While no humans were living here when we arrived, this has not always been the case. Decades ago, the dread pirate Rogers used the island as one of his bases. From what we have been able to determine, he sheltered in the cove on the northwest end and built a small village there. This village was abandoned when one of the jungle fevers common to the island began killing members of his crew. They never returned to resettle, although Rogers revisited the island often for supplies and supposedly to bury his ill-gotten gains.

Curiously enough, this treasure brought us to the island, in a roundabout way. A group of treasure seekers sailed here in search of some sign of Rogers's loot when they discovered a ruin. They uncovered part of it and found only stone walls and rubble. When disease again reared its head, they too abandoned the island, though they sold the ruin's location to the Explorers. We decided to launch an expedition to determine whether the island held anything of archaeological value. The results have exceeded our dreams.

That first site turned out to be an extremely complex structure built centuries ago. The long building runs parallel to the lines of magnetic north and the exterior walls were gridded into sections ten and a half inches square. We have since dubbed this measurement a Syrneath foot or a syrnoot. I have used this term exclusively throughout the rest of this report. The building was 64 syrnoot wide, 128 syrnoot long and 32 syrnoot high. The only openings in the structure were some sort of windows on the roof to allow light to enter (measuring 2 by 2) and a doorway (measuring 2 wide by 8 high by 1 deep). Inside the building stood a series of large stones (measuring 2 by 8 by 1) organized into rows. A single white block of stone (measuring 1 syrnoot cube) carved from the floor sat in the center of the struc-

ture. We still have no idea of what to make of this structure though we believe it held considerable importance due to the highly mathematical precision with which it is constructed.

Uncovering that first site demonstrated some of the difficulties inherent in the island. The jungle was exceedingly lush and difficult to cut back. The entire site contained intense magnetic fluctuations that made using metal tools difficult. Fevers and disease became so frequent that we were forced to house the men onboard ship rather than on land. Further, several shipments of supplies from Théah disappeared into the clutches of the pirates who preyed upon that area. Still, the site gave us a glimpse into a culture that existed there hundreds, perhaps thousands of years ago.

Further exploration uncovered a mirror site to the southeast. Unfortunately this Site B had begun to sink into the mud of the island and the efforts to uncover it have been far less successful. Then we discovered a third site, located directly between Site A and B and the two dormant volcanoes. Rather than a single building, it consisted of scores of buildings of varying sizes. We immediately began working on the newly dubbed Site C. The difficulties we had previously encountered were compounded here. The entire location lay beneath a shallow (approximately 3 syrnoots deep) pool of sulphurous water. The water was extremely hot and proved quite difficult to work in. We built walkways and dikes to hold the water back as we worked and begun to pump out of several of these buildings, and learned several important things. The entire city was again laid out parallel to the lines of magnetic north and in strict geometric precision using the exacting measurements of the Syrneth foot. Furthermore, the factors of two proved to be the root of the layout as the buildings were all laid out in multiples of that number. Hence Building Six was a 16 by 32 by 32 building while the narrow Building Seven next to it measured 8 by 16 by 128. The most notable room contained a square board (measuring 2 by 2) with a number of small blocks of variously colored rocks.

In addition, the city produces artifacts, which we dutifully sent back to the Society for examination. Most of these seemed to work on principles of magnetism far beyond our grasp. This leads me to one of the new discoveries unearthed over the past several months. The buildings here on Syrne are of volcanic stone which is incredibly durable. Some weathering has occurred and no one was surprised that no carvings or writings appear on them... that is, until one of our men, a Benjamin Richard, brought with him a small barrel of iron filings in the last batch of supplies. He believed these might be useful in observing the magnetic variations at the sites. Any metal tools used either fly from the user's hands or begin to heat up after only a few minutes. He brought the iron filings to Site A and sprinkled some of them near the door. Rather than fall to the ground, they began to swirl in mid-air and then drifted over to one of the stones. This confirmed that the stones indeed were the source of the magnetic disturbances. After sprinkling several other stones, he detected a trend in the patterns that formed upon them. I examined the stones myself and I concur. They form distinct characters, as used in formal writing — writing inscribed in the magnetic variations in the rocks of these structures. However, they do not resemble any language I know nor were they written for human eyes. Armed with this knowledge, we have examined more of the island and found similar writings at all three sites and in virtually every building.

