

Swashbuckling
ADVENTURES™

Rapier's Edge™





Rapier's Edge™

Adventures in Théah

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

A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*™.

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Walking the Rapier's Edge

"Thank you, Madame," the lieutenant said as he plucked the wine-glass from the silver tray.

The Montaigne lady blushed slightly and nodded to him. She was a pretty young widow who had pledged her late husband's home and resources to aid in the struggle against Castille. Barcino was a perfect place for the officers to relax and discuss strategy away from the ears of Castillian spies.

"My dear Fleurette," one of the other officers said. "Don't you have servants to do this? Your devotion to our cause is admirable but a noble lady like you should not be serving."

She smiled as she averted her eyes from the other officers' gaze. "My servants are mainly Castillian," she replied softly. "Although they are quite well-suited for this work, I did not think that it was worth what they might overhear to send them."

"Ah, as intelligent as she is beautiful," the captain said. "Didn't I tell you, gentlemen? A true lady of Montaigne."

"And one of the few who has not lost her head," smirked one of the others.

That brought chuckles from around the room and the lady looked away. The lieutenant thought the joke in poor taste with their hostess present. "Thank you again for your hospitality," he said quietly.

She looked up and he finally noticed her eyes. They were sapphire blue. "It is my duty, Lieutenant," she said. "I am and always will be true to those to whom I have pledged my loyalty."

There was more to that statement than appeared on the surface, he thought, but the conviction in her eyes was very real. With the Revolution taking its toll on the nobility, it was not unreasonable for him to think about courting her. He took her gloved hand and put it to his lips. "Your loyalty is admirable, Madame," he said.

Her response was interrupted by a hasty knock at the door. Without thinking, the lieutenant put himself between potential danger and the lady.

"Captain," cried the corporal who barged into the room, "We have captured one of the local leaders! What shall we do with him?"

The captain rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Well, that depends on whether we have a safe place to hold him."

"Madame," the lieutenant said. "Is your cellar available?"

"Oui," she replied. "It may have some things in it but nothing that could not be removed."

"Excellent idea," the captain said. "Corporal, follow the lady and she'll show you where to take him. We'll deal with him after this evening's party."

The lieutenant stepped aside, but caught the lady's hand gently. "You will be attending, will you not?" he asked.

She smiled, and blushed slightly. "Of course, Lieutenant."

Her eyes lingered on his as he let her go.

* * *

Don Roberto paced the dirt floor and swore. It had been foolish of him to come to Barcino. Had the need not been so great, he would never have risked being captured by the Montaigne patrol. But only El Vago could save his brother and he had been told that there was someone in Barcino who could help him find the legendary bandit.

They could have at least given him some light, he sighed. The root cellar had no windows and the only reason he knew his location was because of the smell. He heard a noise and glanced around in the vain hope of seeing anything. A seam of light appeared on the floor and grew as part of the floor rose up and moved aside, revealing a figure in black with a lantern.

"Come with me."

He hesitated because the feminine voice spoke with a Montaigne accent.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A friend of El Vago," she replied. "Come quickly. If the guards notice the light, we are undone."

That was all the assurance he needed. She handed him the lantern and he preceded her down the crude ladder. She pulled the dirt-covered trap door back into position. "No offense, Don Roberto," she said as she took the light back, "but what were you doing on the road to Barcino? It is heavily patrolled."

"Looking for El Vago," he replied.

She paused. "Why?"

"The Inquisition has my brother Ernesto" he said. "They are taking him to Cardinal Verdugo in the Vaticine City."

"Why does Verdugo want him?" she asked.

"The Inquisition is convinced that he knows the identity of El Vago."

She paused for a moment and then quickened her pace. "When did they leave?" she asked.

"They were still at my home when I rode off. Some of my people set fire to their carriage so they were looking for an alternate means of transportation. I'm certain it slowed them down but I doubt it stopped them. Even amongst my people, they have found allies."

She stopped and lowered the lantern. "So perhaps a very fast horse could catch them still?"

"Perhaps, but I have no horse, Señora, and I am not a good enough rider to catch up to them. Even if we did catch them, what could the two of us do?"

"You are right," she said, as she started down the passage again. "I will leave you somewhere safe in Barcino. They will get you out of the city."

"I thank you, Señora. I only wish I could have helped Ernesto."

"Don't worry, Don Roberto. El Vago will rescue your brother. I swear it."

* * *

Ernesto tested the bonds again even though they had held fast every other time that he had tested them. The Inquisitor who sat across from him smiled. "I don't know why you struggle," he said. "There will be no rescue."

His captor leaned back with obviously enjoyment at Ernesto's frustration. "Your brother has been captured by the Montaigne and those who burned our carriage will be caught. They have succeeded only in making your trip to Vaticine City less comfortable. You should be thankful that Theus has not chosen to bless us with rain."

Ernesto cringed as the open wagon bounced over a rut in the road. He should never have sent Roberto to Barcino. With him in the hands of the Montaigne military, there would be no one to protect their people. He glanced over his shoulder for the rescue he knew would not come. Perhaps El Vago would be able to save Roberto.

"Blessed Theus," he prayed silently. "Save my brother so that our people are not without hope. And please let Verdugo's arrogance prevent him from believing that a Montaigne woman could wear the mask of El Vago."

Suddenly a riderless horse burst from the trees and ran past the wagon. Ernesto turned to the front to see the two lead riders, whose attention had been caught by the noise, unhorsed by a rope strung across the road.

"Stop!" the Inquisitor shouted.

The driver pulled the wagon to a halt as the Inquisitor stood and drew a pair of pistols. "Who dares interfere with the chosen of Theus?"

Ernesto struggled again with his bonds as the two rear guards urged their mounts forward. He hated the idea of having to watch his own rescue as a helpless bystander.

A cloaked figure dropped from the trees onto one of the mounted guards and knocked him from the saddle. It then leaped from that horse to the next and unseated the other one. The Inquisitor swore as the hood fell aside to reveal the grinning white mask of El Vago. He cocked his pistols and leveled one at the vagabond. Ernesto seized the opportunity and threw himself at the Inquisitor's knees just as the man fired. The shot went wild and the Inquisitor tumbled back into the bed of the wagon. "How dare you!" he demanded as he regained his stance and struck Ernesto. "You will die for your heresy!"

"I am ready to meet Theus," Ernesto said. "Are you?"

As El Vago vaulted onto the wagon, the Inquisitor found his weapon and fired. Ernesto cringed — even a child could have hit a target so close, but the shot did not appear to injure the man in the mask who positioned himself between Ernesto and the Inquisitor.

"Go!" Ernesto did not have time to react to the voice — high and feminine — as he felt his bonds release. Although he was loath to leave his rescuer alone, he was weaponless so there was not much he could do to assist her. He leapt onto one of the riderless horses and pulled himself into the saddle, then looked back at the two figures who faced each other in bed of the wagon.

The Inquisitor drew a sword. "I shall be only too happy to bring in the greater prize," he sneered.

El Vago gave the Inquisitor a silent salute, but before she could go en garde, her foe lashed out with his blade, which cut her gloved hand and sent the weapon spinning out of her grip.

"Yield, heretic!" the Inquisitor demanded as he advanced.

Ernesto tried to grab for a weapon even though he knew there was no way he could get it to her in time. The swordswoman parried the Inquisitor's blade with a flash of steel from her left hand and drove him back with a series of precise dagger strikes which the Inquisitor parried frantically until he toppled backward off the wagon.

Ernesto slid off the horse and knocked the stunned Inquisitor unconscious. He then offered El Vago her sword, hilt first.

"Merci," she whispered, as she slid the blade back into its scabbard. "I have something for you, as well."

She drew a sealed envelope out of her jacket. "This needs to get to Don Andres Aldana as quickly as possible."

He took the envelope and tucked it safely away. "Gracias, Señora."

She whistled and a black mare trotted from the trees to her. With a quick salute to Ernesto, she mounted her horse and sped off.

Rosario gently snipped the linen thread. "It is a good thing that gloves are still in fashion here, Madame," she said.

She examined the wound on her mistress's hand to make certain she had not missed anything. The cut had not been deep but without stitching, the scar it left would be difficult to explain. "Thank Theus I was able to save both Ernesto and Roberto," her mistress said.

"And the information on the Montaigne warships?"

"Given directly to Ernesto. I hope they will be in Don Andres' hands soon."

Rosario gave a relieved sigh and put her medical tools away. "Castille owes you a great debt, Madame." The maid began to lace up her lady's corset. "The lieutenant has asked to escort you this evening. He will be sending a carriage."

The lady winced as the corset tightened. "The lieutenant?"

Rosario pulled harder. "Yes. From the gossip I've heard, he was quite taken with you."

"This," the lady gasped as the corset tightened again. "is why I would rather fight Inquisitors than go to balls."

Rosario chuckled, "I am most certain that Theus appreciates your suffering."

"Well, I hope Theus has given just punishment to the villain who invented the corset."

She craned her head to look at Rosario. "Why did you accept the lieutenant's invitation for me?" she asked.

"He is a member of the military council here," Rosario replied, as she tucked the laces into the corset. "It is likely he will have much conversation with the other members at the ball."

The lady smiled. "Ah, and such conversation may yield more information on the plans for the navy. Excellent thinking, *ma chere amie*."

"That is why I am your servant, Madame."

The lady turned and put a hand on Rosario's shoulder. "You are my servant only for this charade. You are my friend first and foremost."

"Yes, Madame," Rosario replied with a smile as she bobbed a curtsy.

The Castillian helped the Montaigne noble into her dress and was much more merciful with the lacings.

When her toilette was complete, the elegantly attired widow nodded to her "maid."

"And without you I would never be able to ride to the rescue during the day and still be impeccably dressed in time for dinner."

Introduction

Players always ask for adventures of all sizes and shapes so it seemed like a good time to dig some gaming gems out of the mines of Théah. There's nothing better than seeing (and hearing) a table of 7th Sea™ players bring a convention room to a halt with their exuberant swashbuckling antics!

Chapter One presents a rule systems for running a 7th Sea™ LARP (live action role-playing) game. We included the basic story for Giovanni Villanova's Grand Ball, a LARP run at Origins and Gencon-SoCal 2003, along with sample character sketches so that GMs can get an idea of how to interweave stories to make interactions more convoluted. This system, based on the original Roll & Keep rules, has been designed to support the pacing of a live-action game. This is not the only system you can use for a 7th Sea™ LARP but it conveniently requires a minimum of hard-copy support. There are other LARP systems currently in use for 7th Sea™ and you are encouraged to participate in them if you wish.

Chapter Two contains four full role-playing adventures, some of which have been run at conventions and some of which are brand-new. "The Tower of Faith" ties in directly with the advancement of the Théan timeline.

Chapter Three is full of plot hooks and adventure seeds that will take players across the world. (We have also accommodated those who play on both sides of the Montaigne Revolution.) Some are serious, some are dangerous, and some are just plain silly but all call for the kind of swashbuckling action that is the hallmark of this game.

Chapter Four presents an overview of new information that brings the timeline up to 1675 and the world to the brink of madness on more than one front. For those who follow a timeline-based game, this section is designed to provide plenty of excitement and a lot of danger.

As always, feel free adjust the material to suit your needs. The world of 7th Sea™ exists because your characters bring it to life!

CHAPTER ONE:

Live Action Role-Playing for 7th Sea

Karlina Loggerheim turned to find Captain Zedeña standing behind her. She had no idea how he had managed to sneak into the ball, let alone find her in the crowd, but one thing was certain — he was looking for revenge. Karlina thought about the dagger strapped to her leg under her gown but it probably wouldn't be enough to dissuade the Castillian. She looked around the room, anxiously hoping to find anyone who might help her.

Moments like the above scene happen all the time in role-playing games. When done well, they build tension for the players and provide entertainment for the entire group. Now imagine for a moment if that scene was actually happening before your eyes. Consider actually crossing the room to confront the scoundrel Captain Zedeña instead of simply stating the action from the comfort of a chair. This is the appeal of a “live system” *7th Sea*™ game; with its focus on human characters and courtly intrigue, it is an ideal setting for live action play.

Game Masters (GMs) and players interested in running a live system game need to understand that a different set of obstacles crops up here than in a table-top game. The first is time. Live adventures need to run as close to “real time” as possible. Taking time to “negotiate” (whine, wheedle, cajole) or otherwise convince the GM to see things your way breaks the fiction of the live game, so the following rules were designed to streamline the resolution system from a series of dice rolls to a single check wherever possible.

A second obstacle is location and attendance. While it is relatively easy to find an agreeable time and location for a small group to gather around a table, scheduling larger groups can be quite a task. GMs need to scout potential locations and check with management of those sites before run-

ning games to assure that they will be welcome to proceed, and comply with any local rules or restrictions, especially as noted below.

A third obstacle involves players' desires to carry weaponry. While there are certainly many players who have received training in their use, most have not. It only takes one would-be hero to cause an accident and harm someone... as well as denying access to that site for the group and others like it. Added to that are restrictions in large venues for most kinds of weaponry, due to the current world situation and the threat of terrorism. We recommend that GMs forbid the use of weaponry during a live system game, or to act out combat with realistic weapons.

That said, there are specific situations in which this can be ameliorated. One is if the game is played on private premises; however, even then, the risk of physical damage due to lack of proper training and/or precautions must not be underestimated. Another is at smaller conventions where weapons are permitted, although most bladed weapons must be peace-bonded (i.e., tied to their sheaths or otherwise rendered incapable of being drawn). The third is the inclusion of a weapons and combat demonstration by a historical re-enactment group which, while not hands-on for the players, gives a nice example of what happens during game combat. If soft weapons are permitted, these can be used — which are not particularly authentic, but do give players the thrill of “nerfing” their opponent and watching them drop to the ground.

The *7th Sea*™ live system operates as a variant of the original Roll and Keep mechanics. Details have been trimmed to speed play, focus the players on direct interaction, and avoid a dependence on statistics over personality. It would be

impossible to compress alterations to every skill, advantage, and ability that have been created for this game in the space of this sourcebook. Instead, the focus is on how to resolve actions using the new system, the basics of building or converting characters to the live system, how to deal with sorcery and special advantages, and a few tips for those looking to extend a live game into an ongoing campaign.

Resolving Actions

Unlike traditional table-top games, the live system does not require dice. A live setting often does not provide a convenient location for the rolling dice and for those in costume (especially women), pockets to store dice can be scarce. Instead, the live system uses Drama Points that augment ability scores to reach lower Target Numbers than those found in the regular system. Tests are made in two forms: Simple Tests against a GM-assigned TN and Opposed Tests, which are basically player vs. player abilities checks. Unlike the regular system, the live system does not use a Kept/Unkept format for Tests. When players make a Test, they keep both their numbers for Trait and Skill.

The Simple Test

Players make a Simple Test to complete swashbuckling actions like making amazing leaps from the balcony to the chandelier. While an integral part of swashbuckling play, doing this sort of thing in a public venue is not a good idea. Instead, the GM assigns a TN to achieve the desired action. The player adds the appropriate Trait + 1 Skill + any special bonuses and checks the total against the TN. Reaching or exceeding the TN results in success. Simple Tests work for physical actions, knowledge checks, activating certain sorcery abilities, and any other action that cannot be directly opposed by another character active in the game. Simple Tests are also used for learning from the GM about information the character may know or need to obtain.

Note on Target Numbers

After reviewing the changes in Character Statistics, it will be obvious that live system characters cannot possibly reach "normal" TNs without adding rolled dice. GMs should adjust TNs for live-action by dividing the standard TN by 5 (i.e., a standard TN 15 becomes TN 3.) Unless noted elsewhere, this is the default method for adjusting TNs for all live system checks.



A Simple Test Example

Mercutio, Lord's Hand of Prince Villanova, has been charged with protecting the Prince during the Grand Ball.

"Do I notice anyone who seems dangerous or suspicious?"

[Note: in a live game, players are encouraged to use 1st person ("I") rather than 3rd person ("he" or "she"). GMs should respond to such questions in the 2nd person ("you") to help players get into character.]

The GM asks for a Simple Wits Test against TN 4. Mercutio checks his statistics and asks if his Spy skill could aid this check. The GM confirms that the Spy skill would indeed be useful in this case. Mercutio adds his Wits 2 to his Spy rank of 2 for a total of 4. The GM says, "Yes, you noticed a man named Fortunato who has caused problems in the past. He seems to be lurking near that [pointing to it] door."

The Opposed Test

Opposed Tests are used when two characters (PC or NPC) are actively working against one another to achieve a result. This occurs most commonly in situations that involve combat and social actions like seduction. In an Opposed Test, players add their appropriate Trait + 1 Skill + any bonus advantages and compare the result. The player with the highest total is successful in the attempt against the other player.

In the Opposed Test, the individual who caused the need for a Test is the Acting Player. The actual task is irrelevant to this designation; he could be attacking, attempting to mooch a meal from the target, or challenging someone to a duel. The Target is the Defending Player. The Defending Player may be avoiding a saber attack or simply trying to tell whether the Acting Player is cheating in a card game. When the players determine their actions, the Acting Player must declare which skill, if any, he is using first. The Acting Player also declares his point total to the Defending Player first. While an Opposed Test can occur without adjudication, it is often wise to have a GM present.

This can be achieved in several ways other than calling out "GM here!" Players can be given a colored card that they hold up when they need a GM or perhaps silk scarves that they wave about to attract the GM's attention. Whatever method you choose, try to keep it from breaking other players' concentration.

Opposed Tests and Ties

Fortune favors the bold in *7th Sea*™ and this is true in a live system game as well. In an Opposed Test the Acting Player wins any ties. If no definitive Acting Player can be determined (as in the case where two characters are gambling) all ties are considered break-even situations with no clear winner. In the event of a duel, the challenging character wins all ties.

Drama Points in Tests

Because every so often the little guy wins, it would not be fair to simply leave Tests to be resolved by just totaling statistics. Players also have Drama Points to spend to add on these Tests. (Details about how the player gains Drama Points are presented below.) After a player has added up his Trait (and pos-

sibly a skill), he may still be short of a TN for a Simple Test. At this point, the player may opt to spend one or more Drama Points to reach his TN and succeed. During an Opposed Test, the players may also opt to spend Drama Points to adjust totals after their numbers have been added up. After learning their own total and their opponent's total each player involved in an Opposed challenge may simultaneously bid a secret number of Drama Points to win the Test. Only one bid of Drama Points is made for each Test.

Drama Recovery

After the Test is resolved, the winner's Drama Points are gone, just as they are in the regular game. GMs may award a Drama Point for particularly amazing actions. In addition, the loser of an Opposed Test recovers all of the Drama Points he spent on the Test -1. This happens because in a cinematic style event, those heroes who fail early always have a little reserve of luck later. In the event of combat, the loser recovers Drama Points *after* damage is assessed.

An Opposed Test Example

Fortunato is attending a Grand Ball at Prince Villanova's estate. He has a long-standing disagreement with the Prince over a past incident and is looking to attack him and exact revenge for his family. Unfortunately, Mercutio has been very alert in his duty to protect the Prince. The GM has told Fortunato that he will need to find a way to distract or sneak past Mercutio if he wishes to attack the Prince. Fortunato asks to use his Criminal skill to sneak past the guard. The GM informs him that this will be a Wits Test. Fortunato adds his Wits 1 with his Criminal rank 2 for a total of 3.

The GM, having recently dealt with Mercutio's Simple Test, knows his Wits and Spy total is a 4. He informs Fortunato that he is currently behind in his Opposed Test by 1 point and leaves him to consider how many Drama Points he wants to spend. The GM now informs Mercutio that he is being acted upon and leading the Opposed Test by 1. Mercutio, worried about his chances, bids 2 Drama Points to make his total bid 6. The GM returns to Fortunato who, unaware of Mercutio's bid, has also decided to bid 2 Drama Points for a total of 5. Fortunato fails the Test but keeps one of his bid Drama Points. Mercutio loses both bid points but is aware that Fortunato is about to try something...

Character Statistics

Statistics separate role-playing from acting. Without scripts, numbers help players and GMs determine who is successful and who has failed in a variety of actions. All characters in the live system receive statistics for the standard five traits from the original Roll and Keep system, as well as Advantages, Skills, Backgrounds, and Arcana as needed. Instead of using ranks 1-6, live system characters use ranks 1-4.

TABLE 1:1 CONVERSION TABLE

Roll & Keep Stats	Live System Stats
1-2	1
3-4	2
5	3
6-7	4

Swordsman Schools and Sorcery convert to mastery levels (1–3). Skills and Knacks work a little differently. Knacks tend to be an unnecessary hurdle when dealing with a live action environment. Instead, it is assumed that any Skill includes all of its assigned Knacks, per the source material. Traits work the same way as they do in the tabletop game. Skills and Traits range from Level 1 to 3. Players who want to convert established characters can generate the Skill rank for a live action game by averaging learned Knacks and applying the total to the chart.

Generating new characters for a live system game can be done using the standard 100 Hero Point method and applying new costs for Traits and Knacks. Any characters created for live system games should be limited at character generation to rank 2 or lower. See Table 1:2 *Live System Advancement Costs* below.

Drama Points

Drama Points are the currency of the live system. In the course of a game, players will spend Drama Points to contend against one another, reach Target Numbers assigned by GMs, and generally bail out of near certain doom. Each player is issued a number of Drama Points at the beginning of each session. These points can be spent to augment an Opposed Test; activate certain Abilities, Arcana, Sorcery, and Advantages, or to gain information from the GMs.

Beginning Drama Points are equal to the character's lowest Trait + Reputation Dice + 2. Thus, each starting character will begin with a minimum of 3 points to spend. Characters can earn additional Drama Points in the same way Drama Dice are earned in the original *7th Sea*™ system. To represent Drama Points, GMs may simply list them on the character sheet and allow the players to bid with extended fingers, use small stickers that can be collected and destroyed as used, or some other prop that is readily available in large amounts like plastic "treasure" coins that can be found at most party supply stores. These add a currency feel to the transaction and are less cumbersome to carry than dice.

Character Advantages

Advantages in the live system act as they normally would with the following alterations. Any Advantage offering the addition of Unkept dice or a Free Raise adds 1 point to any Opposed Test total where appropriate for use, while Advantages offering Kept dice add 2 points. Academy, Castillian Education, or University halve the cost to purchase certain Skills to 5. Dracheneisen reduces all damage taken by one point. Faith, as always, functions at the GM's discretion.

TABLE 1:2 LIVE SYSTEM ADVANCEMENT COSTS

Statistic	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Cost to Purchase	Cost to Advance
Trait	1–2	3–4	5	6–7	16 pts.	35 pts.
Sorcery	Apprentice	Adept	Master	–	40 pts.	30 pts.
Swordsman	Apprentice	Adept	Master	Grand Master	30 pts.	30 pts.
Skill	Avg. 1–2	Avg. 3–4	Avg. 5	–	10 pts.	20 pts.

Hubrises

Hubrises function as listed in the *7th Sea Player's Guide*™ and *Game Master's Guide*™ except for the following:

Inattentive characters suffer a –1 to checks when activated by a GM.

Indecisive characters do not win ties during Tests when activated.

Unlucky characters may be activated to retest a successful Test.

The GM may activate a character Hubris directly for 1 Drama Point and by another Player with knowledge of the hubris for 2 Drama Points. The character's Player may refuse the activation of the Hubris for 1 Drama Point regardless of who activated it.

Virtues

Virtues also function as described with the following changes. All Virtues offering a raise or Unkept die add 1 to a total for each raise or die offered. All Virtues offering a Kept die add 2 to a total for each die offered.

Exemplary allows for the use of a Skill for one Test instead of a Knack, as would occur in the tabletop game.

Focused switches the entire rank of two Traits for one scene.

Fortunate allows one retest.

Victorious adds 1 point of damage.

Willful prevents the use of Drama Points in combat by the opponent for one Opposed Test.

Worldly adds the use of one skill until the end of the scene. Players may activate Virtues as normally described.

Sorcery

Sorcery in a live action game requires a large suspension of disbelief as well as a series of signals to represent the action being taken for visible activity. The following abbreviated versions of Sorcery allow for players to deal with supernatural talents. The ground rules for sorcery follow the standard rules of the original *7th Sea*™ system for Half, Full, and Twice-Blooded sorcerers concerning limits of Adept level or Rank 1 for less than full sorcery. Additionally, any ability that refers to augmenting a Knack instead augments or affects a Skill.

Glamour (Avalon)

Those who tap into the power of legends do so at the cost of 1 Drama Point. Apprentice users start the game with the knowledge of two Legends and earn an additional Legend for every rank gained. The blessings listed in the *Player's Guide*™ do not apply in this system, although a GM should feel free to work them in, if it meets the needs of this group. Glamour users do, however, gain Glamour points equal to double their lowest Trait that may be used to activate Glamour abilities.

The list below represents a sample of how Glamour Knacks have been adjusted for this system:

The Horned Hunter: Adds your rank in Glamour to Brawn when activated. All regular restrictions on this effect apply.

Robin Goodfellow: Removes range penalties for any attack made with a bow at Apprentice level, deals an extra level of damage for Adepts, and adds 3 to the Master's TN to hit a target.

Mad Jack O'Bannon: Adept level ability grants 3 forms at rank two and gains the other two forms when Master level is reached. Players using Jack should describe their character's appearance to those with whom they interact with during the game.

The Green Man: Grants the ability to donate a Drama Point to another player at Apprentice level. The healing effects of the Adept and Master level remove one level of wounds from the recipient of this donation.

Thomas: Functions as described in the source material with the payment of a Drama Point.

Lærdom (Vestenmannavnjar)

Skjæren gain the use of 4 Runes at character creation. Additional Runes may be learned for 10 experience points (XP) each. A Lærdom practitioner Invokes Runes against TN 5, Inscribes Runes against TN 7, and Becomes a Rune against a TN 10. (Note Becoming a Rune is not the same as becoming a Living Rune. Those people are described in *Vendel-Vesten™* and in Chapter 4 of this book.) While an inscribed item should be apparent enough to players, the user should show it when activating its power. (This is a prop that the GM should provide. Another way to play this is for skjæren who have Become a Rune to represent use of their Rune by tracing a circle over their chest with the index finger.) Skjæren Invoking Runes trace Rune shapes in the air in front of them with their fingers to represent invoking actions.

The list below represents a sample of how Laerdom Knacks have been adjusted for this system:

Rune effects: Any Rune that grants a raise or adds dice in the tabletop system confers an additional 1 point for every die or raise granted for the listed amount of time. Variable durations are increased for every point beyond the TN the skjæren succeeded on a Resolve + Lærdom check.

Storsæd: Allows the skjæren to retain his spent Drama Point(s) after a successful Test and distribute it/them as noted in the description.

Kyndighet: Allows the skjæren to attempt a retest for an Opposed Test in combat. (Note that this is an exception to the standard "no re-take" rule for combat.)

Fjell: Removes one level of wounds when used.

Herje: Subtracts the user's rank in Lærdom from the target's next Test.

Villskap: Enables the caster to attack at a rank equal to Resolve + Lærdom and deals damage equal to the skjæren's rank in Lærdom.

Porté (Montaigne)

Those with a talent for tearing holes in the fabric of reality gain the use of all Knacks when this sorcery is purchased. Portal Sickness, however, is standardized to 3 minutes of real time (despite the accuracy of dedicated role-playing, any retching the player wishes to portray should be kept to tasteful understatement if at all possible). All effects of Porté are

made with a Resolve + Porté Test against TN 5. All regular limits apply to the use of Walk, Bring, and Bleeding. Attunement is separated by 1 mile, 3 miles, and 10 miles respectively for increasing ranks in Porté.

Because Porté involves the use of the hands, players can demonstrate what they are doing as follows:

Using Porté to move or recover an item: The player should extend his arm straight up and flex the hand while grasping the elbow with the other hand.

Walking: The player should interlock the fingers of each hand and turn the palms out from the body raising the hands in front of the user's face. If it is not impractical, the player should then place his hands over his eyes when navigating through the "space" he has entered. (Obviously, he can open his fingers wide enough so he doesn't crash into anyone.) Walking with others can be done using the same action as above, with each passenger first linking arms to form a chain and then covering his or her eyes with the other hand. Remember that they must remain in physical contact with each other and they must keep their eyes "closed."

Players who are "lost" inside the rent should be encouraged to role-play the pain and terror, although screaming should be kept to a minimum unless the game is occurring in someone's home where such noise will not bring hotel security at a run. There is no way to retrieve the character from this place, so the player must leave the game. If there is time and extra characters are available, he should be encouraged to re-enter the game as someone new.

Pyeryem (Ussura)

Shapeshifters provide delightful role-playing opportunity in a live setting. Pyeryem users begin with 1 or 2 spirit skins at the GM's discretion and gain a new spirit skin with each rank of Pyeryem gained. All transformations are made by spending a Drama Point to activate and then making a Resolve + Pyeryem Test. Cat, Goshawk, Mouse, Otter, Owl, Rabbit, and Red Fox Test against a TN 3. Kodiak Bear, Snow Leopard, and Wolf Test against a TN 5. Regardless of the skin chosen, the player should make an effort to represent the animal by acting out the flapping of wings or miming the ears or fangs of the animal into which they have transformed. (The GM might also wish to provide masks.)

Boons add bonuses to Tests. All attack bonuses offer +1 damage. Armor increases the shapeshifter's combat Opposed Test total by +1. Any Boon offering a bonus of raises or additional dice, regardless of the number in the tabletop system, grants a +1 to the appropriate Test.

It should be noted that a character who turns into a large animal not normally encountered indoors will have to deal with the reaction of the other characters, which may include a panicked attempt to shoot or harm the animal.

Sorte (Vodacce)

Fate Witches operating in a live setting present a basic problem for the GM. Often, the player cannot be asked directly about links to various other players in larger games as they are unaware of just who is or is not tied to the character. The GM will be required to arbitrate exactly what the Strega can and cannot perceive or affect. Any player wishing to portray the operation of Sorte powers should either draw cards from a tarot deck prop or mime the action should such a deck not be available.

Apprentice Strega have the ability to sense the strands by making a Resolve + Sorte Test against TN 4. It is recommended that a GM step aside with the target player at this point and review the character sheet or ask the player about the character's connections in the game. After reviewing the information, the GM can then return to the Strega and reveal what was discovered.

Adept Strega gain the ability to tug strands, thereby granting Blessings or Curses. When attempting this, the Strega must make a Resolve + Sorte check against TN 5. If successful, the Strega may grant an extra Drama Point that the target can spend on Tests made for the appropriate strand. An adept may also grant an additional Drama Point for every 2 points she exceeds TN 5.

Master Strega have the ability to create and destroy strands. This is a very subjective ability and should be left to the GM to determine just how the effect will play out during the game. The attempt to create or destroy strands is TN 8.

A note on Fate Lashes: As the live system has no exploding dice, it is entirely the GM's option to introduce damage to a Strega for fate lashes whenever it feels appropriate for the story or the result of the attempt warrants such action. Lashes deal one level of damage when they occur.

Unless the player is very familiar with Fate Witches, the GM should include a one-page explanation with detailed information to help the player with her character.

There are many other sorceries and shamanistic practices in Théah which could not be addressed here due to space limitations. The material above is sufficient to enable this particular scenario to proceed as designed.

Combat

Combat is a major part of *7th Sea*.[™] Swordsmen, Knights, and brash youths with inherited rapiers can be found at every turn. The big duel is a major turning point of many adventures. It is entertaining to watch two gentlemen with skills honed to perfection cross blades. Unfortunately, the same is not true for two players issuing verbal descriptions and marking off Drama Points. Tracking complex combat in role-playing games just cannot be done in real time.

While *7th Sea*[™] offers a rich tabletop method for settling fights, expecting a large group to wait for a GM to resolve swordplay with dice rolls is not conducive to a live game. Players are encouraged to act out the motions of a fight should they desire (and within the parameters of safety), but the actual combat is resolved with one Opposed Test. Players involved in combat are considered to be both attacking and defending during this Test.

Combat Tests add Finesse + Wits + 1 combat skill + any other granted bonuses. This is the only Test in the live system that adds two traits. Once totals are reached, players may then select to bid Drama Points in the same manner as any other Test. The winner of a combat check then decides if he is dealing damage.

Combat Ties

The attacker (challenger in the event of a fair duel) wins ties in combat; however, the winner also suffers a single wound.

Ranged Attacks

Ranged attacks are not contested rolls. The player who is shooting or throwing makes a Simple Test against a TN of the target's Wits × 2. This TN is given a +1 for every 10 paces between the shooter and the Target. The shooter will count paces. If the target feels that the shooter has taken extremely large and or generally silly extremes in his paces he may ask that a GM re-step the paces for a new pace total. The GM has final say in pace count. (*Note:* in a duel at 10 paces, each player has taken 10 paces, making the range 20 paces for each.)

Damage

When characters are injured in combat, they take damage. Thrown weapons deal 1 wound. Bows and crossbows inflict 2 wounds. Firearm damage is 3 wounds. Damage from hand to hand combat uses the following formula:

The Winner's Brawn — the Loser's Brawn (minimum 1 wound) + any Damage Bonuses from abilities.

Players and GMs should be careful to subtract the Loser's Brawn before adding the Damage bonuses for various abilities. For every 5 points by which a combat is won, the victor may add one wound to the total.

Wounds

Characters get hurt during games; it's part of the job when you are a hero. With augmented Traits, it is not fair to limit players to 2, 4, and 6 dramatic wounds. Instead, characters in the Live system suffer damage in the following order. *Note:* all wounds are cumulative. For example, suffering two ranks of wounds followed by an action that results in three ranks of Wounds places you at the fifth Wound.

First Wound: Flesh Wound with no further effect.

Second Wound: Nagging injury, All Skills are halved round-in-down.

Third Wound: Crippled, character loses use of skill points until treated.

Fourth Wound: Dramatic, character loses 1 rank of Resolve.

Fifth Wound: Character continues to lose ranks of Resolve. At zero, the character is unconscious and will remain so for 15 minutes of game time unless someone successfully uses a medical skill, which reduces it to five minutes. The TN is number of wounds to be healed + 1.

Note: Spending a Drama Point keeps the character conscious until he or she is wounded again or healed, but does not remove wounds.

Combat Example

Mercutio and Fortunato are ready to square off after Fortunato attacks the guard. Fortunato is the Acting player again so he declares that he will be using his Fencing 2 skill along with his Finesse 2 and Wits 1 for a total of 5. Mercutio is up to the task and declares proudly that his Fencing 1 skill, Finesse 2, and Wits 2 places him at a total of 5. Each player now considers how many Drama Points to spend and place them to bid. In this case, it is a good idea for each player to write the number on a scrap of paper and give it to the GM.

While the bid happens simultaneously, the GM asks for Mercutio's first. Mercutio, desperate to not fail his Prince has bid his remaining two Drama Points for a total of 7. Fortunato has bid 2 fearing a future need for a point and also has a total

of 7. Fortunato wins the fight but suffers 1 wound. Mercutio and Fortunato happen to have identical Brawns at rank 1 and there are no other special factors, so Mercutio suffers a wound as well. Fortunato is now clear to attempt to attack Prince Villanova if he still feels brave enough to do so.

Tabletop vs. Live Action Combat “Rounds”

Normally, in a tabletop game, combat continues for 10 rounds, with character participation determined by Initiative (and physical condition.) However, in a live action game, if players were to conduct combat in this manner, it would take all night. Therefore, combat is considered somewhat cumulative. Referring back to the previous example, if Mercutio wishes to attack Fortunato while Fortunato is walking towards Villanova, he may do so. However, players should not be permitted to continue combat simply because they didn't like the way the previous fight ended. The GM needs to keep a firm hand on this aspect of the game and permit continued combat only if it is appropriate to the overall action.

Brute Squads

Brute Squads may be operated by the GM or played by a group of players. Brutes carry a single rating rank used for all Tests and add 1 to the total for every two members in the squad. Damage to brutes remove one member of the squad for every wound dealt +1. Brutes are considered to have Brawn ranks of 1 for damage resolution.

Special Martial Skill Effects

Most martial skills grant the player no ability beyond using the weapons involved without penalty. Any attempt to use weapons with the offhand, for example, still results in a -1 to Combat Tests. However, certain Skills are useful for other effects.

Buckler grants a +1 to Combat Tests if you are the defender. Dirty Fighting deals one rank of wound even if you lose. Panzerhand, Pugilism, and Wrestling offer the user the option of knocking the loser of a combat out for 15 minutes of game time instead of dealing damage.

Note: Damage dealt by Pugilism and Wrestling is erased after 15 minutes of game time unless the character is unconscious.

Swordsman Schools

With the streamlined combat rules; certain abilities no longer seem to come into direct play, notably Swordsman Knacks. While Tagging, Lunge, and other Knacks may not directly affect combat, they are assumed to make up a portion of the combat in a manner that offsets one another. Swordsmen still gain advantages with every level of Mastery. Apprentice and Journeymen advantages have been standardized for convenience.

Exploit Weakness: Any player who is facing an opponent actively using a Swordsman school in which they have ranks may deduct their rank in that school from the opponent's combat total regardless of whether they are using the school. (A fencer using just his fencing skill but with 2 ranks of Aldana may reduce a defender's total by 2 if the defender declared he was using Aldana in the combat).

Apprentice Swordsmen: Suffer no penalty for use of weapons associated with their school regardless of off-hand or single-hand use. Additionally all Apprentice Swordsmen gain a +1 to Combat Tests.

Journeymen Swordsmen: Gain the ability to deal +1 damage when they win a combat. They deal a single wound to characters not using a Swordsman school if they lose combat as well.

Master Swordsmen: With over 60 Swordsman schools available, space prohibits including Mastery advantages for every school in this listing. Yet any character willing to devote the effort and points to reach the Master level deserves a unique ability. Schools from the *Player's Guide*™ and a few popular favorites follow.

Aldana masters gain additional Drama Points equal to their Wits at the start of every game.

Ambrogia masters reduce their opponents Combat Test Number by 2.

Bernoulli masters may demand a retest of the Combat Test before damage has been assessed.

Bogatyr masters gain a fear rating at rank 1.

Finnegan masters reduce any wounds taken by 2 (minimum 1).

Donovan masters may spend a Drama Point to deal wounds equal to what they receive in combat.

Eisenfaust masters may opt to either break the opponent's weapon or deal an extra 2 wound ranks.

Gallegos masters gain +2 to their Combat Test number.

Leegstra masters no longer deduct the loser's Brawn when totaling wounds.

MacDonald masters may voluntarily reduce their Combat Test total to add the same number of wounds.

Soldano masters lose only 1 Drama Point when they win Combat Tests rather than lose all points bid.

Valroux masters gain +1 Panache.

Villanova masters may take a wound to deal 2 additional wounds.

An Unfortunate Example

Fortunato has decided to attack Prince Villanova. He declares he will attack with Ambrogia Swordsman 2 + Finesse 2 + Wits 1 and add his Apprentice bonus for a combat total of 6. The Prince responds by declaring that he is defending with his Villanova Swordsman 3 Skill + Finesse 3+ Wits 2 along with his Apprentice bonus of 1 for a total of 9. Then the Prince declares that he will exploit Fortunato with his Ambrogia rank of 3 as well, taking Fortunato's total down to 3. When Drama Points are declared, Fortunato bids his remaining 2 Drama Points hoping to avoid adding wounds. His total is 5. Villanova needs to enforce his influence and bids 1 Drama Point so that he now has a total of 10.

Having lost, Fortunato deals no damage to the Prince. Villanova has a Brawn 2 and deals 1 wound +1 for his Swordsman Journeyman rank +1 for a difference of 5. Villanova's Master rank allows him to take a wound to add 2 more wounds for a total of 5 wounds. With the wound taken from his earlier fight, Fortunato has now lost his use of skills entirely, as well as his two ranks of Resolve, and now needs to spend Drama Points to stay conscious. Unfortunately, the Vodacce is out of Drama Points, and therefore at the Prince's mercy as he lies on the floor.

Experience in the Live System

Players participating in a live system campaign will want to improve their characters as in any role-playing game. Players receive one experience point just for showing up and playing for the evening. In addition, they should receive a second point for participating in a theme-appropriate outfit. (What is appropriate is subject to the GM's ruling.) Additional experience points (XP) are earned at the same level and rate as the Roll and Keep system for accomplishing tasks and resolving Backgrounds. At no time do Drama Points convert to XP. Costs to improve Skills, Traits, and other abilities have been adjusted to use the standard experience system for the live system.

Notes From the Design Team

The above rules were written to accommodate a live action game with 40 or more players in a setting with multiple GMs, in a one-time event that uses sorcery and combat found in Western Théah. With the large numbers, certain details can be amended for convenience or fairness. With smaller groups, a GM may very well wish to extend Skills to include individual Knacks or even return combat to a more complicated style. Those are decisions that any GM is free to make for his or her individual game. GMs who have not had the experience of dealing with large groups may be overwhelmed at the concept of handling such numbers as well. We recommend following a few simple tips.

Prepare in advance. Pre-generating characters is a lot of work but allows you to know the details of every character. Take time to review the plotline and rules in advance with your assistant GMs.

There can never be too many assistant GMs. You need people to handle multiple events going on in the room. You also need people to play the NPCs who may arrive on the scene.

Leave the glory for the players. A high-profile NPC (like Giovanni Villanova) can easily dominate a game. GMs must exercise caution to keep the result of events in the hands of the players and use the NPCs to advance the plot as needed.

Don't over-plan. As a GM, you know how players at a table-top game can wreak havoc with your storyline. With a large number of players in a live action game — not all of whom are under your watchful eye at all times — the results can spin out of control. If you set up too many goals for each player in the live action game, nothing gets accomplished. Limit the storyline to one or two goals per character and have them working in groups.

Stay in motion! This is essential for the GM and his staff. If you stand still, a cluster will form around you and players will stop interacting with each other (and stop role-playing) to assail you with questions.

When asked if a player can or cannot do something, always allow the attempt and adjust the TN accordingly.

When in doubt about the result of an action, ask yourself what would be the most entertaining result for the players.

A Few Rules for All Involved

The following rules should be in effect throughout the game; some are for fun, some are for safety.

Physical safety of the players is first priority. No one should ever physically strike, attack or threaten another player. This is a game, not a fight.

Live system *7th Sea*™ games do not require actual weapons. Many public venues forbid them. If the game is being held in a place that allows them, it is still a good idea to restrict them to plastic or soft materials to decrease the potential for physical harm.

Contact between players should be done tastefully and within the limits of acceptable social interaction. Every player has the right to refuse physical contact for any reason.

Character actions do not reflect player actions. While seduction and game-related threats are a part of *7th Sea*™ character life, this happens between characters and should not extend to the player. If a player expresses discomfort with another player's "attentions," address the issue immediately by taking the aggressive player aside and asking him or her to tone it down.

Unless the instructions in a character's write-up indicate that killing or some reputation-destroying action is required, such in-game behavior is not acceptable and should be dealt with immediately.

If a player's mood, mental state, or level of sobriety is such that he or she will be more of a distraction than a contributing participant, encourage them to either sit out the game or withdraw. Because LARPs tend to occur in the evening, GMs should be alert to the players' general state of inebriation.

Likewise, as a courtesy to fellow players, participants should be encouraged to ensure that their general physical and dental hygiene is conducive to social interaction.

When a Test is resolved, a second Test against the same target to yield a better result is not permitted. Follow-up Tests may occur the way another round of combat would, but "rerolls" are not permitted.

The point of the game is to have fun. If anything presented in this system fails to allow the players as a group to enjoy themselves, please alter it for your group. Enjoy yourselves and have a great session!

Bombs

While the Rilasciare are inordinately fond of bombs, hotel security is not. If you are including a bomb in your scenario, add a note on everyone's character sheet that they should use alternate words like "device" or some other euphemism. Shouting "Bomb!" (or "Fire!") could result in the game being shut down quickly and the possibility of losing access to that site in the future.

Denouement

End the game at 1 minute times the number of players before you must vacate the area so that everyone can gather and give a 45-second "synopsis" of who they are and what their mission was. It is always amazing, and enjoyable, to see the stunned looks on other players' faces when they realized that the person they were flirting with was actually sent to relieve them of their precious goods!

Prizes

The GMs may wish to give prizes for the best role-playing, the funniest action, etc. You may also want to ask players to cast a ballot (index cards work very well) for the person they thought was the best role-player. Prizes can be anything from a “scroll” commemorating the event to a little trophy, a sourcebook, or a really great prop (like a deck of tarot cards or a good piece of costume jewelry.)

Giovanni Villanova's Grand Ball

GMs running this LARP adventure will discover that the event operates better as they increase the number of assistant GMs. As more players are added, the use of additional GMs will permit the lead GM to focus on the overall plotline. The Grand Ball has a series of intertwined plot threads to entertain the players for the evening. It is also recommended that one assistant be assigned the sole task of playing Villanova for the evening. The Prince will be sought out by many of the players and needs to be aware of the ramifications of his actions; this player also needs to be experienced enough to turn the focus back onto the player and away from himself.

An assistant GM also needs to assume the brief role of Lord Baltusrol before his demise this evening. Other GMs can split duty by dividing the play area or working with specific secret societies. If at all possible, a minimum of three assistant GMs should be employed for this event.



The Story

Tonight's intrigue features an event that Giovanni Villanova both anticipates and dreads: hosting the annual grand ball at his Dionna estate. The evening traditionally gives the Prince an opportunity to twist the plots of his rivals, reward a few loyal agents, and reinforce his image as the most powerful man in Vodacce. Several invited guests have reasons to approach the Prince about various needs. Additionally, there are a number of party crashers who have a great desire to appear to fit in, for they know well what the Lord's Hands do to those without invitations.

The Grand Ball begins with a single hard point, then allows the players to make their way around the event to resolve their personal soft point goals for the night. The following plot points were designed for approximately 60 players but can run well for many more if needed and be trimmed for fewer players easily. Plots are divided into the interests of the various secret societies of Théah and other independent factions. The GM and assistant GMs should take the time to personalize these for the individual characters while trimming events and goals for fewer players.

Hard Point: The Death of Lord Baltrusól

Lord Baltrusól is a Castillian Don burdened with the misfortune of being well traveled. Through the sheer coincidence of bad timing, Baltrusól has witnessed the kidnapping of Prince Javier, Remy du Montaigne disposing of Cardinal d'Argeneau, and the suicide of the Emperor. He is certain that various agents are after him to assure that he will never reveal what he knows. In desperation, he has turned to Prince Villanova for sanctuary. The Vodacce Prince is the one man in power whom he has never actually witnessed committing a crime. Villanova is naturally suspicious of the man he assumes to be part of a powerful group of Théan do-gooders, and has ordered his men to poison Don Baltrusól at the first opportunity, then find a convenient enemy to take the blame before the ball ends. (As noted above, it is highly recommended Lord Baltrusól be played by an assistant GM who can then interpret rules after his “death” and offer information to investigators about his remains.)

Despite the efforts of the players, Lord Baltrusól will die just after an early conversation with Prince Villanova, leaving behind the mystery of what he knew and who actually killed him. Agents from every society have reason to question Baltrusól, and solving his murder should be a priority for the players. With application of the right questions and skills, players should be able to discern the method of murder (poisoning), which type of poison was used (Carmock root) and how it was applied (slipped into his drink). To avoid giving a player pre-game knowledge, the identity of the actual murderer is left to the GM's discretion, to be determined the day of the event (Villanova, of course, is far too clever to do the dirty work himself).

Secret Societies – Secret Agendas

The goals of the players include objectives for the Secret Societies and a handful of independent factions. It is not necessary for every member of every Society to pursue all of these goals but every member should have a specific interest in at least one of these events. Some characters may not know the names of their allies and may need to first make contact during the course of the Grand Ball.

The Rilasciare

Dionna is the home of a very active cell of the Freeman's League. Every year, the League sets its sights on a member of the Villanova bureaucracy to ridicule and hopefully prove unfit for leadership. Villanova's pride has been helpful since he rarely forgives the targets for allowing someone to ridicule them. This year, several members of the League have found a method to gain entry into the ball and attempt the biggest prank in their history against the most dangerous target alive. When Valentina Villanova and Juliette escaped Dionna last year, the Freeman noticed a flaw developing in the Prince's agendas: his obsession with finding his wife and courtesan caused him to ignore small details at home. In addition, the Prince has lost trust in his still-loyal servants, save a few key staff members. This has opened an opportunity to infiltrate his inner circle and attempt to plant an imposter in the Grand Ball. It has taken nine months of planning and the co-operation of several cells across Théah but the Freeman are ready to try.

The Freeman have made contact with a daring Glamour mage who has agreed to assist in their plan by creating a series of wards around a man to make him believe he is Giovanni Villanova. The agent of choice recently joined the Rilasciare and was suspected of possibly serving as an agent of either Elaine's Knights or the Vendel Guilds. He was to be executed but this event offered an opportunity to see just how loyal the man was. The wards should fool even the scrying of a Fate Witch if needed.

A more dangerous method has been applied with the second double. He is an actor from Avalon looking to prove his talent by posing as the Prince. The actor has fallen in love with the tenets of the Rilasciare and acts as if he truly believes in their cause. Through sheer luck, the Rilasciare have also stumbled on a dull-witted, stubborn Vodacce man who coincidentally looks identical to Giovanni Villanova. The man was just dull enough to be manipulated into place and convinced that it would be incredibly amusing to pose as Villanova for the evening. If things go well, the Rilasciare could even use one of them as a more "permanent" replacement.

Additionally, an agent of the Rilasciare in attendance has found on a few pages of an old notebook. He managed to duplicate the pages and assumes there is a market for them. Selling the forgeries, or even the originals, could garner a nice cash bonus for the cell. Keeping the pages could stop another faction from something as well. No matter what or how the Rilasciare choose to use the items, they make a wonderful bargaining chip for the cell.

Finally, word has reached the Freeman that a Castillian nobleman named Baltrusól is rumored to be in attendance tonight. He may have been involved in the abduction of Prince Javier, a friend to the Rilasciare. If possible, the Freeman have been asked to abduct the nobleman and find out what happened to the Castillian prince.

Sophia's Daughters

The Daughters have several tasks to accomplish before the night is out. Many are important; a few are just acts of opportunity. The society is also dealing with another problem as its attendees have never met one another before and have no idea about each other's identities.

The first objective is also one of the more common problems the Daughters deal with. Since the escape of Valentina Villanova, the Prince has retained a distant cousin named Carla to handle his Sorte needs. Unfortunately, Carla lacks the skill and talent that his wife Valentina wielded, which leads Villanova to treat her with a decided lack of respect. The Daughters are concerned that if anything embarrassing were to happen to the Prince, he would blame Carla for her failure to prevent it. She can be reached through a contact named Annabella who is trying to plan an escape at an appropriate opportunity near the end of the evening.

The Daughters also have an eye out for a Surneth artifact of vast power known as the "Eye of the Wind." It is a Domae stone set into a piece of jewelry and recently stolen from agents of the Daughters. A scoria has foreseen that it will resurface at tonight's event so the Daughters need to be prepared to recover it through theft, negotiation, or good old-fashioned socialization. They do not know what it does or how to activate it, but each agent has a solid enough description to recognize the item on sight.

The Order is monitoring Lord Baltrusól so that they can watch those around him. Powerful members in the Order are aware that his mere presence often causes catastrophe so they wish to see if he is the cause or simply drawn to these events.

Finally, the Daughters have an agent in the Invisible College to help identify the authenticity of a Franzini notebook they hope to purchase. This notebook contains a specific page of information that the Daughters would prefer did not reach the College. They have made a special effort to create a duplicate journal that lacks this key page in hopes of switching the document.

Invisible College

The Invisible College has one official mission for the evening: find the person selling Franzini's notebooks. A fellow member in Kirk has begun research on a new method of ship propulsion involving Domae stones but needs to review parts of Franzini's inventions for a manner of application. The plans could reduce his research by a decade or more. The current owner has sent a very vague message through his friend, Lord Baltrusól, suggesting the availability of the item merely on the virtues of obtaining scientific illustrations. The noble has ties to Cardinal Esteban Verdugo, so it could be dangerous to even approach the man: the whole invitation could be an Inquisition trap. The nobleman seems to have no idea about the particular applications so an over-eager group of negotiators might drive the price to an overwhelming limit.

The larger problem will be identifying the noble owner after Baltrusól's death without drawing the attention of all the other guests. Many people would have an interest in a Franzini notebook and Villanova would love to own a fleet of ships that could move without use of oars or sails. If anyone outside the College got word of what they are looking for, it could be disastrous. On a related issue, there is also a powerful Domae stone at the ball tonight called the "Eye of the Wind." It would give the scientists in Kirk the item they need to perform their research if it could be recovered.

Another big problem is that certain members of the Order are not interested in the success of the mission. Ramon Batista is actually an agent of the Rilasciare who has infiltrated the College and does not want the scientists to succeed tonight. He is interested in watching the College throw its money away and possibly even in embarrassing the members in attendance tonight in a very public way just for his personal amusement. Another agent serves the Sophia's Daughters and is intent on switching the Franzini notebook with a forgery.

The Rose and Cross

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are looking for a little bit of recognition in Vodacce. It has become apparent that the Order needs a publicly-acknowledged chapterhouse in that country. Negotiations with Prince Lucani were going well until his recent assassination. Prince Bernoulli refuses to work with the group due to their ties to Kirk, and Prince Mondavi is a less than desirable choice after his orchestration of the Lucani's assassination. This has left the Order in the unenviable position of dealing with either Prince Falisci or Prince Villanova.

Tonight offers an opportunity to encourage Villanova to support a chapterhouse on the mainland of Vodacce. The Order's representatives are to negotiate with the Prince, should they gain his ear for a moment, about allowing the Knights to build a home in his territory. Under no circumstances are they to offer him patronage, accept any gifts from the man, or incur any debt to the Prince. He is dangerous enough without being owed any special favors.

The Knights are also looking for an agent who has been missing beyond a reasonable amount of time. He was working as a spy within the Rilasciare but failed to check in several times over the last month. While the Order does not wish to endanger him by blowing his cover, it would be useful to make quiet contact with the agent and offer assistance as well as returning any information to his superiors.

As always, the Rose and Cross has a few patrons in attendance as well. It goes without saying that their safety, as well as that of all the guests, will be the responsibility of the Knights in attendance. This includes a patron named Lord Baltrusól. After his death, the Rose and Cross should be seriously involved in the investigation into his murder. Depending on the actions of those agents working directly for Villanova, the results of their investigation could lead in many directions.