We also learned that the buildings at Site C form a defensible pattern. Several of our men were former soldiers and expressed concerns about pirate attack. When they considered where to make a stand, they noticed the city's layout. Not only do the buildings conform to magnetic lines, precise mathematical lengths and geometric layout, but they also provide overlapping lines of fire and ample cover for defenders. They also noticed that, for optimum defense capability, one building was missing. We have long believed that the site has lost a structure, since the current number stands at only 127. The soldiers examined the area where the final building should be located. Beneath several feet of mud, they discovered foundations and carbonized materials. We believe that this building was destroyed during a war of some sort. Further examinations of the other buildings provided other evidence that the city endured conflict. Given that the damage was never repaired, it is logical to assume that the defenders of the city lost the conflict. This may be the reason that the Syrne are no longer present here.

Now I must come to the most difficult part of my report. Given some of our recent advances, I believed it was finally time to remove some of the larger stones from Site B. We had uncovered enough of it to verify that it was a duplicate of Site A down to the white cube in the center. With a great deal of effort we removed three of the stones from the building, and carried them through the jungle to the ships. There they were to be taken to Avalon for further study. Unfortunately a band of pirates attacked the ship and when their first volley of cannonballs veered away from their target, a routine attack turned into a brutal conquest. They boarded and seized the three stones, and the pirate's leader, Captain Aaron Blackstone, tortured the men until they told the pirates the stones' origins.

The pirates quickly sailed here and attacked the ships in the harbor. While two of our vessels were able to flee, the remainder were forced to surrender. Blackstone used the prisoners as slave labor for several days without break and removed another six of the mammoth stones to his own ship. When the two Explorer ships counterattacked and Councilman Bernard began belching clouds of thick black ash, Blackstone and his men quickly retreated with their loot.

Squares

In the center of Site C stands a rock table patterned in alternating squares of black and white, and holding numerous small cubes of various colors. No one has discovered the secret of this artifact. In truth, it serves to display information about key systems in the city and transfer power between them. This one point controlled moving walkways, water transportation and magnetic field distribution by allocating different levels of power to each system. Functioning systems had a white hue. As problems occurred, the cube would change to a different color depending on the level and type of damage. When a system finally failed or was destroyed completely, the cube turned black. Two red pieces, indicating functional but requiring extreme maintenance, representing Site A and B have turned black due to recent events. No one has noticed this yet.

In the days since the attack, both the volcanoes began to smoke more violently and ground tremors are a daily occurrence. I don't know if the removal of the stones accounts for this increased volcanic activity, nor if the pirates committed some further mischief. I do know that if the volcanic activity continues, we will be unable to remain here and all we have gained may be lost beneath the seismic quakes.

Regretfully Yours,
Professor Joseph McTavish

The Tessera

Note: The following information is not intended for players.

As the Explorers discovered, thousands of years before the rise of man, other races lived and thrived. One of the most elusive were known as the Tessera, a race of humanoid beings, tall and slender replete with both telepathic powers and the innate ability to generate and control magnetic forces. Their civilization grew up on the volcanic islands of the Midnight Archipelago, particularly those which bore large deposits of ferrous metals and built an advanced culture. These beings revered the number two and duality, perhaps because of the dual poles found in magnetism. Most of their architecture and science was based around multiples of that number. The dimensions of their buildings existed in multiples of two and many of their technological systems worked in pairs to support each other. The most terrible thought to a Tessera was that of being alone.

The Tessera left extensive writings on their ruins, though they are not visible to the naked eye. They wrote in magnetic fields imbedded into the rocks of their structures, which could be detected through magnetic attraction. If quantities of iron filings are used, the fields can actually be seen. This may allow the Explorers Society to someday translate the writings.

However, the Tessera's greatest creations will almost certainly remain a mystery. They constructed fabulous cities that floated upon the earth's magnetic fields like a ship at sea, filled with magnetic cannons, electric generators and force fields. Sadly all of this technology was not enough to allow the Tessera to defeat their enemies. They warred with the other Synchron races and lost. In a last effort to escape their foes, they sailed their floating cities to the west. No one knows exactly what they discovered there, but the Tessera attempted to return with a warning of an even greater threat. Only a handful of their race survived the long journey and they eventually perished through inbreeding and attrition. Their greatest artifacts sank into the depths of the seas or were obliterated when they fell from the sky.

The ruins on the Isle of Synchron are actually from one of the Tesseras' first cities. It came under attack from their enemies and only a rearguard remained to hold them off while the rest of the population fled to the west.

For some reason unknown to modern day scholars, the magnetic powers of the Tessera counteracted divinatory magic. In particular, any attempt to use sorcery or magic for divinatory uses always fail — including the Fate Witches' ability to see fate strands. The island and other Tesseran ruins distort the witch's vision of the workings of fate to the point where she cannot see anything clearly.

In addition, none of the magnetic fields upon the island react with non-ferrous metals, including gold, silver, copper and dracheneisen. However, ferrous materials, such as iron or steel, will be very vulnerable to the many magnetic fields in the area. None of the fields were random, but because many systems have collapsed, the fields now work erratically or for no apparent purpose. As a result, ferrous materials often move about by themselves or experience significant thermal changes. Tools tend to disappear if left unguarded, swords turn on their wielders and one poor individual who refused to let go of his weapon found himself dragged across the length of the island before being dropped to the ground.

Geography

Site A & Site B

The Tessera preferred to build cities near volcanic activity because of the increased presence of ferrous metals, but they did not care to experience eruptions firsthand. The building and stones at these sites were intended to prevent such an occurrence. The stones work in tandem to create and direct magnetic fields that control and suppress the tectonic forces within the volcano. The Tessera built them to last, and they can function even during major disruptions. However, the removal of certain key artifacts placed tremendous strain on the system, and when Blackstone stole another six of the stones, the remaining artifacts were unable to compensate. Because the two sites worked in tandem, the failure of one has caused the failure of the other. The magnetic containment fields have fallen, resulting in increased volcanic activity.

The Volcanoes

The Tessera designed reliable systems to ensure that the two volcanoes would not threaten their city. However human interference caused those systems to fail. Councilman Bernard could erupt within a week and that will trigger an eruption at Captain Johnson an hour later. The first eruption will be primarily black smoke and ash that will cover the island. Anyone who remains take damage from smoke inhalation at a rate of 1d10/1k1 damage per half hour. Continued earthquakes warn of more to come. Lava will begin to pour down the side of the southern volcano and engulf Site B within an hour. Ten minutes after that Captain Johnson will erupt as well — a far larger upheaval than Councilman Bernard. It will level the vegetation on the northern half of the island and cause 3d6/2k2 damage to anyone present. Inhalation damage will increase to 1d6 per minute, and lava will quickly pour through Sites A and C. Anyone caught by the lava will take 8d6/5k5 heat damage each round. Inhalation damage and eruption damage include anyone onboard ships within 500 yards the island.

The damage can be repaired, though it requires effort. First all of the stones taken from Site B must be returned. Then the players must go to the "Squares" board in the center of Site C (where the two pieces that represent Site A and Site B will have turned from black to red). They must both be placed in the center of the board, side by side, which reestablishes the magnetic field around the volcanoes. It will not halt any eruption already in progress, however.

After the eruptions, the Isle will be uninhabitable for two weeks while gases seep out of the volcanoes. Anyone who returns before that time suffers 1d8/1k1 damage for each half hour they remain. The northern volcano will be shorter by half while the southern one will be at three quarters of its previous size. All vegetation will be gone from the island and ash covers every square inch. Further, lava flows cover the island from just north of Captain Roger's treasure cave to the northern end of the island. Anyone stepping on the lava before it cools two weeks later runs the risk of breaking through into the molten lava underneath (for 5d6/3k3 damage per round). There are two previously hidden small buildings south of the lava, but little remains within them. There are magnetic runes upon the walls there, but no other artifacts of interest.