The Explorer's Society

The Explorers have a couple of important tasks to complete before the night ends. Foremost is the negotiation for the release of two members whom Villanova is holding for "suspicious activity." When Geoffrey Selby and Jelena refused to present the entirety of their findings to the Prince, he had them arrested. This suggests there may be a Villanova spy in the midst of the Explorer contingent. Nonetheless, the two members are far too important to leave to rot in a prison cell on Dionna. Lord Baltrusól was in attendance as a guest of the Explorer's and was supposed to approach the Prince about the prisoners' release. His death will leave the rest of the team with many questions.

The second mission for the group is to acquire a trinket from Villanova that serves as a key in the Aviary. This Thalusi key will open a recently discovered portal that the Prince's diggers somehow overlooked. The society has fashioned a faux version to switch with the real item, which the Prince

carries on his person, if such a swap could be made without detection. The problem is that if Villanova realizes he has something the Explorers want, he will want to know why they want it so badly. Once he does, he will simply deny all Explorer access to the Aviary while his men loot the new area. Unfortunately, some eager cutpurse has stolen the copy at the party. Now the Explorers need to find the copy or figure out some other way to steal the item from their host of the evening.

If any member of the Explorers overhears a discussion about the "Eye of the Wind," it will be easy to figure out that this is the missing key to a series of items the Society has already acquired. While not a primary mission for the night it can easily become a mission of opportunity.

Die Kreuzritter

As usual, the members of die Kreuzritter are on a mission of life and death. A trail of rumors has followed several nobles from various nations who fled Montaigne in the wake of the Revolution... rumors of safety purchased with a most foul and blasphemous currency — the preserved heart of Cardinal d'Argeneau!

While Villanova is a devout Vaticine, his reputation for cruelty and his public disgust for the Cardinal of an excommunicated nation has fueled these rumors to be valid enough to investigate. Witnesses have even recently described a heart resting in a jar on a shelf in Villanova's throne room. Needless to say, die Kreuzritter would love to find a witness to the murder of the Cardinal, such as Lord Baltrusól. Any person who could bring a heart to Vodacce would fit the bill quite nicely as well. Those involved are rumored to be wearing cameos given to them by Empereur Léon himself in gratitude for killing the Cardinal.

The appearance of the Thalusi key has equally perplexed the Black Crosses. They knew about the locked entrance in the Aviary and had helped hide it from Villanova's diggers, executing the two who stumbled on it before word got out. There had been no evidence that the key had ever been on site. Discovery that the Explorers have found the key, realized its use, and are actively seeking it from Villanova does not bode well for mankind. The Order would prefer to steal the key for themselves and toss it into a very deep, dark, bottomless hole.

While the Eye of the Wind looks to be a very impressive artifact, the Knights know nothing about it. If they discover its presence, capturing it would be nice but it is not on the "to do" list for the evening.

The Pirates

A pair of pirate factions are at work tonight. The pirates of the ship known as the Blood Wind are central to many events tonight. First mate Karlina Loggerheim has stolen an item from her captain she hopes to sell at the grand ball: a Sryneth artifact known as "The Eye of the Wind." She figures she can then retire to the life of moneyed gentry instead of wasting her years on the high seas. Her captain, Juan Zedeña, has other ideas and chased Karlina to the Grand Ball to recover the item and sell it himself. Juan owes Karlina his life many times over, so he cannot bring himself to kill her for it and would be happy to cut her in for a share if she truly wants to retire.

There is a surprise in store for Juan tonight as well. His sister, whom he believes dead, is in attendance as an agent of die Kreuzritter. Naturally, if he recognizes her, she may be forced to send him to an unpleasant end.



Captain Rawleigh's crew sails for the Brotherhood of the Coast — acting under the orders of Allende to capture Zedeña if possible, steal his trinket if not, and generally ruin the day of the crew of the *Blood Wind* who have been a thorn in the side of the Brotherhood for the past few months. Additionally, Allende has asked Rawleigh to keep an eye out for a man calling himself Ramon Batista. All the Captain knows is that the Brotherhood of the Coast owes the man a favor.

The Rest

The other guests are involved in a tangled web of intrigue, plotting, mistaken (or stolen) identity, romance, commerce — everything one expects in a swashbuckling world like Théah.

Props

This event requires a small number of items to add to the festivities. If possible, physical props can be procured from costume jewelry and small bits of decorative flotsam that tend to gather about one's home. If this is not possible or awkward for your location, simple note cards featuring written descriptions are the easiest option.

Poisons

Various characters operating with the Rilasciare, Sophia's Daughters, Lord's Hand, and Die Kreuzritter should be issued poison vials of three types.

Carmock Root (Resolve Check 4) will incapacitate a player for a half-hour of play time if ingested. (Lord Baltrusól died from a concentrated form of this poison in his beverage.)

The Extract (Resolve Check 5) renders a person unconscious (out of gameplay) for fifteen minutes real time. This item was issued to the member of the Invisible College seeking sorcerous blood.

Dr. Kish's Remedy (Resolve Check 3) This syrup has an identical effect to Carmock Root but has been purchased with the belief it will kill instantly. A character of the GM's choice has bought this with the intent of killing Prince Villanova.

The Eye of the Wind

Carried by Karlina Loggerheim, the eye is a Domae Stone set into a necklace. Its actual powers require the owner to be in constant contact for a lunar cycle to attune to it. No one will have the time to do so during this ball. Nonetheless, it is an allegedly powerful Syrath item that many men would kill to gain or hide.

The Thalusiai Key and the Forgery

The Thalusiai Key opens a portal in the Aviary dig outside of Dionna. The original is in the Prince's possession. The Explorer's Society created a duplicate forgery to attempt to replace it if they are unable to successfully negotiate with the Prince.

Franzini's Notebook and Forgery

Written hundreds of years ago, this scientific sketchbook contains a variety of scientific and artistic renderings that fascinate scientists and hold dark secrets of lost knowledge. The original is with Lord Pavillion d'Aur. The forgery is in the hands of a Sophia's Daughter member posing as a member of the Invisible College.

Six Loose "Art" Pages

A few light-fingered guests have gotten their hands on some pages of the Franzini Notebook. At least one member of the Rilasciare has two of the pages and has worked feverishly on creating a pair of quick but good forgeries.

Letters of Credit

Every Society has one patron member in attendance who has brought along a Letter of Credit good for around 10,000 senators to negotiate purchases, release prisoners, or buy off witnesses. (It never hurts to have money.) Groups attending the ball with the intent of purchasing an item may have brought along more at the GM's discretion. Note: the equivalent in guilders is 1 senator = 1/3 Guilder, but because the event occurs in Vodacce, anyone flashing Guilders around had better be ready to answer to the Prince.

Miscellaneous

GMs are encouraged to include as many other props as they wish, within the constraints of their budget and time.

Character "Bios"

Note: When preparing hard-copy character sheets for a LARP, it is customary to include the stats, a general background about the situation as it relates to the character, specifics about the character, and a reminder about his or her mission. There will be some repetition in the background section because several characters may know the same information, especially if they belong to the same Secret Society.

Some GMs staple the pages together and give them out at random as players show up, while others ask players what type or nationality they prefer, and may make a more elaborate presentation of the material in folders or large envelopes. In any event, information should be presented in a very simple and legible format so that the player understands enough about the character to jump right into play.

The bios presented below include stats for this particular LARP system. A GM may wish to use a different system for the LARP or may use these characters and the storyline for a regular tabletop game in the original *7th Sea*™ system, the *d20 System*™ or some other system used for swashbuckling gaming. You can add or remove characters as needed, depending on the number of players or preference for certain Societies. *Please note that this LARP system is presented as an example of a tested system and should not be construed as the sole or "official" system for such games.*

Cast of Characters

EXPLORER'S SOCIETY

Adrian MacElvie (Highland Marches)
Paulina diMarco (Vodacce)
Eduardo Caruso (Vodacce)
Otto Leibwächter (Eisen)
Denis du Chenne de Gloyure (Montaigne)
Reinhardt Krugerann (Eisen)

RILASCIARE

Beatrice Conoti (Vodacce)
Maximilian Robynson (Avalon)
Erman Wörrse (Eisen)
Cagliari (Vodacce)
Fortunato Renallo (Vodacce)
Eva Grüber (Eisen)
Raphael Castiglioni (Vodacce)
Ramon Batista (Castille)

ROSE AND CROSS

Everrel Morrisey (Avalon)
Mystral d'Abaer du Crieux (Montaigne)
Gatien Cuvere (Vendel)
Gavril Androsov (Ussura)
Dieter Wolfsberger (Eisen)
Searen Renquist (Vendel)

INVISIBLE COLLEGE

Antonio Messucci (Vodacce)
Vito Messucci (Vodacce)
Elena Morinova (Ussura)
Hans Peterizen (Vendel)
Elise du Pannenoir

DIE KREUZRITTER

Albrecht von Schultheis (Eisen)
Kevin O'Halligan (Inish)
Maria Dominguez (Castille)
Ferenzo Lota (Vodacce)
Gunther Kunze (Eisen)

SOPHIA'S DAUGHTERS

Sabrina (Vodacce)
Wilhelmina Tobler (Eisen)
Delizia Silvestri della Lucani (Vodacce)
Leita Kordekova (Ussura)
Françoise du Paix (Montaigne)
Annabella Cacace (Vodacce)

PIRATES

Juan Zedeña (Castille) – *Blood Wind*
Egers (Vendel) – *Blood Wind*
Lockheart (Avalon) – *Blood Wind*
Karlina Loggerheim (Eisen) – *Blood Wind*
Wynn Rawleigh (Avalon) – *Merry Widow*
Robin Hoyne (Avalon) – *Merry Widow*
Cincos de Verro (Avalon) – *Merry Widow*

VILLANOVA'S HOUSEHOLD

Leonardo Mancuso (Vodacce)
Arrigo Scaramond (Vodacce)
Fredo (Vodacce)
Carla Lucini della Villanova (Vodacce)
Giovanni Villanova (Vodacce)

MISCELLANEOUS (UNALIGNED)

Laurent Pavillion d'Aur (Montaigne)
Pol Kish (Vendel)
Nicolo Vitale (Vodacce)
Nikolas "Nikita" Vulcovic (Ussura)
Magdalena Baltassari (Vodacce)
Harald Jorvus (Vendel)
Camille Valroux du Martise (Montaigne)
Prosper Valroux du Martise (Montaigne)

Individual Character Bios

Adrian MacElvie

Nationality: Avalon/Highland Marches
Secret Society: Explorer's Society
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Scholar 2, Spy 2, Syrneath Lore 3
Combat: Fencing 1
Languages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a series of tunnels were found on Villanova's land and the Society was allowed to study them but only after the Prince's men had been through them. Fortunately, they overlooked a locked hatch of Thalusai design that leads somewhere as yet unexplored.

A member of the Explorer's Society for almost 10 years, you are here in an official capacity. Villanova holds two members of your organization captive, probably as leverage to gain information about any new discoveries within the Aviary excavation. You need to keep the recent discovery of a new hatch from him and rescue your fellow members if you cannot negotiate their release.

Additionally, Villanova is allegedly in possession of an artifact (a key perhaps) that will open the hatch although he is unaware of its use. The item is rumored to be with him at all times because he cannot ensure its safety out of his sight. If at all possible, you must recover this artifact as well. You are relatively certain that it's at the party somewhere, possibly being worn as jewelry. You brought what you believe is a viable fake copy of the key, which you hoped to switch with the real item, but it vanished from your pocket just after you arrived.

MISSION

Free your compatriots and find the missing copy of the key, swap it with the real key, and make a quiet exit from the party. If you fail, you may end up alongside your fellow captives... or worse.

Paulina diMarco

Nationality: Vodacce
Secret Society: Explorer's Society
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Courtier 2, Criminal 1, Doctor 1
Combat: Fencing 2
Languages: Avalon (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce
Item: Cameo

BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a series of tunnels were found on Villanova lands and the Society was allowed to study them but only after the Prince's men had been through them. Fortunately, they overlooked a locked hatch of Thalusai design that leads somewhere as yet unexplored.

You and your fellow Explorers were reluctant to accept the Prince's invitation to attend the annual Grand Ball because Villanova holds two members of your organization captive, probably as leverage to gain information about any new discoveries within the Aviary excavation. You need to keep the recent discovery of a new hatch from him and rescue your fellow members if you cannot negotiate their release.

Additionally, Villanova is allegedly in possession of an artifact (a key perhaps) that will open the hatch although he is unaware of its use. The item is rumored to be with him at all times because he cannot ensure its safety out of his sight. If at all possible, you must recover this artifact as well. You are relatively certain that it's at the party somewhere, possibly being worn as jewelry. You brought what you believe is a viable fake copy of the key, which you hoped to switch with the real item, but it vanished from your pocket just after you arrived. A member of the Explorer's Society for just over five years, you are here as Adrian MacElvie's assistant. He is looking for a Thalusai key to open the portal in the Aviary, but you are also here for a more personal reason. You are in love with Geoffrey Selby, one of the Explorers whom Villanova is holding hostage.

Before you parted, he gave you a cameo he received from Empereur Léon himself to remember your time together in Charouse before the Revolution. You understand the importance of recovering the key, but it's more important to you that Geoffrey is out of Villanova's hands. If it meant selling out your friends, you will probably hesitate, but almost anything else is fair game if it means rescuing your true love. You know Adrian would not approve of such behavior, which is why you do not intend to share your plans with him.

MISSION

Free your compatriots (especially your lover Geoffrey), find the missing copy of the key, swap it with the real key, and make a quiet exit from the party. If you fail, you may end up alongside your fellow captives... or worse.

Eduardo Caruso

Nationality: Vodacce
Secret Society: Explorer's Society
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1
Skills: Criminal 2, Spy 2, Servant 3
Combat: Knife 2
Languages: Castillian, Eisen (R/W), Teodoran (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a series of tunnels were found on Villanova lands and the Society was allowed to study them but only after the Prince's men had been through them. Fortunately, they overlooked a locked hatch of Thalusai design that leads somewhere as yet unexplored.

You and your fellow Explorers were reluctant to accept the Prince's invitation to attend the annual Grand Ball because Villanova holds two members of your organization captive, probably as leverage to gain information about any new discoveries within the Aviary excavation. You need to keep the recent discovery of a new hatch from him and rescue your fellow members if you cannot negotiate their release.

Additionally, Villanova is allegedly in possession of an artifact (a key perhaps) that will open the hatch although he is unaware of its use. The item is rumored to be with him at all times because he cannot ensure its safety out of his sight. If at all possible, you must recover this artifact as well. You are relatively certain that it's at the party somewhere, possibly being worn as jewelry. You brought what you believe is a viable fake copy of the key, which you hoped to switch with the real item, but it vanished from your pocket just after you arrived.

A member of the Explorer's Society for two years, you are actually less of a member and more of ... well ... a spy. You work for Prince Villanova and report anything interesting through an intermediary named Sorscha. You know that tonight's party will be an excellent opportunity to gather information but you should not, under any circumstances, reveal yourself as a member of the society. Too much effort was made to place you within the Explorers and you would not want Prince Villanova to be displeased with your work.

MISSION

Find out as much as you can about what the Explorer's Society is doing with the Aviary — and anything else you can learn — without being revealed as the Prince's spy.

Otto Leibwächter

Nationality: Eisen
Secret Society: Explorer's Society
Traits: Brawn 3, Finesse 3, Wits 1, Resolve 3, Panache 1
Skills: Bodyguard 3, Servant 3, Wrestling 2
Combat: Heavy Weapons 2
Languages: Eisen, Vodacce, Ussuran

BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a series of tunnels were found on Villanova lands and the Society was allowed to study them but only after the Prince's men had been through them. Fortunately, they overlooked a locked hatch of Thalusiai design that leads somewhere as yet unexplored.

You and your fellow Explorers were reluctant to accept the Prince's invitation to attend the annual Grand Ball because Villanova holds two members of your organization captive, probably as leverage to gain information about any new discoveries within the Aviary excavation. You need to keep the recent discovery of a new hatch from him and rescue your fellow members if you cannot negotiate their release.

Additionally, Villanova is allegedly in possession of an artifact (a key perhaps) that will open the hatch although he is unaware of its use. The item is rumored to be with him at all times because he cannot insure its safety out of his sight. If at all possible, you must recover this artifact as well. You are relatively certain that it's at the party somewhere, possibly being worn as jewelry. You brought what you believe is a viable fake copy of the key, which you hoped to switch with the real item, but it vanished from your pocket just after you arrived

You were working as a servant for a Vodacce family that decided to use you as entertainment in their despicable blood sports. You managed to survive and even win on occasion. When the family fell into financial ruin, you were left without a home or immediate job opportunities, but a lot of combat training. The local Swordsman's Guild declared you too "undisciplined" to train. Eventually, you met Adrian MacElvie who recruited you to serve as his shield man. Your duty is to protect your fellow Explorers from harm, plain and simple. If that means giving up your life, you are prepared to do so but only if things get so far out of hand there is no other solution. After all, it would be nice to get a chance to see your homeland again.

You trust your boss, Adrian, but have a soft spot in your heart for Paulina diMarco. You want her to be happy even if it means saving that pathetic weakling Geoffrey Selby from Villanova's clutches.

MISSION

Protect the members of the Explorers' Society attending Villanova's party, especially Paulina. Try to avoid getting into a fight.

Denis du Chenne de Gloyure

Nationality: Montaigne
Secret Society: Explorer's Society
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 3
Skills: Archaeologist 2, Courtier 3, Spy 1
Combat: Swordsman (Valroux) 2
Languages: Avalon, Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel, Vodacce
Item: A vial of Carmock Root syrup

BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a series of tunnels were found on Villanova lands and the Society was allowed to study them but only after the Prince's men had been through them. Fortunately, they overlooked a locked hatch of Thalusiai design that leads somewhere as yet unexplored.

You and your fellow Explorers were reluctant to accept the Prince's invitation to attend the annual Grand Ball because Villanova holds two members of your organization captive, probably as leverage to gain information about any new discoveries within the Aviary excavation. You need to keep the recent discovery of a new hatch from him and rescue your fellow members if you cannot negotiate their release.

Additionally, Villanova is allegedly in possession of an artifact (a key perhaps) that will open the hatch although he is unaware of its use. The item is rumored to be with him at all times because he cannot ensure its safety out of his sight. If at all possible, you must recover this artifact as well. You are relatively certain that it's at the party somewhere, possibly being worn as jewelry. You brought what you believe is a viable fake copy of the key, which you hoped to switch with the real item, but it vanished from your pocket just after you arrived

You are the fourth son of a Montaigne nobleman and thus were handed off from household to household as a youth. You joined the Explorer's Society 6 years ago and have worked with Adrian MacElvie on several occasions. He is a good and competent man but the Society would be better served with you leading this group. You are here to make sure MacElvie does not foul up any negotiations for the release of your fellow Explorers.

You have a second agenda as well. One of tonight's guests is Lord Baltrusól who has been a thorn in your family's side for many a year. Taking a cue from your Vodacce hosts, you have decided to poison him. You arrived with half a vial of distilled Carmock Root syrup, which kills instantly but only if ingested within a few moments of leaving the vial. If you can achieve this assassination, you are certain that it will vault you to the top of the ranks within the Society. If you fail, you can always blame someone else. If you are actually caught in the act, it probably means disgrace for the Society. Oh yes, and your death.

MISSION

An assassination, some subtle wreaking of havoc, maintaining your anonymity. The usual.

Beatrice Conoti

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Courtesan 2, Criminal 2, Courtier 2

Combat: Fencing 1

Languages: Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

The Dionna cell of the Rilasciare has a unique opportunity at tonight's Grand Ball — an opportunity to play a prank on the Prince himself! While risky, it might, even if unsuccessful, help destabilize the entire Villanova rule.

You and your fellow Freemen have taken Villanova's recent distraction with his wife's disappearance to scour Théah for several men who look like the Prince. A few are natural look-a-likes, while others needed some Glamour placed on them to complete the "transformation." Tonight's mission is to convince other important guests that one of these men is, in fact, the real Villanova and that the real Prince is actually an impostor. It should be amusing at the very least.

Regardless of what else transpires, your first goal is to survive to taunt again. Avoid getting caught participating in this charade, as the true Prince may not see the humor in your efforts. Then again, you *might* be able to fast-talk your way out of it by claiming to have done him a favor by, um, testing his security systems or ah, showing him that no one could possibly imitate him. Yeah that sounds good...

As head of the local Rilasciare cell, you must make certain tonight's mission goes off without a hitch. Losing a member or two is actually acceptable so long as they are not questioned before they die. Making Villanova look like a fool is good, making others believe your actors *are* Villanova is even better. To add to the matter, you just discovered that the insufferable Camille Valroux du Martise will be attending tonight's Ball. The two of you have crossed paths before and you find her attitude quite offensive. If you could publicly embarrass her as well (and prove her to be the liar you know she is), it would make tonight that much sweeter.

If you could actually replace the Prince permanently, it may shut up the Free Thinkers in Charouse who don't think the Vodacce Rilasciare have contributed anything to the organization except its name.

MISSION

Humiliate Villanova, upset his plans with imposters, expose Camille (A comtesse? Oh please!), and survive to taunt another day.

Maximilian Robynson

Nationality: Avalon

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Skills: Bard 3, Criminal 2, Performer 3

Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 1

Languages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian, Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

The Dionna cell of the Rilasciare has a unique opportunity at tonight's Grand Ball — an opportunity to play a prank on the Prince himself! While risky, it might, even if unsuccessful, help destabilize the entire Villanova rule.

You and your fellow Freemen have taken Villanova's recent distraction with his wife's disappearance to scour Théah for several men who look like the Prince. A few are natural look-a-likes, while others needed some Glamour placed on them to complete the "transformation." Tonight's mission is to convince other important guests that one of these men is, in fact, the real Villanova and that the real Prince is actually an impostor. It should be amusing at the very least.

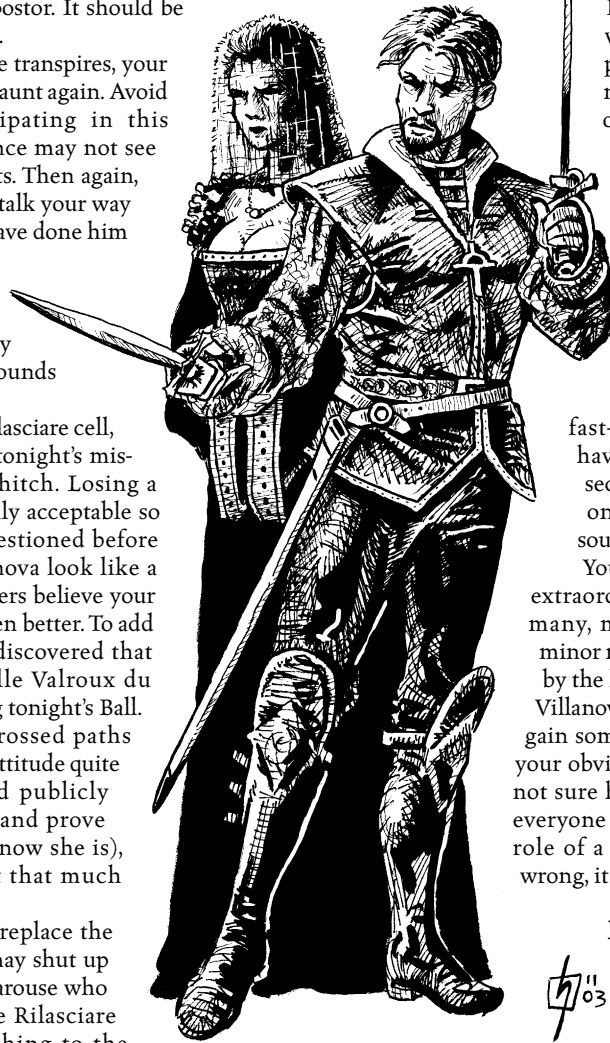
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You are a Rilasciare cell member and actor extraordinaire. You have worked in Avalon for many, many years and impersonated various minor nobles. Recently, however, you were hired by the local cell to impersonate Prince Giovanni Villanova — in his own home! You would love to gain some recognition for this performance and your obviously incredible acting skill but you are not sure how to go about that and still convince everyone that you are the true prince. This is the role of a lifetime! Of course, if anything goes wrong, it may very well be the last role of your life.

MISSION

Impersonate Prince Giovanni Villanova so brilliantly that you are showered with praise and Guilders. Barring that, try not to get killed. And under no circumstances should you reveal the

Rilasciare's hands in all this!



7/03

Erman Wörrse

Nationality: Eisen

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Skills: Artist 3, Firearms 1, Forger 3, Merchant 2, Spy 2

Languages: Eisen (R/W), Vendel, Vodacce

Item: Two pages of Franzini's Notebook and two forged pages

BACKGROUND

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You recently came to Vodacce after your cell in Eisen was destroyed. You have always been a man who prepares, however, so you have plenty of false travel papers prepared in advance. Forgery comes easy to you and it was your duty to create the invitations the Rilasciare are using to get into the Grand Ball tonight. Your friend and ally Eva Grüber came to you a few days ago with some pages of an old notebook she had stolen from a man who had just arrived in the city. The man was claiming he would sell them at tonight's ball. You have made a set of not quite exact duplicates and brought them along to night to sell if you can find the buyer. The money could be the start of rebuilding your home cell, at the very least.

MISSION

Sell the pages for as much money as you can and under no circumstances should you reveal anything about the Rilasciare!

Fortunato Renallo

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Courtier 1, Dirty Fighting 2, Streetwise 1

Combat: Swordsman (Villanova) 2

Languages: Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

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You have spent your entire adult life being mistaken for other people. Usually, it's a man named Castiglioni but lately many people have been treating you very well before you are introduced. They bow to you and give you anything you desire. Some who claim to have met him say you happen to look just like Prince Villanova. It offends you a bit to think of this Prince parading around using your face and ruining your good name. You should really do something about that and your new friends in this Rilasciare group claim to have a way to do just that. Regardless of what happens tonight, you are a man of honor and will tolerate no insult from anyone in attendance.

MISSION

Ruining Prince Villanova is the goal, not just for the Order but for your own sense of personal honor.

Eva Grüber

Nationality: Eisen

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 3, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Athlete 1, Courtier 1, Criminal 3, Knife 1

Languages: Castillian, Eisen, Ussuran, Vendel

Item: Strange item pickpocketed from an Avalon (Thalusai key)

BACKGROUND

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You traveled here with Erman Wörrse when your cell was destroyed. His skill with forgery and your talents as a pick-pocket have gotten the two of you this far in the world. Over the last few weeks you have been told to go about Dionna talking with well-to-do folk and trying to gain information that could help your cause at the Grand Ball. In that time, you managed to pick up a couple of note pages that Erman has been working on and tonight as you walked into the Ball you bumped into an Avalon named MacElvie and managed to pocket a strange thing. You have no idea what it is but odds are the Avalon thought it was important. It's very pretty and hums slightly. Whatever he was using it for could probably benefit your friends.

MISSION

Help facilitate the Villanova "look-alike" scam and find out more about the strange musical device.

Raphael Castiglioni

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Rilasciare

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 3, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 2, Doctor 1, Courtier 2

Combat: Swordsman (Valroux) 3

Languages: Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

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A woman named Beatrice Conoti whom you recently met invited you to Giovanni Villanova's Grand Ball. She seemed like a very pleasant person and was very insistent that you attend. Everyone seems to be looking at you as if you should know them. You're beginning to suspect that Fortunato Renallo is about. He looks exactly like you and recently that has gotten you in trouble, as the man seems to grow enemies faster than a farmer raises wheat. Beatrice says that you look more like Giovanni Villanova than you do Fortunato. That makes sense to you; the Prince would be lucky to have features as striking as yours.

MISSION

Impersonate Prince Giovanni Villanova so brilliantly that you are showered with praise and Guilders. Barring that, try not to get killed. And under no circumstances should you reveal the Rilasciare's hands in all this!

Antonio Messucci

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Invisible College

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Courtier 2, Streetwise 2, Scholar 3

Combat: Fencing 2,

Languages: Teodoran (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

Item: 7,000 senators (equal to approximately 2,333 Guilders)

BACKGROUND

As a member of the Invisible College you have often been asked to perform missions to aid the various scientists working in secret across Théah. You were recently contacted with a very odd request to attend the Grand Ball hosted by Prince Giovanni Villanova. While at the ball you are to contact a man named Laurent Pavillion d'Aur who has offered to sell pages of one of the famed Franzini notebooks. A member of the College needs the information in the book to finish a new

experiment in ship propulsion that could make sailing twice as fast as it is today. Laurent is rumored to be desperate for money and would probably not hesitate to sell you and your allies to the Inquisition at a moment's notice.

You have been charged with holding the money (7,000 senators) for the transaction along with negotiating the price for the pages. If possible, you should try to gain the entire book. You happened to get a glimpse of the guest list for tonight as you entered and a name leaped out at you — Paloma Cantera, a dangerous investigator for the Inquisition. Experience has taught you that where there is one, others are never far behind. Keep your eyes open and watch out for any traps. You are attending the party with your brother and fellow college member Vito.

MISSION

Get the pages for as little money as you can and avoid Inquisitorial entanglements.

Vito Messucci

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Invisible College

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 2, Streetwise 2, Synchrony Lore 1

Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 3

Languages: Vodacce

BACKGROUND

As a member of the Invisible College you have often been asked to perform missions to aid the various scientists working in secret across Théah. You were recently contacted with a very odd request to attend the Grand Ball hosted by Prince Giovanni Villanova. While at the ball you are to contact a man named Laurent Pavillion d'Aur who has offered to sell pages of one of the famed Franzini notebooks. A member of the College needs the information in the book to finish a new experiment in ship propulsion that could make sailing twice as fast as it is today. Laurent is rumored to be desperate for money and would probably not hesitate to sell you and your allies to the Inquisition at a moment's notice.

Attending with your brother and fellow College member, Antonio, who is supposed to buy a book tonight from some Sunflower noble who survived the Revolution. Your job is to watch his back and make sure he's around to kiss your mother at the holidays. He said he saw the name of an Inquisitor on the guest list and you don't trust Prince Villanova not to invite a group of alleged heretics to a party just to entertain some Inquisitors. If you can get the book, you are certain that your allies in the Invisible College will do something great for mankind with the information.

You have also heard a rumor about the party that has caught your personal interest. Allegedly, Villanova's men have uncovered a rather large cache of Synchrony objects. Artifacts have always fascinated you and you would love to get your hands on a few if you could. A friend in town has told you that some Castellians are asking about a man named Messucci. It probably involves a member of the Invisible College named Sancho who was captured last year by the Inquisition. His sacrifice saved your life but you know little other than that a priest he trusted betrayed him.

MISSION

Protect Antonio, avoid Inquisitorial entanglements, and find out who is looking for you.

Elena Morinova

Nationality: Ussura
Secret Society: Invisible College
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 1
Skills: Doctor 3, Knife 3, Scholar 3, Spy 3
Languages: Eisen, Montaigne(R/W), Théan (R/W),
Vodacce (R/W)
Item: Forged copy of a book

BACKGROUND

As a member of the Invisible College you have often been asked to perform missions to aid the various scientists working in secret across Théah. You were recently contacted with a very odd request to attend the Grand Ball hosted by Prince Giovanni Villanova. While at the ball you are to contact a man named Laurent Pavillion d'Aur who has offered to sell pages of one of the famed Franzini notebooks. A member of the College needs the information in the book to finish a new experiment in ship propulsion that could make sailing twice as fast as it is today. Laurent is rumored to be desperate for money and would probably not hesitate to sell you and your allies to the Inquisition at a moment's notice.

You are actually an agent working for Sophia's Daughters who has managed to keep her cover safe by playing a shy, bookish scholar and remaining quiet during the few local meetings you have attended. Ostensibly, you are here to help Antonio verify the authenticity of the text. Your real motive is something a bit more sinister. You believe that a member of the Invisible College is involved in harvesting blood from nobles, primarily Fate Witches. Your real leaders would like you to find out if there is any truth to this and what their intention for such blood might be. The sisterhood has provided you with a forged copy of the Franzini notebook you are negotiating for; if you get the chance to exchange it for the real thing, it would prevent the scientists from abusing something best left alone.

MISSION

Make an effort to assist Antonio but focus your efforts on your assignment from the sisterhood and find a way to swap that book!

Doctor Hans Peteirzen

Nationality: Vendel
Secret Society: Invisible College
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Merchant 1, Courtier 2, Doctor 3
Combat: Fencing 1
Languages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne, Vendel (R/W)
Item: 2,000 senators (equal to approximately 667 Guilders)

BACKGROUND

As a member of the Invisible College you have often been asked to perform missions to aid the various scientists working in secret across Théah. You were recently contacted with a very odd request to attend the Grand Ball hosted by Prince Giovanni Villanova. While at the ball you are to contact a man named Laurent Pavillion d'Aur who has offered to sell pages of one of the famed Franzini notebooks. A member of the College needs the information in the book to finish a new experiment in ship propulsion that could make sailing twice as fast as it is today. Laurent is rumored to be desperate for money and would probably not hesitate to sell you and your allies to the Inquisition at a moment's notice.

You are one of the most respected men of medicine in Vendel and you are wealthy to boot. In recent years, you've begun using your talent and finances to help those who cannot help themselves. You gave Antonio Messucci 7,000 senators to purchase the notebook the scientists of the Invisible College so desperately want. It is a pittance compared to the information they have taught you about healing the sick.

Additionally, you have brought an extra 2,000 senators in hopes of convincing your host of parting with any Syrneath bauble he may have lying about. If the Prince isn't willing to sell you artifacts, you hope to find other contacts tonight who might be willing to deal with you. If nothing else, the money will be there to raise the offer for the notebook, should the 7,000 not be enough.

MISSION

Make sure Antonio gets the notebook — and see what else you can buy (or “obtain”) from the Prince.

Lady Elise du Pannenoir

Nationality: Montaigne
Secret Society: Invisible College
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 3, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Alchemy 2, Courtier 2, Spy 2
Combat: Swordsman (Bonita) 2
Item: Two doses of “the extract,” a fast-acting knock-out drug; blood-harvesting gear

BACKGROUND

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The rest of your allies are not even supposed to know about why you are here. Your orders came from Alvara Arciniega himself. You are in Vodacce to harvest samples of blood from a list of nobles, most of them women. You have collected all of the samples except one. The name was smeared by water damage so all you could read was “Delizia.” You suspect the person in question is likely a Fate Witch so you must be careful and very certain of your target. The knockout formula is activated when added to the target's drink — unconsciousness with no memory of being so — but the target is only out for *five minutes* so you must be certain of your target and find somewhere secluded to act. If you are lucky, you can finish your mission and still help the others get the notebook.

MISSION

Get the blood, help get the notebook, and don't get caught doing either!

Lord Albrecht von Schultheis

Nationality: Eisen

Secret Society: Die Kreuzritter

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Courtier 2, Scholar 1, Spy 1

Combat: Swordsman (Eisenfaust) 2

Languages: Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce

Item: 2,000 Guilders

BACKGROUND

Tonight's Grand Ball has drawn several members of die Kreuzritter to Dionna. Surprisingly, most of their interest does not lie with their host but instead with the other guests. A small handful of Montaigne citizens responsible for rescuing members of the ruling family have taken refuge in Dionna. While this would normally not bother die Kreuzritter, the method of payment has drawn their interest. It is rumored that the exiles purchased their safety from the Prince's nephew, Giancarlo Villanova, with the preserved heart of Cardinal d'Argeneau. Such heresy cannot be allowed! If this is true, it is important for die Kreuzritter to recover the heart for proper interment. Additionally, members of the Phantom Guard have detected a rift in the Barrier near Dionna, the kind of rift out of which *things* crawl.

Lord Albrecht does not exist. He is a persona you have adopted to further the Order's goals. You know that others have been sent to deal with several problems at this Ball but your priority is to recover an artifact that appears to be in the possession of Giovanni Villanova. It is a Thalusiai Key that would open areas of a cave that is better left alone. You are also aware that the Explorers are after it and there is rumor of a third faction that is showing some interest. While Prince Villanova may not yet suspect its value, you need to recover it before the night ends and he learns the truth.

MISSION

Get that key!

Kevin O' Halligan

Nationality: Inish

Secret Society: die Kreuzritter

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Skills: Herbalist 2, Doctor 1, Spy 1

Combat: Swordsman (Finnegan) 2

Item: Vial of Carmock root syrup

BACKGROUND

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If Lord Kevin O'Halligan does exist, you are not he. It is a name you took to hide your true self from the world. You have a mission outside the Order (although your colleagues

would likely appreciate any help you can offer). You must study an Eisen man named Reinhardt who has inadvertently provided Vincenzo Caligari with a dangerous Synchron artifact. Additionally, he is a newly named noble of Freiburg with a manor house that holds secrets that could reveal your Order. He has actually handled several clues that other members of die Kreuzritter have worked very hard to remove. If he seems to have any knowledge about die Kreuzritter at all, you need to eliminate him. If von Dietrich appears unaware of the information he holds, it will do to just continue to observe him. The Carmock root poison you carry is an ingested product that must be consumed in a beverage within a very limited timeframe. You will need to get close to him and be trusted to slip it in his drink.

MISSION

Watch von Schultheis and find an opportunity to poison him without getting caught.

Doña Maria Dominguez

Nationality: Castille

Secret Society: die Kreuzritter

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Skills: Athlete 1, Doctor 1, Courtier 2

Combat: Fencing 2

Languages: Castillian (R/W), Eisen, Vendel(R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

Tonight's Grand Ball has drawn several members of die Kreuzritter to Dionna. Surprisingly, most of their interest does not lie with their host but instead with the other guests. A small handful of Montaigne citizens responsible for rescuing members of the ruling family have taken refuge in Dionna. While this would normally not bother die Kreuzritter, the method of payment has drawn their interest. It is rumored that the exiles purchased their safety from the Prince's nephew, Giancarlo Villanova, with the preserved heart of Cardinal d'Argeneau. Such heresy cannot be allowed! If this is true, it is important for die Kreuzritter to recover the heart for proper interment. Additionally, members of the Phantom Guard have detected a rift in the Barrier near Dionna, the kind of rift out of which *things* crawl.

Doña Maria Dominguez does not exist; you are really Carmen Zedeña but you have not used that name since you joined the Order, and you have avoided your homeland so that no one would ever recognize you. Tonight you are portraying a Castillian noblewoman at a Grand Ball. However, your true mission is to find a group of heretical Montaigne who are keeping a Vatican Cardinal's heart preserved in a jar. They are said to be wearing cameos that were gifts from Empereur Leon's children.

Unfortunately, you have a problem. A woman named Karlina Loggerheim passed you before you entered. She is the first mate on a ship called the *Blood Wind*, a ship captained by your brother Juan... who thinks you are dead. If one of them recognizes you, they may have to be silenced for the safety of the Order.

MISSION

Find the heretics and avoid the people who know you from a former life.

Ferenzo Lota

Nationality: Vodacce
Secret Society: die Kreuzritter
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 1
Skills: Athlete 2, Courtier 2, Servant 2
Combat: Swordsman (Soldano) 1
Languages: Castillian, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

Tonight's Grand Ball has drawn several members of die Kreuzritter to Dionna. Surprisingly, most of their interest does not lie with their host but instead with the other guests. A small handful of Montaigne citizens responsible for rescuing members of the ruling family have taken refuge in Dionna. While this would normally not bother die Kreuzritter, the method of payment has drawn their interest. It is rumored that the exiles purchased their safety from the Prince's nephew, Giancarlo Villanova, with the preserved heart of Cardinal d'Argeneau. Such heresy cannot be allowed! If this is true, it is important for die Kreuzritter to recover the heart for proper interment. Additionally, members of the Phantom Guard have detected a rift in the Barrier near Dionna, the kind of rift out of which things crawl.

You are not really Ferenzo Lota, you are not even really Vodacce. You were born in Castille on the other side of the mountains. Since joining the Order, changing your name and your identity have become commonplace for you.

The Order wants like to recover the Cardinal's heart and you want to dispatch those responsible for such an atrocity. They are alleged to be wearing cameos but you have no idea what the particular cameos look like so you will have to investigate suspects thoroughly. Secrecy is the first priority. No one must know you exist.

MISSION

As a Vodacce you will melt into the crowd, which is the ideal situation for you to retrieve the Cardinal's heart and help bring the heretics to justice.

Juan Zedeña

Nationality: Castillian Pirate
 Captain (*Blood Wind*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Panache 2
Skills: Captain 3, Courtier 2, Firearms 2
Combat: Swordsman (Aldana) 2
Languages: Avalon, Castillian, Vendel, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The *Blood Wind* sailed into port two nights ago, after a month of plundering merchant vessels. The efforts had been fruitful and there is plenty of gold on board. The big item is something its previous owner called "The Eye of the Wind," a large

diamond set into some sort of necklace of apparent Synchron design that was easily worth the rest of the plunder combined. Twenty minutes after ship set anchor, first mate Karlina Loggerheim was gone — as were "The Eye of the Wind" and two invitations to some Grand Ball that you took off the last ship you ransacked.

As Captain of the *Blood Wind*, you are not much of a party person. Your approach is "Board the ship, loot it, and move on." You trusted your first mate but it looks like she sold you out and took your rightfully stolen treasure. She needs to be taught how wrong it is to take things while others are sleeping. You have scrounged up decent looking clothes for yourself and your two best sailors, Egers and Lockheart. All you have to do is hide yourselves among those fancy dans and find Karlina before she sells your treasure.

MISSION

Make Karlina cough up the treasure without getting caught as a party-crashing pirate.

Egers

Nationality: Vendel Pirate (*Blood Wind*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 3
Skills: Criminal 1, Firearms 1, Sailor 2
Combat: Firearms 1, Swordsman (Rogers) 1
Languages: Avalon, Castillian, Eisen

BACKGROUND

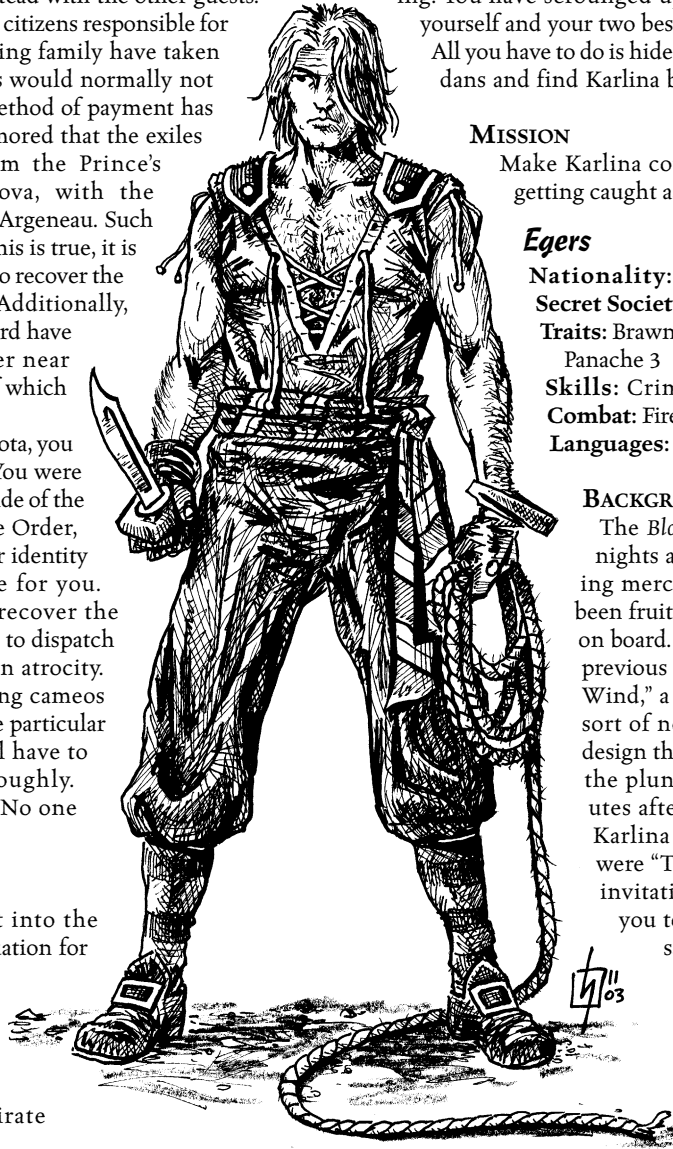
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You are one of Captain Zedeña's most trusted men. You have sailed with him on the *Blood Wind* for years and yearned to be named first mate but Karlina Loggerheim has always been in your way. Now that she's

sold him out, the job is yours to take! All you have to do is help the Captain find her at some fancy party. You have never been to a party before, so you're not quite sure what to expect. Karlina is a much better fighter than you and you have worked hard to avoid direct confrontations with her until now, but you'll do what you have to do to get that job!

MISSION

Help the Captain get his loot back from Karlina and depose the thieving wench from her post as first mate.



Lockheart

Nationality: Avalon Pirate (*Blood Wind*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1
Skills: Criminal 1, Doctor 1, Sailor 2, Fencing 1
Languages: Avalon
Item: 2 pages of some notebook and 75 senators (25 Guilders)

BACKGROUND

The *Blood Wind* sailed into port two nights ago, after a month of plundering merchant vessels. The efforts had been fruitful and there is plenty of gold on board. The big item is something its previous owner called “The Eye of the Wind,” a large diamond set into some sort of necklace of apparent Synchron design that was easily worth the rest of the plunder combined. Twenty minutes after ship set anchor, first mate Karlina Loggerheim was gone — as were “The Eye of the Wind” and two invitations to some Grand Ball that you took off the last ship you ransacked.

You have always sailed with Captain Zedeña. He’s like a father to you. He’s made you wealthier than you ever dreamed of being. Granted, most of that money was taken from folks who wanted to keep it, but that’s the pirate way. The Captain is looking for Karlina who snatched a prime prize from under his nose. You’d have liked to take it yourself if the Captain hadn’t claimed it. It was interesting and you love interesting things. You’ve picked up a few interesting things since you arrived. You found some money, a few fake pieces of jewelry, and a couple of book pages with interesting drawings on them. You don’t know what they are but they’re real fascinating. You’re gonna go with the Captain to find Karlina and get the “Eye of the Wind” back. Maybe the Captain will let you fiddle with it for a while when you get back to the ship.

MISSION

Help the Captain get that interesting jewel back from Karlina.

Karlina Loggerheim

Nationality: Eisen Pirate (*Blood Wind*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 3, Panache 1
Skills: Criminal 1, Captain 1, Sailor 2
Combat: Swordsman (Rogers) 2
Languages: Eisen, Vodacce
Item: “The Eye of the Wind” necklace

BACKGROUND

The *Blood Wind* sailed into port two nights ago, after a month of plundering merchant vessels. The efforts had been fruitful and there is plenty of gold on board. The big item is something its previous owner called the “Eye of the Wind,” a large diamond set into some sort of necklace of apparent Synchron design that was easily worth the rest of the plunder combined. Twenty minutes after ship set anchor, you left, with “The Eye of the Wind” and two invitations to some Grand Ball that you took off the last ship you ransacked.

Yep, you stole the “Eye of the Wind” from Captain Zedeña. You were hoping to find a rich person who might buy the artifact from you at the party. You didn’t know the host was Prince Giovanni Villanova until you looked at the invitation. Plenty of influential people will be there and one of them might just have use for this bauble. It should bring enough to buy you a ship of your own at last!

When the whiny Castillian finds out the stuff is gone, he’ll probably come after you with those knuckle-dragging thugs Egers and Lockheart. Hopefully, they aren’t stupid enough to attack you in the middle of a noble party, but they are reckless and dangerous. The Captain will want the “Eye” back and probably be looking to take revenge for your treason.

MISSION

Sell the “Eye” for as much as you can and keep away from Zedeña and his apes.

Sabrina

Nationality: Vodacce Courtesan
Secret Society: Sophia’s Daughters
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 3
Skills: Courtesan 3, Performer 2, Servant 2
Combat: Swordsman (Capputina) 2
Languages: Montaigne, Castillian, Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

If Giovanni Villanova had an inkling of what you are involved in, he would most likely never even let you touch his arm. But men are so foolish, which makes it so easy to manipulate them. You shift your hair color and your mask so often that so far no one has suspected you are playing a favored courtesan to every royal house in Vodacce. You are Rosa with Mondavi, Bella for Falisci, Angelina to Vincenzo, and Carlotta in the company of Bernoulli. The list stretches longer than that. The best part is that all of the secrets go back to Sophia’s Daughters who recruited you as a spy. Tonight, you will play the most dangerous part you have ever played in the Grand Game as you make certain that Giovanni Villanova takes his last breath.

Three days ago, you sent a letter through the regular channels to an assassin named Enzo Siprini, which should give your hairdresser plenty of time to get the assassin in place. If not, you will need to find an alternative method. You are aware that a woman named Wilhelmina is attending the party. If you can find her, she might have a method or ally to carry out your task. Whatever happens, you must avoid all suspicion. Your position so near the Princes of Vodacce is far too important to the Sisterhood to be compromised by an assassination that others can execute.

MISSION

This may be the most important night of your life. One false step and years of deception will bring the wrath of Vodacce down upon you.

Wilhelmina Tobler

Nationality: Eisen
Secret Society: Sophia’s Daughters
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Courtier 3, Spy 2, Servant 2
Combat: Knife 2
Languages: Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce
Item: Mysterious Vial

BACKGROUND

The Order has taken great pains to infiltrate the Grand Ball this year. Part of the reason is a need for information. No one knows for certain what happened to Villanova’s courtesan Juliette, who was an important agent before her disappearance. There are also a variety of other important figures in

attendance who need to be approached or investigated. Then there is the matter of a theft and an item to be recovered, a very important item known as the “Eye of the Wind” that was stolen from a member of the Daughters by pirates. The ship was tracked to Dionna and the Oracle predicted the item would be here tonight with the thief. Finally, a spy for the Daughters has sent word that her employer is attending the party tonight to sell one of Franzini’s notebooks to a scientist. This particular notebook holds a few pages of information hidden in a coded piece of text. This information could, in the wrong hands, drastically alter civilization. A member of the Sophia’s Daughters has been sent with a forgery minus that particular piece of text. However, if any member of the Daughters can acquire the original without need of the forged version, it would be a boon to the Society.

A woman’s work is never done. You have been a member of the Order for over a year and it feels like you have been actively involved in a constant series of missions since that day. It would be nice if you had the opportunity to do something for yourself for once. You would love to relax and enjoy yourself tonight but the Daughters have asked you to pass a mysterious vial to a Fate Witch named Delizia. Then you must find your contact, an Ussuran named Leita, and tomorrow morning you leave for the Crescent Empire. As if that were not enough, you have just received a letter from home informing you that your mother is ill in Insel. You might not get the chance to return but perhaps someone could carry a letter to her for you.

MISSION

Pass the vial to the Fate Witch, find the Ussuran, pack for the trip east. Oh, and find time to write a letter and find a courier to deliver it. Perhaps you can sleep on the ship...

Delizia Silvestri della Lucani

Nationality: Vodacce Fate Witch

Secret Society: Sophia’s Daughters

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Courtier 2, Sorte 2, Spy 1

Combat: Knife 1

Languages: Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Order has taken great pains to infiltrate the Grand Ball this year. Part of the reason is a need for information. No one knows for certain what happened to Villanova’s courtesan Juliette, who was an important agent before her disappearance. There are also a variety of other important figures in attendance who need to be approached or investigated. Then there is the matter of a theft and an item to be recovered, a very important item known as the “Eye of the Wind” that was stolen from a member of the Daughters by pirates. The ship was tracked to Dionna and the Oracle predicted the item would be here tonight with the thief. Finally, a spy for the Daughters has sent word that her employer is attending the party tonight to sell one of Franzini’s notebooks to a scientist. This particular notebook holds a few pages of information hidden in a coded piece of text. This information could, in the wrong hands, drastically alter civilization. A member of the Sophia’s Daughters has been sent with a forgery minus that particular piece of text. However, if any member of the Daughters can acquire the original without need of the forged version, it would be a boon to the Society

You are a fairly competent Sorte Strega but there is much you still need to learn about your abilities and your place in the world, which is why you joined the Daughters, a society so secret that you don’t know exactly what their goals are. Recently you have been helping them get other Fate Witches out of Vodacce.

Tonight you have a different mission, however. You are to help the Order steal back a precious artifact known as the “Eye of the Wind.” Someone much more powerful than you has twisted the strands to get it here tonight and given you this unique opportunity. If you can recover it, you are to turn it over to a contact who will give you a vial in exchange. You don’t know who your contact is so you hope that she will find you. As for the vial, you have no idea what its purpose is.

MISSION

A large diamond should not be that difficult to locate. Then again, it might be difficult to hide. And what about this vial?

Leita Kordekova

Nationality: Ussura

Secret Society: Sophia’s Daughters

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Courtesan 2, Pyeryem (mouse) 1, Servant 2

Combat: Swordsman (Capputina) 2

Languages: Ussuran, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Order has taken great pains to infiltrate the Grand Ball this year. Part of the reason is a need for information. No one knows for certain what happened to Villanova’s courtesan Juliette, who was an important agent before her disappearance. There are also a variety of other important figures in attendance who need to be approached or investigated. Then there is the matter of a stolen item to be recovered, a very important item known as the “Eye of the Wind” that was stolen by pirates. The ship was tracked to Dionna and the Oracle predicted the item would be here tonight with the thief. Finally, a spy for the Daughters has sent word that her employer is attending the party tonight to sell one of Franzini’s notebooks to a scientist. This particular notebook holds a few pages of information hidden in a coded piece of text. This information could, in the wrong hands, drastically alter civilization. A member of the Sophia’s Daughters has been sent with a forgery minus that particular piece of text. However, if any member of the Daughters can acquire the original without need of the forged version, it would be a boon to the Society

As a courtesan, you have many skills to gain information from men. As a Pyeryem shapeshifter with the form of a mouse, you have several other subtle ways to learn information.

A woman in your line of work should be careful never to fall in love but sometimes one’s heart overrules the mind. Ever since you spent that first night with Giovanni Villanova three days ago, your heart has been in control. He may be ruthless at times, but with you he has shown nothing but tenderness. There can be no one else worthy of your love and devotion. You would give up everything to protect him, even your own life. And that may be necessary because you have heard about at least two planned assassination attempts. You were to contact a woman named Wilhelmina tonight but the message you were told to deliver would mean harm for your handsome Prince so you destroyed it. The Order will not be pleased with you but you are certain that he will protect you.