Site C

Terra's Blood, a sulfuric lake located between the two volcanoes, contains the ruins of a long abandoned city. The Explorers have built causeways to allow them access to the entire city and its buildings. They have also constructed dykes and pumped out the extremely warm water to allow them to work in certain key areas, unhindered. Unfortunately anything submerged for even a short period of time in these waters emerges covered with a sulfuric residue, making the artifacts retrieved from the city extremely difficult to clean. However, the buildings themselves give the Explorers several intriguing clues to the minds of the race that built it. All of the dimensions for the buildings are in powers of two and are constructed using the syrnoot as a measure. There were originally 128 buildings; a number damaged by a weapon of unknown origin.

Of the eight excavated buildings, most held bizarre machinery the Explorers could not comprehend. Unlike ruins found in other locations, they lacked visible mechanisms or clockwork pieces. Roughly built, or heavily worn, they possessed magnetic fields or properties. (Any of the Tessera Artifacts from Chapter Five may be found here, should the GM desire.) When the Explorers find something of value, they remove them to the ships in the northeastern end of the island. Nothing remains in the city overnight: left-over tools are often found floating above the city the next morning. Almost all of the uncovered buildings have one room. The exceptions all have either four or eight.

Since the pirates' arrival, the Explorers rush to gather as many artifacts as possible from the city. They believe that the increasing number of tremors will quickly make this site unsafe and are trying salvage what they can. One team of archaeologists has begun using the iron filings to expose the magnetic writings in the city and to copy them down for later study.

The Explorers' Ships

The Explorers maintain a small fleet of five ships on the Isle of Syrne. However, one of these ships constantly ferries back and forth to Theah with supplies, artifacts and men in need of a break from the island. The ships are named the *Persephone*, the *Raider*, the *Archaeologist*, the *Vesta's Tears*, and the *Expedition*. The first three serve primarily as couriers; they are small and lack offensive weapons. *Vesta's Tears* is a frigate that acts as a barracks by the men working the island. The pirate attack badly damaged her and she will be unable to set sail until at least twelve hours of repairs by a full crew. The *Expedition* is a former galleon that ran aground two years ago only a short distance away. Her experienced crew limped to the island

and is this far and stabilized with the help of the Explorers. McTavish used her as a floating warehouse ever since. Few men sleep on the ship, other than McTavish himself because they fear she will sink during the night. The *Expedition* suffered damage in the pirate attack as well. She currently rests upon a shelf of rock in the harbor. She requires at least two weeks of repairs from a full crew in order to travel anywhere.

In d20™ terms, the *Persephone*, *Raider*, and *Archaeologist* are considered 1st level small merchantmen, carrying 6 pound guns. In *7th Sea*™ terms, they are considered 10 point Explorer's brigantine. The *Vesta's Tears* is a 10 point/1st level naval frigate with 10-pound guns, and the *Expedition* is a 20-point naval galleon in *7th Sea*™ terms or a 1st level ship of the line with 10-pound guns in d20™ terms. Her cannons still function, but she is unable to move without the repairs described above. Details on all these ships can be found on pages 198–199 of *Swashbuckling Adventures*™ or pages 198–199 of the *7th Sea Players' Guide*™.

Plot Hooks

For a game starting before the pirate attack, the PCs may wish to investigate the island and learn what secrets it holds. They might belong to the Explorer's Society or they might be freelancers willing to pitch in and lend a hand. There may be a larger complex hidden beneath the island, containing perils the Explorers can only guess at. On the other hand, perhaps the characters came across a journal written by one of Captain Rogers' men. Learning the secret of the cave is only valuable if they are willing to first retrieve the lost spear. And how can the party reach the treasure without alerting the Explorers?

The players might also be hunting Aaron Blackstone — the man has a considerable price on his head — interfering with his attack on the island. After the pirate attack, time becomes an ever-present factor. The volcanoes may explode at any moment and there is very little that can be done to prevent it. A daring party of adventurers might attempt to retrieve the stones from the Blackstones, though it won't be easy. If the Explorers' plight isn't enough to move the party, the GM may wish to use harsher means. Perhaps a local native tribe wants to prevent the eruption, and kidnap a woman from for use as a human sacrifice. And where can this poor woman turn? Perhaps McTavish hires the party to find him a new ship to transport some of the doomed Expedition's cargo? No matter what happens, any adventures after the pirate attack should remember the ticking clock. There is a very short deadline for the island and everyone on it.

Characters

Professor McTavish

The leader of the expedition, Professor Joseph McTavish is a rather typical Explorer scholar. He comes from the Highlands of Avalon and studied at the University of Kirkwall before joining the Explorers. An expert in foreign languages, history and Syrne Lore, he has worked on the Isle of Syrne since the expeditions began. He became the leader of the expedition six years ago and has made remarkable headway during that time. However, his methods are methodical and

The Isle of Syrne



1. Captain Johnson
2. Councilman Bernard
3. Terra's Blood
4. Site A
5. Site B
6. Site C
7. Captain Roger's Secret



0 5 1
1 Inch = 1 Mile

cautious. He refuses to allow any of the men spend more than six hours at a time in the jungle to avoid contracting the jungle fevers. He also insisted on constructing dikes at site C rather than simply using explosives to blow open the pool's banks and allowing the water to drain. While his tactics slowed the rate of discovery, it kept fever outbreaks in check and ensured the buildings at Site C remained undamaged. Now that a true emergency has arisen, he is still unable to abandon his precautions in favor of more drastic methods.

He also has a rather cutting sense of humor, especially when faced with obvious or inane questions. In fact, he named the island's two volcanoes after a pair of men who were essential in setting up the first expedition to the island. He never allows this sense of humor to creep into his official reports or correspondence since he believes that it would undermine the seriousness of his communications. If it comes up in conversation, he immediately apologizes for his rudeness.

Captain Rogers

Captain Rogers did, in fact, bury a large portion of his plundered loot on the island of Syrne. The main reason that no one has yet recovered this treasure is that his key is long lost. However, Rogers left a journal that details the Battle of LaGrange, one of his final clashes with the Castillian Armada. He attacked a small town expecting slight resistance, only to discover that four galleons had made port only hours before. The fighting lasted for hours and he only escaped the ambush through a cunning trick. He ordered full sails and then suddenly dropped anchor. The galleons raised full sails to catch him and swept by him when the anchor pulled him up tight. He was forced to cut the anchor loose and then tack away. He swore bitterly afterwards for he had given up the key to most of his wealth. The journal revealed that the enormous stone rod that Rogers used for an anchor was magical. When brought near the cave where Rogers had stored the loot, the cave would open and the treasure would be revealed.

In actuality, the "anchor" is a magnetically charged stone, 12 feet long and 3 feet wide. It weighs six hundred pounds and takes four men to carry it. However, if brought to a small cliffside in the center of the southern portion of the Isle of Syrne, a crack opens on the cliff face. The rock slabs on either side swing open to reveal a cave ten feet tall and wide and almost forty feet deep. The cave contains no other apparent exits and if the spear moves away, the rock slabs swing shut again. The treasure consists of four chests filled with Castillian doubloons and Montaigne sol, a moderate sized fortune for the taking. However, whenever the outer stone slabs seal shut again, another set of slabs swing open at the rear of the cave. Inside this next chamber are another twelve chests filled with more money, a tremendous fortune of stolen plunder. In addition, it contains a smaller version of the stone spear that opens up the cave above; this spear weighs only 300 pounds, and two men alone may lift and carry it. The trick, of course, is getting to it, and without Captain Rogers' anchor, that may well prove impossible. No one knows where the anchor lies, but rumor has it that a band of smugglers found the anchor's resting place and managed to raise it from the depths...