MISSION

The one in your head: serve the Order. The one in your heart: save the Prince. Which one will win?

Françoise du Paix

Nationality: Montaigne

Secret Society: Agent for Sophia's Daughter

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1 Panache 3

Skills: Courtier 2, Merchant 2

Combat: Fencing 1

Languages: Montaigne, Vodacce

Item: A mysterious letter

BACKGROUND

It all started so simply. As a displaced Montaigne émigré in Vodacce, you began work as a stylist to the courtesans and quickly gained a reputation as the person to come to for the best of everything. Soon you were setting fashion for the elite courtesans who serve the princes themselves. A courtesan from the Caligari household asked you to deliver a letter for her — nothing important, just a little favor for which she offered generous compensation. You agreed to help her and the man who accepted the letter gave you another to pass to a different courtesan as you styled her hair. Soon it seemed like you were passing notes to every woman who came to you!

Last week one of your favorite clients asked you to take a letter to a man named Enzo Sigrini. You arrived at the house to trim his hair and deliver the envelope. Instead you found him lying in a pool of blood, murdered in his own home! You panicked and fled to Dionna, where you managed to wrangle your way into Villanova's Grand Ball to try and find the courtesan who gave you the letter and tell her what happened. You have not opened the envelope — you are illiterate so it would do you no good. The courtesan you are searching for has a habit of switching her name regularly so you do not know who to ask for, but you will recognize her hair no matter what color it is.

MISSION

You have got to find your client before something awful happens to you!

Lord Laurent Pavillion d'Aur

Nationality: Montaigne Nobleman

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Skills: Courtier 3, Streetwise 1, Scholar 2

Combat: Swordsman (Valroux) 1

Languages: Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce

Item: A Franzini Notebook

BACKGROUND

The last year has been a major inconvenience to you. The rabble in Charouse were a bit of a scare, but you were abroad at the time and hardly in danger. Still, it has made life difficult of late. You have depleted your funds but returning to Montaigne for the rest of your money does not seem at all wise. Visiting Vodacce for an extended time sounds much more enjoyable. The artwork is passable, the servants are competent, and the women seem to know their place, which is always good. (The wine, however, is still execrable.)

It's difficult to attach yourself to people for long periods without any money to support yourself. This party offers you a much-needed opportunity to find a noble family that does not mind having a nearly talentless houseguest for an extended

stay. Failing that, you still have one possession: a notebook of sketches made by someone named Franzini. A man has sent word to you that he would be interested in purchasing it. Perhaps you could settle for 10,000 senators or so, which would let you keep yourself for another few weeks. Regardless of your situation, you are a nobleman of Montaigne and people should be thrilled to have you in their midst.

MISSION

Find a rich, noble host who will be thrilled to entertain you for an extended stay.

Dr. Pol Kish

Nationality: Vendel Doctor

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Alchemy 2, Forger 1, Doctor 2

Combat: Fencing 1

Languages: Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W)

BACKGROUND

You are a fraud, plain and simple. You have been exiled from your homeland and two königreichen for selling patent medicines under a variety of names. You find people trust your judgment as Doctor Kish and throw money at you in the belief that you will be able to cure them. (It helps that you know how to punctuate your conversation with enough mumbo-jumbo about leeches, bleeding, and the like.)

You also have a lucrative side business here in Vodacce mixing poisons for a variety of clients; recently, however, you hit a small snag. Through an intermediary, you sold a pair of half-strength poisons to an unknown individual who apparently plans to use them at tonight's Ball. The victim won't die but will be seriously ill and looking for the responsible party, while the buyer will probably want to know why his target is still alive. The vials are marked with your symbol and easily traced. If you cannot find them before they are used, you had best be sure you either treat the victims or do not survive to ask questions. Either way, it's important you recover the vials before someone recognizes your mark.

MISSION

Find the vials before the dissatisfied customer (and the unhappy victim) find you!

Nicolo Vitale

Nationality: Vodacce Nobleman (and spy)

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Courtier 1, Streetwise 1

Combat: Dirty Fighting 1, Swordsman (Ambrogia) 1

Languages: Vodacce

BACKGROUND

Being noble makes it much easier to fulfill your dark and twisted desires. No matter whether it's a murder, scandal or simply blackmail, your family has always had the money to make the problems in your life simply vanish. Now you have found a new benefactor in Prince Mondavi who you were surprised (and pleased) to find out is even more twisted than you. Mondavi has sent you to the ball to serve as his spy regarding the actions of Prince Villanova. You are to report on anything you learn about the Prince and his guests that Mondavi could use to further his position in the Great Game.

Naturally, you have your own agenda. A fortune teller has prophesied that you will soon be ruined financially. She refused to give you more details so you need to find a Fate Witch to remedy your dilemma by twisting the strands for you. You brought nothing with which to pay her and you have no intention of doing so anyhow. Fate Witches do not scare you. You know from experience that they die when their throats are slit just as quickly as any other person would.

There is something strangely familiar about the courtesan with Villanova tonight. She hides her face behind a mask but something about her gestures remind you of someone you've seen with Mondavi. You can't quite place her but you're sure you will figure it out before the evening is over.

MISSION

It's an easy way to earn a living. Watch, listen, go to parties, tell Mondavi what he wants to hear. These Princes are all alike; that courtesan, however...

Nikolas "Nikita" Vulcovic

Nationality: Ussuran Professional Thug
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 3, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1
Skills: Athlete 2
Combat: Heavy Weapons 2, Pugilism 2, Wrestling 3
Languages: Eisen, Ussuran

BACKGROUND

Life was hard in Ussura. Matushka made lots of snow, and food was scarce in the best of times. You were never good for much more than beating others and taking their things but in Ussura, there is not that much to take, so you moved to Eisen. Life was hard in Eisen as well. The men there wanted to keep their things too so they fought back more often. Still, you could usually find someone willing to pay you to hurt people. After a while, Eisen didn't seem to have all that many things to take from others. Almost everything there was broken, so you headed south to Vodacce.

Even though it doesn't snow, life is hard in Vodacce. The men here don't like to settle things with their fists. They like to stab you with their knives after you beat them. The women put curses on you and everyone has a sneaky plan you cannot seem to follow.

All this hard living has made you hard as well. You are strong and tough. Many call you big and dumb but you make up for that by being big and dumb. Unfortunately, you don't have much money and you had to sell most of your weapons to buy food and the cheap swill Vodacce calls wine. You are a good fighter and people always need good fighters. You just have to find someone here who needs you to be big and strong for them. If you can show off a bit tonight somebody is bound to hire you for a lot of money.

MISSION

Find someone with lots of money who wants you to hit people.

Leonardo Mancuso

Nationality: Vodacce Lord's Hand in training
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1
Skills: Criminal 1, Servant 1, Spy 1
Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 2
Languages: Vodacce

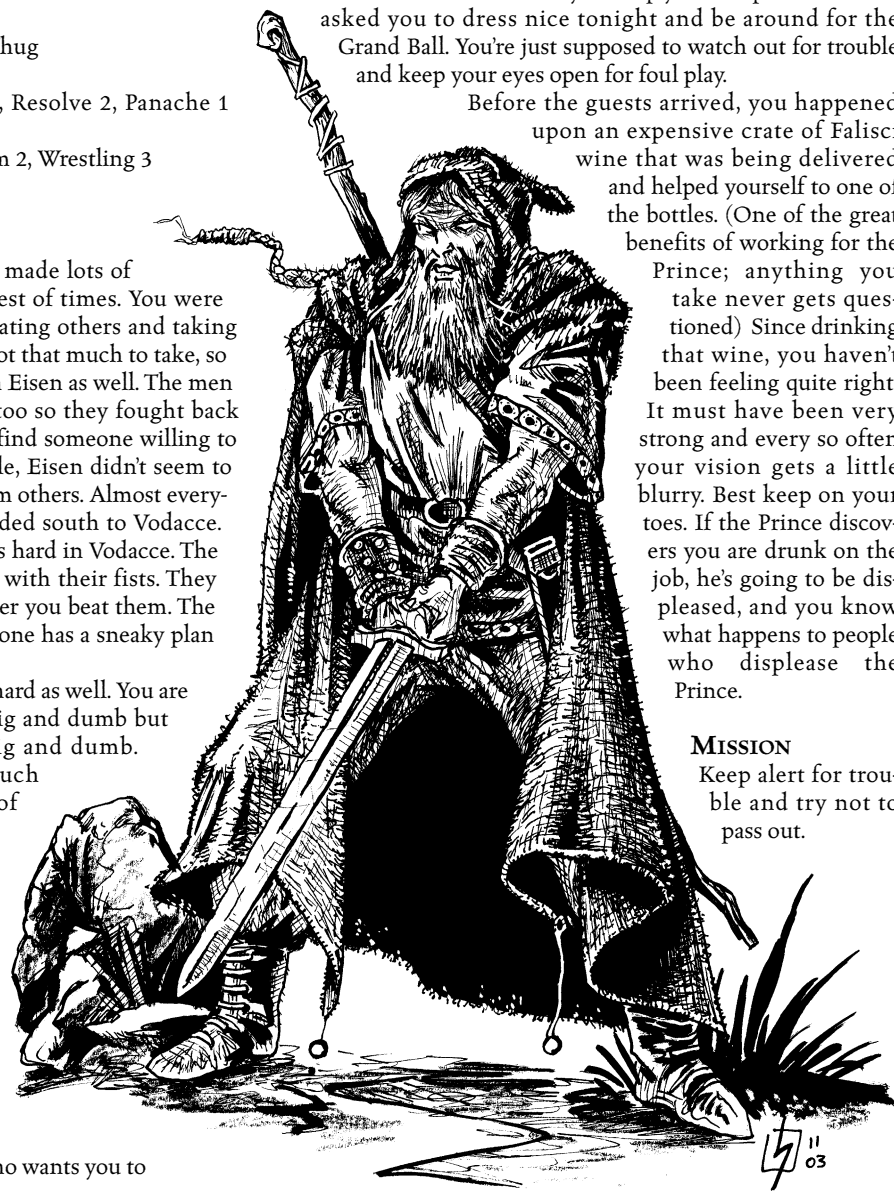
BACKGROUND

You work for Prince Giovanni Villanova. It's a good job and you're getting better at it every day. The benefits of the job are very nice and you get frequent chances to vent your hostility in productive ways. Sometimes your job involves threatening people who have bothered the Prince. Other times you are called upon to break the bones of those who have disappointed the Prince. Once in a while, you get to kill someone who has displeased or failed the Prince and then you get to dump the offender's body into a canal. It's an enjoyable job with a fair amount of variety to keep you occupied. Villanova asked you to dress nice tonight and be around for the Grand Ball. You're just supposed to watch out for trouble and keep your eyes open for foul play.

Before the guests arrived, you happened upon an expensive crate of Falisci wine that was being delivered and helped yourself to one of the bottles. (One of the great benefits of working for the Prince; anything you take never gets questioned) Since drinking that wine, you haven't been feeling quite right. It must have been very strong and every so often your vision gets a little blurry. Best keep on your toes. If the Prince discovers you are drunk on the job, he's going to be displeased, and you know what happens to people who displease the Prince.

MISSION

Keep alert for trouble and try not to pass out.



Magdalena Baltassari

Nationality: Vodacce Fate Witch

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 3

Skills: Criminal 2, Courtesan 3, Fortune Teller 2

Combat: Knife 3

Languages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian, Montaigne, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

How hard can this Fate Witch job be? You have the veil, you have the cards, and people are already starting to get out of your way. All you have to do is scowl and roll your eyes at them and they scurry to find other things to do. The poor man at the door almost died of shock when you pointed at him. The funny part is that it's all an act. You are not a Fate Witch — you're not even Vodacce! These noble folks would probably die if they found out you were just a common jenny from Avalon named Nina Cross. Granted, it seemed like a better idea before you arrived, but you have been paid as much as you would earn in a year back home by one of your regulars, a man named Serrano.

He charmed you into the job with a sneaky smile and the lovely sound of clinking senators. He refused to tell you why he needed you to play this role at the party tonight; all he said was that you might be "important." You thought you saw him here tonight but if that's him, he's talking in Castillian a lot and calling himself "Ramon." He hasn't approached you yet so you have been left to your own devices for the time being.

There is another guest that has you curious. Everyone has been fawning over Lord Baltrusól. While it's no surprise to see people carrying on about important noble guests, this particular Lord looks exactly like a stable boy you know very well back in Avalon by the name of Gwilym. Maybe you can get him alone to see if he recognizes you as well. After all of his compliments back home, you are certain he would remember you.

Now all you have to do is enjoy the evening as best you can, help a friend do whatever it is he's up to, and pray that nobody finds out about your act. You get the feeling that being exposed as a fake here in Vodacce would pretty much be your last mistake.

MISSION

Pretend to be a Fate Witch, find a way to chat up Lord Baltrusól, and maybe read a fortune or two just for laughs.

Ramon Batista

Nationality: Castille

Secret Society: Invisible College (assumed);

Rilasciare (in reality)

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Skills: Conceal 2, Courtier 3, Spy 3

Combat: Swordsman (Gallegos) 2

Languages: Castillian, Montaigne, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

Ramon Batista is not your given name (you haven't used your given name in years.) You are not even a loyal member of the Invisible College. Your true loyalty lies with the Freemen of the Rilasciare. It's been that way since you were using the name Alejandro Montenegro, back when you were a friend of Prince Javier's in Castille. (Technically, you are not full-blooded Castillian either but your accent is flawless.) As a member of the Rilasciare, you change identity and nationality as needed. Currently, that duty is to trick the Invisible College.

The College wants to purchase a famous sketchbook. While you see nothing wrong with that, some cell or other is not happy with those scientists gaining that sort of information. If you can convince them the document is a forgery, they may drop their project. If you can get them to pay for it and then discard the thing, you would be very amused. If you can figure out a way to convince the Prince that it's in his best interest to pay for the item and then destroy it, *that* would be priceless.

You have brought in a wild card of your own tonight, a jenny named Nina from Avalon, a promising actress. She's portraying a Fate Witch named Magdalena and she's your only back-up in case anything goes wrong with your plans.

MISSION

Find a way to get rid of that notebook! If you can get the Prince to cough up money, so much the better. If you gets caught, Nina knows what to do.

Everrel Morrisey

Nationality: Avalon

Secret Society: Rose and Cross

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 1, Courtier 2, Doctor 1

Combat: Swordsman (Donovan) 2

Languages: Avalon, Montaigne, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are here as guests of guests. You are charged with looking out for the safety of your patrons and a pair of Montaigne nobles who need supervision, mostly due to their own petulance and lack of common sense. You can see that this night will test your skills.

Additionally, one of your own has been missing but may be in attendance. His name is Searen Renquist. You have been told that he failed to check in for several months but was spotted traveling to Vodacce with others who will be at the ball. While you have never met the man and have no idea what he looks like, you need to make yourself available should he approach you and ask for help.

Lastly, Lord Baltrusól is not who he claims to be and there are just too many threats tonight to safely protect him. Instead, a young poor knight who resembles him volunteered to take his place and act on his behalf. You need to protect young Gwilym as best you can.

As the ranking member of the Order in attendance, you are handling the security for Baltrusól, Lord Valroux du Martise and his daughter, and that rake Pavillion d'Aur. Baltrusól is your priority because you have decided to take Gwilym on as your tyro should he survive tonight. You are worried about him because of a letter you received, allegedly signed by Villanova himself, hinting that he is aware of your deception. You would hate to lose any Knights tonight; your last assignment cost you the lives of six. You need to find a way to protect the Order in Vodacce. Perhaps you could find a sponsor at the Grand Ball for a chapterhouse here

MISSION

Protect an exhausting number of people, keep your tyro-to-be safe, and ascertain whether the letter from Villanova is real. Oh, and see about getting a patron for that chapterhouse...

Mystral d'Abaer du Crieux

Nationality: Montaigne

Secret Society: Rose and Cross Musketeer

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Skills: Athlete 2, Courtier 2

Combat: Firearms 1, Swordsman (Valroux) 3

Languages: Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are here as guests of guests. You are charged with looking out for the safety of your patrons and a pair of Montaigne nobles who need supervision, mostly due to their own petulance and lack of common sense. You can see that this night will test your skills.

Additionally, one of your own has been missing but may be in attendance. His name is Searen Renquist. You have been told that he failed to check in for several months but was spotted traveling to Vodacce with others who will be at the ball. While you have never met the man and have no idea what he looks like, you need to make yourself available should he approach you and ask for help.

Lastly, Lord Baltrusól is not who he claims to be and there are just too many threats tonight to safely protect him. Instead, a young poor knight who resembles him volunteered to take his place and act on his behalf. Sir Everrel has asked you to help protect young Gwilym as best you can.

You are here tonight as the official bodyguard of Laurent Pavillion d'Aur. However, the nobleman was insistent upon you keeping your distance, so you are somewhat free to make wander. Searen Renquist is supposed to be here but you haven't seen him in years. He might remember you but it's best if you just make yourself visible in your activity.

As an Official Musketeer, you serve three leaders: your noble charges, the Revolutionary government in Montaigne, and the Rose and Cross. To say it's a conflict of interest is to put it mildly. Then there is the Villanova problem. Lately you have heard that he is acting very well toward the Order, almost as if he were about to offer to sponsor the Order in Vodacce. That will never do because he is the most vile and evil man alive. He will likely try to coerce you into some sleazy criminal activity tonight. As much as you'd love to gouge his other eye out, you have to stay your hand. Keep your wits about you and watch out for your fellow Knights.

MISSION

Keep an eye on Lord Laurent and stay away from Prince Villanova. Hopefully, you will meet up with Searen but your most pressing job is watching that obnoxious Montaigne nobleman.

Gatien Cuvere

Nationality: Vendel

Secret Society: Rose and Cross

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 2, Courtier 1, Doctor 2

Combat: Fencing 3

Languages: Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are here as guests of guests. You are charged with looking out for the safety of your patrons and a pair of Montaigne nobles who need supervision, mostly due to their own petulance and lack of common sense. You can see that this night will test your skills.

Additionally, one of your own has been missing but may be in attendance. His name is Searen Renquist. You have been told that he failed to check in for several months but was spotted traveling to Vodacce with others who will be at the ball. While you have never met the man and have no idea what he looks like, you need to make yourself available should he approach you and ask for help.

Lastly, Lord Baltrusól is not who he claims to be and there are just too many threats tonight to safely protect him. Instead, a young poor knight who resembles him volunteered to take his place and act on his behalf. Sir Everrel has asked you to help protect young Gwilym as best you can.

You have been assigned as the guardian of Camille Valroux du Martise, a young noblewoman who escaped the Revolution along with her father. While it is not your place to do so nor was it your intention, you have fallen totally in love with the young woman who was recently declared *Compresse de l'Île de la Bête*. She has a few flaws but her beauty and her kindness — well, at least her beauty — far outweigh an trivial imperfections. You realize that there should be no reason for her to feel the same about you, mostly because her father has brought her tonight to find some rich, old noble lord to marry her. You will never have the wealth or prestige to impress her father and have no idea about how she might feel about you but tonight you have decided to be true to yourself. It's time to throw caution to the wind and do something dashing and utterly romantic. Tonight you will declare your feelings to her so she will know how you truly care for her.

MISSION

Behave as a proper Rose and Cross guardian should, with chivalry and honor. And find a quiet place to declare your undying love for Camille Valroux du Martise without her father or your fellow Knights seeing you.

Gavril Androsov

Nationality: Ussura

Secret Society: Rose and Cross

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 2, Hunter 2, Servant 1

Combat: Heavy Weapons 1

Languages: Montaigne, Ussuran, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are here as guests of guests. You are charged with looking out for the safety of your patrons and a pair of Montaigne nobles who need supervision, mostly due to their own petulance and lack of common sense. You can see that this night will test your skills.

Additionally, one of your own has been missing but may be in attendance. His name is Searen Renquist. You have been told that he failed to check in for several months but was spotted traveling to Vodacce with others who will be at the ball. While you have never met the man and have no idea what he looks like, you need to make yourself available should he approach you and ask for help.

Lastly, Lord Baltrusól is not who he claims to be and there are just too many threats tonight to safely protect him. Instead, a young poor knight who resembles him volunteered to take his place and act on his behalf. Sir Everrel has asked you to help protect young Gwilym as best you can.

You are here to help with guard duty for Lord Valroux du Martise but he's one of those noblemen that wants no commoners in his presence. He doesn't understand how many

hateful looks follow him from room to room. He needs you, however. Badly. It's a good thing you were raised to be the better man and tolerate his rants. You are also worried about Gwilym. You can feel an ambush a mile away and it's coming for the kid. Anybody who hurts that boy will have to answer to you. There are not many Ussurans here tonight and very few folks around with whom you are comfortable. It's awkward for you to fit into such fancy social settings. Maybe you'll get lucky and find an excuse to join a rooftop chase or something.

MISSION

Guard that obnoxious Montaigne Lord Valroux du Martise but keep an eye on young Gwilym who is definitely going to need your help before the evening is over.

Dieter Wolfsberger

Nationality: Eisen

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Athlete 3, Spy 2

Combat: Swordsman (Eisenfaust) 3

Languages: Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce(R/W)

BACKGROUND

The Knights of the Rose and Cross are here as guests of guests. You are charged with looking out for the safety of your patrons and a pair of Montaigne nobles who need supervision, mostly due to their own petulance and lack of common sense. You can see that this night will test your skills.

Additionally, Lord Baltrusól is not who he claims to be and there are just too many threats tonight to safely protect him. Instead, a young poor knight who resembles him volunteered to take his place and act on his behalf. Sir Everrel has asked you to help protect young Gwilym as best you can.

But you are here tonight for the express purpose of finding Searen Renquist. You have known him for years and would recognize him by his gestures as easily as his features. You have scrutinized the entire guest list for his favorite aliases but you don't see them. He does not appear to be in the crowd or among the servants either. If he is here, he is really deeply undercover. It's possible that he is no longer loyal to the Order. His mission involved infiltrating a cell of the Rilasciare. If you cannot find Searen, perhaps you can uncover their plans and they will lead you to him.

MISSION

Find Searen. If you can't find him, find the people who know where he is.

Note: The following two characters, "Cagliari" and Searen Renquist are actually the same person. The player receives "Cagliari" first and at the point in the game where the GM thinks it most appropriate, the player receives the second sheet for Renquist.



“Cagliari”

Nationality: Vodacce
Secret Society: Rilasciare
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 2
Skills: Courtier 1, Servant 3, Spy 1
Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 2
Languages: Avalon, Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

You think Cagliari is your name, but you're not really sure anymore and when you concentrate on it, your head hurts. You are from Avalon — no, that isn't right, you're from Vodacce, yes, Vodacce. Your head hurts less when you are from Vodacce. Your name is Giovanni... Giovanni Villanova. Yes, that's it, you are Giovanni Villanova and you are a Prince of Vodacce. You are working with the Rilasciare tonight, no wait, you hate them, no, you want to help them but must not work with them because you are the Prince. You remember a woman named Beatrice Conoti but you can't remember why she is important. That still doesn't explain why you remember being in Avalon in a field that was filled with faeries...

MISSION

What mission? A Prince doesn't have a mission.

Searen Renquist

Nationality: Vendel
Secret Society: Rose and Cross
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Panache 1
Skills: Courtier 3, Doctor 1, Spy 3
Combat: Swordsman (Valroux) 2
Languages: Avalon, Montaigne, Vendel (R/W)

BACKGROUND

Your memories are starting to return. It's hazy but most of the time you know that you are not a Vodacce named Cagliari. You are a Vendel and a Knight of the Rose and Cross. Your friend Dieter Wolfsberger is nearby. You can feel it even if you cannot see him here. Your name is Searen... Searen Renquist. You seem to be in Vodacce but you are not sure why.

As you find a mirror, you realize that this is not your face, you look like... oh Theus! you look like Giovanni Villanova! Even as an Invisible, a special agent of the Rose and Cross, you would never have imagined a reason to pose as Villanova. You have to concentrate to remember...

You were in Avalon, infiltrating a cell of the Rilasciare. You had gotten yourself in good with a man named... you can't remember his name but he introduced you to a woman named Beatrice. Then Beatrice took you to a glade and there were Sidhe and then... you don't remember.

The Rilasciare couldn't have been planning to replace Villanova with you, could they? They couldn't think you would have gotten away with it. It's crazy... but it could work. The Rose and Cross would have a Prince of Vodacce at their beck and call. It's... you need to talk with someone about this. You should find some of your brother Knights...

MISSION

Try to remember...

Harald Jorvus

Nationality: Vendel Ship Captain
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Panache 1
Skills: Captain 2, Firearms 2, Merchant 2, Stealth 2
Languages: Avalon, Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce
Item: Dr. Kish's Remedy (poison)

BACKGROUND

You were, until recently, a very successful merchant captain. You had a fleet of twenty ships at your disposal and accounts across Théah. You were well on your way to a chair in the Guilds. Then Giovanni Villanova decided he wanted to make an example of a Vendel merchant and selected you as that example. Villanova sent his fleets with orders to sink your ships, burn your warehouses, and ruin the finances of those with whom you dealt.

Pride kept you strong as you tried to persevere. Vodacce strangers appeared in Kirk soon after and you lost your family in a mysterious and questionable fire. Your friends literally disappeared off the face of Théah overnight. You have been robbed and beaten on several occasions. You now have nothing left but your life. The Guilds have cut you off from support, citing you as a bad investment. Your wife and children are gone. You have only one reason to live — revenge.

You purchased transportation to Dionna with your remaining money, then took the last of your funds to buy a vial of poison and a pistol. You will need to get very close to Villanova to use the poison and he must drink it, perhaps in his wine. If the moment arrives, you will be ready for it. If not, you can live on the streets of Dionna and find another chance. You would like the Vodacce pig to know it was you that got to him and his own fault you had a reason at all.

The pistol is for you. There is no way you would give the Prince the satisfaction of taking your life. He got everything else but Villanova cannot decide when you will die.

MISSION

Kill the man who ruined your life, then kill yourself.

Camille Valroux du Martise, Comtesse de l'Isle du Bête

Nationality: Montaigne
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 1
Skills: Artist 2, Courtier 1,
Combat: Knife 2
Languages: Montaigne (R/W)

BACKGROUND

You are young, you are beautiful, and you are rich. You have a title that hasn't been revoked by that new government of scurvy peasants in Charouse, even if it's as the countess of some stupid island in the Midnight Archipelago. You will be a fine bride for any nobleman your father finds to marry you... except you have no desire to wed. It's not a matter of love, it's just that you don't want to be tied to any single person. You have too much fun being free.

Another thing is that you are just incapable of telling anyone the truth. It's not that you couldn't tell the truth, it just seems more fun to make up stories about things. Once you start embellishing, it's so easy to continue. You realize that some of the stories get people in trouble probably because you always swear that you have absolutely accurate

information. Not that it matters: that silly Knight of the Rose and Cross keeps people from hurting you and he always believes you. Gatien is sort of cute as long as he keeps his place.

These Vodacce parties are very boring, all the men strutting about and the women cowering in the corners while your father tries to find some rich nobleman for you. One of these days you may have to sneak out your window and run away. Maybe tonight you need to liven things up with a story or two. Something about your host, who is completely insufferable and just plain hideous with the eyepatch. Of course, the story will be nothing but the "absolutely accurate truth."

MISSION

Girls just wanna have fun. At someone else's expense, of course.

Lord Prosper Valroux du Martise

Nationality: Montaigne Nobleman

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 3

Skills: Criminal 1, Courtier 2, Porté 1

Combat: Swordsman (Valroux) 1

Languages: Montaigne, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

As an exiled Montaigne Nobleman, the last year has been very difficult for you. You are very aware of the danger that affairs such as this Grand Ball pose for a man like you — not to mention the apprehension over someone revealing your secret talent in Porté. It's not strong enough to Walk from place to place but enough for you to have salvaged a sizable amount of your fortune from the Revolution back home. Still, it is difficult to know who your enemies are at this ball, as there are those who would likely enjoy seeing you die for your sorcerous blood.

Your goal this evening is to try and find a suitor for your daughter Camille. You need a profitable and secure marriage for the girl to secure your own position now that Léon has been thrown down. Lordship in Vodacce would be almost as pleasant as it was in Montaigne. Their games don't seem nearly as dangerous as you were lead to believe. Your daughter is pretty and has a huge dowry. The problem is that she also harbors a few traits the Vodacce men do not find appealing. She is headstrong, outspoken, and has a habit of embellishing the truth, to put things politely. Your work tonight will not be easy, especially when you are looking over your shoulder to see if anyone is after you.

MISSION

Make a good marriage for Camille and hope no one finds out about the Porté.

Arrigo Scaramonde

Nationality: Vodacce (Lord's Hand for Prince Villanova)

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Panache 1

Skills: Criminal 2, Merchant 1, Spy 3

Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 3

Languages: Vodacce

BACKGROUND

You are a merchant in the service of Giovanni Villanova. You have a writ signed by the Prince himself proclaiming you as his "Lord's Hand," which gives you legal permission to do all sorts of underhanded things in his name. You also serve as a spy using the code name "Sorscha" to communicate with Eduardo Caruso about the activities of the Explorer's Society. You have seen him here tonight and need to contact him to find out why they are at the Ball instead of digging up artifacts.

Secondly, you have been spending a lot of time lately ruining the life of a Vendel named Jorvus who had the nerve to compete with the Prince's merchant trade. You thought you had gotten the point across when you killed his family but apparently he's in town and no doubt looking to harm your Prince. An assistant of yours directed him to Dr. Pol Kish, a charlatan quack who mixed a poison for the suicidal Vendel. Your men made sure it wouldn't be strong enough to kill but only to paralyze temporarily. This man will probably have to die; unfortunately, you have never actually met and have no idea what he may look like. He is desperate, however, and desperate men do desperate, reckless things.

MISSION

Contact Caruso and make sure Jorvus only hurts himself.

Carla Lucini della Villanova

Nationality: Vodacce

Secret Society: Sophia's Daughters

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Skills: Courtier 2, Fortune Teller 1, Sorte 2

Combat: Knife 1

Languages: Vodacce

Item: Deck of tarot cards

BACKGROUND

You have lived in the Dionna home of your distant cousin Giovanni for the last eight months or so. He has been making you search his strands for signs of his wife Valentina and his courtesan, Juliette. He pushes you hard and when he doesn't like the results, he has pushed you down the stairs. He is an awful, awful man. Lately, he has started making threats. He spent a week cutting fingers off a servant, one a day for every day you failed to track the women. He calls you all sorts of names. You can see the strands forming around him but Valentina has hidden any that link her to him. At least you cannot find them. You can see a black strand of death forming between the two of you, however. You have no doubt that your failure has reached the limits of his patience and he will kill you soon.

You need to escape. A friend in the Prince's court has offered you a way out. Maybe she is telling the truth and maybe she is setting you up. The strands are too tangled to read accurately. Annabella said that she would find a way to get you in contact with some allies who will help you escape tonight at the Grand Ball. They will take you far away, away from Vodacce, and away from your hideous cousin. Right now you are not sure Théah is big enough to get away from him, but at least you will have a head start.

MISSION

Enough is enough. Time to get out.

Annabella Cacace

Nationality: Vodacce
Secret Society: Sophia's Daughters
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 3
Skills: Courtier 2, Performer 2, Spy 2
Combat: Knife 2
Languages: Eisen, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

You are one of the inside agents of Sophia's Daughters. Your mission is to make contact with the women in the noble families and find the victims who need rescue from the abuses of the Vodacce nobility. You walk a dangerous line in the lands of Villanova. He is still angry about his wife fleeing and has been brutally savage toward those he caught helping others escape. The risk is still worth taking, however. You know there are three other Daughters here tonight, maybe more.

Tobler, Silvestri, and Kordekov should be able to help you get Carla Lucini out of Vodacce. They may have goals of their own as well that you could help them with in exchange. Regardless, it's better if they approach you rather than you going to them. You know you are likely being watched but also you know which servants are doing the spying. You have no idea who may be following them, however.

BACKGROUND

Regardless of the risks, nothing is more important than rescuing the beleaguered women of Vodacce, especially Villanova's young cousin whom he has abused almost to the breaking point.

Gunther Kunze

Nationality: Eisen
Secret Society: die Kreuzritter
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 2
Skills: Courtier 2, Doctor 2, Herbalist 2
Combat: Fencing 1
Languages: Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce

BACKGROUND

Tonight's Grand Ball has drawn several members of die Kreuzritter to Dionna. Surprisingly, most of their interest does not lie with their host but instead with the other guests. A small handful of Montaigne citizens who were responsible for rescuing members of the du Montaigne family have taken refuge in Dionna. While this would normally not bother die Kreuzritter, the method of payment has drawn their interest. It is rumored that the exiles purchased their safety from Giovanni's nephew, Giancarlo Villanova, with the preserved heart of Cardinal d'Argeneau. Such heresy cannot be allowed. If such a thing is true, it is important for the Order to recover the heart for proper interment.

You are not really Gunther Kunze. It is the name you have used of late as an agent of die Kreuzritter. Your real name is Gerhard Tobler and you were shocked to see your sister Wilhelmina attending tonight. As important as your mission is, you have always harbored a curiosity about your family's well being. It has been many years since you saw your sister and your features have changed significantly. Perhaps you could find a way or an ally to talk with your sister and get news of your family.

There is another woman here who has drawn your interest as well. Her name is Annabella Cacace and she is smuggling women out of Vodacce. Something about her fascinates you

and if all your concerns are well in hand or end up being impossible to deal with tonight, it would be nice to take a moment for yourself to at least talk to or dance with her and feel like a normal citizen again. You can't really take such a thing seriously, but for one night, surely the Order can forgive you a single indulgence.

MISSION

Tonight you may risk those years of training and take some time for personal business. It is a dangerous concept but it would seem as though Fate wants you to know.

Captain Wynn Rawleigh

Nationality: Avalon — Brotherhood of the Coast
(*Merry Widow*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 3
Skills: Captain 2, Courtier 1
Combat: Firearms 1, Swordsman (Rogers) 1
Languages: Avalon

BACKGROUND

You are a pirate buccaneer for the Brotherhood of the Coast. You have to be very clever and careful tonight. You are seeking a rival pirate in hopes of stealing a treasure called the "Eye of the Wind."

Captain Zedeña of the *Blood Wind* is an arrogant but worthy rival. Unfortunately for him, your leader Allende wants the item, so you and your crew are going to take it. This is not Porta Serafina; your host will not be happy to have pirates crashing his party. You and your crew got in by waylaying a group of opera performers and stealing their costumes.

Having dealt with Zedeña in the past, it should be an easy task to steal the pendant. He is a bit of a fool, after all. The whole night should be rather easy to get through, and there is plenty of fine food and drink to enjoy as an added bonus.

Just so long as nobody asks you to sing Opera.

MISSION

Get that necklace for Allende, and have a rollicking good time at the party to boot!

Robin Hoyne

Nationality: Avalon — Brotherhood of the Coast
(*Merry Widow*)
Secret Society: None
Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Panache 2
Skills: Criminal 2, Dancing 1, Sailor 2
Combat: Fencing 1
Languages: Avalon
Item: Cameo

BACKGROUND

You have been sailing on the *Merry Widow* with Captain Rawleigh for about three years now. It certainly beats rotting in a prison cell, especially on the petty little charges they have caught you with in the past. Your captain seems understanding enough but he just doesn't understand how much you *need* to take things. They don't need to be valuable, just interesting or shiny. You swiped a cameo right after you entered the room and decided to add it to this silly opera costume. (If you have to sing, you should probably look for an escape because the only songs you know are bawdy sea ballads.)

This party will be a great chance for you to prove to the captain that you are actually good at picking pockets and lifting things. As long as he doesn't catch you in the act, he shouldn't mind much. What he doesn't know won't hurt you. And he better not find out because you get the feeling that he's broken you out of the last prison cell... at least for a while.

MISSION

Look for interesting things to steal and sing when everyone else does.

Cincos de Verro

Nationality: Castille — Brotherhood of the Coast
(*Merry Widow*)

Secret Society: None

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 2

Skills: Courtier 2, Sailor 2, Singing 2

Combat: Swordsman (Aldana) 2

Languages: Avalon, Castille

BACKGROUND

You sail for Captain Rawleigh and where he goes, you go. Tonight you had to ambush a troupe of opera singers to sneak into Giovanni Villanova's Grand Ball! All to steal a little pendant. The man is insane... and you love him for it.

Just because you are buccaneers doesn't mean you can't be gentlemen. You know if push comes to shove, it'll be up to you to keep up the "opera" façade. Rawleigh can't carry a tune to save your hides and Robin only knows sailor songs. Sometimes you think you should abandon the lot and go track down your hero, Captain Gosse. But Allende is such a great man and Rawleigh needs you to watch his back. And you haven't had the heart to settle down in a long time.

Not since Karlina Loggerheim stole your heart. She's a lovely pirate lass who sails with Zedeña... the same Zedeña you have tracked to this ball. The same Zedeña what has the Eye of the Wind your Captain is looking to steal from under Villanova's nose. She might be here tonight. Maybe you can find a Fate Witch to take pity on you and twist Karlina's heart into loving you like you love her. If you can't find one to make her love you, maybe you can find one who will just fall for you herself.

MISSION

Officially, get that pendant. Personally, win Karlina over. Or find someone else.

Giovanni Villanova

Nationality: Vodacce Prince

Secret Society: Why bother?

Traits: Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Panache 3

Skills: Courtier 3, Criminal 3, Dirty Fighting 3, Scholar 2, Spy 2

Combat: Swordsman (Ambrogia) 4, Swordsman (Villanova) 4

Languages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

BACKGROUND

You are the only worthy Prince of Vodacce. Tonight's ball has a handful of concerns that bother you.

Your spy within the Explorers — was it Caruso? — has told you that the Society has an interest in some bauble you own. You have decided to wear it to taunt the grubby little diggers. Some Avalon twit named Baltrusól wants your attention about some sort of treaty. He's sent a few gifts that were adequate but nothing special. You've decided to hear him out but may just kill him for sport later.

You also have a pair of representatives of the Vatican Church on hand. You know one is an Inquisitor, probably looking to borrow more of your dungeon space. Might do to just build them one of their own. The other, you aren't sure why he is here but he's a priest and that is good enough for you.

Then there are the ladies. Wouldn't do for the next ruler of Vodacce to be without one. Fredo has made arrangements for that courtesan Sabrina to be here with you and there is another one that has been hanging about: an Ussuran you made use of a week ago. You aren't sure why she is still around.

You still have that weak Strega cousin of yours around as well. Carla is not nearly as powerful as Valentina was. She can't even find your wife but your enemies don't need to know that.

Odds are half the guests are out to kill you as well. That's nothing new. In fact, half would make for an easy night. May as well enjoy the events as they unfold.

Mission

The usual.

CHAPTER TWO:

*Adventures**The Tower of Faith* Act 1*Scene 1 – Meeting the Shadows*

A short history is useful for understanding the events of this adventure. In 1664, Léon of Montaigne openly declared himself a sorcerer and offered asylum to other sorcerers within his lands. The Inquisition of the Vaticine Church responded by sending an army to capture him. Léon's troops, led by a young man named Montegue, repelled the invasion. In 1666, the Hierophant, head of the Vaticine Church, visited Léon who had granted himself the title l'Empereur. During the visit, the Hierophant died under mysterious circumstances. Soon afterwards, Cardinal d'Argeneau of Montaigne and his subordinate Archbishops disappeared. In the Vaticine Church, a council of officials selects their immediate superior, but they could not do so without the Montaigne Cardinal and he could not be replaced without the concurrence of the Montaigne Archbishops.

Cardinal Erica Durkheim of Eisen spent a great deal of time within Montaigne, trying to discover the whereabouts of the missing clergy. During that time, Montegue was placed in command of an army, which invaded first Castille and then Ussura. The Ussuran invasion proceeded so badly that he was forced to retreat through Eisen where Fauner Pösen's forces defeated his men and captured him. He was reported dead just as the peasants of Montaigne threw off their shackles and rose up against the tyrannical sorcerer ruler in open revolt.

You begin in the city of Tannen in Fischler, one of the königreichen of Eisen. It is a busy day and the market in the center of the town is doing better than most. Suddenly one of you feels a tug at the belt, and your purse is gone! A small girl dressed in rags runs away from you, the obvious culprit. (If the heroes give chase, they will be able to keep up with her but not quite catch her.)

The girl runs into a narrow alley and turns to face you, her back pressed against the wall. At the same time, several figures step out of the shadows of the alleyway in a rough circle around you. The men are dressed in dark leathers that seem to match their hard faces. One steps forward and brusquely orders the girl to return the purse for a coin. The small girl shrugs an apology to the group, tosses the purse back to you, catches the coin the man flipped to her, and skips out of the alleyway.

At this point, the heroes' actions are crucial. The man who spoke is an Eisen named Franz Kerbonais. He and his men are members of die Kreuzritter, a fact they will keep secret (and evade if queried.) They are looking for a group to undertake a difficult mission. A group that overreacts or offers violence to either his men or the little girl has proven that they are not the ones for the task. Kerbonais will attempt to prevent violence and order his men to retreat if a

fight breaks out. If the heroes listen to Franz he will apologize for the rather rude way of getting their attention, but he needs their help.

“You are known as men and women of honor, skill, and more importantly, discretion. We believe you are the right ones for an important task. There will be danger of course, but also great reward. If you are interested, meet my mistress at number 14 Kirchenstrasse at six bells tonight. I urge you to at least hear her out.”

After speaking, Kerbonais and his men will stride from the alley and disappear into the crowd. The mission is completely voluntary. If the heroes do not pursue it, they miss an opportunity to take part of the rest of the adventure. If the heroes are not traveling together or if the GM wishes to introduce new members to the party, this is an excellent time to do so. Simply have Kerbonais approach each separate group and invite them via these events to 14 Kirchenstrasse.

Scene 2 – The Lady of Church Street

As the sixth bell rings out and evening begins to fall, you find yourself at No. 14 Kirchenstrasse. It is a house on a small side street near one of the moderately sized Vaticine churches in Tannen. You knock upon the door and before your knuckles can rap a second time, it opens. A middle-aged maidservant stands within a small room and motions for you to enter. She quickly leads you through a darkened hallway and into a parlor decorated in dark oak. A number of beautiful landscape paintings hang upon the walls and red overstuffed couches invite you to sit, but the room is dominated by a beautiful woman wearing the robes of a Vaticine Cardinal.

This is Cardinal Erika Durkheim, one of the highest-ranking members of the Church. Any Vaticine Eisen or Montaigne characters will probably recognize her. She will offer the party refreshment and apologize for the “cloak and dagger” way her men invited the heroes. She needs a group willing to act against the Vaticine Inquisition and if her involvement is made public, it would damage her standing within the church. She will quickly inform the heroes that she has heard of them and their good reputation. She may hint that some of her information comes from privileged sources, such as confessionals, but this should *not* be openly stated. The Cardinal will then ask the heroes to keep this meeting secret, even if they choose not to take on the mission. She will not mention it, but they would be well-advised to do so, as Black Cross assassins will watch anyone who leaves very closely, just in case.

Should the heroes agree to keep the meeting confidential, she will explain further. The mission is to intercept two coaches full of gold. The Inquisition is taking them from Insel in Pösen (a neighboring *königreichen*) to Vaticine City in Castille. The Inquisition has been secretly gathering church tithes in Durkheim’s name while she was away in Montaigne and now means to ensure the money furthers its own agenda.

As far as Durkheim knows, Fauner Pösen is unaware of their activities in her land or she would have seized the gold herself a long time ago. Durkheim wants to see the money put to a better use and has a need for a substantial amount of cash for a plan. Privately, she is also secretly furious that the Inquisition showed such blatant disregard of her station.

She will further outline the mission that once the heroes have taken the coaches (and dealt with the Inquisition guards) they are to take the gold on to Pösen. There is a ruined church just south of the city of Insel where they are to meet an agent of Fauner Pösen a few hours after dawn. They are to hand over the coaches and will receive something in return. She hands them a bulky envelope and tells them that after they have made the exchange to open it up. They must then complete the further instructions within the envelope, which will take no more than a week. In return, they may keep 1,000 guilders each from the carriages.

The letter is sealed and has no address or name on the envelope. The ring is the official seal of state of a cardinal. Although it is obviously of Vaticine origin, the ring is not easily recognized for what it is, although a priest or religious scholarly character may know. Any sharp-eyed character will notice that Erika wears an almost identical ring. She will dodge or even outright refuse to answer any other questions. The coaches are on the move and the heroes must leave now if they are to intercept them as they near the border.

If the heroes need horses, the Cardinal has enough for the entire group stabled next door and has a map, which details what roads the coaches will be taking. Make it very clear that if the party does not move quickly, they will not be able to intercept the coach before the border where she believes the coaches will be joined by more guards. If they intercept the coach past the border, they will also not be able to make the meeting in Pösen.

If she needs to convince Objectionist heroes to help her, she will offer to help reduce tensions between the two churches and see if she can get them officially recognized by the church.

Act 2

Scene 1 – Chasing the Gold

The coaches are going as fast as they are able towards their destination. Knowing what they are carrying they take very few rest breaks. To capture the coaches, the heroes will only have three chances. The first is to seize them while they are on the move in Pösen. The party is coming from the south while the Inquisition is traveling west-southwest. If they move quickly they can get ahead of the Inquisition, but it will require riding checks from all of the characters (Riding check, DC 10/TN15). If the entire party makes this check, they can get ahead of the coaches. If some of the party makes it and the others do not, they may elect to split up so that only those who succeeded get in front of the coaches. If they elect to stay together and some fail the check, they must pursue the coaches from behind. Luckily the coaches are laden down with gold and anyone on horseback will be able to catch up eventually.

If the riding check results from above are extremely high (Riding check DC 20/TN 30), they may set up an ambush over three hours or ride further and intercept the additional

guards waiting at the border. There are twelve guards there, but only one of them is a true threat (Arturo de Paz). They are waiting at a small inn with two men posted to keep an eye out for the carriage. These guards then join those already with the carriages and after a short stop, continue to escort the coaches through Fischler.

The inn is a quiet place at this time of night; the only other person there is William the Innkeeper. He is scared of the Inquisition guards and will stay in the kitchen, only emerging to serve the patrons. Arturo de Paz and Diego Aldana del Zepeda know each other, but none of the others have ever met. This provides heroes an opportunity to use more subtle means of ambushing the coaches.

If the heroes get ahead of the coach, they may set up an ambush. The coaches should arrive within an hour, so they have some time to plan. Adjudicating the ambush is left to the GM; the coaches will arrive at the site at approximately midnight. They have lanterns to provide illumination and the drivers will not stop to aid or assist anyone. For anyone who failed to make their riding checks, they only arrive at the scene of the ambush after three rounds of combat.

Each coach has six men onboard; one drives while two others sit on the roof and two more sit inside. They are all armed with muskets and a hole has been cut in the roof of the ceiling. The men inside keep two loaded muskets with them and reload muskets for the two men upon the roof. (See *statistics below*.) The sixth man on each commands the coach and rides beside the driver. On the lead coach it is Diego Aldana del Zepeda, a Knight Inquisitor. On the second coach, it is Gunther Metzgar, an Eisen mercenary.

However, the heroes have another problem. The Inquisition was expecting trouble and has laid a trap. The rear coach carries only a quarter of the gold while the rest of the space is loaded with explosives. If the situation turns against the Inquisition, one of the men inside the coach will light the fuse and jump off. If any of the others are still on board and fighting the heroes, he will shout a warning before jumping, but it will be a simple code word (like Omega) rather than an

explanation of the trap. If the party sets up an obvious ambush, the Inquisition will send the trapped coach in first... with the fuse lit.

If they are lucky, the heroes will spot the trap in time. Since there is a reasonable fuse (1d4 rounds or 2d10 phases), a quick player can put it out easily. Also note that explosives are dangerous, and may go off if jolted too much in a hard coach chase. The GM can decide exactly how nasty to be with his players.

If the heroes don't go into the coach, or ignore the fact the bad guys have run for it, they will not be in time to stop the fuse. The explosion will destroy the coach and melt most of the gold as well. It will also do extensive damage to anyone on top of the coach (8d6 or 5k5) or anyone inside it (10d6 or 6k6).

The Chase

Should the heroes fail to make their riding checks, they will reach the road a short distance behind the carriages. They must then pursue the coaches. Each round, the coaches and the riders must make skill checks.

D20: The rear coach begins 5 lengths ahead of the riders and the lead coach remains 1 additional length ahead. Each round, the riders must make Riding checks (DC 10) and the coachmen must make a Driving check (DC 10).

Whichever result is higher increases or decreases the distance between the two sides by the difference between the rolls (winner's choice). Any attacks between the riders and the coach must be made at a -1 circumstance penalty for each length between them. Should the number of lengths exceed 15, the riders fall behind and lose the coach.

7th Sea: The rear coach will begin 5 raises ahead of the riders and the lead coach remains 1 additional raise ahead.

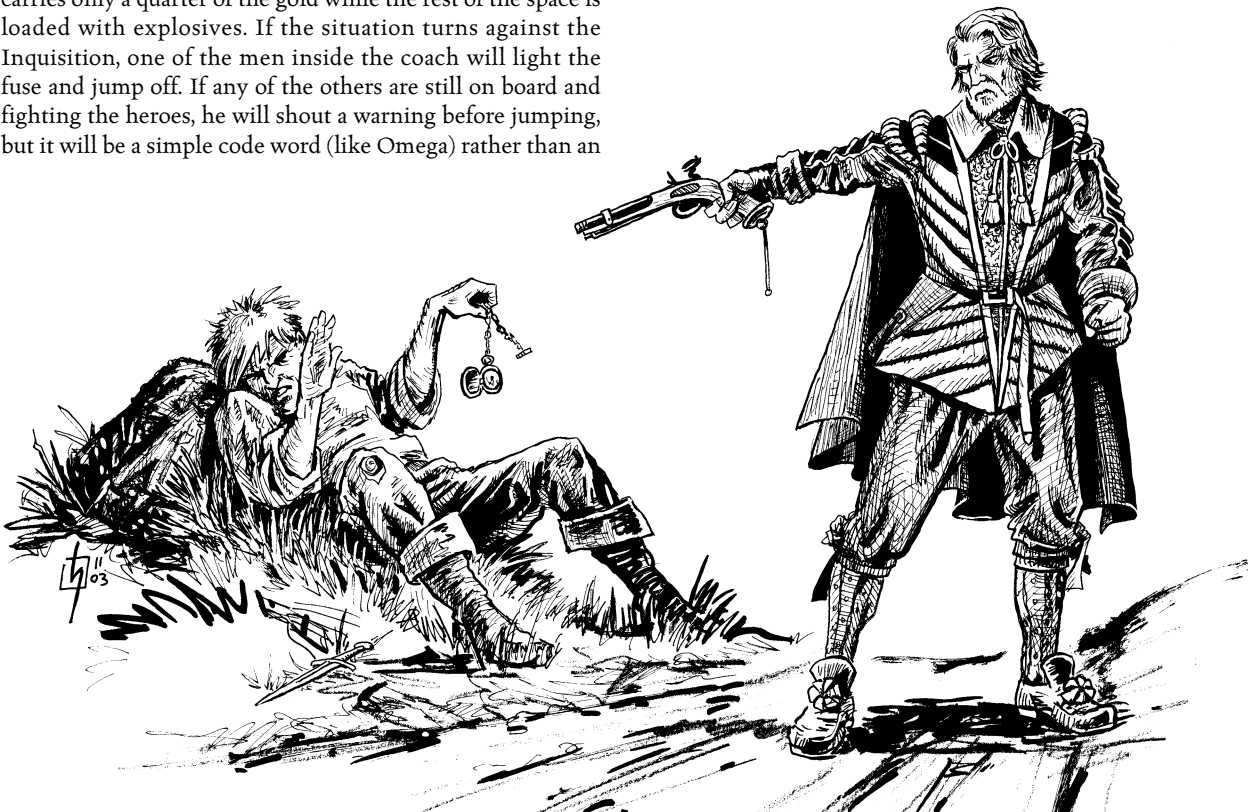


TABLE 2:1 COACH ENCOUNTERS

Roll	Results
1	A wheel comes off the rearmost carriage, which skids to a stop. No one is hurt.
2	A low branch ahead threatens to knock down anyone on top of the carriages. (d20™ : Balance check (DC 10) or be knocked off; 7th Sea™ : Balance check (TN 15) or be knocked off).
3	The fuse is accidentally lit inside the carriage. (d20™ : It explodes in 1d4 rounds; 7th Sea™ : it explodes in 2d10 phases.)
4	A rider's horse throws a shoe. The horse stops. This effectively ends the chase. Either the prey is captured or the predator is immobilized.
5	A fallen tree blocks the road. The wagons must stop and fight the riders. The obstruction cannot be cleared; proceed to melee combat.
6	Nothing happens and you continue without incident.
7	Someone in one of the carriages becomes very ill. (or something like that)
8	It begins to rain. (d20™ : All additional skill checks are at -2 circumstance penalty; 7th Sea™ : Everyone must make one raise to all riding/driving checks.)
9	A group of peasants is ahead in the road. The Inquisition will run them down. Obviously, the party will be faced with the dilemma to continue the chase or stop to help the peasants.
10	The hitch comes loose on the back carriage which then separates from the horses at the end of the next round unless someone notices it and jumps down to fix it. (d20™ : Jumping DC 15, 7th Sea™ : Leaping (TN 15) and puts the hitch back in place.) Re-attaching the hitch is fairly simply and requires no rolls. The trick is getting to the hitch without falling.

The checks are contested checks (TN 5 times opposing character's Trait). However, since the heroes are on horseback, they receive a free raise to this contested roll due to the increased speed of their mounts over the carriage. Whichever side wins the contested roll either increases or decreases the distance between the two sides (winner's choice) by 1 raise for every five points they exceeded TN. Should any ranged weapons or firearms be used between the coaches and the riders, the person firing must make a number of raises equal to the distance between them. Diego Aldana and his men will fire muskets at anyone overtaking them once they are within 3 raises. Only two men from each coach will fire, the others will drive the carriage and reload the guns.

Should there be no change in the distance between the coaches and the riders for one round, use the following table to determine that round's events.

Act 3 Scene 1 – Gifts and Heroes

The heroes should now have possession of two coaches of gold and can proceed to the ruined church to hand of the money. Should the party decide to pursue any other course of action, both the Inquisition and Durkheim's allies within die Kreuzritter will pursue them. The party with the coaches should proceed north to the ruined church Durkheim mentioned. It is quite easy to find, easily spotted from the road, but providing enough cover to conduct a clandestine meeting.

While the place looks deserted, it is easy to determine that quite a few people have come through here lately. Once inside the ruins, there is quite a group waiting. Fauner Pösen herself is there with 50 trained Eisen troops. They are posted on the walls and in defensive positions, as well as keeping a protective ring around Pösen and her prisoner. The prisoner is dressed in well-tailored but unremarkable clothing — any Montaigne or military character should recognize General Montegue (GM's discretion). He ignores the guards assigned to him. As an honorable man, he will not attempt to escape.

Pösen knows what the heroes are here for, and tells them to leave the coaches. She sends a squad to investigate and if they find nothing amiss, she will inspect them herself. After a curt nod, she tells the heroes that the amount of gold is satisfac-

tory, and that they may have Montegue. If the heroes have any sense, they removed their reward from the coaches before handing them over. Fauner will not allow them to return to the coaches after they have been handed over, and considers any attempt to do so as theft (in which case she may decide to take back her side of the deal). If the explosion destroyed one of the coaches, she will be coldly furious, though if the party brought the melted gold with them, she will calm down.

If the party attempts to ambush her or is extremely disrespectful, Pösen has no qualms about slaughtering them out of hand. She instructs her men to open fire upon anyone she deems to be breaking the agreement. Each group of six men will fire a volley at a single character while Pösen waits until someone threatens her and then destroy him. One of the squads will keep Montegue in their sights at all times and prevent him from escaping.

After she has verified the gold, Fauner Pösen mounts her horse and calls out to Montegue. "Farewell soldier. You were a pleasant houseguest." Then she smiles and adds with uncharacteristic humor, "Perhaps now you are gone I'll finally be able to win a Squares match."

The heroes should realize that Montegue is the one for whom the letter and ring are destined. He reads the letter alone while the party prepares their horses. He will then tell them the next part of the mission.

The unsigned letter reads:

Friend, I paid for your release for a reason. I believe you will recognize this ring and the man to whom it belonged. You mentioned once that you had visited his tower. Now his sister is at that tower along with the eight others. They are scheduled to be executed in three days time if word is not brought from Emperor Léon preventing it. I have been unable to find anyone else who knows the location of the tower. You must save them or the current instability may never end.

While much of the following information is not available to the players, it is provided here to give the GM some insight into the events unfolding. The ring belonged to the missing Cardinal d'Argeneau. Léon was seen wearing this ring soon after that, which caused much speculation around the court. Léon had the Cardinal killed and kept the ring both for sentimental reasons and because it held the key to one of d'Argeneau's treasures. The Cardinal owned a Surneth tower, his private sanctuary, gifted to him by Léon in earlier times. Its location within die Weissbergen (The White Mountains) remained a complete secret. However, Montegue discovered the tower's location while arranging provisioning depots for his Ussuran campaign. When he mentioned it to l'Empereur, Léon warned him that it was completely off limits, claiming that he believed Cardinal d'Argeneau often retreated there in difficult times and might be even be there currently. In truth, Léon imprisoned the archbishops of Montaigne there, in the care of his most fanatical followers.

Because of the tower's isolation, their only contact with the outside world was a Porté mage who re-provisioned the tower periodically. When the mage returned to Charouse recently, he was captured and killed by the new government. Before he died, he revealed that if he did not return, the Archbishops would be executed, a claim that the government did not believe. Cardinal Durkheim discovered all of this from her contacts in Montaigne and put her plan in motion before the deadline passed.

The archbishops including Archbishop d'Argeneau, the Cardinal's sister, are scheduled to be executed in three days; it will be a hard ride to get to the tower. The heroes must mount up at once and race to the tower to rescue the imprisoned clergy. This is the task to which Durkheim referred in her agreement with the heroes. Should they be unwilling to fulfill their obligation, Montegue will shrug and attempt to rescue the Archbishops on his own.

When Léon imprisoned the Archbishops at the tower, he left a trusted duelist in charge. In fact he made a point of leaving the one man the Cardinal despised most as his sister's warder: Philippe Gaulle du Motte, a twisted sadist who deeply lusts after Marie-Claire d'Argeneau. She was married when he met her thirteen years ago, so he killed her husband in an illegal duel. She joined the priesthood to find peace and escape his attentions. Her brother was as much help as her dedication and faith, getting her appointed to archbishop only a month before they both disappeared.

Luckily for the heroes Philippe has decided an open-air execution would serve his needs best. As the players approach the tower he prepares to throw each of the archbishops from the battlements. However, Philippe has his own plans as well. He told Marie-Claire d'Argeneau that he will stop the executions if she agrees to marry him. He planned killing the other Archbishops anyway, but there's no need for her to know that. He is just preparing to throw the first archbishop over the ramparts, and Marie-Claire is tearfully about to give in to his demands, when the heroes arrive.

Act 4

Scene 1 – Investigating the Tower

After three days of hard riding, you are more than happy to reach the end of your journey. You follow Montegue through a long natural cavern within the mountains and finally emerge out into bright daylight. To the left and the right, a steep cliff face climbs up into the sky. To the north, the ground falls away sharply reveal a breathtaking drop into a river far below. You notice that to the west, a strange tower juts upward into the sky and a rough road leads towards it. To the east, you see the ruts of several wagons leading into another valley.

As you move closer to the tower, you see that it is more like a jagged claw thrusting up out of the earth. There are no windows and only a granite double door breaks the exterior. A stone causeway reaches out to the double door and some sort of pulley and rope system hangs beneath it. Every surface of the claw appears smooth, like a river stone, except for the tower's top, which appears to have been cleanly sheared through. With no signs of other human beings, the place sends a shiver down your spine.

The tower sits on the Montaigne side of die Weissbergen, in a remote valley on a pinnacle of rock that makes a small causeway the only access. Unfortunately the causeway and tower are Surneth in origin. Any ferrous metal that touches the causeway or passes across it will melt into slag, though without producing heat or any other effects. This includes iron and steel, but not copper, brass, bronze or dracheneisen (or magic weapons, GM's discretion). Milk products also spoil if they pass across the bridge. A basket hangs down below the bridge from two ropes attached to either side; the guards use it to ferry metal objects and food into the tower. However, there is a large, loud bell attached to the bottom of the basket.

Montegue knows of the tower, the causeway and its properties, and will warn the heroes though they are more than welcome to test the effect for themselves. Remember many things such as belt buckles and rings are also made of steel. The cardinal's ring has a small disc of unknown metal concealed within it. Anything within a foot of the disc in the ring is immune to the melting effect. The disc also unlocks any lock to which it is pressed within the tower. Montegue has heard of the unlocking properties of the ring, but is unaware of its properties upon the causeway.

Scene 2 – Flying Vodacce

If the party scouts the area to the west, they will find an amazing sight in a small valley about a mile from the tower.

As you approach the valley, you hear the harsh breathing of some enormous creature. Coming around the corner of the cliff face, you spot a gigantic heaving mass of brown flesh. It seems to shiver with each new breath and to grow larger as you watch. As you come closer, you see dozens of men and women scurrying around beneath the behemoth, though you cannot make out what they are doing.

In truth, a group of Vodacce men and women are inflating five hot air balloons. Many are simple sellswords, but some are obviously the scholars and inventors responsible for the aircraft. The balloons are nearly ready, but there seems to be some sort of argument preventing any taking off. The party consists of men in the employ of Prince Caligari, led by his grandson Marcello. He has chosen tonight to invade and take the tower, so he can seize any Syrneth artifacts it may contain. He thinks this is why it is guarded and does not know about the archbishops inside. He is arguing with his wife Sofia, the leader of the scientists preparing the balloons. While the couple is very much in love, they fight with typical Vodacce passion.

The balloons are Sofia's life work. She thought her husband and men were coming as protection for a secret test flight far from all prying eyes. Only now has she discovered their real purpose: she can't conduct a scientific test while engaged in aerial assault and is outraged at being deceived. However, Vodacce law demands she defer to her husband, who is on family orders. She knows she will eventually lose the argument, but her honor is at stake so she can't back down. Marcello knows that time may be a factor, and he may lose the element of surprise if this goes on much longer.

Although they may not know it, the heroes have the solution. If they suggest an alliance to storm the tower, both sides have an escape clause from the argument. All the Vodacce are loyal Vaticine, so a desperate mission to save the Archbishops allows Sofia to back down for the greater good of holy mother church and keep her honor.

Despite this, Marcello is not in the habit of providing favors when he can extort a price for them. He wants at least 500 guilders, any artifacts in the tower, and possession of the site. He does not feel that he needs any more troops, but the heroes' quest allows him to pacify his wife. Characters who figure this out can make a harder bargain. Either way, Marcello can be bargained down to simply taking possession of the tower. Although a successful trial of this new flying technology will prove a great bargaining chip in the Great Game, the Caligari family needs hideouts and strongholds since the fall of their island. Note that the party has no authority to give him the tower, but he doesn't need to know that. Marcello does not know about the ring, so the heroes may keep it or offer it to sweeten the deal.

Each balloon can take a total of four men (three plus a pilot) and still fly well. A fifth man makes it heavy and just able to reach the top of the tower, six will make it very difficult to stay aloft, and have trouble fitting in the basket! Anything beyond six and the balloon will not get off the ground. There are five balloons total, and a round trip to the tower and back will take several hours; the Vodacce will reject any plan that involves destroying any balloon on purpose. The soldiers will happily let the party take their place on the first run. They are all frightened of flying in these contraptions, but dare not say so for fears of insulting Sofia (and therefore Marcello). Even if the party doesn't find or make a deal with the Vodacce, they will still attack the tower at the same time as the party. If the heroes decide to assault the tower with balloons, the GM should have each player clearly denote upon which balloon he is riding. Montegue goes in the third balloon.

Any unskilled attempt at using the balloons is a very difficult proposal.

D20: Heroes who attempt to use a balloon must make five Piloting checks from take off to the tower with a DC 20. Should any of these checks fail, the balloon will not pass close enough to the tower for the passengers to disembark. They will be carried along by the wind for several hours before the balloons descend enough to disembark.

7th Sea: Heroes who attempt to use a balloon must make five Wits checks from take off to the tower with a TN 25. Should any of these checks fail, the balloon will not pass close enough to the tower for the passengers to disembark. They will be carried along by the wind for several hours before the balloons descend enough to disembark.

The GM may reduce the difficulty of these checks if the players have an alternate means of aiding the pilot (such as Lardom weather effects or the like). Any Vodacce NPCs will automatically make these checks.

After a short while, the Vodacce indicate that they are ready. Each of you climbs into a basket and the bespectacled scholar motions for one of the soldiers to cut the balloon loose. With a stomach-churning jolt, the contraption lurches into the air. After a long moment, you rise high enough to see the tower thrusting into the air far ahead of you. Before you can speak, the balloon rises high enough for a strong gust of wind to catch it and hurl you forward towards the tower. You can make out dozens of men gathering upon the wide roof, although several of them are standing quite close to the edge. The crash of distant thunder suddenly alerts you to the fact that the men upon the tower are beginning to fire towards you.

While approaching the tower by hot air balloon, characters may make one attack from long range and one from short range before reaching the tower. The balloons arrive in order one at a time (meaning the third balloon can fire long range shots while the second one fires short range shots and the first balloon is sweeping alongside the rooftop); only one balloon may disembark at a time. The heroes must use caution when leaping down into the fray (**d20:** Jumping skill check DC 10; **7th Sea:** Leaping TN 15) or they will fall prone and need to stand up as their first action. Each balloon will linger for an additional round, then drift down towards the road leading to the tower on the following round, and away from the tower completely the round after that.

Scene 3 – Inside and On Top of the Tower

If the players enter the tower through the main door, read the following description:

The tower's inner walls are all made of a smoothly rounded substance, almost ceramic in texture. Humans have obviously adapted the place with the additions of doors, tapestries, furniture and rugs, but something unnatural seems to linger in the rounded corners of the room. A thin wrought iron staircase spirals up and out of sight above you while two hallways lead off, each with several doors.

The tower is 8 stories tall and the layout for each is very similar. There is a single hallway that bisects the tower with a spiral staircase up the very center of the structure. Several doors lead from the hallways into bedrooms, armories, pantries, sitting rooms and other areas with six to eight rooms per level. None of the rooms contain Synchron artifacts. Two men are stationed on each floor armed with muskets. They will fire upon heroes dashing upstairs and attempt to slow them down enough for the men upon the rooftop to prepare themselves.

There are several gates blocking the staircase, preventing anyone from ascending or descending past them. These are all open until someone has detected the heroes' presence when they will be locked, though they can easily be forced (D20: Strength check DC 15, 7th Sea: Brawn check TN 20). The staircase ends at a large door that leads out onto the rooftop.

Scene 4 – On the Rooftop

Once the heroes reach the rooftop, read the following passage:

Dozens of men gather themselves upon the roof to fight off your invasion. Armed with muskets and rapiers, they are an ugly assortment of ruffians and thugs. A line of prisoners stands along the roof's edge while a well dressed Montaigne nobleman sneers at them. He quickly barks out a series of commands to the cutthroats who prepare to assault you. Another man lumbers to the front as he slowly draws out an axe so large that you wonder how he can even swing it. His scream of rage unnerves you slightly as the other men call out "Pour l'Empereur!" Several large objects hang in the air beside the tower while baskets filled with men hang beneath them.

Philippe has assembled most of his men to watch the executions upon the rooftop. They are fanatical in their loyalty to him and will fight off any attempted rescue while Philippe grabs Marie-Claire and tries to leave the tower at the first sign of trouble. If the party attacks via balloons, he will go down the stairs, dragging Marie-Claire with him and locking doors behind him. (D20: Break down the door, 7th Sea: Brawn check TN 15 to barrel through them.) Any hero with the Cardinal's key will find that the doors unlock themselves as he passes. If the party moves quickly enough to block the staircase or comes up from within the tower, Philippe will seize Marie-Claire, leap to one of the balloons, and descend to the road beside the causeway. If cornered, he will challenge the best swordsman in the party to a duel offering to surrender the tower unconditionally if the hero wins, and unmolested escape for he and his men if he wins. Details of such a duel are left to the GM.

Upon the rooftop, each player will face an entire brute squad (6 men) to slow them down as Philippe escapes. Another group of thugs advances upon the Archbishops and execute one at the end of each turn by pushing them off the building. Montegue and the Vodacce men will attempt to save the Archbishops if none of the heroes do.

Epilogue

Montegue is freed, as are the Archbishops. While the clergy wish for someone to escort them home, Montegue is only interested in finding his wife. He has done enough for Montaigne, and was not even there when his son was born (he does not yet know that the child did not survive birth; see *The Montaigne Revolution sourcebook* for more details). This time he means to reunite with her, no matter what. Cardinal Durkheim now looks very good politically: by rescuing the Montaigne archbishops, a new Cardinal can be elected. At that point, she can return to Eisen and devote herself to her own people, or pursue whatever plans she might have of a more global nature.

The heroes, of course, have the undying gratitude of both Montegue and the archbishops, which they can parlay into increased political clout or whatever material rewards the GM deems reasonable.

NPCs and Statistics

Act 1

Franz Kerbonais (d20™)

Spy 3/Mortis Assassin 4/Nacht Sorcerer 2: CR 9; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 3d6+6+6d10+12; hp 68; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork stiletto +9/+4 melee (1d4+4) and stiletto +7 melee (1d4+3) OR pistol +8 ranged (1d10); SA Aim for the Vitals, Ambush Attack +4, Attack Through the Shadows, Fast Blade – Slow Opponent, Sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Alias, Contacts, The Dark Paths; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 13; AL LN; Skills: Bluff +11, Climb +11, Concentration +8, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +11, Gather Information +6, Hide +11, Innuendo +7, Move Silently +11, Open Locks +6, Read Lips +7, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Castilian, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Spot +6; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with a short blade in the off hand), Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Improved Initiative, Membership (die Kreuzritter), Parry, Riposte, Two Weapon Fighting (only with a short blade in the off hand), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Focus (Stiletto), Weapon Specialization (Stiletto).

Franz Kerbonais – Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: None
Arcana: None
Advantages: Castilian, Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W); Combat Reflexes, Membership (die Kreuzritter)
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3
Criminal: Ambush 3, Gambling 2, Quack 2, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 4

Spy: Conceal 3, Disguise 3, Lip Reading 2, Poison 1, Sincerity 3, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4
Mortis (Journeyman): Double Attack (Knife/Knife) 5, Exploit Weakness (Mortis) 4, Riposte (Knife) 4, Throw (Knife) 4

Knights of die Kreuzritter (d20™)

Guards (Warrior) 4: CR 3; SZ Medium (Humanoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks Dagger +6 melee (1d4+2); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +5, Reflex +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL LN; Skills: Climb +5, Hide +4, Jump +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Speak Language (Eisen [alternately, any one language from your campaign setting]), Spot +3; Feats: Improved Initiative, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

Knights of die Kreuzritter (7th Sea™)

2 Squads (Threat 3, 6 men each)
TN to be hit: 20
Usual weapons: Small Weapons (Knives)
Skills: Ambush +1, Climbing +1, Leaping +1, Shadowing +1, Sprinting +1, Stealth +1

Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim (d20™)

Eisen Noble 4/ Porté Mage 4: CR 8; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 4d6+12+4d8+12; hp 64; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC10; Atks: Unarmed +7/+1 melee (1d3+1); SA Spells; SQ Apprentice, Attunement 1 mile, Bleeding 2, Bring, Commanding Presence +1, Friends in High Places, Pocket 5, Seduction, Taunt; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +13; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 18; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +15, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perform +10, Sense Motive +13, Speak Language (Castillian, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W) [alternately, any five languages from your campaign setting]), Spot +9; Feats: Appearance (Above Average), Debater, Half-Blooded (Porté), Iron Will, Toughness.

Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, Finesse: 1, Wits: 4, Resolve: 4, Panache: 3
Reputation: 93
Background: Mistaken Identity
Arcana: Altruistic
Advantages: Castille, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne, Théan (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Connections (die Kreuzritter), Faith, Noble
Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Politics 3, Sincerity 4
Performer: Acting 4, Cold Read 3, Dancing 2, Oratory, Singing 3
Porté (Apprentice): Attunement 3, Blood 3, Bring 3, Pocket 3
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Occult 3, Philosophy 5, Research 4, Theology 5
Servant: Accounting 2, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 4
Streetwise: Shopping 4, Socializing 4, Street Navigation 3
(For more information see Church of the Prophets™)

Act 2

Diego Aldana del Zepeda (d20™)

Note: Diego hates to fight in melee. He wears a brace of rounds for his pistols and uses them as much as possible before entering hand-to-hand combat. He has 4 loaded to begin with. He will also try to seduce any women he likes the look of, even during a fight to the death!

Castillian Inquisitor 2/Swashbuckler 5/Aldana 2: CR 9; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 5d6+10+4d8+8; hp 59; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +2 Light Footed); Atks: Masterwork rapier +12/+7 melee (1d6+2) OR pistol or musket +10 ranged (1d10); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Slipping Feint; SQ Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12; AL LE; Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +5, Innuendo +6, Ride +7, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Castillian, Montaigne, Théan [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Tumble +14; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Faith, Expertise, Parry, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Finesse (any applicable weapon, only in light or no armor), Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Diego Aldana del Zepeda, The Inquisition Leader – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, Finesse: 3, Wits: 3, Resolve: 3, Panache: 2
Reputation: -15
Background: None
Arcana: none
Advantages: Castille (R/W), Montaigne, Théan (R/W), Faith, Noble, Memberships (Inquisition, Swordsman's Guild)
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3
Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Scheming 3, Seduction 3, Lip Reading 4, Politics 4, Sincerity 4
Drive Carriage: 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 2
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3
Aldana (Apprentice): Feint 2, Riposte 2, Tagging 3, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 1

Arturo de la Paz (d20™)

Arturo is a very quiet commander who never loses his temper. He believes passionately in the Church and will go out of his way to kill any sorcerers or Objectivists he encounters. He will not surrender under any circumstances.

Castillian Swashbuckler 6/Aldana 3: CR 9; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 6d6+12+3d8+6; hp 58; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +2 Light Footed); Atks: Masterwork rapier +13 melee (1d6+2) or pistol +11 ranged (1d10); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, One Blade as Two, Slipping Feint; SQ Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12; AL LN; Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +11, Climb +8, Diplomacy +11, Jump +9, Sense Motive +11, Speak

Language (Castillian, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Tumble +14, Use Rope +6; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Parry, Slip, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Finesse (any applicable weapon, only in light or no armor), Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Arturo de la Paz – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
TN to be hit: 25
Attack Rolls: 7k3 rapier or 4k3 pistol
Damage Rolls: 5k2 rapier or 4k3 pistol
Skills: Attack (Fencing) 4, Attack (Pistol) 3, Climbing 2, Drive Carriage 3, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4, Footwork 3, Parry (Fencing) 3, Sincerity 4
Note: Speaks Castillian, Montaigne, and Vodacce. Aldana Journeyman.

Gunther Metzgar (d20™)

Gunther couldn't care less about the Inquisition. It's just a job for him.

Eisen Fighter 1/Swashbuckler 5/Eisenfaust 3: CR 9; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 5d6+10+3d8+6+1d10+2; hp 68; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +3 masterwork studded leather armor, +1 panzerhand, +2 Light Footed); Atks: Longsword +10/+5 melee (1d8+3) and panzerhand +11/+6 melee (1d6+1); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Retaliatory Blow, Sunder; SQ DR 2/–, Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12; AL NE; Skills: Bluff +12, Climb +5, Hide +4, Intimidate +12 (+16 Large), Jump +7, Ride +5, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign setting]); Feats: Ambidexterity (only with panzerhand in off hand), Brawny, Exotic Shield Proficiency (Panzerhand), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Flashing Steel, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Large, Parry, Sunder (only with panzerhand), Toughness, Two Weapon Fighting (only with panzerhand in off hand), Weapon Finesse (any applicable weapon, only in light or no armor), Weapon Focus (Panzerhand).

Gunther Metzgar – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 4, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
TN to be hit: 25
Attack Rolls: 7k3 rapier or 4k3 pistol
Damage Rolls: 5k2 rapier or 4k3 pistol
Skills: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 2, Attack (Panzerhand) 4, Beat (Heavy Weapon) 4, Bind (Panzerhand) 4, Climbing 3, Disarm (Panzerhand) 4, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 4, Footwork 3, Leaping 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Panzerhand) 4, Uppercut 4
Note: Speaks Eisen, Montaigne. Eisenfaust Journeyman.

Inquisition Agents (5 per coach) (d20™)

Guards (Warrior) 3: CR 2; SZ Medium (Humanoid); HD 3d8+3; hp 20; Init +1 (Dex); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather armor); Atks Musket +4 ranged (1d10) OR rapier +5 melee (1d6+2); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +4, Reflex +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL LN; Skills: Climb +4, Hide +2, Jump +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Speak Language (Eisen [alternately, any one language from your campaign setting]), Spot +3; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency Firearms), Power Attack.

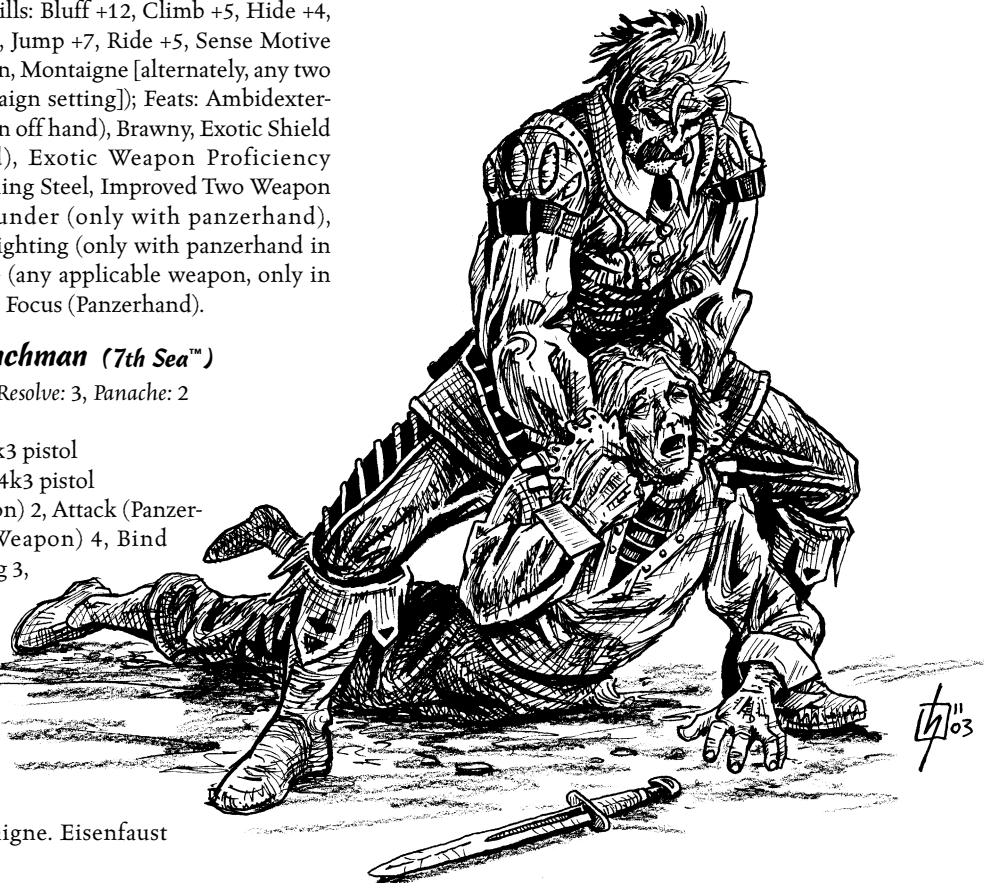
Inquisition Agents (5 per coach) (7th Sea™)

2 Squads (Threat 2, 5 men each)
TN to be hit: 15
Usual weapons: Medium (Rapiers), Firearms (Muskets)
Skills: Attack (Fencing) 2, Attack (Firearms) 2

Act 3

Fauner Konrad Pösen (d20™)

Note: As you can see, Fauner has a range of skills that are incredibly impressive. She has a full set of dracheneisen plate mail (drachenschuppe), a dracheneisen panzerhand, a dracheneisen boar spear, and Totung, The Emperor's sword (+3 dracheneisen longsword). She is included for completeness' sake and not meant to be an opponent for the heroes. If they are foolish enough to attack her, feel free to have Fauner and her guards inflict whatever woes you can devise upon their empty heads.



Eisen Fighter 5/Drexel 2/Eisenfaust 5/Gelingen 1/Leegstra 1/Pösen 5/Unabwendbar 1: CR 20; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 5d8+20+14d8+56+1d12+4; hp 205; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25 (+3 Dex, +10 *drachenschuppe*, +2 *dracheneisen panzerhand*); Atks: Totung (*The Emperor's Broadsword*) +30/+25/+20/+15 melee (1d10+10) and dracheneisen panzerhand +24 melee (1d6+4) or dracheneisen boar spear +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d8+8); SA Retaliatory Blow, Whirlwinds of Steel; SQ Apprentice Level Training (Metzger Stance), Concentration, Favored Prey (Kobold), Focused Training (Eisenfaust, Leegstra, Pösen), In The Thick, Off-Hand Training (Eisenfaust), Schooled In Command; SV Fort +25, Reflex +9, Will +15; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16; AL LN; Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +7, Heal +5, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (War) +12, Ride +17, Search +6, Sense Motive +19, Speak Language (Eisen, High Eisen, Théan [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +10; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with panzerhand on off-hand), Appearance (Above Average), Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Exotic Shield Proficiency (panzerhand), Great Cleave, Indomitable Will, Iron Will, Leadership, Mounted Combat, Orders, Power Attack, Proud, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Sunder (only with panzerhand), Toughness (gained twice), Two Weapon Fighting (only with panzerhand in off-hand), Warrior Born, Weapon Expert (Longsword), Weapon Focus (Boar Spear, Longsword, Panzerhand, Zweihander), Weapon Specialization (Boar Spear, Longsword, Zweihander).

Fauner Konrad Pösen – Villain (7th Sea™)

When Fauner was introduced in the *Eisen™* book, she was presented as a Villain but with a strong sense of honor and a desire to do the right thing. However, over time, she has grown into a complex character driven by a deep love of her nation, and thus should not be regarded as unrelentingly evil. She is, however, inordinately stubborn and frequently harsh and blunt.

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

Reputation: –70 (see note above)

Background: Fear (of Romance)

Arcana: Proud

Advantages: Academy, Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Dracheneisen, Eisen Accent (North), Indomitable Will, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Noble (She does not have membership in the Swordsman's Guild because she thinks it is silly.)

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 5, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3, Break Fall 1, Leaping 3, Lifting 2, Rolling 4, Swimming 2, Swinging 3, Side-step 5

Commander: Ambush 4, Artillery 3, Diplomacy 2, Incitation 2, Leadership 4, Logistics 4, Strategy 4, Tactics 5

Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Politics 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 2, First Aid 3

Hunter: Ambush 5, Stealth 3, Tracking 4

Rider: Ride 5

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Eye-gouge 5, Throat Strike 5

Drexel (Master): Disarm (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Drexel) 5

Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Gelingen (Master): Exploit Weakness (Bear) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ghoul) 5, Exploit Weakness (Horse) 5, Exploit Weakness (Kobold) 5, Exploit Weakness (Siren) 5, Exploit Weakness (Wolf) 5

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5,

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

Panzerhand: Hand (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 5

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 5, Parry (Polearm) 5

Pösen (Master): Beat (Polearm) 5, Charge (Polearm) 5, Lance (Polearm) 5, Exploit Weakness (Pösen) 5

Unabwendbar (Master): Advance 5, Charge 5, Envelop 5, Hold Ground 5, Trim Line 5, Withdraw 5

Wrestling: Grapple 3, Escape 5, Head Butt 3

Full suit of drachenschuppe: 24 Armor Points, +10 to TN to be hit, –2 Kept dice from attacker's damage

Dracheneisen Boar Spear: +1 Unkept die when using Polearm Knacks

Totung (the Emperor's Dracheneisen Sword): +2 Unkept dice when using Heavy Weapon Knacks

Montegue du Montaigne (d20™)

Although born a peasant, Montegue rose through the ranks of the military and distinguished himself by his skill at arms and his noble demeanor. The ruler of Montaigne (who was still using the title of "King") was so impressed that he overlooked the man's humble origins and permitted him to marry his youngest daughter, Princess Dominique and add "du Montaigne" to his name. A modest man, he usually goes by his first name alone.

Montaigne Fighter 5/Valroux Swordsman 5: CR 10; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d10+10; hp 74; Init +6 (+2 Dex; +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex; +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork rapier +12/+7 melee (1d6+3) and main gauche +10 melee (1d4+2) OR pistol or musket +12 ranged (1d10); SA Raise the Stakes; SQ Focused Training, Nimble; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 19; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +16, Climb +4, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (military history) +8, Ride +10, Sense Motive +13, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Théah, Ussuran [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Swim +4, Tumble +14, Wilderness Lore +9; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light or no armor, with a fencing weapon and short blade), Combat Virtuoso, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Expertise (only with rapier and main gauche), Indomitable Will, Iron Will, Leadership, Orders, Power Attack (Only with rapier and main gauche), Two Weapon Fighting (only in light or no armor, with a fencing weapon and short blade), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Weapon Focus (main gauche), Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (main gauche), Weapon Specialization (rapier), Willful (virtue).

Monteque du Montaigne – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 5
Reputation: 120
Background: None
Arcana: Willful
Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Ussuran, Commission (General), Indomitable Will, Swordsman's Guild, Academy, Montaigne Accent (South)
Commander: Ambush 5, Artillery 4, Incitation 5, Leadership 5, Logistics 5, Strategy 5, Tactics 5
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3
Hunter: Stealth 1, Survival 2, Tracking 2
Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 5
Rider: Ride 4
Streetwise: Scrounging 4, Shopping 1, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2
Valroux (Master): Double Parry 5, Feint 5, Tagging 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5
(For more information, see *Montaigne™* and *The Montaigne Revolution™*.)

Eisen Soldiers, Pösen Iron Guard (d20™)

Human Eisen Théan Ranger 5/Gelingen 1/ Pösen Iron Guard 1: CR 7; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d8+2+6d10+12; HP 61; Init +2 (Dex); Speed 30 ft; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks Longsword +11 melee (1d10+3); SA Favored Enemy, Favored Prey; SQ Iron Guard Membership, Provided By Nature (Healing Herbs); SV Fort +10, Reflex +3, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 13; AL LG; Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +5, Climb +9, Heal +8, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Intuit Direction +9, Jump +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Search +8, Speak Language (Eisen, High Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages native to your campaign setting]), Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +11; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light, medium, or no armor), Iron Will, Track, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light, medium, or no armor), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Expert (Longsword), Weapon Focus (Longsword).

Eisen Guard [Pösen] (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: none
Advantages: Castillian, Eisen (R/W), Vodacce; Eisen Accent (North), Keen Senses, Membership: Iron Guard, Toughness
Doctor: Diagnosis 1, First Aid 1
Hunter: Stealth 1, Survival 2, Tracking 1
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 1
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 1
Gelingen (Apprentice): Exploit Weakness (your choice) 3
(For more information, see *Swashbuckling Adventures™*, *Iron Guard*, Ch. 3: *Prestige Classes and Eisen™*.)

Act 4

Marcello Caligari – Vodacce Leader (d20™)

Vodacce Noble 1/Fighter 4/Villanova 3: CR 8; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 4d8+8+4d10+8; hp 63; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork rapier +8/+3 melee (1d6+2) and dagger +8 melee (1d4+1); SA Feinting, Stop-thrust; SQ Commanding Presence +1, Focused Training; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +12, Climb +6, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +12, Jump +6, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Vodacce, Montaigne [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +5, Tumble +12; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light or no armor with a small blade in off-hand), Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Left Handed, Parry, Riposte, Two Weapon Fighting (only in light or no armor with a small blade in off-hand), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Focus (Dagger, Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier).

Marcello Caligari – Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: 0
Background: Debt
Arcana: none
Advantages: Montaigne, Vodacce (R/W); Combat Reflexes, Left-Handed, Noble, Membership (Swordsman's Guild)
Athlete: Break Fall 3, Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Swinging 3, Throwing 3
Courtier: Dancing 5, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Politics 2, Scheming 3, Sincerity 4
Spy: Bribery 4, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3
Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 4
Villanova (Journeyman): Double Parry 4, Feint 4, Stop Thrust 4, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 4

Sofia Caligari (d20™)

Vodacce Expert 7: CR 6; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 7d6+14; hp 41; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: Dagger +5 melee (1d4); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 13; AL LN; Skills: Balance +11, Bluff +11, Climb +10, Craft (Balloon Making) +11, Craft (Basket Making) +4, Knowledge (History) +14, Knowledge (Mathematics) +14, Knowledge (Natural Philosophy) +14, Knowledge (Physics) +14, Listen +16, Sense Motive +13, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Vestenmannavjar [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +16; Feats: Alertness, Craftsman, Keen Senses, University.

Sofia Caligari – Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: -5
Background: Moment of Awe
Arcana: none
Advantages: Keen Senses, University
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3
Ballooning*: Balance 3, Care & Maintenance 4, Inflating 2, Pilot 2

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 3, Mathematics 3, Natural Philosophy 3, Occult 1, Philosophy 1, Research 4, Theology 3
Servant: Accounting 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Hagglng 3, Menial Tasks 4, Unobtrusive 4
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 2

***BALLOONING (FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SCENARIO)**

Balance: Ability to keep one's balance and defending oneself while aloft, if necessary.

Care and Maintenance: Ability to pack, transport it without damage, unpack it, and put it together. Ability to look for and repair fabric tears and rips, frayed rope, and unstable baskets.

Inflating: Ability to get the balloon ready for flight without setting fire to it. Also how to get a fire hot enough to do the job and reduce inflation time.

Pilot: To know how to judge wind speed and weight. After a few experiments they may even realize wind direction changes at different heights, but for the moment they are slaves to wind.

12 Vodacce Brutes (d20™)

Vodacce Warrior 4: CR 3; SZ Medium (Humanoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 24; Init +2 (Dex); AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather armor); Atks Rapier +5 melee (1d6+1) OR pistol or musket +6 ranged (1d10); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +5, Reflex +3, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL NE; Skills: Balance +4, Climb +4, Jump +4, Move Silently +5, Speak Language (Vodacce [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +2, Tumble +2; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

2 Brute Squads (7th Sea™)

2 Squads (Threat 3, 6 men each)

TN to be hit: 20

Usual weapons: Medium Weapons (Rapiers) or Firearms (Pistols)

Skills: Attack (Firearms) +1, Balance +1, Climbing +1, Leaping +1, Stealth +1



Invisible College Balloonists (d20™)

Vodacce Expert 2: CR 1; SZ Medium (Humanoid); HD 2d6+2; hp 11; Init +2 (Dex); AC 10; Atks Cutlass + 5 melee (1d6+1) OR musket +6 ranged (1d10); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +1, Reflex +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; AL N; Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Craft (Balloon) +7, Jump +5, Profession (Pilot) +7, Speak Language (Vodacce [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +5, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5; Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms).

Invisible College Balloonists (7th Sea™)

TN to be hit: 10

Usual weapons: Firearms (Muskets)

Skills: Attack (Firearms) +1, Balance +1, Climbing +1, Leaping +1

Philippe Gaulle du Motte, Master of the Tower (d20™)

Montaigne Swashbuckler 6/Valroux 4: CR 10; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 6d6+18+4d10+12; hp 79; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 29 (+3 Dex, +12 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +3 Dashing & Daring, +1 Light Footed); Atks: Masterwork rapier +13/+8 melee (1d6+4) and masterwork main gauche +13 melee (1d4+3); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike; SQ Light Footed; SV Fort +3, Ref +12, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16; AL CE; Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +13, Climb +8, Diplomacy +13, Jump +8, Listen +9, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Vestenmannavnjar [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +9, Tumble +13; Feats: Ambidexterity (only in light or no armor with a short blade in off hand), Combat Reflexes, Dashing and Daring, Envious, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Parry, Power Attack (only with fencing blade and short blade), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner, Intermediate, Master), Weapon Finesse (any applicable weapon, only in light or no armor), Weapon Focus (Main Gauche, Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Main Gauche, Rapier).

Philippe Gaulle du Motte, Master of the Tower – Villain (7th Sea™)

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

Reputation: -30

Background: Obligation

Arcana: Envious

Advantages: Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Vestenmannavnjar; Combat Reflexes, Connections (L'Empereur Léon), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3

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

Criminal: Ambush 2, Gambling 2, Quack 4, Shadowing 2, Stealth 2,

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 2, Throw (Knife) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 4

Valroux (Journeyman): Double Parry 4, Feint 4, Tagging 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4

Orm Stenson (d20™)

Stenson glowers at his foes until his action comes up and then hammers away with an enormous two-handed sword and an ear-piercing scream. He always attacks obvious Vendels first and after that the largest person present. He has very little in the way of strategy, but is so enormous that it takes a lot of damage to stop him. He will be at the top of the tower and guard Felipe's retreat.

Vestenmannavnjar Fighter 3/Bearsarker 5: CR 8; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 3d10+9+5d12+15; hp 83; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 hide armor); Atks: Greatsword +17/+12 melee (2d8+7); SA Bearsarker Rage 3/day; SQ DR 2/-, Unstoppable; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8; AL CE; Skills: Climb +6, Jump +6, Intimidate +13, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Montaigne, Vestenmannavnjar [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Tumble +8, Wilderness Lore +6; Feats: Brawny, Large, Legendary Trait (Strength), Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Expert (Greatsword), Weapon Focus (Greatsword).

Orm Stenson (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 6, Finesse: 3, Wits: 2, Resolve: 4, Panache: 1

TN to be hit: 25

Attack Roll: 7k3 heavy weapon

Damage Roll: 9k2 heavy weapon

Skills: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Leaping 2, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4, Rolling 2, Survival 3
 Special: Speaks Montaigne and Vendel. Bearsarker, Large, Toughness

Tower Brute Squads (d20™)

Guards (Warrior) 3: CR 2; SZ Medium (Humanoid); HD 3d8+3; hp 20; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather armor); Atks Rapier +5 melee (1d6+2); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +4, Reflex +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL LN; Skills: Climb +4, Hide +2, Jump +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +2, Speak Language (Eisen [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +5; Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Tower Brute Squads – Henchmen (7th Sea™)

There is one opponent for every player at the top of the tower, plus one at the bottom of the tower and another stationed half-way up the tower.

TN to be hit: 15

Usual weapons: Medium (Rapiers)

Skills: -1 to all Social skills — they've been away from home a long time!

The Archbishops of Montaigne (d20™)

For the purposes of this scenario, all the archbishops have the same statistics. Brief character descriptions follow.

Montaigne Aristocrat 7: CR 6; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 7d6+21; hp 48 ea.; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: Unarmed +6 melee (1d3+1); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 15, Wis

14, Cha 13; AL LG; Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +11, Innuendo +9, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Religion) +12, Listen +9, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Castillian, Montaigne, Théan [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +9; Feats: Faith, Natural Diplomat, Ordained, Priest.

The Archbishops of Montaigne (7th Sea™)

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

Reputation: 20

Background: None

Arcana: None

Advantages: Castillian, Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W); Faith, Noble, Ordained

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

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Gossip 3, Politics 4, Sincerity 2

Priest: Diplomacy 3, Mooch 3, Oratory 4, Philosophy 2, Theology 4, Writing 3

Scholar: History 3, Law 3, Mathematics 2, Occult 1, Research 3

MARIE-CLAIRE D'ARGENEAU

A striking and passionate young woman who wants no more than to mourn her husband and live a quiet life. She is ready to fight to protect what she still has.

CEDRIC DUBOISE DU ARRENT

A very fat indolent priest who is always hungry.

IRENE ÉTALON DU TOILLE

A frail woman who believes Theus will rescue them from everything, so does very little to help herself except pray incessantly.

VICTOR ALLAIS DU CRIEUX

An old man who appears a bit cantankerous, but actually wise and kind.

PIERRE LEVEQUE D'AU

The third son of a noble, who wishes he could have been a swordsman, most likely to get in the way.

MARC ROIS ET REINES DU ROGNÉ

A brave and kind ex-soldier who is now paralyzed by a fear of heights!

LYDIA PRAISSE DU RACHETISSE

Quiet and reserved, a secret half-blood Porté sorceress (Apprentice Knacks at 2, or Porté mage class skills equal to level 3).

COSETTE RICHÉ DU PARIOSSE

A nervous woman who screams loudly through any danger she is near, but does little else. Unless she faints.

EUGENE SICES DU SICES

A complete fop who refuses to do anything that may make him dirty or uncomfortable. He insists on bathing first thing in the morning and washing his feet every night before he goes to bed.

Four 'n Twenty Blackbirds

"Four 'n Twenty Blackbirds" is a series of adventures to be run in a special manner. The events are split into 24 separate pieces that occur over the course of a single day, beginning at noon and ending at noon the following day. Likewise, the adventure is intended to run over the course of 24 hours of real time, broken up into different gaming sessions. The correspondence is not exact since certain activities (like combat) normally take less real time than game time while others (like travel) take more time. The GM should exercise discretion in how quickly the clock actually moves, but in general, each full hour of game time should take only one hour of real time.

One of the most important aspects to this adventure is its pacing. The heroes are operating against a very definite schedule; they may certainly affect these events, but time continues to proceed. Should they go a different way than specified in this adventure, the GM can reintegrate them in at a later hour or skip certain events. There are numerous points where Val Mokk, Brun Stenson, or one of the other characters in the adventure could summon the heroes. Despite this, the heroes should always feel under the gun. One method of doing this is to occasionally remind them of the ponderous chiming of the Hadewig pendulum clock in the center of Kirk or the steady sweep of the light from the lighthouse that sits on a steep cliff over the western end of the harbor. (Actually setting an alarm clock or timer to go off once an hour to illustrate this passage of time will reinforce this concept as well.) Both the clock and the lighthouse will appear in the course of the adventure, so mentioning them occasionally also serves as a form of foreshadowing.

There are several deadlines during the adventure and failure to meet them will have significant consequences. Most of the parts of this adventure are broken into sections and presented together. Feel free to mix events from different sections that should be occurring simultaneously. For example, intersperse the heroes' ride to the ruin north of town at 7 p.m. with the Vestenmannavnjar attack on Joseph Volkner's home.

Another important aspect of this adventure are the numerous "windows" or opportunities for the characters to see glimpses of what is occurring in other locations. Many of these will be things that the heroes could not possibly know, but serve to remind them of the passage of time. In other cases, they feature events and people with whom the heroes will interact later in the adventure, again to foreshadow future events and to generate more interest and excitement. These are not generally meant to take up a lot of time and will often only consist of no more than a sentence or two read with the chiming of the clock. The best time to use a window is during travel times between locations within the city. Since it takes between fifteen minutes and half an hour for any such trip, these often include slow moments where the GM can introduce such insights into other important events.

Two of the "windows" are more extensive and require that the players either create new characters or use ones provided by the GM. These are not the heroes of the adventure and should be treated as henchmen. (d20: the characters should be 2–3 levels lower than the players' normal characters and

will surrender when their hit points drop to 10 or less; **7th Sea**: the characters are knocked unconscious when they receive dramatic wounds equal to their Resolve.)

Please note that the events listed here are not presented with full details. The GM is responsible for dealing with heroes who act outside the scope of the adventure. Good luck! The clock is ticking...

Noon to 4:00 p.m. – The Jeweled Rose

Wherein the heroes discover that someone has stolen a jeweled rose from an important Vendel merchant on the night before he planned to present it to his beloved. Can they foil the villain's plans and help true love prevail?

Noon: The Law Comes A'Knocking

The adventure begins in the city of Kirk, port and capital of the island nation of Vendel. At least one of the characters has had previous contact with a merchant or Vendel official in a matter that required some discretion. (He can be anyone suitable to your campaign.) This contact told his good friend, Brun Stenson, about the hero's invaluable assistance. Stenson was robbed and is desperate to recover his lost goods, so when he hears that the police are questioning the heroes, he comes to their aid, in the hopes that they will return the favor. The time of day should be noon exactly and the heroes should be within their quarters, which could be a ship's quarters, a hostelry, or any other convenient location (all that is necessary is that the heroes remain there for at least one day).

Just as the bells of a distant church chime out the noon hour, you hear a heavy knock at the door. You open it and greet a short, stout man who has a sour expression and an elaborately carved walking stick. Behind him, you can make out a dozen or so men dressed in the uniform of the Kirk constabulary. They shuffle their feet nervously as the man confidently (and loudly) declares, "I am Lord Sheriff Ivar Dags, head of the Kirk police. I must ask you to step aside while my men might search the premises."

Dags is completely within his legal rights to search the place. Should the heroes refuse him or attempt to argue, he calmly (and loudly) explains the law and request that the heroes step aside. Should the heroes offer strong resistance, he will certainly provide them with less support later in the adventure. Also if anyone attempts to assault the constables, Dags retreats and places an order for their arrest. Constables in groups of 12 will attempt to arrest the heroes periodically (approximately once every three hours) until the heroes apologize to him and pay a steep fine. Should the heroes attempt to bribe Dags or his party, he will be deeply offended and attempt to arrest them immediately.

Once inside the room, he orders his men to search for the items and begins questioning the heroes as to their whereabouts last night. He takes notes about their answers, especially anyone who might corroborate their story. He has a witness (albeit an unreliable one) who saw someone matching the description of one of the heroes leaving the scene of a

crime last night. He will not provide any further information, but his questions become more pointed as his men continue searching. They are obviously looking for something small and extremely valuable.

After several minutes of questioning — and before the heroes can do anything foolish — another knock on the door draws everyone's attention.

A tall blonde man strides in and glances around the room before nodding gravely. "Master Dags, what is the meaning of this?"

"I am conducting an investigation about the theft from your home, Master Stenson."

"Here?! I'm afraid you're mistaken. I have it upon good authority that these are noble and blameless men; I am certain that they are innocent of this crime. Be on your way, inspector, find the true culprits."

Reluctantly Dags has orders his men from the room, politely nods to each of you, and then strides out.

Master Stenson turns to you. "Again, I must apologize. Our good sheriff is under a great deal of pressure to recover something stolen from my house last night. I must have it back within a matter of hours. However, when I heard that he was investigating the same people who helped out my friend so recently, I knew that it must be a mistake."

His friend is, of course, the merchant the heroes helped previously. "However, since you are now involved, in a way, I must beg of you. I have heard that you are a group of talent and discretion. Could you help me recover my missing rose?"

If the heroes are reluctant, he will mention that true love rests in the balance and that he is willing to reward them for their assistance. Should they still refuse, he will leave deeply saddened. If they accept, he insists on bringing them to his home where they can examine the scene of the crime and tell them everything he knows about the theft on the way.

Master Stenson is a merchant, aide to Val Mokk, and ambassador from Vendel to the nation of Ussura. He returned from there only yesterday morning and discovered that Inga Snyder, the woman he has been courting for months, has a new suitor — a Vodacce merchant name Luco Villanova. Stenson bought a beautiful rose crafted of silver, rubies, and emeralds while he was in Ussura and had planned to give it to Inga as an engagement present. The rose is a coiled stem of silver from which delicate petals spread. Each petal is covered in rubies while the stem and leaves are covered in emeralds to form the illusion of a living flower. It measures two inches in radius and six inches high.

Discovering that Villanova is hosting a garden party tomorrow (which is now today), he decided that this would be the perfect time to propose to his ladylove and told her that he would have a surprise for her at four o'clock. After having dinner with his friend and mentor, Val Mokk, Stenson returned home, only to discover that he had left his favorite cloak at Mokk's estate outside the city. He sent his butler to retrieve it, locked the rose in his safe, and retired for the evening.

When he awakened this morning, he opened the safe to admire the jeweled rose again and discover that it was missing. The only people with keys are Stenson himself and his butler, José Gadeva, who returned this morning with the cloak.

The search, speaking to Stenson and traveling to his home should take an hour. More details of the crime follow under the following hour.

1:00 p.m. – *Floral Investigations*

The focus of this hour is to determine who stole the jeweled rose.

Brun Stenson tells the heroes everything he knows. Last night, he returned from a meeting with Val Mokka — the jeweled rose in the safe — and went to bed. Upon waking in the morning, he and his butler discovered that the jeweled rose was missing. He informed the Sheriff Dags who has been pursuing an investigation since then. Stenson's groom claims to have seen three suspicious men last night outside his window and Dags has been attempting to find them. One of these men apparently bore a striking resemblance to one of the heroes. A handful of people knew about the rose but only three (Stenson, Gadeva, and Mokka) know where Stenson kept it. The only keys to the safe belong to Stenson and Gadeva, who both wear them about their necks on a leather thong, and neither key is missing. Stenson has complete faith in Gadeva.

Once he has brought the heroes to his home, Stenson allows them to wander through the house, speak to his staff, and proceed as they see fit. Meanwhile, he will speak to several merchants to determine whether anyone has tried to sell the jeweled rose. In his desperation to find the item, Stenson will use every means he can: he is convinced that it is the only way to win his beloved Inga.

Stenson's home, located on a fairly busy street, is a small two-story building surrounded by a solid six-foot wall. The first floor contains a kitchen, dining room, servants' quarters, and a parlor. The upstairs contains two bedrooms and an office. Also within the walled complex is a two-stall stable, and coach building with an exit out onto a small alleyway to the side of the house. Stenson divides his time between here, his larger estate several hours outside of Kirk, and aboard his ship on merchant voyages. Since he spends so little time at the city house, only Javier and his wife live there full time. The other staff comes from the estate.

- The butler, José Gadeva, is a Castillian who has worked for Stenson for more than 12 years. He is calm and reserved, and cares for all of his master's holdings during Stenson's many absences.
- His wife Jana is a Vendel whose sharp tongue hides a true love of her husband. The groom is a young teenager named Karl who loves working with horses, but has problems relating to humans.
- The underbutler is young man name Franz who has only worked here for a few months, since the departure of the previous underbutler. He may appear suspicious since Jens says that his bed was not slept in last night and he refuses to explain his whereabouts last night.

- Gertie, the maid, is a rather homely and extremely shy girl who has taken a liking to the underbutler and was up talking to him until dawn.

The cook, underbutler, and the maid did not see or hear anything unusual last night. If asked about other servants, they will admit that until a few months ago another man was employed here as underbutler, but they will not say more, insisting that the heroes ask the butler.

If the butler is asked about keys or any former employees, he will turn pale and attempt to deny it. After a moment, he admits that there was another employee: his brother Javier whom José was forced to fire when he discovered that Javier had stolen his key to the safe and was tampering with it. While José knows that Javier has found another position as a servant within the city, he does not know for whom. He did not mention him to Sheriff Dags or his employer because he did not want to besmirch his family's name or bring suspicion on himself.

The groom confirms what Stenson told them. He was sleeping in his loft above the stable, which overlooks the alley behind the house. He awakened and saw a group of three men pass below his window, heading away from the house towards the docks. The only one he saw clearly was the one who bore a resemblance to one of the heroes. He thought nothing of it until the butler asked if he had seen anything suspicious.

If the street is examined, there are traces of an orange powder on the ground. This powder is cumin, a very uncommon spice native to the homelands of the hero whom the groom identified. The cook or the accused hero can identify the powder.

If the heroes want to examine the safe, it is located in a closet off Stenson's office on the second floor. The safe was locked when the theft was discovered, but all of the items had been swept to one side within it. There are no signs of forced entry, but there are a few clumps of a strange grey mud beneath the safe, an orange-ish powder, and some strange discoloration on the wood. If the party attempts to move the safe (which requires two strong men), the back leg of the safe falls off. Close examination reveals that the leg had been corroded for some time and was actually held in place with a gray plaster. The discoloration on the wood is from the acid used to corrode the safe leg several months ago. The hole is large enough for a small man to put his arm through. When the safe was lifted up last night, someone pulled off the leg, reached in and pulled out the jeweled rose. Very faint tracks of black soil lead from the safe to the window. The soil matches the dirt of the alleyway and the orange powder is cumin.