Professor McTavish (d20™)

Rogue 4/Fighter 3/Archaeologist 3: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d4+3d10; HP 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atks rapier +8/+3 melee (1d6); SA Ancient Lore, Evasion, Sneak Attack +2d6, Limitless Knowledge, Lucky, Uncanny Dodge; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int17, Wis 14, Char 12; AL LG; Skills: Appraise +9, Balance +7, Climb +2, Decipher Script +10, Disable Device +4, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +9, Hide +1, Jump +5, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (Isle of Syrne) +9, Knowledge (linguistics) +12, Knowledge (Syrne) +12, Knowledge (traps) +10, Move Silent +1, Open Locks +7, Profession (archaeologist) +7, Profession (engineer) +6, Search +9, Spot +9, Use Rope +5; Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus: History, Skill Focus: Linguist, Font of Wisdom, Keen Senses.

Professor McTavish – Hero (7th Sea™)

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

Reputation: 12.

Background: None.

Arcana: None.

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Keen Senses, Linguist, Membership Explorer's Society, University.

Artist: Drawing 3.

Doctor: Diagnosis 2, First Aid 2, Surgery 1.

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 4, Mathematics 3,

Philosophy 3, Research 4, Syrneath Lore 3, Theology 2.

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2.

Aaron Blackstone

The notorious Aaron Blackstone escaped from prison only a few months ago. He convinced a rich and greedy Vodacce smuggler to investigate the island of Cabora just risen from beneath the waves (see *Swashbuckling Adventures™*, page 232, and *Waves of Blood™*, pages 84–86). While the Vodacce and his most loyal men went ashore, Aaron and the men he coerced into his employ seized the ship. The *Massacre* sailed from Cabora while her former captain watched in horror. Aaron quickly returned to piracy and quickly proved that his time spent in prison had dulled none of his predatory instincts. Joined by his brother, Conrad who commanded his own pirate frigate, Aaron launched a number of brutal and profitable attacks.

When the Explorers began increasing their voyages of exploration to the west, Aaron Blackstone offered them his services as a captain. The Explorers, eager for more ships, agreed and added a group of archaeologists and Shield Men to his ship. Those unfortunate souls didn't make it out of sight of land before Aaron raised the Jolly Roger and attacked another Explorer vessel. Since that time, he and his brother prey upon the increased shipping between the Midnight Archipelago and Théah.

When they attacked an Explorer's ship near the isle of the Syrne, they received a shock: their cannon balls were deflected in mid air, splashing harmlessly into the sea. Their curiosity piqued, they boarded her and took her crew captive, only to discover the three stones and their magnetic properties. They resolved to secure more of the fantastic devices and set course for the Isle.

In a brutal dawn attack, Aaron and Conrad severely damaged two of the Explorer ships anchored at Syrne and drove the other two away. They quickly used the remaining Explorers as slave labor and the tools already set up to retrieve more of the stones. They were able to load six stones onto their ships within two days. Severe tremors shook the island on the morning of the third day, but the pirates' hold was full with the stones and other supplies stolen from the island. When Aaron's lookout reported the two Explorer ships on a heading for the harbor, he and his brother retreated. They plan to sail back to Castille to sell several of the stones to the highest bidder, keeping the last two for private use.

Aaron Blackstone (d20™)

Pirate 6/Donovan 3: CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d10+12+3d8+6; HP 63; Init+2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks cutlass +10/+5 melee (1d6+2) or pistol +11/+6 ranged (1d10); SA Ambidexterity, Buckler Master, Donovan's Twist, Focused Training, Pirate Trick (quick draw), Roguish Style, Seasoned, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Specialization (dagger); SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 16, Char 13; AL NE; Skills: Balance +9, Climb +6, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +3, Listen +4, Profession (sailor) +10, Spot +7,

Swim +2, Use Rope +5, Bluff +7, Sense Motive +7, Gather Information +4, Profession (captain) +4, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Knowledge (strategy) +6; Feats: Able Drinker, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (pistol), Proud, Scoundrel, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate).

Aaron Blackstone – Villain (7th Sea™)

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

Reputation: –19.

Background: None.

Arcana: Proud.

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Able Drinker, Scoundrel.

Captain: Ambush 3, Bribery 1, Cartography 2, Gunnery 1, Leadership 1, Logistics 1, Strategy 3, Tactics 2.

Athletics: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2.

Buckler: Attack (Buckler) 2, Parry (Buckler) 3.