If the heroes ask around, they can quickly discover that only one merchant in Kirk deals with cumin. If approached, the merchant denies any knowledge or involvement in the situation, although he does own a warehouse down at the docks. If the party checks out the warehouse, they find that a dozen squatters have made a home there. These thugs resist any intrusion into their area, though most had no connection to the crime. They say that a Castillian servant named Javier Gadeva hired two of them last night to break into a house. Afterwards, he paid them well, but the men were suspicious and followed him home. For the right price, they will tell the party where he went.

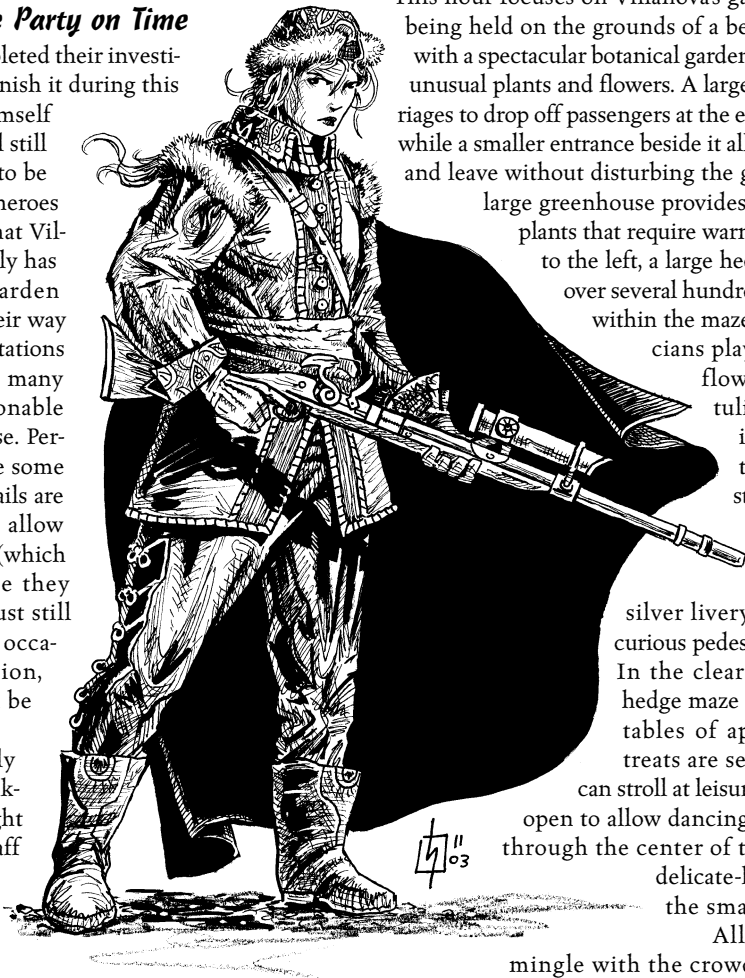
Otherwise, if they know that Javier Gadeva is responsible, the heroes can discover where he works. The Butler's Guild can provide the information, as can many servants within the town. Javier Gadeva is the head butler at the home of Luco Villanova, a Vodacce merchant who attended a recent mercantile and tradesmen meeting at the nearby sea fort of Hofsjokull before coming to Kirk. Since arriving, he has attempted to forge alliances and trade agreements with several merchants while also hosting numerous parties, ostensibly to reduce Vendel/Vodacce tensions.

If the party goes to the rented house, they find Villanova's household in a state of turmoil: most of the servants are preparing for the garden party later that afternoon. Neither Villanova nor his butler is home. Should the heroes sneak into his home, they will not find the rose there.

2:00 p.m. – Get Me to the Party on Time

If the heroes have not yet completed their investigation of the home, they can finish it during this hour. Stenson has resigned himself to not finding the rose, but will still go to the garden party, simply to be near the woman he loves. The heroes will almost certainly realize that Villanova has the rose and probably has it in his possession at the garden party. Now they must make their way to his party and get inside. Invitations can be forged, purchased from many merchants in town for a reasonable price, or "obtained" at his house. Perhaps Stenson's butler can trade some favors to obtain one. Exact details are left to the GM; all invitations allow the person to bring one guest (which includes a bodyguard). Once they have invitations, the party must still find attire appropriate to the occasion. Even with an invitation, anyone shabbily dressed will be refused entrance.

The party might also simply go to the party in hopes of sneaking into the house, or they might try to hire on as temporary staff for the event. Several of Villanova's personal servants were hiring additional help for the afternoon but will only hire those who can speak Vendel and look at least somewhat respectable. Members of the Swordsman's Guild or others trained in the martial fields might be hired for security duty while some might be instructed to circulate among the guests with trays of appetizers or drinks. (If anyone is hired for security duty, assign at least one of them to the wrought iron gate within the hedge maze along with one of Villanova's personal servants.) All servants and security are required to wear a tabard of black with silver trim (Villanova's personal colors) to denote their status. Servants will be paid a half-guilder after the party with bonuses for exceptional service ranging from one to five guilders.



If the party likes to split up, this is an ideal situation for that. Regardless of the methods used, the focus should be on getting to the party as directed (the party actually begins at 3 p.m.) Should the heroes get lost, they will need to ask directions, which might attract unwanted attention, or (if the GM is feeling kind), they might run into Javier Gadeva in the streets. He is carry a very large book which he drops and hastily picks up. Depending on how well they roll, someone in the party might see the flash of something sparkling. Then again, Gadeva's behavior is plenty suspicious as it is. If they give chase, they will end up at the rented estate. "Windows" should be kept to a minimum during this hour, especially if the heroes have decided to split up to infiltrate the party.

3:00 p.m. – The Party's The Thing

This hour focuses on Villanova's garden party, which is being held on the grounds of a beautiful rented estate with a spectacular botanical garden displaying dozens of unusual plants and flowers. A large driveway allows carriages to drop off passengers at the entrance to the garden while a smaller entrance beside it allows servants to enter and leave without disturbing the guests. To the right, a large greenhouse provides protection for those plants that require warmer temperatures and to the left, a large hedge maze spreads out over several hundred square feet. Niches within the maze hold benches, musicians playing soft music, and flowerbeds of beautiful tulips. A large wrought iron gate leading from the hedge maze straight onto the street is kept locked and two men dressed in the black and silver livery of Villanova direct curious pedestrians to move along. In the clear space between the hedge maze and the green house, tables of appetizers and other treats are set out and the guests can stroll at leisure. A large area is kept open to allow dancing. A small creek runs through the center of this area and several delicate-looking bridges span the small expanse of water.

Allow the heroes to mingle with the crowd in whatever guise they have chosen and investigate as they see fit for half an hour. This gives them a chance to meet and talk amongst themselves for several minutes as well. They should definitely notice that a number of people wearing black mourning garb. Several high-ranking Vendel have died of natural causes over the course of the past week and Vestenmannavnjar warriors killed several others on their way to Kirk. The guests run the gamut from simple merchants to members of the Vendel Council — including Val Mokk himself — although many foreigners are also present. Stenson and Inga are here as well, although the Vendel man will not attempt to be with her.

This is a perfect opportunity to allow those heroes with a courtier or upper class background to display their skills as they must maneuver through the growing crowds without causing suspicion. Luco Villanova himself remains in the open area as he greets his guests. Anyone with an invitation will encounter him as they enter the garden.

He is a tall, rather ominous-looking Vodacce man, not unlike his more famous cousin. After only a few words, the heroes can tell he is a cold, sarcastic man who enjoys mocking everyone he meets (again, not unlike his cousin.) He is not wearing the jeweled rose and any accusation that he has stolen it will be met with disdain.

“A jeweled rose is a common item. There are doubtless three or four within Kirk alone. Of course, in a true mercantile city such as Dionna, there would be dozens.”

Mistress Snyder, dressed in a splendid green velvet gown, is upon his arm and he constantly attempts to amuse her with his rude comments about the other guests. She chuckles appreciably, but is obviously ill at ease.

In actuality, Javier Gadeva still has the rose. Villanova’s plan is to have Javier arrive at the party at 3:30 at the wrought iron gates opening onto the hedge maze. When the servant opens the gate, Gadeva will enter carrying with the large book beneath his arm and sneak through the hedge maze for a few minutes. At 3:45, Villanova will begin gathering people at a small bridge in the center of the garden for an announcement. He will then relinquish the bridge to Stenson, saying that the kindly Val Mokk has asked him to give Stenson an opportunity to make an announcement.

Villanova expects Stenson to look shocked and stumble over his words, then abandon the field to his rival, which will afford Villanova the opportunity to begin a long elaborate speech about the flowers surrounding them and how Mistress Snyder’s beauty outshines them all. During this speech, Gadeva will step from the hedge maze with a large book which is actually a box containing the jeweled rose. The butler will open the book with a flourish, Villanova will take the rose and present it to Mistress Inga, and everyone (except Stenson) will live happily ever after.

It is up to the heroes to intercept Gadeva, retrieve the rose, and return it to Stenson. If they use some discretion, they can defeat the butler inside the hedge maze with a minimum of witnesses. If not, they will need to prove that the rose actually belongs to Stenson. Villanova will claim that his butler purchased the rose this morning, a claim that Gadeva will back up by claiming that he bought it from an Ussura sailor who immediately left port. Villanova will then insist that the matter be decided by a duel with the winner keeping the rose. Dags and his constables will be unable to touch Villanova without far more evidence.

Gadeva is not a very skilled swordsman, but his footwork is quite good and he ignores attacking in favor of simply defending himself, confident that if he can reach Villanova, his employer will protect him. Gadeva is not truly a villainous man, but rather a fledgling scientist who commits crimes solely to fund his experiments into the properties of metallic substances and acid.

Should the heroes get the rose to Stenson in time, he will propose to Mistress Snyder with it. She will happily agree and Villanova will be unable to do anything beyond fume. In truth, Snyder does not care about the rose — she has been

waiting months for Stenson to get around to proposing and had just about given up on him. The happy couple will tour the gardens arm in arm to the applause of those watching.

If the heroes fail, Villanova will propose to Snyder and without any word from Stenson about his feelings, she will reluctantly accept. This becomes important later on in the episode, so keep track of the outcome.

Windows should be kept to a minimum during this hour, especially if the heroes are not at the party together.

WINDOWS

These brief descriptions should be spread out over the course of this section:

- Servants dressed in black and silver livery set up tables in a beautiful garden while gardeners are making a few last minute trims on an elaborate hedge maze.
- A dark-haired woman stands at the railing of a ship gazing towards the port of Kirk coming closer.
- A burly, unkempt Vestenmannavnjar awakes from a deep sleep. He raises his head to look about the small room, almost a closet, where he had slept upon the floor. Someone slipped a note beneath the door and he reaches out for it. The hand-written note is just an address, but he nods and stands up with excitement.
- Servants dressed in black and silver livery scurry about making last minute adjustments and placing out punch-bowls.
- A beautiful blonde woman laces up her green velvet for the party.
- The aforementioned dark-haired woman stares towards the port as her ship leisurely drifts up to the dock. With a nod to the captain, she strides down the gangplank as it is lowered and disappears into the crowd of merchants, sailors and others who throng the docks.
- Sheriff Ivar Dags stands before a seated man and is obviously interrogating him.
- A large Vestenmannavnjar steps into a darkened tavern and glances around. Even through the darkness, the place is decrepit and seedy. With a grimace, he motions several men to approach. The first one is a short, broad man with a twisted scar across his left cheek strides up happily, “Orf, it has been...” The large Vestenmannavnjar shakes his head and draws the other man into the shadows where they speak together in low tones. Each of the others nods in turn and they all leave the tavern together.
- Three Vestenmannavnjar are striding down a street near the docks when someone calls out from behind them. Looking back, they see a constable walking towards them with a cautious look on his face. The three casually exchange looks, and then flee into the shadows of a warehouse.

REPERCUSSIONS

During this first section, the heroes’ actions can have profound repercussions throughout the rest of the adventure.

- If they alienated or attacked Sheriff Dags, he will provide little or no aid for the remainder of the scenario.
- If the heroes attack and kill Villanova, later events would unfold very differently! In this case, introduce his brother Ugo later in the adventure and have him take over Luco's role in any later encounters. Ugo should only appear if Villanova dies, and uses the same stats as his brother.
- Should the heroes fail to get the rose to Stenson in time, he will become despondent and retire to his home for the rest of the adventure. A few hours after the party, the heroes learn that his butler discovered him dead in his office with a flask of poison in his hand. The heroes later discover that Stenson did not commit suicide; he was killed and the scene staged by Hendrickson. In this case, replace Stenson's role in later encounters with Master Red (who is described in the entry for 10 p.m.).

4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. – A Quick Errand

Wherein an important leader asks the heroes to run a quick errand and things quickly escalate out of control.

4:00 P.M.: IT'S JUST A "LITTLE" JOB

If the heroes dealt publicly with Javier Gadeva, Luco Villanova will know exactly who disrupted his plan; otherwise, Gadeva informs his master of the heroes' involvement. Regardless of how he finds out, Villanova intends to challenge one of them to a duel following the events at the garden party. He has a reputation a fearsome duelist and the GM should build it up as a large threat.

Before any challenge can be made, however, Val Mokk walks up and apologizes profusely, but explains that he has to take the heroes with him to deal with an urgent matter of national business. Villanova is obviously furious about being interrupted but will not interfere as they leave. Mokk leads the heroes to his large private coach (two coaches depending on the size of the party) and orders the driver to his home.

If the entire party fits into one carriage, Mokk explains that he is grateful to them for the help they gave his good friend Stenson. (If the party is too big, Mokk will explain once they get back to his manor.) He then confesses to a further motive. He believes there is a traitor within his household. Stenson told no one except Mokk about the rose's location. Therefore, the traitor must have overheard them speaking and told Villanova about the jeweled rose. Mokk intends to find this traitor, but the process will likely take several days.

In the meantime, he has several extremely important matters to which he must attend. One is a meeting with Maria, a foreign operative who is bringing him some information about a Castillian assassin called El Camaléon. Mokk had planned on meeting her in an hour and bringing her back to his home, but now he cannot risk it. Instead, he asks the party to meet with Maria privately and bring him the information. If the heroes balk (which they probably won't), he hints at a reward in return for their aid. (If the GM feels kind, Mokk may offer a reward or promise of a future favor anyhow.)

If they agree, Mokk asks them to meet Maria at the Siren's Heart, a small tavern down by the docks at 5 p.m. He tells them that she will have a small red carnation in her hair and will not use a last name. Mokk offers them the use of his

private coach for as long as they need it (i.e., for the remainder of the adventure.) Once they have the information, he asks that they return to him regardless of the hour. He will be hosting a private party later but they should consider themselves invited.

The Siren's Heart is a rather seedy dive patronized by sailors looking for a cheap drink in relatively quiet surroundings. A one-eyed man tends bar while a half-dozen scruffy patrons morosely nurse their ale. There is no sign of a woman, but if queried, the bartender or any of the patrons mentions that she was here a few minutes ago, then left out the back way after a couple rowdy drunks began harassing her.

5:00 P.M.: A LADY IN NEED

Going out the back door, you stand for a moment gazing at the growing shadows ahead of you. Warehouses crowd tightly alongside a narrow alleyway that leads to the docks. A long pier stretches out towards the harbor from the mouth of the alleyway. Two anchored ships are visible in the background, but your eyes are drawn to a struggle on the docks themselves.

A beautiful dark-haired woman with a red carnation in her hair is dodging blows and striking out against a handful of large burly sailors while even more men encircle them. You can hear rude comments about many men she can handle (adjust this encounter for the age of your group and the venue in which you are playing.) As you watch, the woman ducks beneath a haymaker one of the men throws at her and then slams her fists into his stomach three times in quick succession. The man collapses back into the group in pain and you see guilders quickly exchanged hands among the people in the circle as they cheer or boo depending upon their fortunes. Before she can celebrate, two more men step into the circle to square off against her.

Should the party come to her rescue, several of the thugs break off and attempt to repel the heroes. One small Vendel wearing a pair of spectacles strides over and begins calling out odds and taking bets from some of the others as he watches the fight. He will also inform them of the rules.

This is a nice friendly brawl. Weapons are forbidden and no permanent injuries allowed. Anyone breaking these rules will answer for it. None of the men are wielding weapon at the beginning of the fight, but they will draw cutlasses or knives against anyone who does. Anyone who draws a pistol will find that at least six of the men draw their weapons, ready to fire.

This entire scene is intended to be a generally comic fight. Allow the heroes to use the common dock implements, terrain, and their own panache to defeat these toughs without too much trouble. A dockyard thug to assault the woman and steal a pouch from her hired the men. When things begin to turn in the heroes' favor, one of the men fighting the woman grabs a pouch from Maria's belt and takes off running down the dock. She pursues, but when she or the heroes capture him, the pouch flies out of his hands and into the water.

6:00 P.M.: A SHOPPING TRIP

The dark-haired woman stares towards the dark waters where the pouch disappeared. She shakes her head angrily, bites off a curse, and then turns to you. “Thank you for your aid, but I’m afraid it was for naught. I must be going.” She shakes her head angrily and moves towards the dock side marketplace which is shutting down for the night. If the heroes identify themselves as agents of Val Mokk, she will immediately take them into her confidence.

“I was coming to warn Val Mokk of an assassination attempt against several members of the Vendel Council. Unfortunately, I was delayed and now it is too late. The poison was administered last night. I had the antidote with me, but these oafs have succeeded in destroying it.” She points down in frustration at the dark waters where the pouch disappeared just minutes beforehand. “We must replace the antidote or nothing will save the Council members.”

If asked, the woman does not know precisely which members of the Council are affected, but they will have low fevers and chills by now, so they should not be difficult to identify. She objects to anyone warning the Council before the antidote is prepared, to prevent them from panicking. More importantly, the poisoner is almost certainly still in the area and any attempt to warn the Council may tip him off. If that happens, he could prevent them from finding all the antidote’s ingredients. She is very persuasive and will attempt to convince the heroes to aid her.

In your descriptions of the area, emphasis the slightly seedy nature of the surroundings and that most of the merchants are in the process of closing up shop. This will give the heroes incentive to move rapidly and provide far more contrast with the following hour after the honest merchants leave the streets to the sailors. Should anyone have received grievous wounds, there is a physician in the area who is quite familiar with brawl injuries and can quickly treat the heroes. He should be able to restore the heroes to almost full health. Do not fully heal them as this detracts from the feeling the heroes should be experiencing of being propelled from one event to another without having time to rest or recuperate.

The following items are needed for the antidote; their entries include at least one location where they can be found in the dockside markets. The shops are closing and the sunlight is rapidly diminishing so unless the heroes hurry, they will not be able to obtain everything. She suggests that the group split up try to find everything on the list, and meet at the northern end of the marketplace where a fountain sprays water up into the air at 7 p.m. Maria will definitely try to go separately to obtain several of the more exotic items. She would like the heroes to find:

- *Hickory Wand (or the ashes of one)*: There are a number of carpenters, ship builders, and furniture makers in the area, any of whom will be able to supply a hickory wand for only a few pennies.
- *Several Sprigs of Fresh Morning Glory*: Morning glory is a plant native to Avalon and is occasionally used as ground cover in botanical gardens. However, it is rather early in

the season and only a handful of people have any in stock, including the greenhouse where the garden party was held. Of these, only one, Mattias Parsley, has any growing. His shop is on the far end of town. It takes at least twenty minutes to get there, and he has an unusual problem. Something (he is unsure if it is a street urchin or a Sidhe) has snuck into one of his greenhouses and refuses to allow any plants to be picked unless a riddle is solved first. The creature insists that if anything is picked without its permission, the entire greenhouse will wither and die. Since the garden has grown far better since the creature’s arrival, Parsley is unwilling to disrupt it unduly. If they want the sprigs, the party must pass a riddle test.

The creature poses one riddle for each sprig and allows the party only one opportunity to answer. If they miss all three, he offers them three sprigs in exchange for answering his third riddle. Whenever they answer a riddle incorrectly, he will mock them unmercifully and reveal the answer. There is no immediate effect if the heroes simply take the morning glory they need.

The three riddles are:

“A dash of color in a field of green on the morning of an event that no woman will forget.” (rosemary)

“A grey beard full of learning. What am I?” (sage)

“Every man yearns for more, but cannot remember what he did with what he once had.” (thyme)

- *A Cup of Sugar*: Sugar from sugarcane is a rare and expensive item, exported from the Midnight Archipelago. Several merchants have it but they will want at least 5 guilders for it. However, one of the merchants, Thom Salonnen, is supposed to meet his father-in-law in 30 minutes. He would like to impress the old man by bringing him a bottle of Carleon whiskey, so he will trade the sugarcane for the whiskey. There is only one tavern, the Lusty Siren, nearby that has it. There — amidst walls cluttered with all manner of knickknacks and odds and ends — an enormous bald man throws daggers at the tavern’s target. This is Twodirk, the owner, and he is about to open the only bottle of Carleon whiskey left for his own use. He will not sell it, but he will offer it up as a wager to anyone who can beat him in throwing knives, as long as they have to put up something in return (in case they lose). He insists that he will only throw daggers if the other man’s wager is something interesting he can put on the walls.
- *Four Drams of Cumin*: Known for its strong flavor, cumin is seldom used in Vendel. As mentioned previously, only one merchant in Kirk deals with cumin. He is currently visiting the warehouse where Gadeva’s thugs live. He is willing to part with a cup of it for a guilder.
- *A Mortar and Pestle*: Simple to find at several chemists.
- *Nero Muschio*: No one has heard of this substance. This is a very rare chemical and only a handful of people knows of its poisonous properties.

7:00 P.M.: A CHANGE OF PACE

Beyond the clear light of the dockside market's lanterns, it is clear that night has fallen. Most of the shops have closed for the night and other establishments, bawdy and riotous in daylight, now spill forth onto the streets. Taverns, gambling dens, and brothels all beckon, as most honest citizens of Kirk have retreated from the area to allowed the ruffians free run of the region. At the northern end of this parade of vice, you gather at the fountain. The far off clock begins chiming the hour of seven and it is not until the final peals fade that you make out the shape of a woman moving towards you. She is carrying several parcels and places them on the ground beside you with relief.

"Were you successful?" Maria examines everything you found with delight. "This is far better than I had imagined. I believe we have everything except the Nero Muschio. Not surprising that no one here keeps it in stock. However, I did find a digger who knew of it. He gave me directions to a patch of it within a nearby ruin. I do not have time to explore the ruin and concoct the antidote as well. If I give you the directions, will you go and gather the moss? I will wait here." She points to a boarding house a few doors down. "By the time you get back with the Nero Muschio, I should have everything else ready. What do you say?"

If the heroes were unable to find of the items, she brushes their concern aside, stating that she found a substitute for whatever is missing. According to her directions, it will take an hour to get to the ruin by horse or coach. She has money to hire a coach if needed (if the party is not using Mokka's carriage.). She describes the item she is still missing as a black-hued moss that shimmers in lantern light. The digger told her that a cave opened up onto a tunnel that led to a single room. It should not be difficult to find at all. The journey towards the ruin is uneventful, but does take almost an hour.

Once the heroes begin traveling towards the cave, consult the section titled "The Vestenmannavnjar" below for details on the extensive window that occurs during the trip.

WINDOWS

- Maria hard at work on her concoction, you can see she is crushing sugar cane into a small pot of boiling water with a look of complete concentration.
- Val Mokka sits at a desk, reading his correspondence. You can see he is sweating, although the room does not appear to be very hot.

8:00 P.M.: THE BASEMENT

This section gives the heroes a taste of the uncertainty and the thrill of exploring a Syrneth ruin filled with deathtraps. Most were once quite capable of killing off several heroes, but their efficiency has eroded with time and the heroes should be able to side step them. Feel free to play up the sense of unknown and danger, but do not delay the heroes so long that they cannot find the moss within the hour. They have a long way to go before the end of the adventure.

After a difficult ride through the darkness, you see a sharp bend in the road up ahead. That is your final landmark from the direction Maria gave to you. You rein up and swing onto the ground. Pushing aside bushes and tree limbs, you quickly spot the natural cavern Maria described. A nearby tree offers an excellent place to tether the horses while you venture inside. You slowly step into the cave. The rocks form bizarre shadows that reach out towards you in almost threatening poses, but you step confidently towards the back of the cave. An opening there beckons you inward. If you are to find the black-hued moss that Maria needs to complete her poison antidote, you must enter.

The entire ruin is unlit. If the heroes did not think to bring candles or lanterns, they may fashion makeshift torches from downed tree limbs.

On the other side of the opening, everything appears much different. The walls and floors were clearly shaped by someone not necessarily human. The left and right wall angle sharply together and meet overhead, forming a triangular cross-section rather than a normal square. Thick dust rises with each step you take, obscuring your feet in clouds of decay. You are not the first to walk here though: dozens of wolf tracks wind through the dust as well. You have entered through one of the walls and the corridor itself stretches from your left to your right.

However, to your right, it only continues for 10 feet before ending in a rockslide. To your left, it descends at a shallow angle. You can make out rivulets in the dust where moisture once flowed. Up ahead, you notice the light from your lantern reflecting from the walls. They appear to be covered in a metallic sheen unlike anything you have seen before. Beneath the dust on the floor ahead of you, you make out a human form, obviously long dead. It looks as if something ripped him apart and devoured him.

This area, a mere ten feet wide, is highly unusual, although it is unlikely the heroes would ever discover its secret unless one of them is skilled in exploring Syrneth artifacts. The Syrneth that created this complex disappeared ages ago, but some of their strange inventions continue to work. Any metal object that passes through this section slowly begins to break up. The process is extremely slow (it takes a year for a dagger to disintegrate), but the metallic dust created by this force is drawn towards the walls and forms a coating upon it. If a metal object passes through the field in less than an hour, there is no lasting effect upon the object. The body is that of a digger who fell afoul of the wolves who dwell within the cave.

The room at the bottom of the slope is approximately 6½ feet wide, 13 feet high, and 26¼ meters long. Anyone who crosses the room's halfway point will trigger a scythe blade that sweeps across the room from the right to the left at chest level for its entire length. Careful examination of the wall reveals two cracks that run the length of the room. The blade sticks slightly at the beginning of the track, allowing the heroes a chance to avoid the danger.

Syrneth Scythe

D20: +10 melee (4d8/x2 crit); Spot (DC 10), Disable Device (DC 15)

7th Sea: Spot (TN 15), Disarm (TN 15). TN 5 to simply duck beneath the crack and TN 10 if the heroes did not spot the trap before they triggered it), Damage 5k5.

Beyond this corridor is a large room 13 feet high, 26¼ feet long, and 52½ feet wide.

Thick dust covers the floor, but dozens of thick gouges and scrapes run through the dust and you can see signs that wolves prowled along the edges of the room and slept near the back corner. There are several large stone blocks measuring 3¼ feet long, 6½ feet wide, and 13 feet high (5 blocks total) clustered around the room's center. The one closest to the back wall is covered in a thick black moss, the material you seek.

If anyone steps within 15 feet of the center of the room, a low humming will emanate from the room's walls. Anyone that steps within 5 feet of the room's center triggers another trap. Sharp metal shrapnel explodes from the walls and converges upon the center, piercing anyone within the room with strange chunks of metal. This trap is not set off unless a living being steps into that area. Close examination of the walls and blocks reveals deep pits in the walls and the floor where the metal emerges from the wall and hits the floor. The trap will reset itself, by slowly drawing the metal chunks back to the walls where they were expelled, but this process takes weeks.

Metal Spears

D20: 10 +15 ranged (1d8/x3 crit); Spot (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 20).

7th Sea: Spot (TN 15), Disarm (TN 20), Damage 3k3
Should the group be unscathed by the dangers so far, or if the GM needs to fill a little time, feel free to have the wolves which occasionally lair here arrive while the heroes are still within the cavern complex.

WINDOWS

- Val Mokk sitting down within a wood paneled parlor with a dozen other merchants while servants move among them serving punch and snacks. The merchants are discussing trade with the newly formed Montaigne Revolutionary government in agitated voices.

Stepping from the stuffy atmosphere of the cavern, you take a deep breath of clear night air. The stars swim above you in the darkness and the moon is just rising over the mountains behind you: the perfect night for an urgent ride towards Kirk.

Again, while the heroes are traveling, consult the section "The Vestenmannavnjar" below while the heroes' journey takes them back towards Kirk. The trip back takes almost an hour.



When you arrive at the small boarding house, you find Maria waiting at the door. With a hurried smile, she takes the black-hued moss from you and brings it inside. Trailing behind her, you see her place it into a strainer and take a small pot off the fire. She pours the liquid from the pot through the strainer into a flask and then uses a pestle to crush the moss. Strained bits filter through the strainer and into the flask. Lifting it up, she screws the top on and begins to shake it violently as she strides for the door. “It is ready. Let’s go!”

10:00 P.M.: CRASHING THE PARTY

Maria hails a coach and quickly urges everyone to enter (or asks to use Mokka’s carriage). She calls out Mokka’s address to the driver (or tells the coachman to take you all to Mokka’s manor) and the coach jolts into motion. If it’s a hired coach, Maria calls out that she will pay a bonus to the driver if he can go faster and the coach begins careening through the lantern-lit streets of Kirk. Maria finally turns to you and seems to actually see your dirt-smudged clothing and disheveled appearance. “I am sorry, I was so focused on the antidote I never thought to ask about you. I know that you were successful, but how did your little adventure go?”

If the heroes describe their moss-gathering journey during the short carriage ride, Maria raptly listens. Afterwards, she says, “Your evening has already been quite exciting, but I’m afraid it’s not over yet. I discovered while you were gone that Val Mokka was planning to hold a small business meeting tonight with several other prominent members of the Guild under the guise of an impromptu costume party. We must find Mokka and speak to him in private. He should know who the most likely victims of El Camaléon’s poison are and can help us administer the antidote. We only have a small amount for now and must use it with care.” Should the heroes object that their appearance is unacceptable, she will insist that no one will notice at a costume ball. She orders the carriage to stop at a shop for a moment and quickly purchases masks for the entire group, including a simple black domino mask for herself.

As the carriage continues towards the party, she advises the heroes further. “While we’re searching for Val Mokka, keep your eyes open. Remember that there is an assassin here somewhere and he will doubtless attempt to poison more of the guests. El Camaléon is a master of disguise, but he has a sick sense of humor; we might be able to use that to spot him. Look for someone of average height and build who keeps to himself and watch him closely. Should he move towards the food, try to divert him.”

The carriage pulls up before Mokka’s manor and two servants stride forward and hold the door open for the group.

The rather austere home has been transformed into a delicate garden with elaborate paintings of trees and fauna throughout the first floor. Most of the guests have abandoned their conservative dress for the fanciful garb of flowing silks and green cloth. A few are dressed in other costumes. There is a courtesan, a musketeer, several clergymen, and even some-

one in full plate armor. Everyone hides their identity behind masks as they twirl and roam across the ballroom and parlors. Maria’s final words to the group are to blend in and keep an eye out for anyone acting suspiciously.

The party is a whirl of social activities including drinking, gossiping, and dancing. Val Mokka does not appear to be present. While the servants know where he is right now, they will tell anyone who asks that he is unavailable and that they will inform him of their presence as soon as he emerges. Should the heroes try to force their way into the room, it will be obvious to the other party guests, and constables will be summoned.

Mokka’s absence gives the heroes time to interact with the other guests. (The point of this party is to experience a social setting, where interpersonal skills are far more important than martial ones.) Maria disappears soon after they enter the party.

A few other notable guests include Master Red, Luco Villanova, Helga Keller, Quitera Cortez, Brun Stenson, and Inga Snyder.

- Master Red is an elderly man and one of the other Vendel Chairs. A friendly and jovial fellow, he is dressed in the costume of a swashbuckling swordsman, well tailored to fit his massive girth. He is accompanied by three well-paid jennys dressed as nymphs in dozens of layers of silk. The women are slightly bored and if the opportunity presents itself, one of them will gladly sneak off to spend some time with a handsome hero.
- Luco Villanova is the man who hosted the garden party this afternoon and is in a foul humor after his failure to woo Mistress Snyder. If he believes that the heroes were responsible for his defeat, he will have one of his minions harass them and attempt to initiate a duel. This is intended to give a swordsman character a chance to shine.
- Quitera Cortez is an important artist and architect in charge of building the Kirk Cathedral (*see “Investigation before Dawn” for more details*).
- Helga Keller is a rather severe looking woman who is dressed in the garb of a swashbuckling pirate and is arguing with several other men about the need to devote more resources against the rebel Vestenmannavnjar who live in the northern islands. Their raids are far too costly to simply ignore.
- Stenson and Snyder are the happy couple that the heroes assisted in getting together and they spend the evening arm in arm. Stenson is very grateful to them and will aid them however possible.
- Three guests might attract the attention of the heroes by remaining apart from the other guests:
 - One is Frederick Gursta, an Eisen nobleman dressed as a priest, he is new to town and uncomfortable at the party since his only language is Eisen.
 - Simon Torres is an Explorer scholar dressed as a digger who is actually here to examine the books and artifacts that Mokka has on display in his parlors and library.
 - Francesca Cordelia, a Vendel woman dressed as a tall Castillian nobleman and is simply remaining apart because she believes that if she speaks, it will be obvious that she is

not a man. The heroes can easily find out that many of the people who were normally be here are out of town in Wische province of Eisen attempting to make a new trade agreement with that area.

After the heroes have been at the party for about 30 minutes, Val Mokka emerges from his meeting and immediately ushers them into a private office. Given the amount of time they were gone, he is seriously concerned about what happened at the meeting with Maria. The heroes notice that he is quite flushed and sweat beads upon his brow. Any medical/first aid examination will reveal that he has a low fever. After hearing about their adventures, Mokka will ask them to describe the woman they met. As they speak, his frown deepens and he will interrupt to state, "That was not the woman you were supposed to meet! While she is an expert at many things, I fear that if she tried to wield a sword, she would only hurt herself. Something strange is afoot." He immediately orders his servants to find Maria and check on the other guests. They will quickly return with the envelope and the news that both the Castilian woman and Sela Cole are missing.

(Unbeknownst to the heroes, Maria changed into an outfit that was already waiting for her and discarded her domino for something far more elaborate. She then approached Sela Cole, one of the Vendel Chairs, the highest rank in Vendel society, and took her aside to one of the smaller rooms. Once they were alone, she pricked Mistress Cole's finger with a tiny needle in her ring that had been coated with the substance the heroes helped her make. Within seconds, Mistress Cole passed out. Leaving a note addressed to Val Mokka and placing a dark cloak around Cole's shoulders, Maria and one of the servants quietly took the unconscious woman out of the room and into a waiting coach.)

The letter states, "I gave your simpletons the truth. You and several other important members of the Guild have been poisoned. I simply neglected to tell them that I was the one responsible. If you would live out the night, have the simpletons bring *The Imperial Book of Genealogy* and a set of ten master plates for printing guilders to the Kirkwood Spa at half past midnight. The book is in the hands of Joseph Volkner. I will exchange the antidote and Sela Cole for the book and plates. Should anyone else attempt to ambush us or should your pet monkeys fail to bring the items, Cole's fate will make your own look mild."

Mokka crumples the letter in his hands and look around furiously for a moment. Then a look of glacial calm comes over him. "My friends, we have been deceived. My fate and the fate of my love lies in your hands. Will you help me?"

Should the heroes refuse, he will offer them a reward for their assistance. Should they continue to refuse, they will have made a terrible enemy, short-lived though he may be. If they agree to help him (which they undoubtedly will), he provides directions to Volkner's home and a letter explaining what they need and why. He them that the printers plates will be here within the hour. If asked about his use of the term "love" for Sela Cole, he simply brushes the matter aside and blames his fever. Just as he finishes speaking, the clock strikes 11 o' clock.

WINDOWS

- Luco Villanova standing within the garden's greenhouse and calmly slashing out at plants with his rapier. He smiles as he decapitates each flower.
- Val Mokka striding up and down in his office while he consults page after page of a thick document.
- Stenson and Snyder entering a coach still holding hands and looking adoringly at each other.
- Vestenmannavnjar gathering in a warehouse near the docks. Large crates, bales, and barrels fill all but a small area near the doors. A short, cloaked figure enters the room and remains within the shadows by the door. The voice is a mere whisper but it cuts through the room easily and each word reverberates with passion. "Warriors, you know me. I am Uvitenhet and together we have preyed upon our Vendel cousins for their treacherous actions. Now the time has come to strike a blow against the Eisen who has allied himself with our cousins. Joseph Volkner sits as a member of the Vendel Council and supports every decision that tears apart the fabric of our world. That ends now. I want you to go to the mansion he calls a home. He has Eisen bodyguards, but that is of no matter. Destroy all that you can, except the books. Gather as many books as you can and bring them back to me. We have an ally who will pay dearly for them. Money that will go towards supporting your families and comrades in arms! Go, show this Eisen lapdog that he will find nothing here but dust!"
- Val Mokka and several well-dressed merchants are sitting in a parlor discussing matters of commerce including the money supply. One of the men urges a reduction in the printing of guilders to ensure the money does not lose its value but others disagree. A silver punchbowl and a tray of appetizers sit upon a sideboard behind them.
- The cloaked figure of the Vestenmannavnjar leader motions one of the men, Orf Halfson, forward. The leader's voice is clear and cold. "Keep your eye out for a red leather book with black print upon the cover. That is the only one we truly need." Halfson nods and watches the other man slip effortlessly from the room into the darkness beyond. A voice from behind him says, "How much can we trust him?" Orf turns with one eyebrow raised and stares into the scarred face of a short, broad man.
 - "What's that, Fjar?"
 - "Uvitenhet. Can we truly trust him?"
 - "Together we have exposed dozens of villainous Vendel, Vendel who have paid for their crimes. I may not know his name, but I can see his heart. I trust him more than I trust you."
 - Fjar scowls for a moment and then nods. "Alright. I'll meet you at Volkner's."
 - The Vestenmannavnjar raiders drift through the streets in ones and twos before gathering in an alley only a few blocks from Volkner's mansion. They cast practiced eyes upon its walls and silently wait for the others to arrive.

REPERCUSSIONS

If the heroes did not participate in the earlier section, they can simply be in the harbor area and see Maria's plight. They

can either witness the fight or participate in it. In either case, she will still lose her pouch and since it contained a rare poison she meant to use later in the evening, she will enlist the heroes to help her remake it. This can serve to introduce the heroes into this part of the adventure. Only one item is truly unique among Maria's ingredient list, the Nero Muschio. Everything else she can obtain while the heroes are looking for the black moss. If they fail to get this ingredient for her, she will be forced to use common arsenic. In that case, she will give the heroes an excuse to keep them busy and continue with her plan alone. She will kidnap and poison Sela Cole, but the poison will be far more deadly and Mistress Cole will likely die before she can be ransomed... unless the heroes can save her.

7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
– The Vestenmannavnjar

Wherein the heroes discover that even those with different views may still espouse heroic ideals.

A group of Vestenmannavnjar appeared in windows over the course of the adventure up until this point. Now the GM should either hand out pre-generated characters sheets for these people or have the players create their own Vestenmannavnjar characters. Regardless, the players will now be assuming the roles of people dedicated to destroying the Vendel and restoring the old ways. Followers of the mysterious figure known only by the runic name of Uvitenhet, they have previously spied upon Vendel merchants and then exposed their crimes. Over the course of the past few weeks, they have changed their strategies and begun attacking Vendel homes and shops. While most of the Vestenmannavnjar do not realize it, all of these attacks were focused upon a single objective, to gain the materials needed to forge their own guilders and destroy the currency's value. Their purpose tonight is to steal a particular book from Joseph Volkner while also stealing other books and destroying his other possessions to prevent anyone from knowing what they were truly after.

You rendezvous at an alleyway within sight of Volkner's mansion. Other mansions stand to either side, blazing with lights, but in contrast this three-story building's top floor is dark and only two lights on the second floor are lit. However, you can make out a great deal of movement and lights upon the entire first floor. The wall that surrounds the grounds is tall, almost eight feet, but the gate at the front allows you to make out the open driveway and lawn in front of the house. Glancing around at each other, you see that everyone except Fjar Gormson has arrived. How will you proceed?

The Vestenmannavnjar can gain the book they seek by numerous methods. They could simply make a frontal assault upon the house and seize what they want. In that case, they will need to face the dozen Eisen bodyguards employed by Volkner, though half of them are currently asleep and unable to join the fray for ten rounds. While they do this, Volkner will retreat to his master bedroom and hide within a secret room he had constructed there long ago.

Another method would be for the Vestenmannavnjar to attempt to sneak past the guards. Only six are currently awake: two at the front door, two in the library with Volkner and two on random patrol. Should the Vestenmannavnjar move cautiously, they should be able to reach the second floor easily enough. Getting the book from the library without Volkner knowing will be extremely difficult, it rests on a shelf only a few feet away from him. Should Volkner notice anything unusual, he will have one of the bodyguards check it out. If the bodyguards or Volkner discover intruders, they will summon the other bodyguards from the first floor while Volkner retreats to his room upstairs. He will defend himself if cornered, but knows that he is not skilled at swordplay.

If the Vestenmannavnjar demand his books, he will surrender them so long as none of his men have been killed. Should the Vestenmannavnjar kill or brutalize anyone needlessly, he will order his men to retreat, but provide the killers with no assistance or aid, instead privately resolving to hunt them down later. The red leather book is easily located and appears to hold information on Eisen genealogy.

The Vestenmannavnjar may try to bluff their way into the home. However, even if they succeed, the guards at the front door will insist that they leave their weapons in a cloakroom and then escort them up to the library. One guard steps aside and orders a page to awaken the other guards and bring them upstairs. Should the Vestenmannavnjar spend too much time watching the house or act too slowly, remind them that any city guardsmen who spot them will surely raise an alarm, something that may have already occurred since Fjar did not make the rendezvous. A few more details about the home follow.

Cloakrooms, servant quarters, and kitchens occupy most of the first floor and a dozen servants are preparing dinner right now. There are several Eisen guards just within the building's main entrance. The foyer that lies beyond is decorated in marble and black walnut. A very lifelike portrait of the last Emperor of Eisen stands above the sweeping staircase that leads upstairs.

The second floor consists of a large dining room, complete with dumbwaiters leading down to the kitchen, and a series of parlors and studies. The widened hallway where the marble steps end contains several portraits of important Eisen leaders and a staircase leading upstairs. Everything here is quite austere. The room in the southwestern corner of the building is a large library where hundreds of texts fill the shelf-lined walls. Joseph Volkner is currently within this room, reading letters from his Eisen agents while two bodyguards stand in the hallway outside. The third floor holds Volkner's master bedroom, complete with two studies and a boudoir. There are also two parlors which each have three bedrooms leading off from them.

Once they have the book and leave Volkner's home, the Vestenmannavnjar must make their way back to the warehouse where they first met Uvitenhet. It is late enough that few people see them, but suspicious looks follow them. Arriving at the warehouse where they originally met, they discover a new surprise.

As you slip inside the warehouse, you immediately note that something has changed. A small lantern draws your eye to a dagger pinning a note to the wall immediately above it. Scrawled upon the parchment are the words, "We are betrayed. Save as much of the loot as you can, especially the bales of paper and the printing press." The symbol of Uvitenhet is emblazoned on the bottom of the parchment. Glancing around, you notice that several of the crates are missing already. Your only hope is to move your loot to your other hideout upon Sigil, the steep cliffs on the east side of the harbor beneath the lighthouse. You probably only have minutes until Ivar Dags and his city guard descend upon the warehouse. What will you do?

The warehouse currently holds 10 bales of linens and fabrics, 10 bales of paper, 15 barrels of oil, 25 barrels of gunpowder, 10 barrels each of green and black dye, over 30 pieces of hand carved furniture, 3 crates of weaponry (swords and axes), 1 crate of pistols and muskets, an elaborate printing press, and 12 crates of various finished goods such as clocks, glassware, and lanterns. This makes 96 pieces including the printing press, which counts as 8 pieces by itself. The crates, barrels and bales are quite large and each piece will require two men to carry it. A single person can roll a barrel, but otherwise they each count as a single piece. The printing press is the largest item and will take at least 8 people to carry, though four could lift it onto a wagon. It is entirely up to the heroes to decide how to handle the situation, but they are not actually in any immediate peril.

Possible plans for the Vestenmannavnjar include stealing or buying a wagon, which can carry up to 10 pieces of cargo, to transport the goods to another hiding place. The wagons are all kept within warehouses with at least a pair of guards or are currently being operated by a driver and a handler. They could also seize one of the small ships near the warehouse and load their goods onto that. The closest ship is the Dream of Andover, a small merchant caravel that can hold all of the cargo. An anchor watch of four sailors is onboard, but only half of them are awake. The two other ships nearby are a brig and a topsail schooner. Both have strong anchor watches of at least twenty men aboard and any attempt to move cargo to them will attract the attention of the city guard. The Vestenmannavnjar could attempt to trick the crew into loading the cargo for them. If they attempt to simply carry the goods to another hiding place, they will attract the attention of the city guard.

They might also decide to simply leave the warehouse, but their sense of duty and mission should convince them to bring as much of the cargo as possible.

What the Vestenmannavnjar do not know is that the city guard captured Fjar a few hours ago. Sheriff Dags tricked him into revealing that he was a member of a group of Vestenmannavnjar rogues operating out of a warehouse in the dock area. Uvitenhet has an informant within the city guard and found out almost as soon as Dags did, which allowed plenty of time to visit the warehouse, take a couple barrels of ink, and leave the message for the others. Dags and his men are currently combing the warehouses, but such a widespread search will take some time and they will not actually arrive for another hour. They are on the alert for any unusual activity however and if the Vestenmannavnjar steal a wagon or load cargo for more than half an hour, they will send six men to investigate. Should those men fail to check back with Dags, he will investigate personally with a dozen men.

This battle should be difficult, given that the Vestenmannavnjar have already had several confrontations over the past few hours.

However, they are still better fighters than Dags' city guardsmen. Dags will retreat to summon reinforcements rather than

allow his men to die needlessly. Should the fight turn against the Vestenmannavnjar, Dags will offer them an opportunity to surrender. He will spare their lives if at all possible.

REPERCUSSIONS

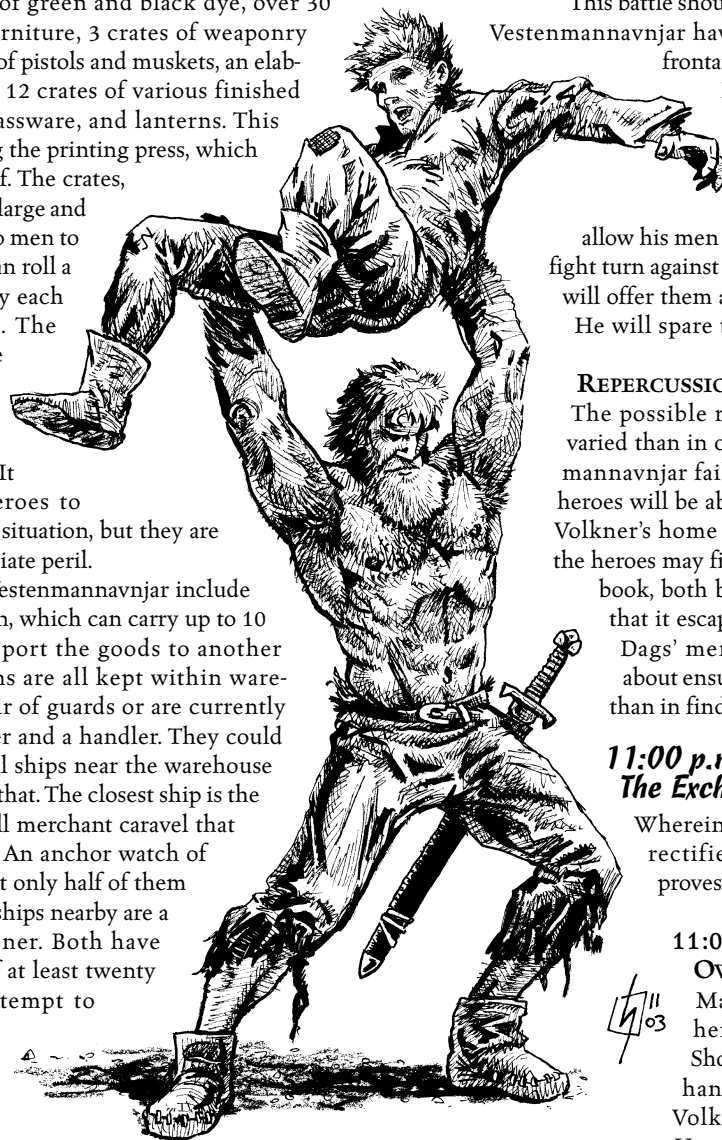
The possible repercussions are far more varied than in other sections. If the Vestenmannavnjar failed to obtain the book, the heroes will be able to get it from Volkner. If Volkner's home was burned to the ground, the heroes may find it far harder to locate the book, both because they cannot be sure that it escaped destruction and because Dags' men will be more concerned about ensuring the fire does not spread than in finding the perpetrators.

11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. – The Exchange

Wherein the heroes' errors must be rectified and a simple exchange proves to be anything but.

11:00 P.M.: FOLLOWING YOUR OWN TRACKS

Make sure to account for the heroes' previous actions. Should they have stolen only a handful of books or burned Volkner's house down as the Vestenmannavnjar, adjust the descriptions appropriately.



11:03

Following Mokka's directions, the heroes quickly travel to Joseph Volkner's home. You find his three-story home lit by dozens of lights while city guards, servants, and others move about in the front yard. Obviously, something has happened here earlier. As you look around, you are slightly surprised to come face to face with Ivar Dags.

In this instance, the heroes' previous actions will dictate what happens next. If they attacked or fled from Dags previously, he will immediately order his men to arrest them. While Mokka will see that they are released, it will only be after two hours have passed. If the heroes treated Dags with patience and respect, he will address them likewise, especially if they recovered the jeweled rose for Master Stenson, and give them all the details of what happened here earlier tonight. If they were surly or uncooperative earlier, he will allow them to remain, but let them discover the details on their own. In any case, the story, including any battle that occurred on the docks, will emerge through pointed questions of Volkner and his staff, as well as the fact that Dags has one (or more) of the men involved incarcerated.

In light of Mokka's introduction, Volkner will help in any way he can. Should the heroes agree to bring the thieves and vandals who attacked his home to justice, he gladly allows them to keep the book they seek. Unfortunately, it was probably stolen a few hours ago. He knows of no particular reason why the book would be so valuable, other than it was handwritten by the last Emperor. It is merely a detailed account of the Eisen noble lineages. It does include some information that was largely unknown to the public at large (such as which bastards noblemen sired), but given that so many of the people mentioned are dead, it is hardly worth all the effort gone into obtaining it tonight.

The heroes can proceed in several ways. They might request the right to question the prisoner and find out where the Vestenmannavnjar might have gone, they might visit the docks for more clues, they might interrogate other Vestenmannavnjar about possible hideouts or they might be completely lost. If they question the prisoner Fjar, they will find a strong-willed individual who is determined to not give any information away, but he is not very intelligent. If the heroes use a reasonable ploy, they can trick him into revealing that the Vestenmannavnjar have probably retreated to a longboat in the harbor area. If they speak to other Vestenmannavnjar within the city, they can obtain the same information. If they visit the docks for clues, they can either track the rogues to the longboat (by asking old sailors or others in the area if they saw anyone pass by) or find a ledger of transactions within the warehouse, which indicates that only two ships have moved cargo in or out. Checking with the harbormaster reveals that one is a merchant vessel that left only a few days ago for Castille, while the other is a longboat docked within the harbor. If the heroes are simply lost, Dags' men are currently combing the docks for any information and will report to him at 11:30 p.m. that the Vestenmannavnjar were spotted upon one of the docks.

Dags will gather his men to deal with the Vestenmannavnjar. Should the heroes want to wait for him, they can do so, but he will allow them to proceed first if they do not want to wait. It should be noted that the Vestenmannavnjar have had several brawls and battles throughout the course of the night and have not recovered from those experiences yet. The heroes should be able to take them out without much difficulty. They have all the loot that is in their possession, as well as another crate of weapons, pistols and a barrel of gunpowder which were stored in the longboat. Should any of the Vestenmannavnjar escape, they will head up to the Sigil lighthouse and join their companions there.

MIDNIGHT

Once the previous section has been resolved (and the heroes either have the book or were unable to obtain it), they will presumably return to Val Mokka.

Returning to Val Mokka's home, you find a strange dichotomy going on. While the parlors and ballroom are still filled with dancing and merriment, Mokka has retired for the evening to his private office. Within this room are dozens of doctors, chemists and herbalists, all examining several Vendel merchants, a silver punch-bowl and a handwritten account of the information regarding Maria's "antidote." Mokka waves the men away and hurries to your side. "Where you able to find it?"

If the heroes were unable to obtain it, he has cobbled up a forgery of the book and hands it to them. He also hands them a stack of metal plates wrapped within a wide leather strap.

"These are the printing plates she demanded. This puts her one step closer to printing her own guilders. Unfortunately, a barrel of the substance we sprinkle upon the bills as they dry has been stolen from the Printers Guild last night. Someone is getting far too close to forging enough guilders to destroy our economy. I want Sela and the antidote, no matter what the cost. However, should this prove to be a trap, make certain that these plates do not fall into villainous hands. Now hurry, there's not much time."

Yet another frantic coach ride through the darkened streets of Kirk follows, with only the regular pools of light provided by street lamps disturbing the inky blackness. At quarter past midnight, you arrive at the Kirk Spa, one of the city's greatest luxuries. The building was actually built into the side of a large rise at the edge of the city where the earth heats several pools of water. Just a few yards away, you can see a tall wrought iron fence behind which lies a pool of water with small chunks of ice floating within it. Wealthy patrons emerge from the steaming pools beneath and run out behind the fence to dive into the icy waters here. The contrast shocks the body and allows the mind to float in utter relaxation. However, the Spa is closed for the night, the wealthy patrons have all gone home, and no light shows within the building. Striding across the courtyard, you reach for the door and find it unlocked.

The second set of doors is locked. The Spa's guests and owners have left for the night, but someone entered the building within the last hour and unlocked the doors.

Opening the double doors that lead into the inner courtyard, you see the white marble tiles gleaming in your light. Normally clerks sit behind a long counter along one wall, but now all is empty and shadowy. There are no signs that anyone is here. Three doors lead from this room deeper into the building. To the right is an area for the men to disrobe and relax including small rooms for massages, changing rooms, and showers. To the left is a similar area for ladies.

Each of these sections has doorways that lead into the Spa area. A large set of double doors in the center of the room opens into the Spa proper, a large room filled with steam and darkness. Four pools fill the room, the two closest to the door are slightly cooler, averaging temperatures of about 90 to 99 degrees Fahrenheit. The two pools near the back of the room are hotter, averaging temperatures from 100 to 108 degrees.

A narrow pathway down the center of the room allows patrons to move between them at will. A long curtain normally hangs down the center of the room, providing privacy to patrons from the prying eyes of the other sex while still allowing them to dream of lays beyond it. This curtain has been pulled back, allowing the heroes to see all four pools simultaneously, as well as a fourth door at the far end of the pathway. The beautiful figure of the woman you knew as Maria stands beside this door with a lit lantern at her feet. She calls out loudly, and you hear her words repeated several times by the echoes of this large chamber. "Send one person with the book and the plates. I will meet him halfway with the antidote. Once I have verified that you have brought the authentic items, I will call for my associates to bring Mistress Cole."

Should the heroes object, she shrugs and declares those are the rules of the exchange. If they do not care for them, she can simply walk away. If they want to hear or see Sela Cole first, Maria will open the door behind her.

The unconscious Guildmistress of Blacksmiths is tied to a chair with a gag within her mouth. "She put up more fight than I expected, but she'll be fine once she receives the antidote. Of course, should you double cross me, my minions will simply slit her throat."

Should the heroes demand proof that the antidote works, Maria will shrug and say "You know how hard I worked to make it, but I don't intend to poison myself to prove its effectiveness."

If the party offers armed resistance, a significant number of guards appear and Maria stands next to Mistress Cole with a dagger at her throat.

Once the heroes are satisfied and agree to the terms of the exchange, Maria strides forward with a familiar flask in one hand and the lit lantern in the other. She reaches the center of the causeway at the same time as the hero who strode forward, places the lantern on the floor and stretches out her hand. The hero notices several buckets of water on the floor.

If the heroes attempt to seize, trick, or attack her, Maria's

first action is to knock two buckets of water into the pools. The cold water from the bucket sends large plumes of steam into the air, obscuring everything near the center of the room. If the heroes examine the flask she hands them, they will quickly see it contains the concoction that she created earlier. Maria equally quickly examines the book and the plates before placing them in a sack.

Regardless of whether they are authentic or not, she will nod and call out to one of her men to release Mistress Cole. If she is able to determine (or believes that) the items are forgeries, she calls out for a minion named Gorn. A huge man steps forward and lifts the chair with Mistress Cole in it. Maria's men will immediately train their muskets on the party to protect the retreat from the room.

If the items are genuine (or the forgeries pass muster), she will call her minion named Bjanick. In this case, a single man steps into view and cuts Mistress Cole free. The heroes see that there are several muskets pointing towards the Guildmistress's back, while Maria makes her retreat.

If things dissolve into combat, Maria retreats across the pathway, knocking over several buckets of cold water to provide a steamy cover for her escape. A dozen men pour out of the doorway, past Cole and attack the heroes, first with muskets and then with swords. Maria should be able to reach her side of the room and disappear into the steam, but a moment later two loud shots ring out. When the steam clears moments later, Maria is lying dead on the ground, blood pouring from two gunshot wounds to her chest. The printing plates and the book she had carried are gone. If the heroes examine her body, they find red and blue paint upon her hands. Anyone with artist or painter skills might be able to tell them that this is oil paint, typically used in frescos.

Even if the exchange goes perfectly, Maria knocks over at least one cold water bucket to cover her escape. Seconds later, three shots ring out from behind the steam. Maria's hired muscle quickly surrenders once they realize that she is dead. She hired them earlier this evening from the dock area so they have no loyalty to her and now that she is dead they realize they will not be paid. They explain that they did not know her or her partner, a tall blonde man carrying six pistols. One of them mentions that the man spoke with an Enhedsfolk accent but wore well-tailored Vendel clothes and had a clean-shaven face with a tiny scar upon his left cheek. The thugs do not know where he went or why he killed the woman and stole the sack. They did overhear her saying that after this meeting, she planned to meet some other agents to deal with the artist and the man seemed quite angry about this.

If the heroes search the area for a minute or two, they find a Vodacce coin and a discharged pistol delicately engraved with flowers and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The gun, quite feminine in appearance, is nonetheless a very well-made weapon. The pommel of the pistol is slightly flattened, as if it were used as a bludgeoning weapon on a regular basis.

Sela Cole appears to be fine, if somewhat dazed. She is almost immediately completely furious as she tells the heroes that the Castillian woman forced her to drink something. She begins to exhibit signs of a fever, but she insists on returning to Mokka's home to check on his condition. The heroes can try to track the gunman, but he has an extensive lead and Mistress Cole is very insistent about going to Mokka's.

WINDOWS

- A dark figure wrapped in a cloak is staring out on a stormy sea from the deck of a ship. Sailors move along the rigging, as a sail rips apart at the seam. Several men shout out curses, but a female voice calls out for them to repair it and continue to pour on the speed.
- Val Mokka is speaking to one of the Vendel doctors when he suddenly pauses. His mouth opens and shuts several times and then his eyes roll back into his head and he collapses. The doctor catches him and several others rush to his side.

REPERCUSSIONS

If the heroes manage to capture Maria, Hendrickson will shoot at her from concealment and kill her (unless they capture him before he shoots.) Regardless of whether the heroes capture Hendrickson, he will offer his information in return for the rescue of his beloved (*see Hendrickson's Confession in the next section*). If the heroes fail to obtain the release of Sela Cole and the antidote, either by not making the meeting or by arriving with a group of Dags' men, the Guildmistress will be found dead in the Spa and both Maria and Hendrickson will escape. In that case, Maria leads the men searching for Cortez at the Cathedral (*see next section*) or at the final battle. (Note: It should be understood that even if Mistress Cole dies in this adventure, she is not dead in the metaplot. The players' enjoyment is paramount and if altering the metaplot, which includes killing major NPCs, makes the game more enjoyable for you, then so be it.)

1:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

– *Early Morning Investigations*

Wherein the heroes work throughout the dark hours of the soul in search of answers and antidotes.

The next section is more freeform than the previous ones. The heroes should discover the identities of the gunman, his employer, and the truth about what is happening, but they may do so by several different methods. Allow them to act as they see fit, but remember that their previous actions affect the present situation. If they have alienated Dags, they are unlikely to get much coordination from him. Otherwise, Dags can provide them with six local constables who can act as "body doubles" for heroes too injured to continue or as simply as brutes assisting the heroes. Likewise, if the heroes did not retrieve the rose for Stenson, he will be too depressed to assist them now.

WINDOWS

- Val Mokka's home as the poison victims thrash about in a feverish delirium
- Stenson considering the list of Villanova's victims once the heroes discover it
- Quitera Cortez working upon the fresco in Lieber's Cathedral
- The Hadewig clock near the center of town
- The lighthouse on Sigil overlooking Kirk

VAL MOKK'S HOUSE

Should the heroes return to Val Mokka's home, they find that few guests who remain are among the most powerful members of the Vendel Guild. Master Stenson has begun coordinating efforts and will greet the heroes when they arrive. Listening to their tale, he nods gravely and seems equally concerned about the missing printing plates and the antidote. He escorts them upstairs where the doctors and herbalists have spilled out of the private office into several adjoining rooms. He quietly remarks that Mokka would be furious if he saw how these people have disrupted his rooms, then asks the doctors to examine the antidote.

One of them takes the flask and pours a few drops onto a piece of parchment. Several others gather around the table to watch. The female doctor says, "Ah, it is crowbane, a rare plant from the Midnight Archipelago used to poison birds. It is extremely lethal, but must have been weakened by a chemical interaction with the silver in the punchbowl."

One of the men testing the parchment suddenly speaks to the heroes. "This is the antidote that this Maria person made earlier tonight? Do you know if she used manegra? It is a kind of black moss that appears almost luminescent in darkness?" When the heroes confirm this, he continues, "It is actually another poison which does not kill, but renders the ingester unconscious." Should the heroes suggest that the poison might counteract the earlier one, he will shake his head vehemently. "No, this actually affects the person's breathing. A lack of air causes the victim to fall unconscious. It would not affect the other poison, but it might kill them faster." With a shrug, he and the others go back to what they were doing when you arrived.

Stenson shakes his head sadly. "We had to try it. Unfortunately, the only known antidote is another Midnight Archipelago herb known as gilfarn. They are currently checking with all of the herbalists and scholars within the city to see if any is available."

If shown the gun, Stenson suggests that the heroes go to the Rasmussen Pistol School shooting range where most of the pistoliers in Kirk practice. If the man who killed Maria is a member, one of the staff there should be able to identify him or the firearm. He provides them with a brief note of introduction.

The other useful piece of information is that while none of the servants had easy access to the crowbane, candidates for the traitor have been narrowed down to one of three people:

- Ulf is a very reserved and devout underbutler who delivered the punchbowl to the gathering.
- Marta is a lascivious young wench who recently convinced Mokka to give her a chance as a scullery maid.
- Rupert is a stable boy last seen skulking through the house while Master Mokka was away at the Garden Party; he then disappeared for several hours.

Stenson asks the party's advice on how to convince the villain to confess. If the heroes engage in conversation with any of the three suspects, each claims to be completely innocent. All three of them are lying, but it is up to the heroes to discover their crime.

- Rupert was in the house stealing one of the pieces of artwork. He then snuck out and found a fence who bought it from him. He has several other silver statuettes are hidden within the stables.
- Marta is wanted by the Jenny's Guild for practicing without a license. She only took the job in the hopes that Mokk would protect her from their retribution. She has continued to practice her trade within this very house and was with several other members of the staff during the earlier part of the day.
- Ulf claims complete innocence, but if questioned, will admit to being a devout Vaticine. If pressed, he will become passionate about the Objectionists who are "tearing apart his faith" and angrily denounce them. He will even admit to having poisoned Mokk on the instructions of the Holy Vaticine Church. He has several letters in his belongings from a "cousin in faith." These are actually from Maria and obliquely give him instructions, including mention of "a special polish I thought you might like to try upon the silver." Contained in these letters are requests for information about a lady named Quitera Cortez. If asked, he will deny any knowledge of her, but Stenson and many of the other members of the staff can confirm that she is a wildly obsessive artist and architect whom Val Mokk hired to work on the Kirk Cathedral.

THE RASMUSSEN SCHOOL

Should the heroes go to the Rasmussen Pistol School, either on their own or after Stenson suggests it, they will find the two-story building long since closed for the night. Banging on the door summons one of the night watchmen who informs them such it a curt and surly turn. If the heroes can convince him about the importance of their mission, he will grudgingly allow them inside and then summon the school's Guildmaster. Rogar Rasmussen, son of the school's founder, the late Erl Rasmussen, is an elderly man who walks a cane and wears a robe over his nightclothes. Despite this, the robe's two pockets bulge from the weight of the pistol he tucked into each one. His manner is completely composed and only the narrowing of his eyes indicates his emotions.

Rasmussen demands to know what is happening and refuses any help until he understands the situation. He is quite perceptive and probably notices if the heroes lie to him. If they tell him the truth or make up a convincing lie, he agrees to help them under one condition. They must tell Val Mokk and the other Vendel Chairs about his assistance and request that the Rasmussen School receive equal footing with the Swordsman's Guild. He take the heroes' word on the matter and does not ask that it be done before he gives them the information.

Should the heroes balk or claim that they are powerless to affect that change, he becomes extremely animated and explains that the Swordsman's Guild has a right to initiate duels at will and often singles out members of his School. He

only seeks an equal right for his students and fellow members to defend themselves legally and to initiate duels against those who wrong them. If they refuse his request, his response depends upon their reasoning.

If they refuse because some of them favor the Swordsman's Guild, he turns to the others and raises his eyebrow as if to say, "Do you see what I mean?" He will aid them to prove that he is more honorable than a Swordsman.

Should they feel that he is traitorous for not immediately leaping to aid them after they dragged him out of his bed in the middle of the night, he will order them out of the building and leave in disgust. If they offer resistance, guards with drawn firearms seem to appear from everyone. Dozens of loaded pistols make a forceful argument.

Assuming Rasmussen agrees to help, the party shows him the pistol and he asks for four details, any four. Mentioning that he worked with a Castillian woman will not help, but stating that he had a Vodacce coin does. "Ah. Yes. I know the man of which you speak. Fang Hendrickson. A bit of a dandy, but he has an eagle eye and is an excellent shot. Son of a wealthy dye merchant. He tends to leave these," he lifts the pistol you handed him, "lying around because he can always afford more. He was hired recently as a companion and lackey to Luco Villanova."

(Note: Ivar Dags is also aware of Fang Hendrickson and for whom he works. He is not familiar with his pistols, but he can identify him if the heroes provide him with five details about his appearance.)

VISITING VILLANOVA

Once the heroes discover the gunman's identity, they may wish to go to Villanova's home. If they simply watch the place, they must make a stealth check (TN 20) or Hide in Shadows (DC 20) to avoid being spotted by one of his night watchmen. If the heroes try to sneak onto the property, they must again avoid the night watchmen. If the party is spotted, Villanova sends the night watchman to bring them to him.

Villanova is still dressed in formal attire, and surrounded by his guards and several servants armed with firearms. He greets the party with the barest degree of civility and demands to know why they are spying on him. He vehemently denies any knowledge of tonight's events outside of his party. If asked about Fang Hendrickson, he responds that the man was in his employ, but was let go several days ago. During the conversation, he sneers and insults the heroes in the manner typical of his family. He refuses them entrance into the house proper.

(Unbeknownst to the heroes, Hendrickson is actually watching the proceedings from a hiding place on the edge of the garden.) Villanova orders the guards to "escort" the party to the gate immediately. There are enough guards that resistance is futile; the party would be better served to leave and try to re-enter by stealth or get help from Ivar Dags. One of the watchmen patrolling nearby bumps into a man hiding in the bushes, forcing him out of hiding. It is Hendrickson!

If one of the characters draws a weapon, one of the guardsmen knocks the weapon from his or her hand. In either case, Villanova retreats towards the house. The night watchmen rush to his aid and provide him some cover. Meanwhile, Hendrickson has regained his balance and starts firing at the heroes as he also escapes out the gate.

If the party tries to follow him but loses the trail, they encounter Javier Gadeva. If questioned, Gadeva knows nothing about Villanova's plans other than his desire to humiliate and destroy Stenson, but he does know that Hendrickson and a Castillian woman have been working closely together on something important. He also knows that Villanova and a Vendel merchant named Helga Keller have also worked closely.

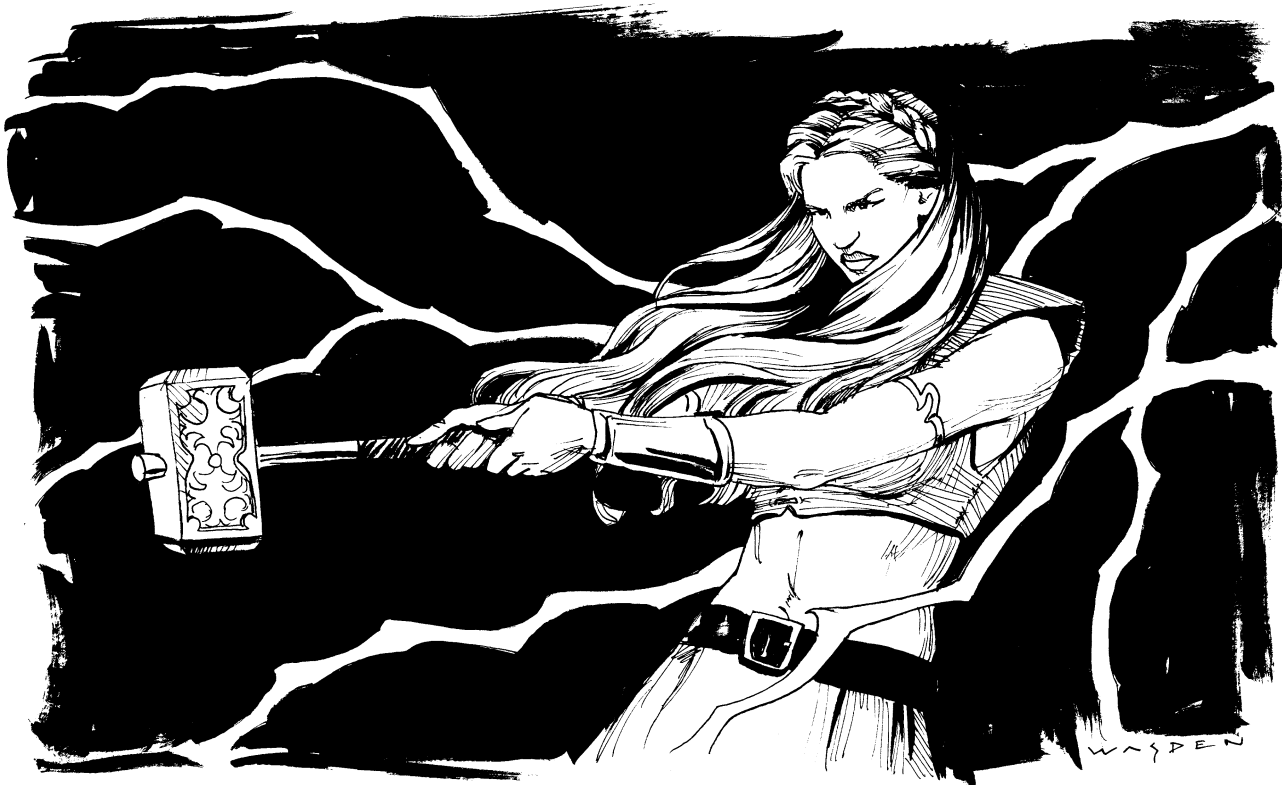
If they catch up with Hendrickson, he manages to keep them from killing him by offering to tell the whole story about Villanova's plan, on two conditions. The first is that they set him free and the second is that the heroes must save the love of his life, Quitera Cortez, a Castillian artist and architect. He tried to rescue her after leaving the Spa, but could not find her. He loves her so much that he will forego his own pardon if they agree to save her life. He refuses to provide them any information until they prove that she is safe.

If the heroes enlist the aid of Ivar Dags, he will accompany them back to Villanova's home. Villanova will act as above, but when Dags insists upon entering the house, Villanova reluctantly agrees and escorts them inside. Rather than accompany them, he ducks into an office, slams the door shut and locks it. If Gadeva or Hendrickson is with the party, he will try to break down the office door, all the while screaming at Villanova and threatening to betray him. If anyone can break down the door in the next two rounds, they burst into an empty room already engulfed in flames; for every round that the fire continues to burn, one piece of evidence is destroyed (with the list being the last to be destroyed).

If the heroes investigate the house, they will find a number of interesting items.

Unless the room is completely inflames, someone finds *The Book of Genealogy* but the maser printing plates are not here.

- There is a letter signed with the rune *Uvitenhet* that refers to needing "just a little more time" to secure "the book" by this evening and offers to exchange it for the printing plates at 4:00 a.m. at the Disappearing Barrel. (Most Vendel from Kirk will know that this is a rather upscale tavern in the southwestern corner of the city.)
- A partially burned chart of a sea fort (Hofsjokull) is located within the fireplace. There are no markings upon it, so it is extremely difficult to determine where the island is located, but Captain Nye (*see below*) or Stenson can provide the information after studying it carefully for at least half an hour (assuming one of the heroes isn't able to identify it).
- In Villanova's accounting books is a record of the sale of over 500 barrels of gunpowder to Helga Keller.
- In a drawer is a folded list of fifty names, which appear to be the most important members of the Vendel Guild. While not all the names are familiar, it should be clear that if everyone on the list died, Vendel would be thrown into an uproar. Over a dozen names are crossed out with a small black bird symbol next to them. The names of Val Mokk and the other eight poisoned victims are freshly marked with the raven and another fifteen names marked with the raven as well. These people are all members of the negotiating team in Wische, though that will not be immediately obvious to most people. The twenty-four names are those whom Villanova has marked for death within the next day.



LIEBER'S CATHEDRAL

Quitera Cortez is a devout Vaticine artist who believed that Theus transcends denomination or faith. When Val Mokk offered her the chance to design and build Lieber's Cathedral with a virtually limitless budget and his full support, she converted to the Objectionist Church and began work immediately. She has taken to her task with a passion and works on the frescos and designs constantly. Should the heroes attempt to visit her lodgings, they will find no one present. Visiting the cathedral provides them with far more excitement. The cathedral is slowly taking shape and large pillars of stone tower above the surrounding buildings. A dozen wagons with building materials are parked outside of it. One of the wagons is still hitched to horses however and closer inspection reveals that it is filled with gunpowder. Entering the cathedral, the heroes will see that one of the entryways is nearing completion. Mokk demanded that one of the entrances be completed fully so he could show others what the artist's final product would look like.

The entrance will be 40 feet square when completed, but currently, scaffoldings and stacks of marble tile vie for floor space. Unable to sleep after the party, Señorita Cortez came here to examine her work and noticed a minor flaw. She only intended to work for a moment, but was drawn into the project and started on the frescos of the nave roof. By the light of a lantern, she touched up the painting of the three Prophets of the Vaticine Church reaching out to touch their fingertips to a dazzling globe of radiance.

However, a few minutes before the heroes arrive, three men barged into the area with pistols drawn. They fired up at the woman, but succeeded only in destroying the lantern. The heroes hear a commotion inside as they arrive and find the three men trying to get at Quitera. She is still up in the scaffolding, occasionally throwing buckets of paint down upon the assassins. (If the assailants can reach her, they plan to kill her and use the gunpowder to destroy the building's structural integrity.)

Should the heroes defeat at least one of them, the remaining killers will flee. With a little pressure, they reveal that a woman named Maria hired him to kill the blasphemous traitor Cortez and prevent the Cathedral from being completed. All the gunman knows that the woman was a member of the Inquisition and arrived in town several days ago with orders to kill the most influential Vendel and cripple the Guilds. He reveals that they were also aware that she was working with someone else within the city, but does not know who that is.

Señorita Cortez is astonished that she was marked for death. She only wants to build a shrine to Theus and cannot conceive why anyone would object to that. Questioned further, she admits that she really does not know much about the social situation in Kirk. She has focused so much attention to the Cathedral that she has largely ignored everything beyond it. She does admit to having a suitor, a merchant named Fang Hendrickson. If questioned about him, she says that he works for Luco Villanova, is a skilled Rasmussen pistolier, and loves poetry and landscape paintings. She will not believe any accusations or revelations the party has about him, but can tell them that he currently lives at Villanova's home.

If the heroes do not want to go to her aid, Ivar Dags and his men go in their place. They will not capture any of the men, but they will prevent Cortez from being injured or killed.

HENDRICKSON'S CONFESSION

If the heroes agree to let Hendrickson go or help him receive a pardon from the Vendel Council (assuming he can prove that Cortez is alive and well), he tells them what he knows about Villanova's plans.

A strange alliance of Vodacce nobles, Inquisition clergy and Vestenmannavnjar warriors has been formed with a single goal — to destroy Vendel. While each has their own interests and plans, they have agreed to work together in a grand scheme to eliminate the most important members of Vendel society and throw their culture into an uproar.

The woman they knew as Maria was actually Doña Urraca Rioja, one of the Inquisition's top agents. The Inquisition wanted to crush Vendel's Objectionist tendencies and "encourage" them to adopt the Vaticine faith. She was visiting the nearby sea fort of Hofsjokull to set up some sort of ambush there. It was she who insisted on the theft of *The Imperial Book of Genealogy* and ordered Quitera Cortez's death. Hendrickson says that he killed Rioja to protect the woman he loved. While she was the one to spread rumors of El Camaléon, to the best of Hendrickson's knowledge the infamous assassin is not anywhere near Kirk.

The second member of the alliance was Luco Villanova. He initially arrived only to spy on the Vendel, but he planned to enhance his standing at home by destroying them instead. He came up with the list and then contacted the other two conspirators. He intended to kill everyone on the list and then return home. Hendrickson knows that Villanova was responsible for killing several merchants over the course of the last week with poison supplied by Doña Urraca. As for Villanova's current location, Hendrickson expects that the Vodacce will certainly flee the city and return home. (The Vodacce apparently expressed frustration that despite hearing rumors that his cousin's wife Valentina and courtesan Juliette were hiding in Kirk, he was never able to find them. After failing to kill the entire list, he needs to accomplish as much as possible before returning to Vodacce.)

The third member of the alliance was a Vestenmannavnjar known as Uvitenhet. While many of the Vestenmannavnjar use brute force and violence to achieve their means, Uvitenhet has always relied upon more subtle means. Hendrickson knows that although Uvitenhet uses the name of a Living Rune, she often disguises herself as a Vendel merchant. While he does not know her real name, he knows that she was to meet Villanova at the Disappearing Barrel at 4:00 am. She was most interested in obtaining the final ingredients to forge her own guilder notes. She was also willing to assassinate several of the members on Villanova's list who were guilty of truly heinous crimes like slave trading, but had been able to conceal the evidence so well that it could not be proven. She ordered her men to kill the Vendel outside of Kirk and even killed one of the men herself with her powerful Lærdom magic by freezing a merchant to death after discovering that he was responsible for shipments of tainted food to Vestenmannavnjar villages.

Hendrickson also knows that the three agreed to destroy a symbol of the Vendel's prominence in the world by setting a bomb in the heart of the Hadewig Clock, which will explode at 3:00 a.m.

HADEWIG'S CLOCK

A towering pendulum clock built by renowned scientist Clarisse Margaret Hadewig chimes out the hour from Hanns-Carsten Square in the center of Kirk. The clock stands 30 feet tall and is roughly 20 feet square. There are no windows and the only door is on a balcony roughly two stories off the ground. The lower levels are filled with gears and other mechanisms while an enormous clock-face and the gears to propel it take up most of the space on the top floor. This is the clock whose chimes reminded the heroes of the time throughout the course of the entire adventure.

(Note: Earlier in the evening, Uvitenhet snuck into the clockworks and placed a ceramic barrel within the large gears of the clock itself. While Hendrickson believed it to be a bomb, the contents of the barrel are actually concentrated acid. When the gears crush the barrel, the acid will spill out and eat away at the delicate mechanisms of the clock. Within an hour, the gears will seize up and the clock will cease functioning. If the heroes find it before this time, they must still find a means of disarming the trap. The barrel is wedged into the gears tightly and removing it with too much force will result in it breaking open. Only by loosening the gear train can the barrel be removed safely (**d20**: Craft (Clock Making) or Craft (Engineer) check (DC 15); **7th Sea**: Clockmaking, Engineering or Wits check (TN 20)).

THE DISAPPEARING BARREL

The Disappearing Barrel is an upscale tavern in the south-western corner of the city. While it is close to the water, there are no nearby docks. The sign outside the door shows a Vendel man trying to pour a drink from a cask while another man lies beneath them and swallows a stream of liquid pouring from a hole in the casks bottom. The interior is very refined with dark maple paneling and beautiful landscape paintings upon the walls. The entire room is designed to look like a Vestenmannavnjar feasting hall. The mugs all resemble barrels and each one is hand-carved. The bar is a sturdy plank of maple, intricately detailed with scenes of famous Vestenmannavnjar travelers and explorers. Behind it is a stained glass window showing the Living Runes fighting the Great Wyrms. Small alcoves around the outside of the room give patrons a chance to meet privately. This is a Vendel's vision of how Vestenmannavnjar halls should look.

The tavern is often used for meetings that must remain completely confidential. There are only two people and the tavern's staff still here. Both patrons are wealthy merchants so the staff allows them to remain as long as they like (the tips are excellent). The two beautiful serving wenches, a handsome bartender, an enormous but rather hideous bouncer, and the Vendel merchants are all singing an Inish drinking song when the heroes arrive. If any of the heroes think to ask if Villanova has been here tonight, the staff offers the information in exchange for a tip. The party learns that Villanova has been here within the past 30 minutes and left a message for Helga Keller who picked it up at 4:00 a.m. and left immediately after that.

For another tip, the heroes can also hear what the message was. "Plans unraveling. Sigurd's hammer." If asked, the staff says that the men turned towards the docks while the woman headed into the heart of the city. Any long-time resident (or party member who is Vestenmannavnjar) knows that Sigurd is the name of an ancient Vestenmannavnjar warrior who fought off a foreign invasion by himself upon the steep cliff-side to the west of the harbor where a lighthouse now stands. The hill and the lighthouse are properly named after him, but most citizens of Kirk merely call them Sigil. (Note: if the party arrives before 4:00 a.m., Keller sees them and arranges for someone else to pick up the message for her.)

THE MYSTERY OF HELGA KELLER

If the heroes chose to investigate the woman who had so many dealings with Luco Villanova, either Stenson, Dags or other Vendel merchants can provide them with some details. She is a Vendel merchant and a member of the Guild who despises the Vestenmannavnjar and repeatedly calls for more action against Uvitenhet, the Vestenmannavnjar vigilante who often exposes supposed Vendel corruption. While most of her trade is in textiles and similar goods, she has recently begun diversifying. She joined the Lighthouse Keepers Guild and bought several lighthouses, including the one on top of Sigil. While keepers can charge the Merchant Guild and Harbor-master for the operation of the lighthouse, it is not a very lucrative endeavor. It does provide a service by constantly watching the coming and going of ships in the area. Keller has used some of the information she gleaned from her employees to corner the market in certain goods. This does not always work to her advantage, however.

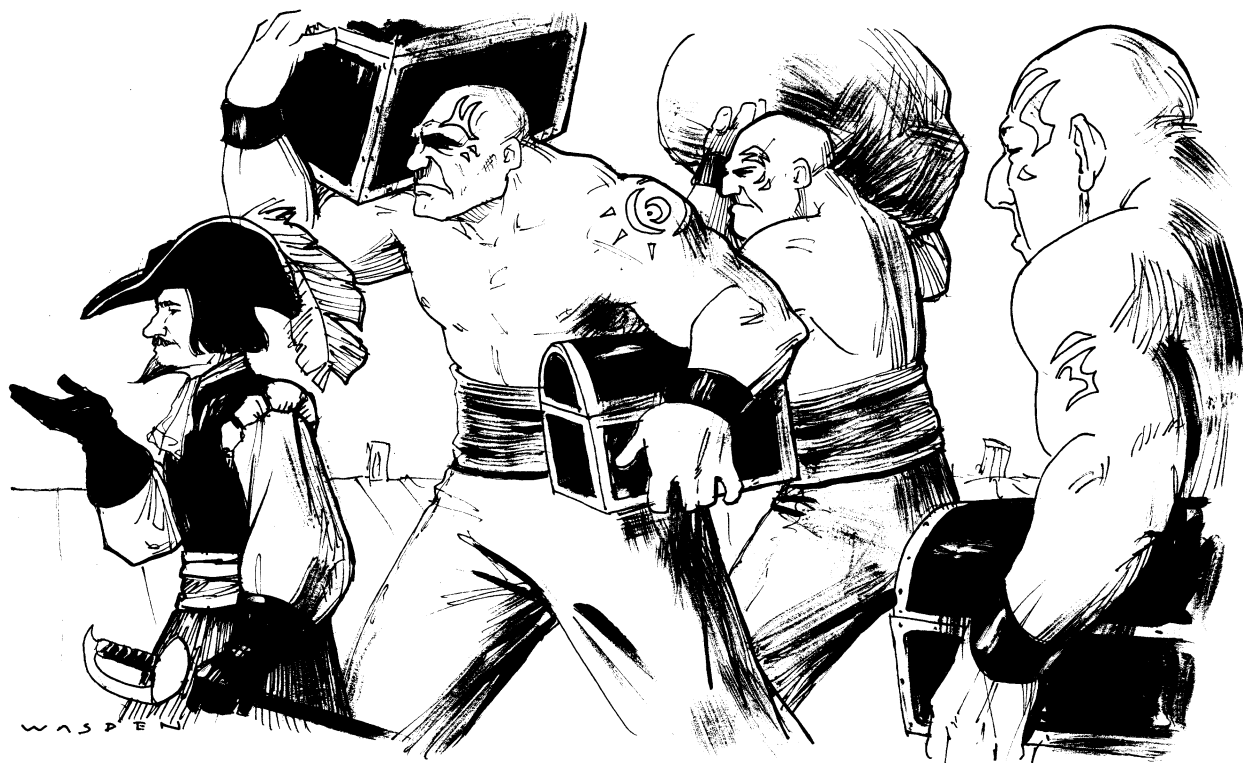
Over the past few months, Keller began to purchase all the gunpowder she could, perhaps thinking that after the battle between Montaigne and Fauner Pösen's troops, prices would increase. Sadly, prices have actually declined and she now sits upon a large surplus of gunpowder. She also owns a warehouse, the very one where the Vestenmannavnjar Raiders gathered last night. Some claim that she bought the lighthouse because she believed there was valuable minerals beneath it. For months, she hired dozens of miners and sent them to Sigil. She has not yet announced the discovery of anything and there is no sign of the supposed mines.

If the heroes are suspicious and try to speak to her, they discover that she is not home. In fact she never came home last night and cannot be found within the city. If her dwelling is carefully searched, the heroes discover a secret room that contains voluminous correspondence and information about every aspect of life in Kirk — and all of the letters are addressed to Uvitenhet. There are also architectural plans showing a large network of tunnels excavated beneath the lighthouse on Sigil. Notes in the margins discuss the volume of space excavated and how many barrels can fit within them.

SIGIL HILL

Sigil Hill is packed with gunpowder set to go off at 7:30 a.m. just as everyone is opening their shops and market stalls. Should the party fail to reach the Hill and put out the fuse, they will be helpless to stop the explosion.

The overland journey to the lighthouse is long and arduous. Because of the steep terrain, the road cuts back and forth in a series of switchbacks. Should the heroes attempt it, they



will find that several recent landslides have blocked part of this trail. Until they clear, the quickest method of reaching the lighthouse is to sail across the harbor and climb the steep cliffs of Sigil. The heroes could also hire a ship to carry them the short distance (15 minutes) it takes to reach the bottom of the cliff from the docks. The temperature is cool and a thick fog engulfs the entire harbor, significantly reducing visibility.

From the bottom of the cliff, the task looks far more daunting. It is close to a hundred feet straight up to the lighthouse. The climb is not particularly difficult, although it does make for a perfect opportunity to allow excitement without combat. Last minute rescues as someone falls towards the rocks below, attempts to climb ahead and place a rope, meeting a flock of sea gulls who refuse to budge from their place on the cliff, and a rope that frays and snaps upon sharp rocks can all be employed to make the player's blood race faster, (though never to the detriment of the ticking clock).

A small one-room house sits beside the lighthouse proper. Two sleepy Vestenmannavnjar emerge to greet the heroes. They readily admit to being Keller's employees and if asked why they work for a Vendel, they solemnly state that they were once pirates who attacked one of her ships. After her men defeated them, she spared their lives. They work for her to repay this debt. They are glad to show the party around the lighthouse, which is a very simple building. A tall spire of rock thrusts up into the air with a single door leading inside. Inside sits a wooden spiral staircase rising up to a platform overhead. The enormous lantern and mirror assembly that projects the light outwards is still rotating though the early morning light that is slowly burning the fog away.

A trapdoor lies within the floorboards of the first floor of the lighthouse, but it is difficult to spot (so DC and TN should be set accordingly.) Opening it reveals a tunnel leading straight down into darkness with a faint spark of light far below. If the trapdoor is discovered, the Vestenmannavnjar guards immediately attack. They know all about the tunnels which are filled with barrels of gunpowder... and a slowly burning fuse. (They were preparing to leave when the heroes arrived. Should the heroes prevail in the combat, the Vestenmannavnjar will cackle wildly and tell them that the fuse has been lit and it is only a matter of moments before the entire cliffside explodes.) The Vestenmannavnjar have strung two ropes for rappelling down to a longboat concealed in a small cave. If they have a chance, they will attempt to escape and leave the heroes here. Should they succeed, the same boat that dropped the heroes off picks them up within fifteen minutes. Otherwise, the heroes might catch a ride into harbor on the *Persephone* (see next page).

The heroes must extinguish the fuse, but task proves more difficult than it initially appears — there are multiple fuses! (Adjust the number to cover a full 10 Rounds at which time, if they make their checks, they just barely manage to put out the last one. If the heroes have not spotted the trapdoor, the GM should still allow them to escape before the explosion.)

Regardless of what happens to the lighthouse, the heroes notice an Eisen ship named *Der Geist* sailing past them from the harbor as they return to the docks. If the party scans the ship as it goes past (and they make the appropriate checks), they are stunned to see Villanova on deck! And oddly enough, although the wind is calm and there is a moderately heavy fog, the ships sails are filled with wind, signifying the possibility that he now has the services of a Lærdom mage. (If for some reason the characters fail to ask, or fail their rolls, Ivar Dags can relay the information.)

REPERCUSSIONS

If the heroes did not play previous parts of the adventure or if they missed part of the story, Stenson may ask them to help during their hour of need. Should the heroes fail to discover which of the servants is the traitor or if they accuse the wrong person, Ulf will escape shortly afterwards and warn the Inquisition of the heroes' actions.

If the heroes were unable to save Quitera Cortez at the Cathedral, Hendrickson refuses to provide them with any information. This could easily mean that the heroes never discover some of the intricacies of the plot. It will also mean that the Cathedral's construction will effectively slow or even cease altogether. The greatest repercussion would simply be that they may fail to track down Villanova or Uvitenhet before their schemes come to fruition.

2:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. – The Privateers

Wherein a different role gives the players a taste of the sea and the dangers it holds.

Between 2:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., the players have the opportunity to play dual roles once again. In this case, have them create members of the Sea Dogs, the Avalon privateers. The players should not be given much background information on the characters' current situation, simply that they are sailing through the darkness towards Kirk on an important mission. However, one of the party should be allowed to play a Vodacce courtesan named Maria who is traveling with them, though she is not herself a member of the crew.

Introduce this window slowly, much as was done with the Vestenmannavnjar raiders earlier. Although she is the only person onboard the *Persephone* who is not a member of the crew, Maria is the focus of this window. Use her to introduce the other members, allowing them to describe themselves and their position upon the ship.

Any position is available except captain, which is held by Needlenose Nye, a former member of Captain Berek's crew who bought and outfitted his own ship in the Sea Dogs. A taciturn man with a halting knowledge of Avalon, Nye has gathered an unlikely crew, but insists on strong sailing skills among his men. Rather than a group introduction, allow Maria to interact with one crewmember at a time until the entire party is revealed. Give them a bit more information about Nye and the ship each time you return to this window.

Nye has devoted his ship to lost causes and improbable feats, and often simply carries normal cargoes while searching for adventure. Currently, he is carrying spices bound for Kirk. He encountered Maria several weeks ago in Castille when she briefly escaped from a group of men determined to keep her imprisoned. Nye and his men broke her out of prison and promised to help her complete an important mission, which involved getting to Kirk as quickly as possible. To that end, the *Persephone* has sailed night and day to reach her destination.

Travel at night is a risky proposition and the GM may wish to include several encounters to bring this fact home to the characters. After the lookouts make several false warnings about other ships, they will spot an iceberg drifting towards them. Only an excellent pilot will be able to maneuver them from certain doom and even that would not be possible if the riggers did not lower the sails in time to slow them. Try to give every crewmember something to do during this

encounter so no one feels left out, but make sure the ship gets to Kirk. Examples include allowing gunners to destroy parts of the iceberg and others to act as impromptu riggers.

When they approach Kirk, the wind dies and the privateers resort to using oars to complete their voyage. The players may now return to their original heroes for the remainder of the adventure.

REPERCUSSIONS

Should the party fail to make it past the iceberg, their ship will be badly damaged and delayed by an hour which means they will need to find another captain to take them to the sea; therefore, they may not know that the antidote has arrived before they must leave to track down Villanova.

9:00 a.m. to Noon – Endgame

Wherein the villains have been unmasked and must now taste the cold steel of justice wielded by the heroes.

9:00 a.m. – Unexpected Allies

As you stand there contemplating Villanova's escape, you hear the steady beat of a pair of oars crashing through the water. A ship suddenly bursts through the fog and glides up to the docks a few feet away from you. The name *Persephone* stands out clearly upon her prow as a tall dark-haired woman rushes down the gangplank and notices you. Running up to you, she demands urgently, "Where is Val Mokka? I must speak to him immediately!"

This ship was the focus of the Privateer window. Xenia Hidalgo, the Castillian woman who spoke to the heroes, is the agent Mokka sent them to find yesterday. She was captured and imprisoned by the Inquisition for several days before Captain Nye rescued her. Now she must complete her mission. She knows that Doña Urraca is somewhere in town and has orders to kill Mokka and other prominent Vendel. If the heroes tell her that they already have that information, she will relax, believing that the crisis is past. When she hears that things are still in chaos, she will feel the need to confirm all of this with Mokka. Should any of the heroes mention gilfarn, Captain Nye, who is standing on the deck and leaning over with a wide grin on his face, will ask about it. He picked up a couple barrels of it in the Midnight Archipelago and was hoping to sell it here in Kirk. Should they mention their desperate need, Nye will happily give them a cask of the gilfarn. This cask is sufficient to cure all of the afflicted patients.

Upon receiving the gilfarn, Stenson grins broadly before turning it over to the physicians. One of them immediately begins preparing it and several long minutes later, he pours boiling water over the crushed herbs and places the pot in the center of Mokka's still disorganized office. The steam billows out and fills the room with a thick cloying odor. For a long minute, there is no effect upon the unconscious patients but then Val Mokka begins coughing harshly. Seconds later the other merchants follow suit. The physicians are all smiling broadly and Stenson roughly demands, "Well?"

“It will take a while for the gilfarn to work; you found the right herb. In a few minutes, we will give them some of the tea. It may take an hour or two, but they should pull through. Thanks to these heroes.” The physicians and herbalists raise a small cheer and then begin moving amongst the patients and checking their condition. Stenson turns to you. “It is true. You have saved these men. Now what about the rest?”

If the heroes decide to pursue Villanova, something Stenson whole-heartedly encourages, Captain Nye will offer his ship. Unfortunately, the harbor is still becalmed. Only by finding a Vendel Lærdom mage can they leave. Dags or Stenson will suggest Boli Kollsson. If other Vendels are asked, they will recommend the small school for Vendel Lærdom mages here in Kirk, which Kollsson runs. While Kollsson is extremely busy teaching class today, he will put that aside if the heroes explain the urgency of the situation. He personally accompanies them upon the trip along with several of his most gifted students. Together, they can replace the calm that sits upon Kirk’s harbor with a strong northern wind.

10:00 a.m. – A Rough Voyage

Should the heroes examine the list of names Villanova had, they discover that fifteen of them marked with the raven symbol were merchants and officials who had journeyed to Wische to negotiate a trade agreement. If they said anything about it earlier, Stenson mentions that he was unable to contact them since they left Wische five days ago by ship and they do not have any means of communicating with them. If asked, he can tell them that the ship should arrive by evening and that it will pass right by Hofsjokull. Any sailor or merchant will be able to provide the heroes with the same information. If the heroes have not yet realized that Villanova is likely heading towards Hofsjokull, Stenson or Nye will certainly suggest it. The seafort lies to the south of Kirk and has a wide control over the shipping lanes in this region. This should provide them with their destination.

The journey to the sea fort should be detailed in a few short minutes. Focus on the fact that the wind is directly behind their ship and far stronger than common for this time of year. Crashing waves and violently rolling seas will make any non-sailors quite ill. Even the Sea Dogs appear uneasy about the speed with which they travel. The heroes overhear one of them mentioning that they have sailed further in the last hour than they usually go in an entire day.

After an hour at sea, you can see the looming fortress of Hofsjokull slowly rising out of the sea. While he has remained apart for the entire journey, Kollsson (if present) now calls out to the heroes and points out dark clouds gathering on the horizon. Striding over to his side, you notice dozens of runes marked upon the deck at his feet in red and black paint. “We’re not the only ones manipulating the weather. There are several other Lærdom mages within the fortress and it looks like they’re calling up a storm.”

If the heroes ask him to disrupt it, he will shake his head. “My students and I have driven this ship farther

and faster than even I believed possible. We have almost expended our entire reserves. We can probably slow the storm’s progress, but I doubt we can disrupt it.”

As you approach closer, you see *Der Geist* you spotted leaving Kirk a few hours ago is anchored at the sea fortresses docks. The *Persephone* lowers her sails and lurches towards the same docks. The crew leaps into action as the ship drifts up to the dock and quickly ties the ship. Captain Nye calls out in Castillian from his spot at the tiller, “The Hourglass says it is 11 am.” Simultaneously the lookout shouts from the crow’s nest. “Sails ho!” Holding a spyglass to his eye, he points to a speck upon the southern horizon.

Boli Kollsson and his Lærdom mages as well as Captain Nye and his Sea Dogs are exhausted by the journey and unable to assist the heroes further. While they cannot verify this yet, the ship on the horizon is the *Aven bildlig*, carrying Vendel envoys from Wische back to Kirk.

11:00 a.m. – Final Confrontation

Hofsjokull’s docks are on the northwestern end of the island. Niklas Lassa, the military commander of the fortress, meets the heroes as they disembark. A brash and overconfident man, he scoffs at their claims, stating that *Der Geist* has docked here several times in the past. Luco Villanova has also visited often and Helga Keller is a well-known merchant and member of the Merchant’s Guild. The thought that he could be tricked into allowing a *Vestenmannavnjar* killer and a *Vodacce* spy into his fortress is inconceivable to him. He will personally escort the heroes through the massive gates and towards the guesthouse where the two retired. Of course, they are not here and there is no sign of where they have gone.

Disturbed, Lassa strides over to the Command Tower in the center of Hofsjokull and begins signaling each of the cannon emplacements with semaphore flags. One by one, each of the 21 guns responds with a signal for an all clear, indicating that no stranger is there. Meanwhile, the sky turns black as the storm to the southeast slowly rolls in closer. The ship to the south is sailing straight towards the fortress, obviously meaning to take shelter.

Having checked with his men, Lassa is suspicious of the heroes and refuses to signal the incoming ship. He escorts them to a small guesthouse in the southern end of the fortress and tells them that he is going to take a tour of the gun emplacements to investigate the situation personally. He orders the heroes to remain here and places four guards upon the door to prevent them from leaving. His last words are a warning that he will have some more pointed questions when he returns. He begins his tour at the southeastern end of the island and proceeds counterclockwise.

If the heroes investigate *Der Geist* or insist that Lassa do so, they discover that it is an Eisen merchantman that regularly plies the water between the Vendel islands and Pösen. The crew contains a large number of rough-looking mercenaries and gunnery mates. If asked, the captain responds that he has had trouble with *Vestenmannavnjar* raiders lately. In fact, pointing to a nearby woman dressed in furs and leather, he says that he hired his own *Vestenmannavnjar* weather witch

to ensure he would not need to fear the raiders' magic. About ten minutes after the heroes arrive, a dozen men leave their ship to dine at the fortresses barracks, as has become their custom.

(Unbeknownst to the characters, only minutes after arriving at the barracks, they overpower the handful of men present and steal their uniforms. The mercenaries then quickly move to the southwestern gun emplacements and join with a group of bribed soldiers in overpowering the other guards and taking command of the guns.)

The heroes have a dilemma. Should they wish to attack the guards, they may do so, but will probably not have any idea where to go. If they just cannot make a decision, ask them to make Perception checks (DC 20/TN 25). Success indicates that they notice smoke coming from the gun position to the southwest. After watching it for a few minutes, someone may realize it is a forge used to heat shot. As any sailor or military man knows, heated shot is a terrible weapon many fortresses use against attacking ships. The red-hot cannonballs must be handled carefully because they often cause fires or even set off explosions. Flashes of lightning are visible in the distance as thunder crashes out. Suddenly thunder crashes out again, but far closer. The cannons southwest of the guesthouse fire, engulfing the area in smoke.

If there are still guards outside the guesthouse, they will be completely shocked that anyone would fire the cannons without orders from the Command Tower. A nearby staircase provides easy access to the top of the wall and the heroes arrive there just in time to see and hear another 15-pound cannon shot thunder out. Glancing around, the heroes see a dozen unconscious guards at adjoining gun emplacements while a score of men dressed in ill fitting uniforms are reloading the Eisen cannon. These were highly skilled, well disciplined mercenaries. They have lookouts posted who will probably spot the heroes immediately and move to engage them, leaving ten behind to continue the assault. Flanked by the guards are familiar figures: Luco Villanova and Helga Keller stand side by side watching a ship at sea from which a column of smoke is rising.

Their plan was to allow their minions to deal with this situation, but given the shambles the heroes have made of their other plans, the two villains decided to handle this matter personally. With at least six mercenaries working at it, they can fire one cannon shot per round. Unless the heroes interfere, the mercenaries will fire two more shots (missing with the first and scoring a direct hit with the second), then descend to the courtyard while the Vendel soldiers race along the wall tops towards the gun they used to bombard the ship. Villanova and his mercenaries race to the *Der Geist* and escape under cover of the storm controlled by Uvitenhet and the other Lærdom mage. Despite this plan, Villanova and Uvitenhet remain behind and fight to the death to revenge themselves against the heroes.

If the heroes can eliminate enough men to prevent them from firing the guns twice or throw off the second shot so they miss, the Vendel ship carrying the envoys from Wishe will be able to put the fires out and make it to port safely. Beginning with round 3 and each consecutive round, 12 Vendel guards arrive. Unfortunately, since they are not sure who is on their side, they initially attack both heroes and villains equally. If the fight continues, Lassia arrives on round

eight and order his men to focus on the Eisen. This time table may be adjusted upwards or downwards, depending on if the heroes are having too easy or difficult a time of it. (Alternately, Uvitenhet will not be in attendance during the final clash, having slipped out to fight another day.)

Noon: Finally...

Wherein the heroes are victorious (with some help) and save the lives of dozens of people, prevent the destruction of the harbor, and defeat several devious and remorseless villains. On behalf of the Vendel government, Val Mokka is extremely grateful and insists on rewarding the heroes, first and foremost with a long hot bath! Mokka later arranges a proper commendation ceremony that he presides over with Mistress Sela Cole at his side; other appropriate rewards are left up to the GM.

Not bad for a day's work!

NPCs and Statistics

Original characters for this adventure: Brun Stenson, Inga Snyder, Javier and José Gadea, Fang Hendrickson, Quitera Cortez, Rogar Rasmussen, Xenia Hildago

Los Vagos: Doña Urraca Rioja ("Maria"), El Camaléon

Vendel/Vesten and *Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*: Sela Cole, Boli Kollsson, Master Red, Joseph Volkner, Uvitenhet/Helga Keller, Ivar Dags, Val Mokka

Ships and Sea Battles: Luco Villanova and Niklas Lassia, as well as the fortress of Hofsjoskull

7th Sea CCG: Needlenose Nye

Brun Stenson (d20™)

Vendel Courtier 6: CR 6; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 6d6+6; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC10; Atks: Unarmed +3 melee (1d3); SA none; SQ Courtier Ability (Voice), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Versatile, Wealth; SV Fort +3, Ref +12, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16; AL LG; Skills: Appraise +11, Bluff +12, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +10, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (History) +4, Knowledge (Local) +6, Knowledge (Nobility) +6, Listen +5, Perform +8, Profession (Merchant) +11, Read Lips +6, Search +7, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Vestenmannavnjar [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +12; Feats: Barterer, Debater, Detect Lie, Merchant.

Brun Stenson – Henchman (7th Sea™)

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

TN to be hit: 15

Attack Roll: 3k2 unarmed

Damage Roll: 1k1 unarmed

Skills: Accounting 3, Cold Read 2, Dancing 2, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Gossip 3, Hagglng 2, Mooch 2, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Scheming 2, Sincerity 3

Notes: Speaks Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W); Membership (Merchant's Guild)

Javier Gadea (d20™)

Castillian Spy 6/Bonita 4: CR 10; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 5d6+15+ 4d10+12; hp 81; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+4 Dex, +6 Unar-

mored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Rapier +11/+6 melee (1d6+2) or pistol +12 ranged (1d10); SA Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ Alias, Brilliant Get Away, Contacts, Face in The Crowd, Fast Footed, Focused Defense; SV Fort +6, Reflex +13, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12; AL CE; Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +16, Gather Information +13, Hide +10, Jump +6, Move Silently +10, Profession (Servant) +6, Read Lips +11, Search +7, Speak Language (Castillian, Montaigne, Théan, Vestenmannavnjar [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Tumble +16; Continuous Parry, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Improved Initiative, Membership (Invisible College), Parry, Run, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

Javier Gadeva – Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, Finesse: 4, Wits: 3, Resolve: 3, Panache: 3

Reputation: -15

Arcana: None

Advantages: Castillian(R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Vendel (ACQ); Combat Reflexes

Servant: Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Gossip 3, Menial Tasks 2, Unobtrusive 3, Valet 2

Spy: Conceal 2, Disguise 3, Lip Reading 2, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3

Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2

Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Rolling 4, Sprinting 4, Throwing 3

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearm) 2

Bonita (Journeyman): Bind (Fencing) 4, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Wall of Steel (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Bonita) 4

Luco Villanova (d20™)

Vodacce Noble 4/Swashbuckler 4/Villanova 5: CR 13 Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 4d6+4+4d8+4+5d10+5; hp 89; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+3 Dex, +2 Light Footed, +7 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Twisted rapier +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+2) and masterwork dagger +17/+12 melee (1d4+1); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Invite the Attack, Stop Thrust, Unexpected Strike; SQ Commanding Presence, Focused Training, Friends in High Places, Light Footed, Seduction, Taunt; SV Fort +4, Reflex +12, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16; AL LE; Skills: Balance +15, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +16, Listen +7, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Vestenmannavnjar, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +8, Tumble +15; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with light weapon in off hand), Arrogant, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Flashing Blades, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Parry, Two Weapon Fighting (only with light weapon in off hand), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Weapon Expert (rapier), Weapon Finesse (any applicable weapon, but only in light or no armor), Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Focus (rapier) Note: Luco has a Sorte-imbued rapier (3 "Destiny Dice") (See *Swashbuckling Adventures™* for full details.)