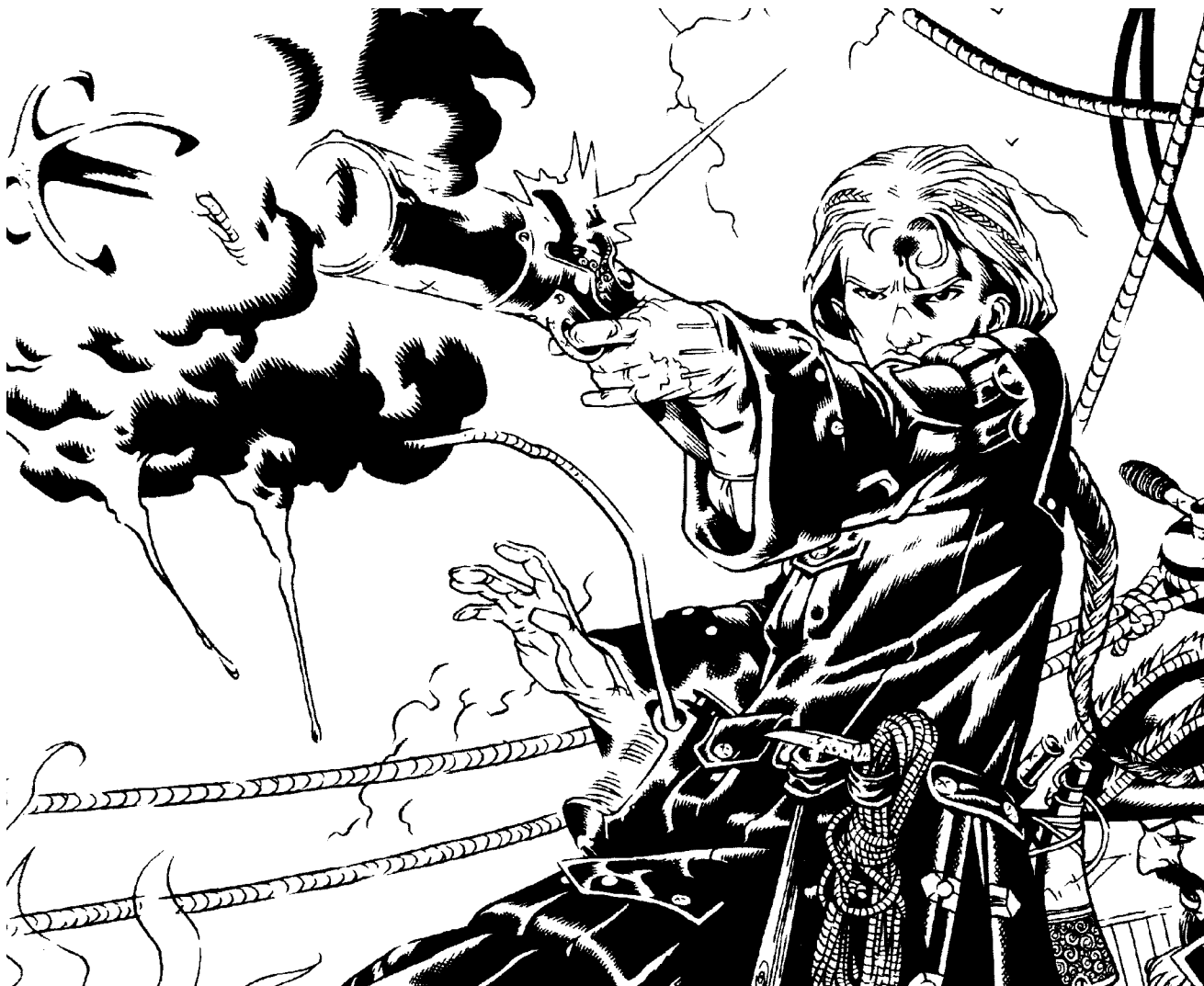
Donovan (Journeyman): Bind (Buckler) 4, Disarm (Fencing) 4, Riposte 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 4.

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3.

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1.

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 2.

Sailor: Balance 4, Climbing 3, Knotwork 3, Leaping 2, Rigging 3.



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