Luco Villanova – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 4
Reputation: –50
Arcana: Arrogant
Advantages: Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W); Combat Reflexes, Connections, Membership — Swordsman's Guild, Noble, Twisted Blade (Rapier — 3 Destiny Dice)
Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Scheming 4, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3
Merchant: Accounting 3, Appraising 2, Hagglng 4, Steward 2
Spy: Bribery 4, Conceal 2, Interrogation 3, Shadowing 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Rolling 3, Swinging 2, Throwing 1
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye-gouge 3, Kick 2, Throat Strike 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5
Villanova (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 6, Stop-thrust 5, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 5

Uvitenhet (d20™)

Vestenmannavnjar Lærdom Mage 18: CR 18; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 18d8+54; hp 149; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC12; Atks: Masterwork dagger +15/+10/+5 melee (1d4+2); SA Lærdom runes, spells; SQ Adept, Apprentice, Becoming I, Becoming II, Inscribing the Rune, Invoking the Rune, Master, Visions 18-20; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 17; AL NE; Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +12, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +12, Listen +6, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Vestenmannavnjar, Vodacce [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +6; Feats: Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Staff, Craft Tattoo, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Full-Blooded (Lærdom), Half-Blooded (Lærdom), Improved Initiative, Indomitable Will, Iron Will, Merchant, Self-Controlled; Lærdom Runes Known: Kjött, Bevegelse, Varsel, Ensomhet, Styrke, Uvitenhet, Kyndighet, Sterk, Velstand, Fjell, Høst, Grenseløs, Krieg, Nød, Sinne, Tungsinn, Reise, Fornuft, Lidenskap, Kjøløg, Villskap.

Spells Per Day 9/10/9/8/7/5/4/3/2; **Spells Known:** 0 level — *icy touch*, *light*, *mending*; 1st level — *bull's strength*, *magic stone*; 2nd level — *endurance*, *locate object*, *obscure object*; 3rd level — *haste*, *lightning strike*; 4th level — *rune of warding*, *stone skin*; 6th level — *control weather*; 7th level — *move the stones*; 8th level — *iron body*.

Uvitenhet – Villain (7th Sea™)

(For full details and background, see Vendel-Vesten™.)

“Maria” (d20™)

Castillian Spy 9: CR 9; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 9d6+9; hp 47; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Rapier +7/+2 melee (1d6+1); SA Sneak Attack +5d6; SQ Alias, Brilliant Getaway, Contacts, Face in The Crowd; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 15; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +9, Hide +8, Innuendo +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +8,

Open Locks +8, Read Lips +6, Search +7, Speak Language (Castillian, Eisen, Montaigne, Vestenmannavnjar, Vodacce [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]), Spot +5; Feats: Alertness, Appearance (Above Average), Dangerous Beauty, Panache, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

“Maria” – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 5, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 4
TN to be hit: 20
Attack Roll: 8k5 rapier
Damage Roll: 4k2 rapier
Skills: Acting 4, Attack (Fencing) 3, Diplomacy 3, Footwork 3, Lip Reading 2, Lockpicking 2, Oratory 3, Parry (Fencing) 3, Seduction 3, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 2
Notes: Speaks Castillian (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W). Appearance (Above Average), Dangerous Beauty, Keen Senses
 (Note: the stats for Dona Urraca Rioja are found in *Los Vagos*™; these have been amended for this game.)

Fang Handricksson (d20™)

Vendel Highwayman 5/Rasmussen 5: CR 10; Size Medium (Humanoid); HD 5d8+10+5d10+10; hp 80; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+3 Dex, +9 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork pistol +11/+6 ranged (1d10+3) and masterwork pistol +11 ranged (1d10+5); SA Clever Shot, Double Pistols, Fire Reflexively, Two Handed Quick Draw; SQ Blur of Motion (20% miss chance), Focused Training, Range Increase +20; SV Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +7, Hide +7, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +11, Move Silently +7, Search +7, Speak Language (Eisen, Vestenmannavnjar, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Tumble +13; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with pistol in off hand), Dead Aim, Defensive Shot, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Improved Initiative, Off Hand Accuracy (only with pistols), Point Blank Shot (only with firearms), Quick Draw (only with pistols), Ranged Expertise, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner, Intermediate), Weapon Focus (pistol), Weapon Specialization (pistol).

Fang Handricksson – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
TN to be hit: 15
Attack Roll: 3k2 unarmed
Damage Roll: 1k1 unarmed
Skills: Attack (Firearm) 5, Diplomacy 2, Exploit Weakness (Rasmussen) 5, Footwork 4, Pommel Strike (Pistol) 5, Reload (Firearm) 5, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 3, Sprinting 3, Stealth 4, Trick Shooting (Pistol) 5
Notes: Speaks Eisen (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W); Rasmussen Master; Combat Reflexes. Membership (Merchant's Guild)

Fischler's Rescue Act 2 – The Introduction

Act 1 – The Entrance

The heroes are on their way to Seeufer, the capital of Fischler, located on the shores of the Südlache, at the edge of the Schwarzen Walden. Perhaps the journey was prompted by rumors of the sighting of a lost relative, or maybe just the search for adventure in an area reputed to contain grave danger. Whatever the reason, the party approaches the town from the south. They spot the walled city on a hill across the Südstrom, the river that flows from the east and feeds the Südlache. Fortunately, there is a ferry. The sun is setting over the water and the ferryman calls out that this is his last trip. He seems relieved that his last passengers are well armed as he furtively glances westward.

“Looks like some poor fisherman has had some bad luck,” exclaims the ferryman, indicating a small fishing boat several hundred yards off the port. In their race to reach port before dark the boat has run hard aground, and the prospects of freeing it before dark are not likely. Any member of the party from Eisen will know that the fisherman and his crew are not going to survive the night unless rescued. If no one from Eisen is in the party, the ferryman (or another passenger) will state the fact. The ferryman will not go to their rescue unless prompted by the heroes. He keeps glancing at the setting sun and the gates of the city. He is afraid of grounding his own craft on the rocks, and will not approach the fishing boat to closely which will necessitate some acrobatics (leaping, rope swinging, and the like) to get the crew off the fishing boat.

Unfortunately, the crew is an elderly fisherman and his family of six, including grandchildren, who will need help getting across. While swinging from one craft to the other, someone should spot a beautiful maiden-like creature swimming in the water surrounding the stranded craft. Anyone looking at the creature must make a (d20: Will save DC 10; 7th Sea: Resolve test TN 15) or become transfixed (immobile) for 1D10 rounds). A successful Lore check (d20: Wilderness Lore DC 20; 7th Sea: TN 20) will recognize the creature as a *lorelai*, a lake creature (distantly related to the sirens) that lurks in shallow rocky waters and lures sailors to their deaths.

If the heroes rescue the fishermen, they make it through the gate just as the last rays of the sun are setting. A sergeant of the guard says, “Good work will greet them! We thought you weren’t going to make it there for a while.” The captain of the fishing boat thanks the party and offers to buy them a drink at one of the local taverns where they will also be able to find lodging for the night.

If the heroes fail in their rescue, they will not make it back in time, and the gates will be locked for the night. They will have to stay the night in some shacks constructed for travelers caught in just such an instance as this. They will not get a wink of sleep, and during the night they will be attacked by a band of kobolds (the exact number should depend on the strength of the party).

In the morning, the ferry captain will thank the party and lead them to the same tavern as above where they will be able to get a few hours rest.

Act 2 – The Introduction

The heroes are awakened in the morning by the proprietor of the establishment who informs them that there is a messenger awaiting them downstairs. In the common area a young lady in well-made but utilitarian dress greets them, asks if they slept well, and then delivers her message, “My mistress has heard of your exploits last night and would like to have a word with you in private.”

If the party asks the identity of the *fräulein*'s mistress she responds that all will be made clear if they come with her. If the party refuses to come, she will confide that her mistress is Franziska Köhl, adviser to the Eisenfürst. This should arouse the party's interest and she will lead them on a circuitous route through the city.

Seeufer is a crowded city with narrow streets and even narrower alleys. The typical building is made of timber and stucco, two to three stories tall, and overhangs the street, giving the traveler the feeling that they are walking through a canyon. Eventually, the heroes find themselves at the side entrance to a large manor house. They are hastily led through the gate, then through a courtyard, and finally in through the kitchen door. There they see a matronly lady in her mid-thirties preparing some food. “Thank you, Katrina, and now would you please...” The lady, who is obviously not the cook, sends Katrina on an errand and the party is left alone with Franziska Köhl, advisor to Faulk Fischler.

Mistress Köhl addresses the party, “If you will pardon me while I finish my work... Some things are better done oneself.” She prepares a small plate of food and a stein of drink that look like they are made for a doll and places them on the ground near the door. “We in Fischler do not forget the old traditions. Even the *Heinzelmännchen* need to eat.” If one of the party is from Eisen, they may know who the *Heinzelmännchen* are (or the GM may give them the information to share with the rest of the party). If none are and someone asks, Mistress Köhl will explain that this is a *geschenk*, a traditional offering of food to the *Heinzelmännchen*. When she has finished her work, Mistress Köhl continues, “You have shown yourselves to be brave, resourceful, and of good heart, all qualities that I value. I have need of your services.”

Act 3 – The Quest

Mistress Köhl leads the heroes across the courtyard to a small chapel. Unlike the manor house, which is made of wood and stucco, the chapel is made entirely of cut stone. It is a small building, seating no more than fifty people, with a high vaulted ceiling and has been white washed giving it a bright, airy feel. She checks to see that the chapel is empty, then addresses the party. “Faulk Fischler is a good man and a good Eisenfürst. He cares deeply for his people and always tries his best. But I am afraid he may have gotten himself into something he cannot handle. There is something he is afraid of, something he is unwilling to tell me about. I need you to find out what is going on.”

At this point a priest rushes in, out of breath from running. “There you are, mistress! I am sorry to interrupt, but a crisis has arisen.” The priest gestures her toward an alcove where they talk in hushed voices.

Mistress Köhl gestures for the party to join them. She points to a niche where a red velvet pillow rests. It obviously

once held an object of some significance, but is now empty. Mistress Kohl tells them, “The Crown of Saint Ludmilla was hidden away during the wars. Objects of religious significance tend to become trophies during religious strife, and a wise abbess hid it away till she felt it would be safe. Now it has gone missing, and I am afraid if its loss became known, or its thief were of a known faction, it might rekindle conflict.”

Any character who has taken religious orders will know the story of Saint Ludmilla (*see below*). Others may make a lore check (**d20**: Knowledge (religion) DC 10; **7th Sea**: Theology or History TN 10). The story is also told in pictures on the alcove walls.

Ludmilla was the young daughter of a woodcutter who lived deep in the Schwartzen Walden about 300 years ago. One evening, her father came home with a grievous wound after being mauled by a bear. Ludmilla bound the wounds as best she could all the while praying to Theus. Then she left the small cottage in the dark of night to go for help. The Schwartzen Walden is a dangerous place in the day, but at night it is foolish for anything less than a large armed force to tread its paths.

Heedless of her own safety, Ludmilla sped along the paths of the Schwartzen Walden toward the village of Holtzbach, praying as she ran. So deep were her thoughts in prayer that she did not notice the bright light emanating all around her. Normally, village gates are never opened after dark, but the guard was so overwhelmed by the light and sense of peace flowing from her that he beckoned her to enter and guided her to the old woman who served as the abbess and healer. The priestess, along with some guards, followed Ludmilla back to the little cottage, where she told the girl to pray for her father. After she unwrapped the bandages, the abbess found the wounds completely healed. Relieved, and exhausted by her journey, Ludmilla could no longer stand, and as she fell asleep, the light about her finally dimmed. It was then that the abbess saw the crown of silver leaves upon the girl's head.

Ludmilla eventually became an abbess and healer of great note, who attended to the poor of the Schwartzen Walden and aided those stranded in its night. It is said that the dark forces of the wood never attacked the houses she visited.

“The crown is said to have great powers of protection, one of the reasons we keep it here in Seeufer. Obviously this takes immediate precedence over any other problems!” she looks directly at the heroes, “Find the crown, and then we can address the concerns I mentioned earlier.”

Mistress Kohl will engage in conversation with the priest, which gives the heroes time to examine the scene of the crime. An examination (**d20**: Search DC 15; **7th Sea**: Perception TN 15) reveals tiny human-shaped footprints no longer than an inch. Another clue is a spool hung high in the rafters with a length of string around it like a pulley. (**d20**: Spot DC 10 or DC 10 if someone specifically states that he is searching that area; **7th Sea**: TN 20 to spot but 3 free raises for anyone intentionally looking in that area.)

The courtyard is guarded and well-lit at night, but no one was seen going into or out of the chapel. Always the consummate hostess, Mistress Kohl invites the party back to the kitchen for a light snack before they set out on their investigation. There they will find the offering to the Heinzelmännchen gone, and an inkwell in its place.

“Ah,” exclaims Mistress Kohl as she spots the inkwell. “I thought he would return it with the proper incentive. The Heinzelmännchen are always ‘borrowing’ things.” (Note to GM: If you have to bludgeon the players with the plot, you can always have Mistress Kohl ponder aloud why the Heinzelmännchen “borrowed” the crown.)

The party should start asking about how to get something back from the Heinzelmännchen. Mistress Kohl will explain that normally things turn up in due time but that the inkwell had been missing several days, and that she did not have that kind of time on this matter. (If someone knows where the local Heinzelmännchen gather, they might recite a rhyme and retrieve the object sooner.) Mistress Kohl says that she is not originally from this area and that she has no idea where that might be.

The party needs to locate someone with a good knowledge of the local folklore. Asking around will get them to Gertrude Strummel. An ancient woman, good Frau Strummel is a gatherer of herbs and stories. Since she is no longer able to move around very well, she has taught the local children how to identify the herbs she once gathered. These she exchanges for stories, which the children are eager to hear. As the party approaches, she is spinning a tale for them. (Note to GM: Any of the Brothers Grimm fairytales will do provided they are in the original, darker format.)

It appears that Frau Strummel is in need of a rare flower, mondblau, found only in the Schwartzen Walden. She offers to answer the heroes' questions if they will gather it for her. She explains that she dares not send any of the children that deep into the woods because of the danger.

Her directions lead them to a valley a few hours journey away, but regardless of how carefully they follow her instructions, they become lost, and be unable to find the flower. When the heroes realize that they have no idea where they are, they are attacked by a small pack of kobolds (the exact number should depend on the size of the party).

Near the end of the fight a woodcutter appears to help them. He asks them what they were doing out here in the Schwartzen Walden, then offers the Heroes some food in his nearby house and afterwards will lead them to the flowers. He points the way and tells them that he will join them once he gets some wood for the fire. A small girl greets the adventurers at the door, ready with a meal of bread and cheese laid out for them. On the table is a bowl of blue flowers she calls mondblau, which she offers. After departing the house, they find the woodcutter just down the trail. He offers to lead them to more flowers. When they relate the tale of the girl, the woodcutter says he has no daughter. (The heroes may notice at this point that any wounds taken in the previous combat with the kobolds have been healed.)

If the heroes return with the flowers, Frau Strummel thanks them and tells them that the Heinzelmännchen of Seeufer are known to frequent a tall hill northwest of town, on which sits a large windmill. Once there, they should repeat the following rhyme:

People of goodness, unknown to greed,
Return to us please those things that we need.

Frau Strummel emphasizes the importance of being polite to the Heinzelmännchen. “Small in stature they may be, but they can make your life miserable if you make them your enemy.”

At the hill, in response to the rhyme, a Heinzelmännchen introduces himself as Hultreich and responds in a laughingly indignant voice that they did not take the item, but they are pretty sure they know who did, and not to worry. If the party explains the importance of the item, Hultreich offers to lead them to it for a price. Any small gift of minor value will do — a pretty ribbon, some food, a thimble, or a silver needle. The importance is in the exchange, not in the actual item. The only stipulation is that it must have some value to the person offering it; a simple rock will insult him and he will go away.

If the party goes with Hultreich he takes them to a hill several miles out of town. Once there, he excuses himself and disappears into the tall grass. Moments later a small opening appears in the hillside and Hultreich reappears to lead the party through it (they will probably have to crawl.) About 30 yards into the hill, after a few twists and turns, the tunnel opens up into a small, well-lit cavern filled with many Heinzelmännchen. A ceremony is in progress.

Four females process with a crown that looks like it is made of silver leaves. Set into the crown are four candles which somehow are enough to light up the cavern like a bright summer day. While the ceremony continues without missing a beat, more than a few eyebrows raise at the presence of the schlankenvolk (tall people). Hultreich explains that the ceremony is to inaugurate a new *gemeindehalle*, a community meeting place for a new colony. These particular Heinzelmännchen are refugees from the darkness that terrorizes Heilgrund.

The procession ends in front of a dais where the community leaders are gathered. One particularly elderly Heinzelmännchen prays for der Schöpfer (the Creator) to bless and protect the community and then announces that the celebration will begin. A band begins playing on small instruments as trays of food are brought forward. Hultreich runs off to talk to the elder and then brings him back, introducing him to the party.

“This is Bertholt Schafer, the Oberhaupt and *hohepriester* (leader and high priest) of these good Heinzelmännchen.” Bertholt is glad the party will take the crown back, to save them a lot of trouble hauling it all that way, but he insists that they stay for the celebration. Food and drink will be brought (albeit in relatively small portions), and conversations ensue. The Heinzelmännchen have heard about the heroes’ adventures of the day before and admire their bravery. They will confide that they see much of what goes on in Eisen, and in Fischler in particular. If asked about Faulk Fischler, Hultreich responds, “He is a good man, and I would enjoy share a drink with him, but if he keeps feeding kobolds, his hands will eventually get bitten.”

The heroes learn from the Heinzelmännchen about a way to confuse a kobold’s sense of smell by running cloth through powdered charcoal. Hultreich will eventually inform the

party that if they want to get back before dark they had better leave soon. This should surprise the party because subjectively they have only been there perhaps an hour. Hultreich accompanies them as far as the outskirts of town but leave them before they reach the gate. “Give my regards to the Eisenfürst,” he bows and then removes a small velvet pouch from his belt. “And tell him that this is for Franziska, but he must be the one to give it to her, for if another man does, even Ludmilla’s Crown will not be able to protect Seeufer.”

The heroes enter the town and find Franziska Köhl awaiting them in the chapel. When the Crown is placed back in its proper place, she thanks them and reaffirms her faith in their ability to find out what is going on with Eisenfürst Fischler.

Mistress Kohl continues. “The Eisenfürst has gone out to spend the evening with friends. It is on evenings like these that Faulk seems most distraught. I only wish I could tell you where he went; he always visits different taverns and he never tells me which one he is going to next. All I know is that there is some sign that the tavern owners use to alert the guard to his presence.” Franziska Kohl’s eyes are tearing, and you can tell her feelings for the Eisenfürst are deeper than they seem. She thanks the heroes again and excuses herself, bidding them good evening.

Act 4 – The Investigation

The heroes will have a difficult time finding Faulk Fischler. Not only does he keep his destination secret, but the people of Seeufer take protecting their fisherman-turned Eisenfürst very seriously. Tavern owners and the guard have come to an agreement: the tavern owners leave a sign that the Eisenfürst is within to notify passing patrols who then dispatch guards to keep watch. When Fischler enters a tavern, one of the staff sweeps in front of the door and leaves the broom leaning up against the wall where the passing patrol can see it.

In addition, different companies have adopted each of the taverns as their personal hangout, so there will be a number of off-duty guards in each tavern at any particular time. Armed strangers asking around for the whereabouts of Faulk Fischler will attract unwanted attention, and had better be prepared to deal not only with the guard, but any armed and loyal locals. With the proximity of the Schwartzzen Walden, there is little nightlife in Seeufer and fewer than a dozen taverns are open after dark. The trick will be to find him.

(Note to GM: roll a D10 to select taverns. Fischler usually stays out for four hours, then heads home. Let the heroes check a couple of taverns, but remind them that Seeufer is a large town, and there is no way they will be able to check them all before Fischler heads home.)

TABLE 2:2: TAVERNS IN SEEUFER

Roll	Tavern Name
1	Das Fischnetz (The Fisherman’s Net)
2	Der Schvien und die Pfeife (The Pig ‘n Whistle)
3	Glassemann’s Steinkrug (Glassemann’s Beer Stein)
4	Der Trinkenplatz (The Drinking Place)
5	Kristen’s Traum (Kristen’s Dream)
6	Der Rastplatz (The Resting Place)
7	Der Grun Draken (The Green Dragon)
8	Hansel’s Schwester (Hansel’s Sister)
9	Der Plaudernplatz (The Schmoozing Place)
10	Der Hölzfäller (The Lumberjack)

Many rumors run through town right now, general topics of conversation at any of the taverns. The Eisenfürst loves Mistress Köhl, but won't confess to it because he was not born a noble and is afraid she will reject him. A convoy out of Sieger was lost in the Schwarzen Walden, the cargo was recovered, but there were no bodies. The fishermen are unhappy about the new fishing quotas but are willing to trust the Eisenfürst for a year or two. Sightings of a mysterious creature in the Südlache, a large hump surfacing in the distance, have people talking. A young fisherman angered the Heinzelmännchen by trying to catch one and has since found his nets cut and a hole punched in his boat. An ex-patriot from Montaigne has opened a gambling house, but everyone is sure the tables are rigged...

As the heroes make their way from one tavern to another, they spot someone putting out a small bowl of oats and a tiny teacup with some drink. If they wait in hiding, they will see a Heinzelfrau come to collect the offering. If the heroes address her, she acts surprised (but later admits that she knew they were there all along.) She recognizes them as the schlankenvolk from the previous night and asks them if she can be of assistance. If they inquire about the whereabouts of Fischler, or what the signal is, she gives them the following riddle:

First rushes on the river,
 Then my family was bound.
 We dance and then we quiver
 With a sweetly rushing sound.

(Note to the GM: The answer is a broom.)

If they solve the riddle, the heroes should have no problem finding the correct tavern. When they enter, they will find it well-lit and crowded. The party should get the feel that this is a local pub where everyone know each other's names and business. The patrons are hospitable and welcoming. The party will immediately be engaged in conversation from various sources; so, what brings you here? What do you think of...? Doesn't Herr/Frau brew the best beer you've ever tasted?

Eisenfürst Fischler sits at a large table conversing with several other men and women. Listening in, the party will discover mostly small talk, discussions of weather, children, and various other common daily occurrences. Fischler listens more than he talks and asks pointed questions, trying to get a feel for the needs of his people. He seems at ease until the topic changes to the happenings in Heilgrund and Hainzl. Then his face darkens and he stares at his cup, becoming more and more withdrawn. He soon excuses himself and leaves the building.

If the party follows him, the patrons block the door and demand what they want with the Eisenfürst. The off duty guards will attempt to arrest the heroes on trumped up charges just to get them into custody. Expect a fight. If, however, the heroes use discretion they can likely leave without attracting attention.

Faulk Fischler heads down the street, staggering slightly. The heroes have no problem spotting him or catching up to him, provided any brawl is taken care of quickly. After about a block, a hoard of bat-like creatures swoops into the area, flit-

tering around the Eisenfürst. A Lore check (**d20**: Wilderness Lore DC 15; **7th Sea**: TN 20) identifies them as *die hirte-fledermausen* (Shepherd's Bats), an intelligent form of bat native to the Schwarzen Walden. The Eisenfürst is neither alarmed nor surprised by this and strikes up a conversation with the one of them, the way someone might converse with a pet. If the party approaches too closely (12 feet), the creatures wheel and attack them, primarily out of annoyance. Fischler will call them off before they cause any real damage but will ignore the party.

If the party manages to avoid the encounter, they notice that Fischler's route seems to be avoiding all the patrols. If Fischler notices the heroes following him, he will try to lose them by ducking down side streets and alleys (this should be a clue to the party to give him more room). He eventually pauses to listen to a group of street minstrels who were about to pack up for the night, but a generous tip encourages them to continue. As one of the musicians puts a pipe to her lips, the bats flee (they don't like the pitch and will disappear for 2d10 minutes). The tune is melancholy and seems to suit the Eisenfürst's mood. When the song concludes, Fischler thanks her, gives her another tip, and then moves on his way. Clever party members may be able to purchase a whistle from the musicians for a small price.

Act 5 – The Confrontation

Faulk Fischler ends his meandering journey in front of an alley. He looks around to make sure no one is watching. (If the heroes are visible, he may issue a command to the *hirte-fledermausen* to "detain" them. Once he is gone, the bats fly off.)

When Fischler drops out of sight, a small pack of creatures, consisting of four kobolds, two gargoyles, and a trollen, ambushes them from the rooftops. If the party is able to detect the kobolds (**d20**: Spot check, DC 20/15 if the heroes are also on the roof; **7th Sea**: Perception check, TN 25/TN 15 if the heroes are also on the roof) the kobolds will attack early. The kobolds block the party from entering the alley, and must be defeated before the heroes can proceed. The sounds of the fighting attract the attention of the guards, who will arrive in 10 rounds (or at the GM's discretion).

The heroes can now enter the dark alley, where they can barely see a cloaked figure holding Faulk Fischler by the throat. The figure speaks, "I raised an army that could rival the Schattensoldat, and we have devoured your enemies. Now you refuse my demand for tribute, and have led these interlopers here to destroy me. I am König Teufleisch, and my plans for conquest will now begin with Seeufer. Sadly, Eisenfürst, you will not be there to defend it." With that the cloaked figure bites Fischler in the neck and throws him to the ground. Hopefully the heroes have already started to act!

König Teufleisch makes one attack against them, but then walks through the wall next round. Luckily there is a door next to where he disappeared. Hultrich appears from behind a barrel and examines the wound, "Go get the monster and bring me his claw! I need it for the antidote of the Eisenfürst will die!"

Act 6 – The Chase

Although König Teufleisch can move through walls, he is slow. It takes him a full round to go through a wall, and he has a limp when he walks. If the heroes keep the pressure up, he will not be able to get away. There will always be a door or window they can break down to follow him.

Roll a D10 and consult the table below to determine the next building the party will enter.)

When the heroes eventually catch up with König Teufleisch (surrounding him, pinning him against a wall, etc.) a final confrontation occurs. If they cause a Dramatic Wound at anytime, they cut off a piece of him for Hultreich to use.

When the party returns to the alley, they find it well lit and full of guards, who have been expecting them and let them through. Franziska Köhl is kneeling on the ground, holding Faulk Fischler's head in her lap. The Eisenfürst does not look well at all. He is sweating and his face has turned white. Hultreich asks if the party has what he needs. If they do not, he will send for Frau Strummel and the mondblau flowers. "They will not work as well, but may save his life." If the heroes have a piece of kobold, Hultreich takes a portion of it and grind it up, then mixes it (or the flower) with some other ingredients from a pouch. He applies the mixture as a poultice to the wound. Hultreich gently touches Franziska on the shoulder and tells her to take the Eisenfürst home and let him rest.

The guards put Fischler on a stretcher and gently carry him off. Mistress Köhl asks the party to accompany her and Fischler to the manor house, and then insists that they stay the night.

Act 7 – The Summons

In the morning, the party awakens, a little sore, but none the worse for wear. Their clothes have been washed and mended and look as if they were almost new. Katrina greets them with a light breakfast and tells them to hurry because they have been summoned. (Note to the GM: If the heroes had been able to procure a part of König Teufleisch for the antidote, the Eisenfürst himself has issued the summons, but if Hultreich

had to use the mondblau flowers, Franziska Köhl has issued the summons.

The heroes are led into Faulk Fischler's private chambers which are surprisingly spartan for an Eisenfürst. The furnishings are of a simple but sturdy design, and there is no artwork on the walls. The one striking feature is a Dracheneisen helmet, shaped like a drachen's head, sitting atop the mantle.

If Franziska Köhl summoned them, she is standing at the bedside, dressed in the same clothes she was wearing last night. She looks worried and is trying very hard to hold her composure. The Eisenfürst is asleep and does not look well, and it is obvious that Mistress Köhl has been caring for him personally. She tells the party that the Eisenfürst is not doing well, and that Hultreich says that it may take as long as a month for the poison to work its way out of his system. (If Hultreich used the flowers, she says that only the mondblau is keeping him alive.) If the heroes think of using the Crown of Saint Ludmilla to heal the Eisenfürst, a sense of calm will fill the room and his color will begin to return.

Either way, Mistress Köhl asks them to recount their tale. She thanks them profusely for their work, offers to pay them, and tries to recruit them for the army to help defend against the impending kobold attack. No matter how weak he may be, the Eisenfürst will summon the heroes himself later that afternoon.

If the Eisenfürst summoned the heroes in the morning (if the kobold extract was used), he is sitting up in bed looking much better. Franziska Köhl has obviously stayed at his bedside all night, but no longer looks so worried.

Fischler says, "Please excuse me if I don't get out of bed to greet you properly. Franziska tells me that I have you to thank for my life. Please, tell me the story." The heroes relay their adventures. If they remember the pouch Hultreich gave them, this would be the perfect opportunity for them to deliver it. Fischler opens the pouch and finds a gold ring, adorned only by simple scrollwork.

"My mother's wedding ring!" he exclaims, "She lost it in the woods when I was young. Thank you, thank you very much." Faulk Fischler also tries to recruit the party's help with the kobolds, especially if König Teufleisch got away.

TABLE 2:3 BUILDINGS DURING THE CHASE

1d10	Building
1	<i>Storefront:</i> The front room has a counter and shelves of various goods, the back room has a desk and shelves of inventory. The Living quarters are upstairs, and the owner will come down to investigate.
2	<i>Warehouse:</i> Stacks of boxes and bails of cloth are piled high in neat rows.
3	<i>Small Tavern:</i> It is getting late and the majority of the patrons have gone home. Five villagers and three guards will act as brutes for the heroes if König Teufleisch is trapped here.
4	<i>Stable:</i> Animals' stalls line the one wall. The animals are spooked by the kobold and make noises as he goes by. The upper levels are stacked with haybales and the equipment to get them upstairs.
5	<i>Brothel:</i> The Jennys are not pleased by the interruption. The brothel consists of a series of rooms off a hallway with doors at both ends. One door is the back door outside, the other one leads to a parlor and the main entrance.
6	<i>Smithy:</i> A large open room with a forge in the middle and many pieces of iron work hanging from the rafters. A dream for those with improvised weapon skills.
7	<i>Chandlery:</i> Ships provisions are stacked on tall shelves, and tackle hangs from the rafters.
8	<i>Woodwright:</i> Racks of wood take up half of the shop; the other half is the work area with saws, lathes and workbenches. Half-finished pieces of furniture are sitting on the benches.
9	<i>Cooperage:</i> Stacks of barrels are piled high; they look unstable. Piles of staves waiting to be shaped and iron rings hang from the walls.
10	<i>Cobbler:</i> A small shop, there is a workbench and piles of leather stacked up. The Shoemaker lives upstairs. (Note to GM: If you feel whimsical, a pair of Heinzelmännchen will stop working on a pair of shoes, point, and yell, "He went that way!")

Act 8 – The War

If König Teufleisch got away, a large force of kobolds, gargoyles, and trollen attack Seeufer within the next week. If Fischler has recovered, he will lead the defense with Mistress Köhl at his side. The kobolds will be defeated and Fischler proposes to Franziska.

If Fischler has not recovered, Franziska Kohl will be forced to lead the defenses herself, the morale of the guards will be low, and the results of the battle could be in doubt, especially if the heroes decline their request to help.

If the heroes killed König Teufleisch during the chase in the town, and gave the ring to Faulk Fischler, he will propose to Franziska Kohl sometime within the next week. There will be a reception celebrating the engagement at which the heroes will be introduced to Fischler's new secret advisor, Hultreich Kaufhochst. The party will, of course, be invited to the wedding scheduled for next spring. If for some reason they forget about the ring (or decided to keep it), there will be no wedding until Fischler can find a way to prove himself worthy of Franziska's love.

Monsters and NPCs

Lorelei (d20™)

Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 3d8 (15 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); 10 (–2 Dex, +2 natural) on land

Attacks: Grapple +4 melee

Damage: Drowning

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Entrancing beauty

Special Qualities: Aquatic

Saves: Fort +1, Reflex +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 18 (6 on land), Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 17

Skills: Bluff +8, Hide +9, Listen +7, Perform +7, Spot +7, Swim +15

Feats: Alertness, Dodge

Climate/Terrain: Temperate lakes

Organization: Solitary

CR: 4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Neutral evil

Advancement: 4–7 HD (Medium)

COMBAT

Entrancing Beauty (Su): When a character first sees a lorelei, he must make a Will save (DC 10) or be entranced and helpless for 1d10 rounds.

Drowning: If a lorelei successfully entrances a target, it will grapple the target and drag him into the water, causing drowning damage as per the standard rules. However, as the victim is entranced, he cannot hold his breath and must begin making Constitution checks immediately to avoid drowning and death.

Lorelei – Henchman (7th Sea™)

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

TN to be hit: 25 (5 on Ground)

Attack Roll: 5k2 Grapple

Damage Roll: (see *Drowning Rules*, 7th Sea GM's Guide™)

Skills: Acting 3, Swimming 4

Special Abilities: Entrancing Beauty — characters who see the lorelei must make a Resolve Test TN 15 or become transfixed by beauty (immobile for 1D10 rounds.)

Lorelei are beautiful creatures that look like human females. They lure boats onto shoals where they use their enchanting beauty to immobilize the crew, then they simply pull them overboard and drag them underwater where they helplessly drown.

Kobolds

In Théah, kobolds are a race of monsters native to Eisen in general and the Schwarzen Walden in particular. They come in various sizes ranging from 3 to 5 feet tall and can vary considerably in appearance and size. Kobolds have hands with long fingers and sharp claws, long pointy ears, fangs, a pig-like snout, small beady eyes, and a pair of horns on the top of their head. Some, but not all, are known to have bat-like wings. Large kobolds are called trollen. (Flying kobolds are sometimes referred to as gargoyles, but should not be confused with “stone gargoyles,” magical stone creatures that sometimes come to life.)

Kobolds are nocturnal and prefer dark places, like caves, or under the dark canopy of the Schwarzen Walden. Their eyesight is poor, so they hunt primarily by their keen sense of smell. They prefer to attack a weaker party, and will only attack a heavily armed opponent if they have overwhelming force or are put into a situation where they have no choice.

Kobold society is based on pack behavior. The pack consists of between four and sixteen kobolds, all of generally the same size and type. One kobold serves as the leader, and maintains his or her position by bullying the others. The pack is the kobold's family; they live, eat and hunt together. Kobolds are extremely prolific and a kobold female may have as many as six cubs a year. When a kobold is born, it is abandoned by its mother and must survive on its own.

Kobold packs sometimes gather together and form tribes, but this usually only happens when either a shortage of food forces them to attack stronger prey, or when a particularly charismatic kobold unites them. While there have been numerous kobold chieftains over the years, only rarely has a kobold been able to unite more than a single pack, and declare himself king.

Most kobolds' bites are mildly poisonous, and will cause illness if not treated. A simple antidote may be made from the claws of the attacking creature.

Some kobolds have the ability to turn non-corporeal momentarily to pass through solid objects. This requires a certain amount of concentration and can only be done in combat by a very few (ignore parrying weapons). Those with this ability often hold prominent positions in kobold society.

KOBOLDS/GARGOYLES (D20™)

Small Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 1d8 (5 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft. (gargoyles have flight 60 ft. (poor))

AC: 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural)

Attacks: Bite +1 melee, 2 claws +2 melee

Damage: Bite 1d3, claws 1d3-1

Face/Reach: 5ft by 5ft/5ft

Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: None

Saves: Fort +2, Reflex +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Search +2, Spot +5

Feats: Multi-attack

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forest/hills (Schwartzzen Walden, Eisen)

Organization: Typically pack (3-36)

CR: 1 for kobolds, 2 for gargoyles

Treasure: Standard (no non-shiny items)

Alignment: Neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

COMBAT

Poison (Ex): If a First Aid roll (DC 10) is not performed on someone bit by a kobold, the victim takes 1d6 points of damage every three days until a successful roll is made. This damage cannot be healed by any natural means until someone makes the First Aid roll.

KOBOLDS (7TH SEA™)

Brutes

Threat Rating: 3

Usual Weapons: Claws and Teeth (small)

TN to be hit: 20

Skills: Footwork 3, Tracking 3, Ambush 3

Special: If a character is wounded by kobolds and the wound is not properly treated (First Aid roll, TN 10), the character takes 1k1 Flesh Wounds of damage every three days until the wound is cleaned. This damage will not heal until the wound is cleaned.

TROLLEN (D20™)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (12hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 2 Claws +4 melee, bite +2 melee

Damage: Bite 1d4+1, claws 1d4+2

Face/Reach: 5ft by 5ft/5ft

Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: None

Saves: Fort +4, Reflex +4, Will +0

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Search +2, Spot +3

Feats: Multi-attack

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forest/hills (Schwartzzen Walden, Eisen)

Organization: Typically pack (2-12)

CR: 2

Treasure: Standard (no non-shiny items)

Alignment: Neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Trollen are the larger, more violent cousins of kobolds. They stand 6½ to 7 feet tall, with broad shoulders, thick necks, and a slightly hunched back. Their arms tend to be slightly longer than a human's, giving them a slightly ape-like appearance. Trollen have the same coarse, pebbly, grey-brown skin as kobolds, and their horns are even more pronounced. Trollen are far stronger than their smaller kin, but fortunately, they are rather dim-witted, relying on brute force over anything that could be mistaken for tactics.

COMBAT

Poison (Ex): If a Heal check (DC 15) is not performed on someone bit by a trollen, the victim takes 1d6 points of damage every day until a successful roll is made. This damage cannot be healed by any natural means until someone makes the Heal check.

König Teuflich (d20™)

Kobold Fighter 6: CR 7; SZ S (humanoid); HD 6d12+6; hp 48; Init: +3; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk: Bite +10 melee (1d3+2) and 2 claws +6 melee (1d3+1); SA: Non-corporeal touch, poison; SQ: Mimic, walk through walls; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +3; AL NE; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13; Skills: Climb +4, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +3, Hide +9, Knowledge (war) +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Speak Language (Eisen, High Eisen, Kobold [alternately, any three languages in your campaign]), Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3; Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Kobold Magic, Leadership, Mobility, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (Bite).

König Teuflich – Villain (7th Sea™)

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

Advantages: Eisen, High Eisen, Keen Senses, Toughness

Athlete: Climb 3, Footwork 1, Throwing 3, Swinging 3, Side step 2

Hunter: Stealth 3, Survival 2, Tracking 2, Traps 1, Ambush 4, Animal Training 4

Spy: Shadowing 3, Stealth 2, Disguise 3, Interrogation 3, Poison 3, Sincerity 4

Commander: Strategy 2, Tactics 1, Ambush 1, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Diplomacy 2

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

Kobold Magic*: Mimic 3, Non-corporeal Attack 3, Walk Through Walls 3

*Kobold Magic is an innate ability based on Panache.

Mimic: König may make a Mimic roll (TN 25) to assume the visage of any human that he can clearly see. He may memorize a number of faces equal to his Mimic rank, which they then change into. It takes a full round to change faces.

Special Abilities: Non-Corporeal Attack, Walk Through Walls (takes a full round)

Non-Corporeal Attack: König may attack using his Non-Corporeal Attack instead of his regular attack, thereby ignoring parrying weapons

Walk Through Walls: König may take a full round to walk through a wall (TN 15 for wood, TN 20 for brick, the Seeufur City wall is TN 30).

König Teufleisch is the self appointed King of the Kobolds, a sneaky, cruel, and ambitious beast who has learned to tap into some ancient form of dark magic. He dreams of one day ruling all the lands from the Schwartzen Walden down to The River. With the Schattenmann focusing his attentions in Heilgrund, Teufleisch feels that now is the perfect time to consolidate his power.

Teufleisch met Fischler one night not long after he was made Eisenfürst. He always dreamt of leading a raid against the large human city on the shores of the Südlache, and was taking a closer look when the young Eisenfürst stumbled by. After learning who the drunken man was, Teufleisch decided he might be better off gaining some influence over the young Eisenfürst than to eat him. He suggested that Fischler should build his house of Blackwood, hoping that anyone who entered it would get the sap on themselves, and then his kobolds could hunt down the leadership of the humans. Unfortunately for him, when Fischler had his house built he specifically ordered that only deadwood (old wood where the

sap had dried out) be used so that none of the woodcutters would risk getting sap on them. Teufleisch knew that he had been outsmarted, and he sent his bat servants to keep an eye on the Eisenfürst and report back.

The kobold king was able to use Fischler to help him consolidate his control over the kobolds. He would occasionally let slip to the Eisenfürst the locations of the dens of rival kobold packs, so that Fischler's men would destroy them for him. At the same time, König Teufleisch could go to other packs, and use the destroyed pack as an example of why the kobolds needed to unite against the humans. By the time that Fischler mentioned his problem with an invading army from Hainzl, Teufleisch had control over a large number of the kobold packs in the region, and figured this would be a good chance to see how they fought together as a single army. Teuflei convinced the Eisenfürst that he could take care of his problem in exchange for the lives of the invading army.

Through a series of ambushes, the kobold army decimated the small force from Hainzl, taking the bodies back to their lairs to feast. His army now tested, Teufleisch set the second part of his plan into action. He has convinced Fischler that if he does not send a live tribute at midnight of the new moon, he might not be able to control the "dark forces." His plan is to attack when the gate is open and the tribute is being sent out. Fischler has complied reluctantly by using convicted criminals, but the last two times the gate has been shut too quickly



for the army to exploit it. During the adventure, König Teufleisch demanded a larger tribute this month — ten men instead of one — hoping that the larger numbers will keep the gate open long enough for his kobolds to reach it. Fischler refused, prompting the assault on his person.

When in Seeufer, König Teufleisch takes on the appearance of a cloaked human. Even Teufleisch cannot change the appearance of his horns so his nature will become evident if uncloaked. He also has a pronounced limp due to an injury from his youth that healed badly.

New Feat (d20™)

KOBOLD MAGIC

Prerequisites: Théan kobold only, character level 6+, Charisma 13+, Leadership Feat

Benefits: The kobold has learned to tap into his innate magical nature, granting him certain supernatural powers. Once per day, for a period of rounds equal to his hit dice, the kobold gains the non-corporeal touch attack. Furthermore, he can cast change self and passwall each three times per day, as a sorcerer of his current level. Unfortunately, there is a price for this power. None of these supernatural powers works in natural sunlight, and the kobold becomes light sensitive (–1 penalty to attack rolls in bright light).

Heinzelmännchen (d20™)

Small Humanoid

HD: 1d8 (5 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 20 feet

AC: 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex)

Attacks: Unarmed –1 melee or by weapon –1 melee

Damage: Unarmed 1d2–2 or by weapon –2

Special Attacks: Racial enemies

Special Qualities: Enchanted cap

Saves: Fort +1, Reflex +2, Will +4

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Craft (any two mundane, such as Leatherworking or Woodworking) +2, Hide +1, Listen +7, Move Silently +1, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forest (only in Fischler)

Organization: Solitary or barrow (2–12 plus 50% children)

CR: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Lawful Good

Advancement: By character class

COMBAT

The Heinzelmännchen tend to avoid combat, preferring stealth to confrontation. However, over centuries of living in close proximity to kobolds, trolen, and worse, they have developed tactics for protecting themselves and those with whom they have formed a bond.

Displacement (Su): So long as a Heinzelmännchen is wearing his distinctive red cap, he cannot be viewed directly. He can still be perceived in peripheral vision, but as soon as a creature looks straight at him, he vanishes. This

has the effect of putting the Heinzelmännchen under a permanent displacement effect, giving him the benefits of 50% concealment from all attacks.

Racial Enemies: Heinzelmännchen frequently battle kobolds and their ilk, and have developed special tactics to aid themselves. When fighting kobolds, gargoyles or trolen, they gain a +1 competence bonus to attack rolls. Furthermore, they gain a +4 Dodge bonus to AC when attacked by gargoyles (only while flying) or trolen.

Heinzelmännchen (7th Sea™)

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

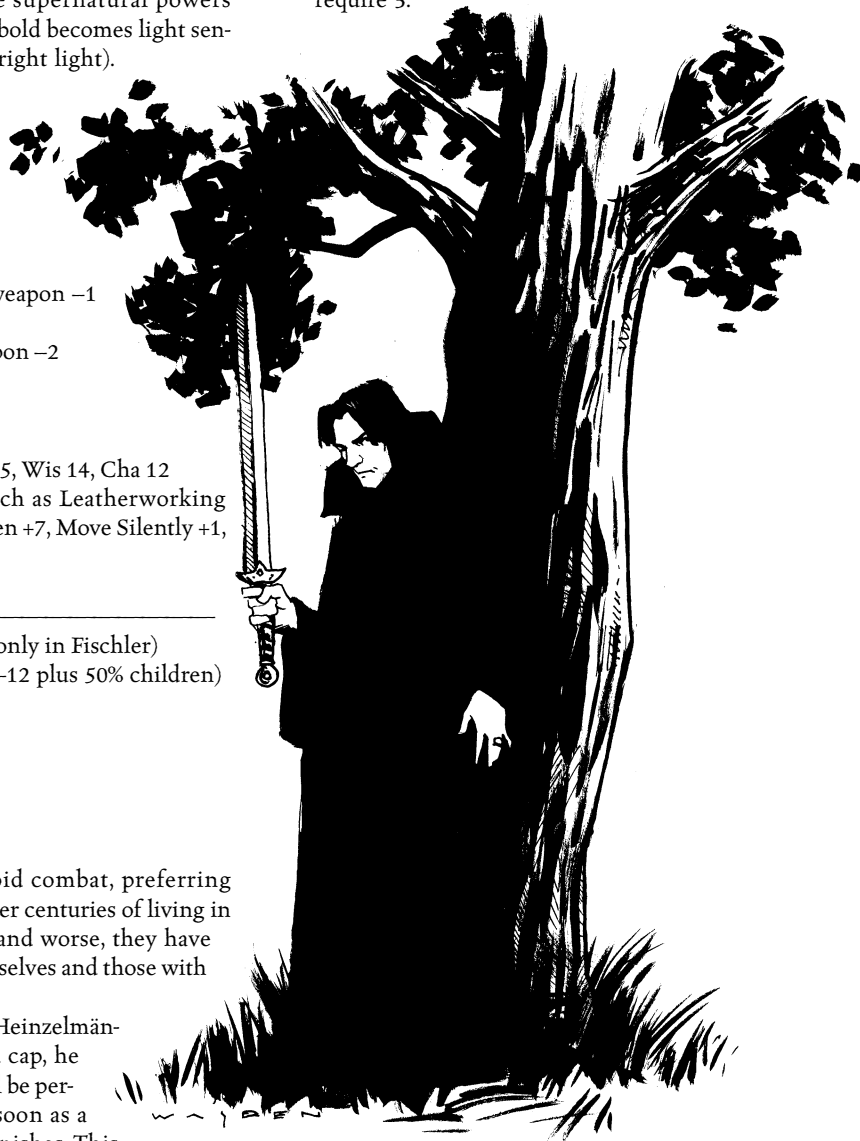
TN to be hit: 15

Attack Roll: 3k2 Unarmed

Damage Roll: 1k1

Skills: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 1, Footwork 2, Menial Task 2, Stealth 2, Unobtrusive 3

Special: Enchanted Cap – While the Heinzelmännchen wear their distinctive red caps, they can only be perceived through peripheral vision, not direct gaze. All melee attacks require 2 raises to hit them, while ranged attacks require 3.



The Heinzelmännchen were once common in the forests and towns of Eisen. For centuries they have lived side-by-side with humans. But then the wars started, and it was all too easy to stop putting out the geschenk, the traditional gift to the Heinzelmännchen (a saucer of meal and thimble of ale,) and as the wars progressed, big folk were not the only ones burned out of hearth and home. As the traditions fell to the wayside, and the violence of war became more horrific, the Heinzelmännchen disappeared from most of Eisen. Only in Fischler, where the people still adhere to tradition, are they still found in large numbers.

Heinzelmännchen either live under large oak trees or share a building with humans. When living in close proximity to humans they make themselves known by doing small favors such as washing dishes or mending clothing. If the human makes the traditional offering, the Heinzelmännchen will continue working, and a sort of symbiotic relationship develops. One should never try and catch them at their work or actively seek to spot them, because Heinzelmännchen value their privacy; if and when they want you to see them they will show themselves. The Heinzelmännchen use magic on their clothing, and especially their red pointed hats, to help hide them from the gaze of others.

Heinzelmännchen have a keen sense of propriety, and often reward good and punish evil. A mean spirited Eisen may find his garden under-producing, while a kind widow may find her vegetables harvested and already stewing in her pot.

While their small stature and shy nature have kept them out of the politics of Eisen, Heinzelmännchen are not unaware of what is happening, and Fischler and the Schwartzen Walden have become their last refuge. They know many secrets, which they keep closely guarded, but to their friends they will offer aid when asked.

Heinzelmännchen worship Theus, but are not Vaticine, and in fact, their beliefs more closely resemble the Objectionists, which they have held long before the birth of Matthias Lieber. Those in the area of Tannen know some of the secrets of die Kreuzritter, which knowledge has effected the nature of their faith.

Heinzelmännchen look in every way like humans, only of a smaller stature, and with a slightly more rotund build. Their ears and noses tend to be a little on the large size for their frame as well.

Hultreich Kaufhochst (d20™)

Heinzelmännchen Expert 4: SZ S; HD 4d6+4; hp 19; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 size); Atks: Unarmed +3 melee (1d2-1); SA: Racial Enemies; SQ: Enchanted Cap; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 15; AL LG; Skills: Appraise +7, Climb +3, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +8, Hide +12, Jump +3, Knowledge (History) +11, Listen +7, Perform +7, Profession (Servant) +9, Speak Languages (Eisen, High Eisen, Kobold, Trollen [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +7, Use Rope +6. Feats: Alertness, Able Drinker.

Hultreich Kaufhochst (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 1; **Finesse:** 3; **Wits:** 5; **Resolve:** 3; **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 0/15 among Heinzelmännchen
Background: None
Arcana: None
Advantages: Eisen(R/W), High Eisen(R/W), Able Drinker, Small
Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Leaping 3, Swinging 2
Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Oratory 3, Diplomacy 4, Gaming 4, Gossip 4, Politics 4, Sincerity 3
Scholar: History 5, Philosophy 3, Research 4, Theology 1, Law 3, Occult 4
Streetwise: Socialize 3, Street Navigation 4,
Dirty Fighting: Attack 3, Throat Strike 3, Eye-gouge 4, Improvised weapon 3
Servant: Etiquette 4, Fashion 1, Menial task 1, Unobtrusive 4, Accounting 2, Gossip 3, Hagglng 3, Seneschal 2

Hultreich Kaufhochst is the leader of the Seeufer Heinzelmännchen. In this capacity he has the ear of many other Heinzelmännchen leaders in the area around Fischler, and what he says carries a lot of weight. Faulk Fischler's ambition caught his eye even before he became Eisenfürst, and he has been keeping tabs on him ever since. Fischler has become the last refuge of the Heinzelmännchen and Hultreich wants to make sure it remains safe. To this effect he is willing to share some of their guarded secrets, but only if he can be sure that the Eisenfürst will not be corrupted.

10 Villagers (d20™)

Human Commoner 1: CR ½; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d4; hp 3 ea; Init: +0; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk: Unarmed +1 melee (1d3+1); SA: None; SQ: None; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1; AL N; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8; Skills: Listen +3, Speak Language (Eisen, [alternately, any one language in your campaign]), Spot +3; Feats: Alertness.

Villagers (7th Sea™)

Brutes
Threat Rating: 1
Usual Weapons: Fists, beer stein, chair
TN: 10
Skills: Footwork 1, Attack 1

6 Guardsman (d20™)

Human Warrior 2: CR 1; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d8+2; hp 12; Init: +1 (Dex); Spd. 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather armor, +1 buckler); Atk: Longsword +4 melee (1d8+2); SA: None; SQ: None; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills: Climb +4, Intimidate +2, Jump +4, Listen +2 (Eisen, [alternately, any one language in your campaign]), Spot +2; Feats: Power Attack.

Guardsman (7th Sea™)

Brutes
Threat Rating: 2
Usual Weapons: Sword
TN: 15
Skills: Footwork 2, Attack 2

Hirte-Fledermaus (Shepherd's Bat) (d20™)

Diminutive Animal
Hit Dice: ¼D8 (3 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
AC: 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex)
Attacks: Bite –2 melee
Damage: Bite 1d4–2
Face/Reach: 5ft by 5ft/5ft
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Blindsight 120 feet
Saves: Fort +1, Reflex +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +9, Listen +5, Spot +5
Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Temperate lakes (Fischler, Eisen)
Organization: Colony (10 – 40)
CR: ¼
Treasure: None
Alignment: Neutral
Advancement: None

Hirte-Fledermaus (Shepherd's Bat) (7th Sea™)

Brute
Threat Rating: 1
TN: 10 (5 on Ground)
Brawn: 1; **Finesse:** 3; **Resolve:** 1; **Wits:** 2; **Panache:** 2
Attack Roll: 2k2Bite
Damage: 1k1 Bite
Skills: Flying
Special Abilities: Able to see in the dark.
Flaw: Must make a Resolve check (TN 15) in presence of high-pitched noises (flutes, whistles, etc.) or flee the area for 2d10 minutes.

Die hirte-fledermausen are also known as shepherd's bats in Seeufer for their habit of shepherding home drunken villagers. With a wingspan of four feet, die hirte-fledermausen are significantly larger than the average bat. They also possess a limited intelligence, like that of a monkey, and can mimic human speech like a parrot. Like their smaller cousins, hirte-fledermausen can use a type of sonar to "see" in the dark, which makes them sensitive to high-pitched noises. The hirte-fledermausen in Seeufer are minions of König Teufleisch, the self-appointed kobold king.

Adventure in Puerto Grande

This adventure is designed for experienced role players (8th to 10th level *Swashbuckling Adventures™* characters or Journeyman-level *7th Sea™* characters), but can be adjusted up or down to suit the group's levels.

Puerto Grande, Marcina

Located in the Midnight Archipelago, a group of islands several weeks travel from mainland Théah, Marcina is one of Castille's most important colonies, a rich source of gold, sugar, and exotic fruit. It boasts a mild tropical climate and some of the friendliest inhabitants in the Archipelago. It is a model of cooperation between the native population and the Castillian settlers. The *Gubernadora* [goo-ver-NAH-dor-ah], Maria Simone Erego de Suarez who is herself island-born, recently replaced the corrupt Pedro del Avila, and the people are thriving under her leadership. The war with Montaigne is over, and the Midnight Archipelago, especially Marcina, plays an important role in providing new income to Castille.

Puerto Grande is Castille's largest colonial port and almost impregnable. Pirates have learned that it is just not worth the shot to attempt an assault, so an uneasy state of amnesty exists. As long as they do not try anything, Gubernadora de Suarez allows them (more or less) free run of the town. Berek and his Sea Dogs are particularly fond of Puerto Grande. (If the truth be known, the Gubernadora would rather deal with an entire fleet of pirates than the looming presence of the Inquisition but she knows that a show of force is not warranted at this time.)

A tall, muscular woman, the Gubernadora has always loved the opera and wanted to have a singing career, but unfortunately was not blessed with a pleasing singing voice. To satisfy her love of music, however, she has become quite a patroness of the arts. She was thrilled to encourage the construction of a beautiful new opera house, designed by famed architect Hernando Ruíz, as fine as anything to be found in San Cristóbal. This afternoon marks its inaugural performance; for whatever reasons are most appropriate, the heroes should be in attendance.

The Opera House

Puerto Grande's new opera house is a multi-storied building. The spacious lobby on the north end of the building contains a place for patrons to enjoy refreshments, a guarded cloakroom, a single set of double doors that lead down stone steps to the street to the south, and two sets of wide doors open onto the main area which contains the ground floor seating, the box seating, an orchestra pit, and the stage, and an impressive ironwork spiral staircase. Two side entrances lead out to the street. Behind the stage are several small dressing rooms, as well as costume and prop rooms and another exit onto an alley.

The ornate 10-foot wide staircase leads to hallways on the second, third, and fourth floors which wrap around the main room and allow access to the box seats. Generally, only rich patrons or nobles can afford these seats and a servant usually guards the bottom of the staircase to ensure that commoners do not wander into that area. The second floor also contains a

social area, a small kitchen to supply the important guests with refreshments, and a staircase leading down to a private entrance on the east side which is usually guarded.

Act 1

Scene 1 – Intermission

The small skiff glides across the dark waters of the cave with only a single torch to light the way. Two men push the boat along while a woman stands in the bow and performs a song of melodic despair. Her voice rises to a crescendo as the skiff disappears from sight and the curtains close at the end of the first intermission. For a moment, you feel a tear in your eye. Despite any misgivings, you are truly enjoying the opera.

The ushers light brass lanterns along the sides of the theater. The light reflects off the dark oak paneling and crossed swords hanging upon them as patrons begin to rise to their feet for the intermission. Overhead the crystal chandelier, imported from the mainland, sways silently, scattering droplets of rainbow light across the entire room. Box seats for the rich and noble hang over the common seating.

As you look about the theatre, you notice that a number of Castillians, who make up the majority of the patrons, glaring up at one of the box seats. An Imperial Montaigne flag has been draped over the edge and the yellow sun upon a light blue field is striking. Although the war is over, tensions still run high between the two nations and the Castillians do not enjoy Montaigne naval officers flaunting themselves in Puerto Grande. You are not sure why, but they seem to have diplomatic immunity as the Gubernadora herself is sitting with them, although she looks none too pleased about it.

At this point, the adventure begins. Unless the party members know each other ahead of time, they are all present, but not together. Ask each player to choose where in the opera house he or she is seated, then allow them approximately 10 minutes real time to get into character. Some heroes may want to get a beverage in the lobby, others might be interested in socializing, or looking around backstage, or simply enjoying flirtation and seduction. These encounters are entirely up to you to devise and run. The only restrictions are that the characters should not leave the opera house or enter the Montaigne officers' box.

If anyone in the party is outside the private entrance during intermission, he or she may see a group of men arrive with several casks of ale. If queried, the men are hastening to the kitchen to restock the supply for the nobles in the special boxes. Anyone in the party who was on the second floor during intermission sees the men taking the ale casks into the kitchen. Anyone near the kitchen during intermission sees the men placing the casks and prepping the spigots. If a member of the party asks for some ale, the men say that they are not permitted to distribute ale to any of the regular patrons, for fear of being fired. One of the men gestures towards a stern-looking guard who watches them. At that point, intermission is over and the party is asked to return to their seats.

Scene 2 – A Most Dramatic Opera

As the orchestra begins tuning their instruments for the second half of the performance, people slowly return to their seats and the ushers turn down the lights. A beautiful serving woman hurries onto the stage and in a breathy stage whisper confides to the room that the duchess will arrive soon. Several more servants scurry onto the stage and go through the motions of arranging furniture as the last members of the audience are seated.

A high pitched scream pierces the air but it does not come from the stage! There is pandemonium in the box seats! Another voice — a man's voice — shouts "Fire!"

Like rats, the audience surges to their feet as tongues of flame begin licking at the back wall of the stage. You hear angry voices and then clashing steel from nearby. What do you do?

The first thought of many heroes will be to draw their weapons. Unfortunately, only members of the Swordsman's Guild are allowed to carry weapons inside the building. Everyone else was forced to leave their weapons in the guarded cloakroom by the main entrance. While there are swords on the walls, they are not real weapons but rather cheap tin.

There is a lot of action in three major areas of the opera house but mainly in the lobby. While many of the patrons and actors escape out the side doors, most will try to go out through the lobby's main doors.

If the heroes head for the cloakroom, they see a group of sailors (who appear to be Castillian, possibly from one of the three ships in residence) rummaging around for weapons and whatever loot they can grab. The party may engage the would-be thieves, or wait a Round, in which case a group of merchants moves in to stop the looting. The merchants arm themselves with whatever they can find, including the tin swords that serve as wall decorations. (Use standard breakage rules in either system for improvised weapons (draperies, curtains, chairs, cloaks, finials, bric-a-brac, serving trays, musical instruments, etc.) As the two groups struggle, they unfortunately block a crowd of patrons from reaching the main entrance. This fight goes on for several minutes with more sailors and merchants joining the fray every Round. If one of the heroes or the entire party steps in, the battle will probably be decided fairly quickly.

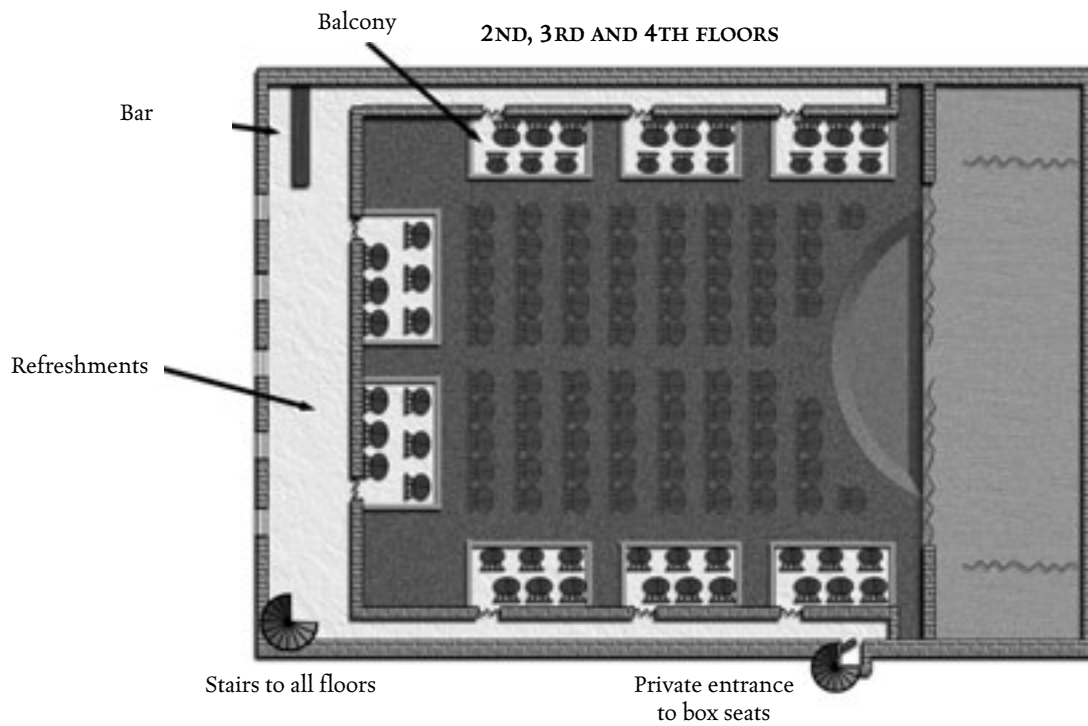
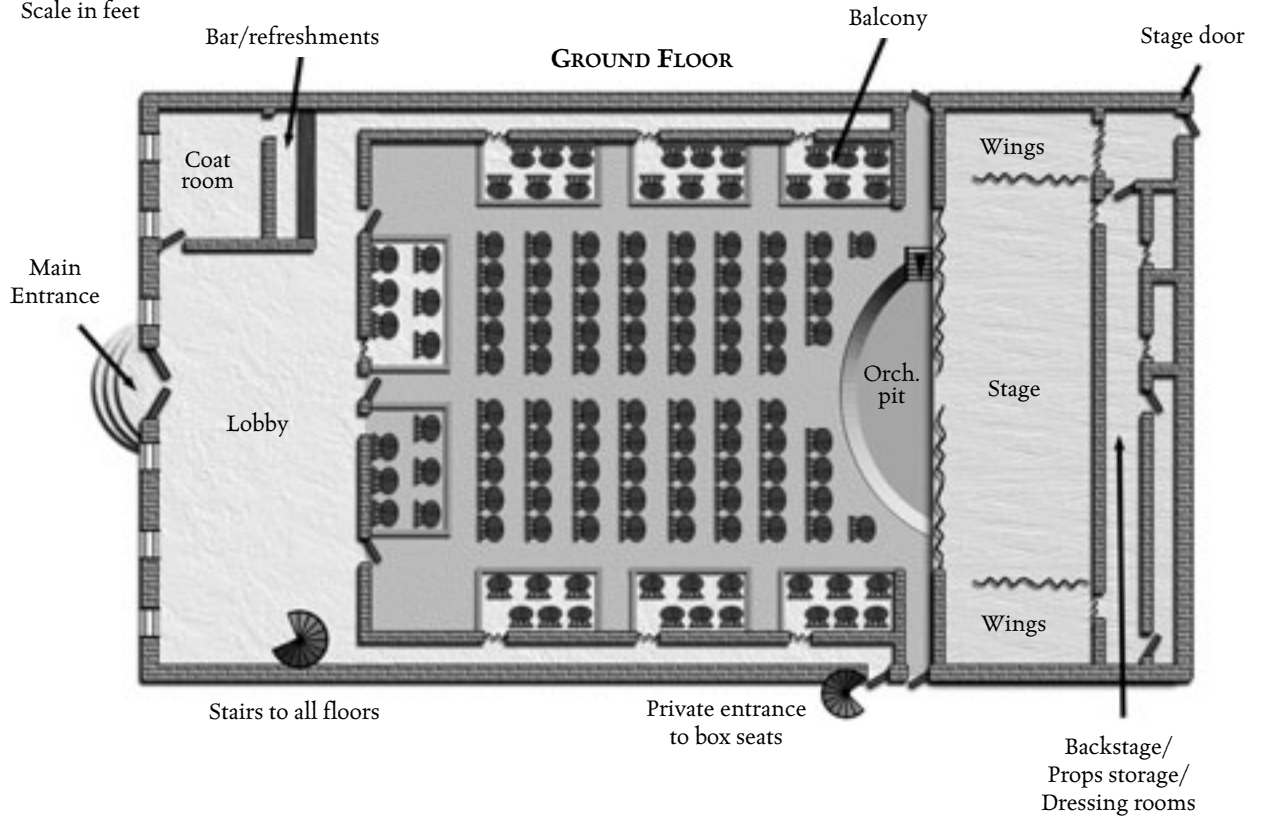
d20: Begin with six Level 1 sailors armed with rapiers and three Level 1 merchants armed with improvised weapons. Add an additional combatant to each side at the end every round, but do not bother running this combat unless the heroes intervene.

Sailors (d20™)

Expert 1: CR ½; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; HP 5 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk Rapier +0 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +1, Reflex +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills: Balance +6, Climb +5, Intuit Direction +4, Listen +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Spot +4; Feats: Dodge.

Puerto Grande's Opera House

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Scale in feet



Merchants (d20™)

Expert 1: CR ½; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; HP 5 each; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atk Rapier +0 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +1, Reflex +0, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Innuendo +5, Knowledge (Local History) +6, Listen +2, Sense Motive +4, Spot +6; Feats: Alertness.

7th Sea: The sailors begin with a Rank 2 Brute Squad (6 men) with medium weapons, while the merchants begin with three Rank 1 Brutes armed with small weapons. Three additional Brutes are added at the end of every round to both sides as members of the crowd join in the fray. Add additional brutes, but do not bother running this combat until a hero arrives to intervene.

Sailors (7th Sea™)

Threat: 2

TN to hit: 15

Usual weapons: Medium (rapiers)

Skills: Footwork 1

Merchants (7th Sea™)

Threat: 1

TN to hit: 10

Usual Weapons: Small (Improvised Weapons)

Skills: None

At the end of the 10th round, the sailors escape with their booty, which includes most of the weapons found in the cloakroom (including the heroes' weapons if (a) anyone was not a member of a Swordsman's Guild or (b) the party does not see the fight.)

If the party had any weapons in the cloakroom, and if they do not arrive until after the combat, they will have to find their weapons or get replacements. This will require searching one of the local pawnshops. The proprietor agrees to sell the weapons back to their rightful owner at full (inflated) price. The party can use a variety of negotiation, bartering, or intimidation checks to "encourage" the man to lower his price, although a well-timed visit from the constabulary may convince him to part with the goods for a minor finder's fee of ¼ their value.

Assuming that the party remains in the main room when the fire strikes, they see dozens of patrons — many of them noblemen — trapped in the box seats overlooking the stage. A handful of nobles may think to use the drapes as ropes to descend, while those on the east wall can still escape down the staircase. Some, however, will sit in shock as the opera house burns around them. There are two box seats along the back (southern) wall and each side (east and west) wall and three tiers of boxes rising above the main seating. For either system, roll a d10 for each box (except the Montaigne officers' box). If the result is higher than 2, the patrons will find their own way to safety; otherwise the result indicates how many people remain in that box.

d20: The people in these boxes are Level 1 nobles. It takes a Jumping, Climbing, or Dexterity check to get up to them. The DC to reach someone in a higher bank of box seats is 5, plus 5 for every level between the person attempting it and the target (i.e., to get from the ground to the third row of box seats in one round is DC 20). Getting down is easier and only requires a DC of 5 for every level descended. For each person a hero tries to assist or rescue, the DC is +3. Therefore, to assist four people from the top row of boxes to the ground requires a DC 27. Failure to make a check indicates that everyone involved falls and takes 1d6 damage for each floor from which they fell.

Starting on the third round from the beginning of action, everyone in the top tier of box seats takes 1d6 damage from heat and smoke per round. On round 5, anyone in the second tier of seats starts taking 1d6 damage per round and anyone above that floor takes an additional die of damage. On round 7, anyone in the first tier of box seats starts taking 1d6 damage and anyone above that floor takes an additional 1d6 damage for each floor they are above the first tier of seats. On round 9, anyone still in the building takes 1d6 damage +1d6 additional damage for each floor above the ground.

Nobles (d20™)

Aristocrat 1: CR ½; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 18; HP 5 each; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atk Unarmed +0 melee (1d3 subdual); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +0, Reflex +0, Will +1; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 12; Skills: Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Innuendo +3, Knowledge (varies) +4, Listen +5, Spot +5; Feats: Alertness.

7th Sea: The patrons in the boxes are unskilled Rank 1 Brutes. It takes a Leaping, Climbing, or Swinging check to get to them. The TN to reach someone in a higher bank of box seats is 10 for every level between the person attempting it and their target (i.e., to get from the ground to the second tier of box seats in one action is TN 20). Getting down is easier and only requires a TN of 5 for every level. For each person the hero is trying to help, the TN is +5. To assist five people from the top row of seats requires a TN 40. Failure to make any of these rolls causes everyone involved to fall and take one die of damage for each tier below the one from which they fell.

Starting with the third round from the shout of "Fire!" everyone on the top tier of seats takes a die of smoke and heat damage each round. Every two rounds after that, the heat and smoke will affect people in one tier lower and damage for anyone above that will increase by one die. On round 7, everyone in the first tier of seats takes one die, everyone in the second tier of seats takes two dice, and everyone in the third tier of seats takes three dice. Starting on round 10, anyone still in the building takes 4k4 damage every successive round. For the purposes of fire and damage, brutes do not fall unconscious until they have taken five points of fire or falling damage.

Nobles (7th Sea™)

Threat: 1

TN to hit: 10

Usual Weapons: Small (Unarmed)

Skills: None

Anyone trying to rescue people from the box seats will find an ally in a handsome Castillian naval officer who was seated in one of the box seats and jumps to assist the other patrons.

The third section of the opera house where characters may head when the fire begins is the Montaigne box in the second tier of seats. A group of masked men with drawn weapons has burst into that box seat and is trying to kill the naval officers. Unless someone intervenes, the assailants will overwhelm the naval aides in the first round no matter how valiantly they resist. If the heroes choose to assist, it takes them at two rounds to reach the second floor box from the ground floor and one round from the beginning of the hallway on the second floor.

d20: Ten of the invaders are Level 1 Castillian Brutes. The three Montaigne naval aides are Level 1 Brutes. It is clear that the naval officers are weaker swordsmen than their opponents.

Castillian Brutes (d20™)

Castillian Commoner 1: CR ½; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d4; HP 3 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk Unarmed +1 melee (1d3 subdual); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +0, Reflex +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8; Skills: Listen +2, Spot+2; Feats: Improved Unarmed Attack.

Naval Aides (d20™)

Montaigne Commoner 1: CR ½; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d4; HP 3 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk Rapier +0 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +0, Reflex +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8; Skills: Listen +4, Spot+4; Feats: Alertness.

7th Sea: The attackers consists of 10 Rank 2 Brutes armed with fencing weapons and two Henchmen. The three naval aides are Rank 1 Brutes and no match for their assailants.

Castillian Invaders (7th Sea™)

Threat: 2 (2 squads of 5 each)

TN to hit: 15

Usual weapons: Medium (rapiers)

Skills: Footwork 1

(Note: Named NPCs in this group are Ambrose Praise du Rachtisse and Nicole du Lac.)

Naval Aides (7th Sea™)

Threat: 1

TN to hit: 10

Usual Weapons: Medium (rapiers)

Skills: None

(Note: Named NPCs in this group are François Gaulle du Motte, Gerard Leveque d'Aur, and Lydia Bisset du Vere.)

Whether the heroes assist or not, one of the Montaigne officers is killed at the beginning of round 3. Fire begins injuring anyone still fighting in this box on the next round. The masked men will retreat if the battle is going against them and at the beginning of the appropriate round (determined by the GM), they will retreat along the hallway, down the stairs, and presumably out into the street. During their escape, one of them loses his mask and anyone nearby can see

that he is a blond man with a beard. The Montaigne naval officers may give chase or choose to tend to their wounded, at the GM's discretion.

When the combat is over, the Montaigne officers thank the party for their help but are visibly shaken at the loss of their compatriot. It turns out that the man was none other than François Gaulle du Motte, the Montaigne responsible for the bombardment and destruction of the Cathedral of San Cristóbal during the war. Why a man with a price on his head would have risked his life by appearing in a Castillian colony is anyone's guess, and if one of the heroes queries a naval aide, the response is terse. "He was a true soldier of the Sun and his presence will be missed."

The surviving officers introduce themselves as Gerard Leveque d'Aur and Lydia Bisset du Vere. They do not introduce their aides. Anyone examining the bodies of the masked assailants identifies them as Castillian, except for one who is obviously Montaigne, which causes great consternation among the aides. They demand to be taken to the Gubernadora immediately.

As the last of the patrons are lowered safely to the ground, another high-pitched scream rises above the flames. A beautiful red-haired Montaigne woman stands at the edge of the stage surrounded by flames. Without hesitation, the Castillian officer who helped the party earlier leaps from the second tier of seats, swings on a swath of burning drapery, and lands upon the stage. Grabbing the woman's hand, he runs backstage, pulls her to safety, and disappears from sight.

Scene 3 – A Lull and a Storm

When everyone has left the building, the heroes join the crowd at the front of the opera house. (Reminder: Castillian is the language spoken in Marcina, so anyone in the party who is not conversant in it will need a translator.)

As the building burns in front of them, Gubernadora de Suarez and a blond bearded man survey the ruin. Nearby, a tall, thin man stares in shock as tears run slowly down his face. The Gubernadora turns to him, places a comforting hand on his shoulder and speaks to him softly. The man shrugs her off and cries out loudly. "Rebuild? Impossible! I sunk a fortune into building this opera house and now look at it. My dreams, and your hopes of civilized entertainment here in Puerto Grande just went up in smoke!"

The bearded man steps forward. "Perhaps, Señor Ruíz. Then again, perhaps not."

The architect snorts. "Why I should listen to you? The luckiest man in Théah? What do you know of loss, Jeremiah Berek?"

The leader of the Sea Dogs shakes his head sadly. "Señor, I've lost friends, dear ones. I've lost fights and come close to losing my mind. I know loss. But I refuse to let it destroy me. You feel as if your world has collapsed and you will never be whole again. I know that feeling, that doom. It is tragic."

The Avalon pirate pauses a moment, then calls out. "Roger?" A thin man with a guitar over his shoulder steps from the crowd. His clothes are well worn but good quality. He raises an eyebrow and Berek loudly asks him, "How are you at opera?"

Roger smiles and swings his instrument around. At the burst of chords, the curious crowd leans in closer. The music seems to calm them. The bard begins singing in a strong baritone, but after a minute or two, he stops and shakes his head. "Sorry, Captain. I just don't have the voice for it."

A deep voice calls out, "But I do." The stout tenor strides forward from the opera steps and nods to Roger. The two begin the song again and the tenor's power grabs the attention of the spectators. Even Ruíz looks a little less grim.

With a solemn look, Berek sweeps a hat off a nobleman's head, places a gem inside it, and passes it along. As you watch, the crowd pours money into the hat, which is then passed to Ruíz. He seems overcome with emotion and nods once to Berek before calling out, "*Gracias, Capitano Berek. It is not enough to rebuild it completely, but it is a start!*" A cheer rises from the crowd.

The bucket brigade which had paused briefly to listen to the music, resumes its work, but in a more festive mood. Unfortunately, that mood does not last long. A roar of fury comes from within the crowd and a giant bald Eisen wearing garish clothing and a steel panzerhand pushes his way forward. "I've finally found you, you baseborn black hearted villain!" His accusatory metal-clad finger points directly towards Jeremiah Berek.

Berek seems utterly unprepared for this and states loudly, "I'm sorry, I do not believe we've ever met."

The Eisen replies, "I am der Kire and you robbed my ship!"

The accusations fly fast and furious. Der Kire accuses Berek of attacking the Albatross, stealing her goods, and then setting her on fire. He even describes the retractable keel of the Black Dawn. Berek says he's never heard of a ship call the Albatross. Were it not for the presence of the Gubernadora, the two would be at each other's throats. A Castillian sailor in the crowd pipes up that he remembers hearing about this a few months back, and several other voices throughout the crowd voice assent. Berek continues to deny his involvement.

Der Kire finally pushes Berek to the breaking point and the Avalon pirate begins shouting. "Enough! You show up with wild accusations and no proof to back up your story. I will not stand by while you besmirch my name. You seek justice, then we shall have it... in a duel of honor at dawn."

Gubernadora de Suarez speaks up at last. "Gentlemen! We have just suffered a great tragedy here. I will not have you sully the sands of Puerto Grande with your duel. Find somewhere else to hold it!"

The Castillian sailor who recalled hearing about the Albatross suggests the nearby island of Kap'a'o Noa. The

two adversaries agree. Both apologize to the Gubernadora and then leave the scene. An excited buzz rushes through the crowd at the prospect of the two legendary fighters meeting at dawn on a deserted island to settle a matter of honor. Some claim der Kire is a pirate and criminal, others say that he killed the Montaigne Empeureur with a single blow from his panzerhand. Scores of tales about Berek's reckless luck and privateering on behalf of Avalon fill your ears as well.

It is now evening. If the party tries to speak to either der Kire or Berek, they are rebuffed by crewmates (although not harshly enough to warrant combat.) They can offer to help the bucket brigade but most of the fire is out. If they seek out Ruíz, he will moan and groan about trying to raise enough money to rebuild his opera house. If they go to a tavern for dinner, they overhear tales about the fire, conjecture about how it started, etc. They may go searching for either the people they saw starting it (if they saw them) or the thugs who attacked the Montaigne naval aids (if they helped out with that.) Of course, someone is probably going to realize that the man they saw running away from the assault looked a lot like Jeremiah Berek...

Scene 4 – The Rescue

Just as your meal is served, a harried messenger arrives and says, "I've been looking everywhere for you! The Gubernadora would like a word with you."

It is doubtful that the party would refuse to go with him, but he does not force anyone to accompany him.

The messenger escorts you to *Casa de Erego*, the Gubernadora's mansion. Maria Erego de Suarez is speaking to a group of Montaigne naval officers. She looks very tense but manages to greet you with a smile. She says to the officers, "... and here are the people who will take care of it."

"*Buenos tardes. I have heard of your actions in the Opera House today. You performed a great service for the entire city and I thank you. It is because of your willingness to act selflessly and keep a cool head that I have asked you here. We have a problem. Captain Ferdinand Orduño, a Castillian naval officer who attended the opera this afternoon, was last seen grabbing a Montaigne noblewoman named Allette du Paix. Her countrymen here are most anxious about her and their ship must sail within three hours. I know it is a lot to ask, but my own people are still dealing with the clean up of the opera house. I am certain that Captain Orduño did not kidnap her, as these gentlemen seem to intimate.*"

With the current tension in the city, if a Castillian had kidnapped or harmed a Montaigne noblewoman, the repercussions could lead to mob violence or worse. If the party hesitates, the Gubernadora hints that it is always advantageous to have the ear of a Castillian government official.

Finding Orduño is not terribly difficult. His whereabouts can be obtained simply by asking any of a number of townsfolk and any reasonable attempt to find him succeeds. (DC 10/TN 15; if 10/15 or more, reveal additional information.)

- Orduño rushed the red-headed Montaigne lady from the opera and was one of the last people out.
- While Berek and der Kire spoke in front, she begged him to escort her back to her rooms and he agreed.
- The woman seemed to be going with him willingly.
- The two of them passed through the commercial areas to a warehouse area and did not appear to be in a hurry.

Note: Feel free to give free raises for ingenious ideas or good role-playing, and to focus on quieter characters in this scene. Options include tracking the couple (Orduño's left boot heel was partially burned by the fire and leaves distinctive footprints); asking people in the street (Diplomacy, Gossip, or Gather Information); or speaking to a succession of professionals who operate in the area such as pickpockets (underworld contacts), carriage drivers, or merchants.

The trail leads to a warehouse on the outskirts of town. Stacked boxes block the windows and the neighborhood seems seedy compared to the upscale neighborhood where the Gubernadora lives. As you enter the warehouse, you see a familiar figure tied to a chair. The man is dressed in the well-tailored uniform of the Castillian Armada although he is bare-footed. A sword lies on top of the scabbard on the ground nearby, next to a small pile of ash topped by a pair of partially burned boots. He scratches, cuts, and a few burns on his hands, feet, and face. He grunts at the sight of you, but cannot speak because of a gag in his mouth. It is, of course, Captain Ferdinand Orduño.

He thanks you for your assistance, then swears bitterly under his breath as he picks up the ashen boots and scowls before pulling them onto his feet. Although damaged, the boots still appear somewhat fit. In disgust, he declares, "What sort of barbarians would burn a man's boots?"

He then picks up his sword and says, "Thank you, my friends, for your timely arrival." He sees you looking at his wounds and says, "I believe that when they returned, they were going to get serious about it."

If anyone in the party inspects the sword and scabbard, they do not see any damage *unless* they have Porté magic or are able to identify it. Then it requires a Spot (DC 30) or Perception: Wits (TN 35) check to see that a Porté mage appears to have Blooded the inside of the scabbard.

When queried about what happened, Orduño looks somewhat sheepish. "I am, after all, a Castillian. I cannot resist a damsel in distress. How was I to know that I was the one who would need rescuing?"

If asked what his captors wanted with him, Orduño admits that he aided El Vago several months ago and assumes that his captors believe he knows the vigilante's true identity. He declares that he would never have revealed that information, even if he had known it!

Orduño asks what time it is and becomes distraught when he learns how late it is. He is the captain of the escort ship *Santa Rosalinda*, which was due to leave an hour ago. Since he is the only one who knows their destination, he must rejoin his ship to make his rendezvous. When asked about the "rendezvous," he explains that part of his job, the part he hates the most, involves escorting reparation payments to the Montaigne pigs.

If the party accompanies him to the docks, he will gladly chat with them and thank them for the service they have provided Castille. His small group of three ships must arrive on time or the peace treaty is null and void. He is scheduled to meet up with several other Castillian ships within a day's sail of here and once they have assembled, only a fool would attack the convoy. At first when he was captured, he was concerned that his Montaigne captors were after his convoy, but they never even mentioned it. If anyone in the party asks for passage or offers to help, he thanks them but says that no one except his crew is allowed on board and that they cannot take any passengers. He does ask them, however, to tell the Gubernadora about the situation, and if possible to find the red-headed Allette du Paix and deliver his "regards." Despite it being close to midnight, the ship gets underway as soon as he boards.

The party returns to their lodgings where they find a note from Casa de Erego, requesting their presence first thing in the morning.

Scene 5 – *Cherchez La Femme!*

The heroes arrive at Casa de Erego shortly after sunrise and Governor Suarez is already at work. After they explain what happened last night them, she asks them to find this Montaigne noblewoman. "I will only endure so much from these posturing idiots," she says, her intense grey eyes flashing with deadly fire. She explains that she cannot authorize them to search Mademoiselle du Paix' residence officially, but if they happened to find a way to achieve that, she would be extremely grateful.

The party's investigation reveals that Allette du Paix arrived a few days ago from Montaigne and was staying with a distant cousin who resides in Puerto Grande as a merchant. Apparently trying to avoid the unpleasantness currently embroiling her homeland, Mademoiselle du Paix came to the island. She was a favorite at social gatherings with other Montaigne in Marcina, particularly the naval officers who were visiting for the last few days. She seemed to have nothing but disdain for the Castillians, although she was happy to spend money on Castillian goods.

If the group decides to question her cousin, they find the merchant distraught and somewhat confused by his cousin's hasty departure. "All she left was a note, and a tidy sum of debts!" he says, waving paper in both hands. He says that she left nothing behind but the heroes are welcomed to search for themselves, and indeed there is nothing to be found. A servant confirms that two burly porters picked up her belongings yesterday while everyone was at the opera. The merchant seems genuinely fond of his cousin despite her odd behavior and asks the party to tell her that the debts were not so large that she had to flee.

Scene 6 – Many Choices but Few Options

If the party asks around the docks, they learn that other than Orduño's vessel, only the fast sloop *Le Cheval Marin* under the command of Captain Ambrose Praise du Rachtisse have departed in the last 24 hours. Apparently over a half-dozen Montaigne including a red-haired woman and several naval officers boarded just before its departure, heading northwest. Depending upon how well they play their cards, they might hear a rambling story about how "surely looked a lot like that damn *Black Dawn*." A further inspection reveals that *Le Bon Visage*, du Motte's frigate, is still in harbor for repairs. The ship's first mate is in charge since neither du Motte nor his officers have arrived at the ship yet.

If the party decides to go after *Le Cheval Marin* themselves, no boats seem to be available. It is close to morning tide and few sailors are willing to head out at this time without a full complement. Seems like everyone wants to be around for the big duel between der Kire and Jeremiah Berek. The party queries a number of captains until only three ships remain (besides the party's, if appropriate): *El Cazador*, Berek's *Black Dawn*, and der Kire's *Der Seevogel*.

- *El Cazador* is a 30-foot sloop owned by Joaquin de Arroyo. He will let them borrow his ship for a sizeable deposit (close to twice the value of the boat.) If no one in the party has any kind of Sailor skills, they can offer to pay some of the sailors on the dock to help them handle the vessel. (If the party queries Berek first, they will be able to return to *El Cazador* with a skilled crew.)

- The *Black Dawn* is a large sloop with a retractable keel. A beautiful female figurehead seems to watch the party as they approach. If the heroes speak to any of the Sea Dogs, the sailors direct them to Berek's cabin. He is inside practicing with a short sword and shield. He appears skilled, but out of practice. He puts his weapons down to greet them and asks them how he can help. After listening carefully, he will probe for more information. He seems interested at the mention of the Montaigne, but will ultimately shake his head and say that honor demands that he attend the duel. However, he offers to have some of his sailors accompany them (to be determined by how many are needed to ensure that the party can sail *El Cazador* successfully.)
- *Der Seevogul* is an older frigate with few guns, but numerous sails. If the heroes approach ship, they see the Montaigne man who was in the crowd yesterday, who confirmed der Kire's accusations of Berek. If they decide to speak with him, they learn that his name is Jacques Renault. A friendly, intense man with a shadow behind his eyes, he listens to their tale but will not allow them to speak to der Kire under any circumstances. It should be clear that they are not going to find any help here (and a show of force is completely foolhardy!)



Act 2

Scene 1 – After Them!

If the party decides to head out after *Le Cheval Marin*, the following occurs:

Spray flies into your face as the ship leaps across waves. Your stomach drops as the deck rolls slightly but you keep your feet and see a darker shape emerge from the night ahead of you. In the light of the half moon, you make out a small island up ahead. It appears no more than a mile across and heavily wooded.

If the party decides to make landfall, they see that there is very little on the island other than trees. Several trails lead to the center where a small camp has been created. There are 12 silk tents that contain beautiful oak furnishings and Crescent rugs. This appears to have been home to 30 or more troops with very expensive tastes, judging from the furnishings and the remains of some very expensive food. There is nothing of note here in the camp — other than a long bloody swath approximately 12 feet long and six feet wide in the center! (Note: Only someone able to detect *Porté* or a *Porté* mage him/herself will recognize it for what it is.)

If the party either sailed around the island first, or does some exploration on foot, they see a ship anchored on the far side of the island. It is indeed *Le Cheval Marin*. Four of crew are on watch.

If the heroes decide to go in for a closer look they see a man come on deck who appears to be... Jeremiah Berek! But he is dressed in the sky-blue blue uniform of the Montaigne Navy. How can this be? The party saw Berek within the last few hours and would have seen his ship leave the dock. (In fact, it is Ambrose Praise du Rachtisse.)

If the heroes decides to rush the Montaigne sailors, they encounter 12 Level 2 riggers (d20™) or 12 Rank 3 Montaigne Brutes (7th Sea™), as well as Ambrose Praise du Rachtisse (see NPC section for his stats.)

Montaigne (or Mercenary) Riggers (d20™)

Expert 2: CR 1; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; HP 9; each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk Rapier +1 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +1, Reflex +2, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills: Balance +7, Climb +6, Intuit Direction +5, Listen +5, Profession (sailor) +5, Spot +5; Feats: Dodge.

Montaigne (or Mercenary) Riggers (7th Sea™)

Threat: 3

TN to hit: 20

Usual weapons: Medium (cutlasses)

Sailor: Balance +2, Climbing +2

Assuming the heroes are successful in their attack, they can question any surviving crew members. If the crew is asked about a specific piece of information (i.e., did this ship attack the *Albatross*?), the roll receives a +3 circumstance bonus (d20™) or a free Raise to the check (7th Sea™).

An inspection of the *Cheval* reveals several interesting things:

- The ship is an almost duplicate of the *Black Dawn* (DC 5/TN 10), including a retractable keel (Profession: Sailor DC 15 or Perception (Wits) TN 20).

- The oaken plaque with the ship's name appears to be removable and doing so reveals the name *Black Dawn*. (Spot DC 15/Perception (Wits) TN 20)

- The captain's log reveals that:

This ship is a Montaigne privateer whose Letter of Marque gives it the right to prey on Avalon ships in retaliation for their "illegal and inhumane treatment of the Montaigne people." (Search DC 5/Perception (Wits) TN 10)

The ship has been in service for several years (Search DC 10/Perception (Wits) TN 15) and if the previous logs are examined, she did indeed plunder and destroy a ship called *the Albatross* (Search DC 20/Perception (Wits) TN 25).

The log notes several times that the ship flies an Avalon flag so that its atrocities will be blamed on Berek (Search DC 5/Perception (Wits) TN 10) and takes advantage of captain's strong resemblance to the privateer (Search DC 20/Perception (Wits) TN 25).

- The captain's quarters bears numerous blood stains on the floor and on a letter opener (Spot DC 5/Perception (Wits) TN 10). (These Blooded items were left by the *Porté* mages who were recently aboard, but this is only discernible as such by *Porté* mages or those able to detect *Porté*.)

- The ship's charts are open on a desk and have a portion of the sea circled with the coordinates beside it. Next to this is scrawled, "*Ambush Orduño on the 7th*," which is today! *Le Cheval Marin* requires at least 15 sailors to sail her. If there are any mercenaries among the crew, they might be coerced (bribed) into serving onboard, but the party may be uncomfortable trusting them to anything that permits them free movement about the ship.

- If Berek and/or Renault accompanied the party, the combat should be blessedly short. Realizing that time is of the essence, they will either take the crew, including Ambrose, back to their ship or they will split their resources so that they can take *Le Cheval Marin* as well. If Berek has joined them, he will take "special care" of Ambrose.

In either case, de Rachtisse will not willingly reveal any information, but will be more talkative after interrogation. It turns out that he is involved in a plot by members of the Montaigne Navy to seize a portion of the Castillian reparations before they reach Montaigne. With the increased tension in Marcina because of the murder of François Gaulle du Motte by supposed Castillian assassins, the "kidnapping" of Made-moiselle du Paix, and the disappearance of the reparation funds, they believe they can resume hostilities... and the war. This would make them too useful to kill and ensure their continued survival in Post-Revolution Montaigne. This is why they captured Orduño and had a *Porté* mage Blood his scabbard which allowed them to use *Porté* to board his ship and quickly seize control of it.

Since only Orduño knew the destination of the rendezvous, the Montaigne are now leading the three ships into an ambush at the coordinates noted on the map in de Rachtisse's cabin. It should be made clear to the party that they will be unable to defeat the Montaigne forces on their own. They need more ships. Luckily, they know (or will be reminded) that most of the ships in Marcina's harbor will be anchored off Kapa'o Noa for the great duel.

Scene 2 – More Important than a Duel

As the first rays of light dance across the waves, a small fleet of twelve ships has anchored off a nearby island called Kapa'o Noa. The island has a sandy beach only a hundred feet across without any features. Everyone waits anxiously to see the battle between the two pirates.

If Berek has accompanied the heroes, they all arrive and disembark quickly. Der Kire begins his taunting, but Berek stops him by showing the evidence from *Le Cheval Marin* and explaining the urgent need to sail to Captain Orduño's defense as fast as possible.

If Berek is already onshore about to square off against der Kire, the party must stop the fight and force the men to look at the evidence. They implore everyone to board the ship(s) and head for the rendezvous point.

In either case, the two opponents realize that Berek is not at fault. If de Rachtisse is still alive, der Kire insists on a duel to the death with him, but wiser minds prevail and he reluctantly agrees that the wretch should stand trial in Marcina. This does not prevent him from regaling de Rachtisse with details about what he would like to do to him as punishment for *the Albatross*.

Scene 3 – Crescendo

Assuming the players have decided to sail to Orduño's aid, the GM can run this encounter using the naval combat system from *Ships and Sea Battles™* or any other standard ship-to-ship combat rules. The players will be more or less involved depending on their naval skills and inclination. If they have the means, allow them to take to forefront of the action, leaving Berek and the Kire to mop up any stragglers. Prior to setting out, the party must determine which vessel is the lead ship in the group.

If the party arrives in sight of the *Santa Rosalinda* before her encounter with the Montaigne ships, they see that the Castillians are traveling with the *Santa Rosalinda* in the lead and the two reparations ships, *La Fuensanta* and the *La Paloma* to either side and slightly behind. At the sight of another ship, the Castillians close ranks and fire a warning shot. If the lead ship in the party's group signals their identify, they may sail towards the Castillian ships unhindered.

If the party arrives after the Castillian ships have engaged the Montaigne, they must find a way to join the fight without having the *Santa Rosalinda* fire on them. Again, signaling needs to come from the lead ship.

Combat ensues between the Montaigne ships and the combined fleet of the Castillian ships and the party's reinforcements. The heroes' ship(s) takes an initial cannon volley, depending on how many Montaigne ships are in range. Also

depending on how close the Montaigne ships are, a boarding cannon then fires at the heroes' ship in an attempt to discourage further assaults. If the party brings a small fleet, several ships will engage the Montaigne vessels while the others close on the *Santa Rosalinda* and attempt to defend it.

(See the *Fleet Combat Rules and Sea Battles™* if the players enjoy detailed naval combat; otherwise, briefly describe the action up to the point where boarding occurs.)

Depending on who has the upper hand, boarding will occur on the more damaged ship. If the party has suffered a great deal of damage, the closest Montaigne ship will board and hand-to-hand combat ensues. The Montaigne officers fight until they are all unconscious or dead, but once they are defeated, their sailors will surrender.

If the heroes board the Montaigne ship, they see a number of Porté mages near the helm, but pulling people through the Porté holes has exhausted them and they will not participate in any battle that occurs. The pooling blood at their feet is testament to their escape efforts, as is the blood dripping from their hands.

d20 System™

There are five sailors for every hero present at this battle, half of whom are Level 2 riggers and half who are Level 3. All are armed with cutlasses and belaying pins and a quarter of them also have pistols.

7th Sea™

There is a Rank 3 Brute squad for every player, armed with medium weapons.

Montaigne (or Mercenary) Riggers (d20™)

Expert 2: CR 1; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; HP 9; each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk Rapier +1 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +1, Reflex +2, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills: Balance +7, Climb +6, Intuit Direction +5, Listen +5, Profession (sailor) +5, Spot +5; Feats: Dodge.

Expert 3: CR 2; SZ Medium (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; HP 14 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk Rapier +0 melee (1d6); SA none; SQ none; SV Fort +2, Reflex +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills: Balance +8, Climb +7, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +8, Profession (sailor) +6, Spot +8; Feats: Alertness, Dodge.

Montaigne (or Mercenary) Riggers (7th Sea™)

Threat: 3

TN to hit: 20

Usual weapons: Medium (cutlasses)

Sailor: Balance +2, Climbing +2

If the *Santa Rosalinda* has been attacked and boarded before the heroes arrive, the party can board and challenge Montaigne invaders. The heroes hear cries in Castillian from the brig. Should they fight their way there, they can release the Castillians and Captain Orduño who will assist them in retaking the ship. Assuming that Allette has been captured and Orduño freed, the Castillian will want to exact revenge for her betrayal. The party may need to intervene physically to protect the prisoners.

Scene 4 – Finale

Assuming the party (and their NPC helpers) are successful, they return in triumph with their prisoners and the Montaigne ships in tow. They are met at the dock by the entire town, including the Gubernadora. Her guards take the prisoners into custody and she vows to let the government in Charouse know about the deception.

The party is praised for their action and heralded as the heroes they are. Ruíz begins to complain loudly that these swashbuckling heroics are all well and good, but what about his opera house!? If the heroes do not come up with an idea for raising money, Berek and der Kire offer to take on all comers (Berek with rapier and der Kire in wrestling) for a modest fee, with the proceeds to go towards funding the rebuilding. This would be a chance for the party to have a go at either of these legends in a friendly competition (and perhaps upgrade their skills.)

The day ends with an impromptu gathering in the square during which there is feasting, dancing, and a lot of singing.

NPCs and Statistics

Captain Ferdinand Orduño (d20™)

Castillian Noble 6/Captain 1: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d8+6+1d6+1; hp 49; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex); Atks: Rapier +6 melee (1d6+1); SA none; SQ Commanding Presence +2, Cunning Plans, Friends in High Places, Seduction, Taunt; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14; AL LG; Skills: Balance +8, Craft (Strategy) +7, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +6, Intuit Direction +5, Listen +4, Perform +8, Profession (Tactician) +8, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Castille, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Spot +4; Feats: Iron Will, Leadership, Orders, Skill Focus (Profession: Tactician), Toughness.

Captain Ferdinand Orduño – Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: 30
Background: None
Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce; Commission, Toughness
Courtier: Diplomacy 4, Dancing 2, Fashion 3, Etiquette 4, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Seduction 2
Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Leaping 3, Rolling 1, Sprinting 3, Swimming 3, Swinging 2, Throwing 3
Captain: Ambush 2, Cartography 3, Diplomacy 4, Gunnery 3, Incitation 4, Leadership 3, Logistics 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Orduño is a flamboyant Castillian captain in charge of a small convoy of ships heading for mainland Théah. His friendly demeanor and passion make him a well-respected and admired figure. He has a somewhat obsessive love for a pair of boots given to him by his mother.

François Gaulle du Motte (d20™)

Montaigne Noble 6/Captain 1: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d8+1d6; hp 43; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex); Atks: Rapier +6 melee (1d6+1); SA none; SQ Commanding

Presence +2, Cunning Plans, Friends in High Places, Seduction, Taunt; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 14; AL LN; Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +8, Craft (Strategy) +6, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +5, Intuit Direction +5, Listen +3, Perform +8, Profession (Strategist) +11, Sense Motive +5, Speak Language (Castille, Montaigne, [alternately, any two languages from your campaign setting]), Spot +6; Feats: Iron Will, Leadership, Orders, Skill Focus (Profession: Tactician), Expertise.

François Gaulle du Motte (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
Reputation: -10
Background: None
Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce; Commission, Toughness
Courtier: Diplomacy 2, Dancing 2, Fashion 2, Etiquette 2, Oratory 2, Politics 2, Seduction 2
Athlete: Break Fall 1, Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Leaping 1, Sprinting 1, Swimming 1, Swinging 1, Throwing 1
Captain: Ambush 2, Bribery 2, Cartography 2, Diplomacy 2, Gunnery 4, Incitation 2, Leadership 2, Logistics 2, Strategy 2, Tactics 2
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4

Du Motte is a haughty, imperious officer who served as Master of the Guns on the Montaigne flagship during the bombardment of San Cristóbal. Admiral Valoix singled him out and promoted him to Captain, although Du Motte was truly only following the Admiral's orders. His pride and disdain preclude any attempt at modesty, so he makes an easy focal point of the Castillian hatred over San Cristóbal. He has remained at sea since the Revolution began to avoid a rendezvous with le coiffeur. Du Motte currently commands *Le Beau Visage*, but is unpopular with his men.

In Act 1, du Motte is imprisoned on *Le Cheval Marin* when they find that ship. Furious at his fellow officers' betrayal, he will aid the heroes in stopping them, although he will constantly insult and belittle his rescuers.

Gerard Leveque d'Aur (d20™)

Montaigne Porté Mage 14: CR 14; SZ M (humanoid); HD 14d6+42; hp 95; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+2 Dex, +10 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: Masterwork rapier +11/+6 melee (1d6) ordagger +10/+5 melee (1d4) OR dagger +12 ranged (1d4); SA Porté spells and abilities; SQ Adept, Attunement (7 miles), Bleeding 7, Bring, Carry Object (150 lbs.), Catch, Escort 1, Pass Object, Pocket (50 lbs.), Porté Checks +7; ; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 14; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +17, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +14, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Jump +6, Pick Pocket +8, Search +14, Speak Language (Castille, Montaigne, Eisen [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]); Feats: Combat Casting, Full-Blooded (Porté), Half-Blooded (Porté), Improved Initiative, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner, Intermediate); Spells Per Day 7/8/7/6/4/3/2/1; Spells Known – 0 level — *arcane mark, mage hand, message*; 1st level — *feather fall, jump*; 2nd level — *blur*; 3rd level — *displacement*; 4th level — *Porté door, protection from arrows*; 5th level — *sending*; 6th level — *teleport, vanish*; 7th level — *teleport without error*.

Gerard Leveque d'Aur – Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
Reputation: -30
Background: None
Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne (R/W),
 Vodacce; Commission
Courtier: Diplomacy 2, Dancing 2, Fashion 2, Etiquette 2,
 Oratory 2, Politics 2, Seduction 2
Sailor: Balance 2, Climbing 2, Knotwork 2, Rigging 2
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 4
Porté (Adept): Attunement 4, Bleeding 4, Bring 4, Catch 4,
 Pocket 4, Walk 4

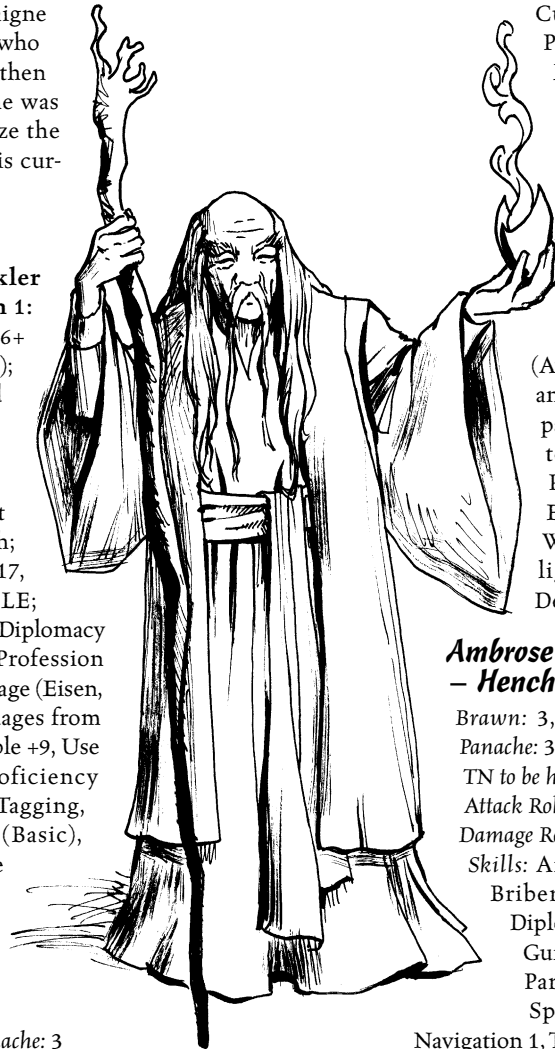
A high-ranking officer in the Montaigne Navy, d'Aur is a cold, emotionless man who sees other people as pawns to use and then discard. An Adept level Porté mage, he was largely responsible for the plan to seize the Castillian convoy by Porté magic. He is currently assigned to Le Beau Visage.

Lydia Bisset du Vore (d20™)

Montaigne Courtier 1/Swashbuckler 5/Durchsetzungsborg 1/Midshipman 1:
 CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d6+12+1d8+2+1d10+2; hp 53; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +1 Light Footed); Atks: Masterwork rapier +11/+6 melee (1d6+3); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Pinpoint Accuracy; SQ Light Footed, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15; AL LE; Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +10, Climb +6, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Jump +4, Profession (sailor) 4, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, [alternately, any two languages from your campaign setting]), Swim +7, Tumble +9, Use Rope +7; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Parry, Riposte, Tagging, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Basic), Weapon Finesse (with any applicable weapon, only while unarmored or in light armor).

Lydia Bisset du Vore – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
TN to be hit: 25
Attack Rolls: 7k3 rapier
Damage Rolls: 5k2 rapier
Skills: Attack (Fencing) 4, Balance 1, Climbing 1, Dancing 2, Etiquette 2, Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungsborg), Fashion 2, History 1, Knotwork 1, Mathematics 1, Oratory 2, Parry (Fencing) 4, Philosophy 1, Research 1, Rigging 1, Riposte 3, Tagging 2, Wall of Steel 3
Note: Speaks Eisen and Montaigne; Durchsetzungsborg Apprentice



A Montaigne woman who trained in an Eisen fencing school while out of favor at Court, Lydia returned to join the Navy and quickly proved her worth as a boarding instructor and swordsman. She has numerous scars and wears them proudly as badges proclaiming that she gained her position by experience rather than noble connections. She serves as an officer aboard Le Beau Visage.

Ambrose Praise du Rachetisse (d20™)

Montaigne Noble 1/Pirate 4/Captain 3: CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+9+1d8+3+4d10+12; hp 68; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency, +2 Roguish Style); Atks: Rapier +9/+4 melee (1d6+2); SA Pirate Trick; SQ Commanding Presence +1, Cunning Plans, Friends in High Places, Legendary Leadership, Motivational Speech; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16; AL LE; Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +8, Craft (Strategy) +8, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +8, Perform +9, Profession (Tactician) +9, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne, [alternately, any two languages from your campaign setting]); Feats: Ambidexterity, Iron Will, Leadership, Pirate Trick (Kick Up), Skill Focus (Profession: Tactician), Two Weapon Fighting (unarmored or light armor only), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner).

Ambrose Praise du Rachetisse – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
TN to be hit: 25
Attack Rolls: 7k3 rapier
Damage Rolls: 5k2 rapier
Skills: Ambush 2, Attack (Fencing) 4, Bribery 2, Climbing 2, Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Gunnery 2, Footwork 2, Oratory 2, Parry (Fencing) 4, Socializing 1, Sprinting 2, Strategy 2, Street Navigation 1, Tactics 2, Throwing 2
Note: Speaks Avalon and Montaigne; Rivalry (Berek)

A Montaigne privateer, Ambrose blamed Berek for his lack of advancement, thinking that the Navy would never promote someone who so closely resembles one of their greatest enemies. In retaliation, he committed atrocities in Berek's name aboard *Le Cheval Marin*, which also sails under the name *Black Dawn*.

Nicole du Lac (d20™)

Montaigne Pirate 1/Swashbuckler 4/Gaule 1: CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6+4+1d8+1+1d10+1; hp 36; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+ 2 Dex, +2 Light Footed, +1 three pronged main gauche); Atks: Rapier +7/+2 melee (1d6+4) and three prong main gauche +6 melee (1d4+1); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Pirate Trick; SQ Focused Training, Light Footed; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12; AL LE; Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +11, Climb +6, Intuit Direction +5, Jump +6, Profession (sailor) +6, Sense Motive +5, Speak Language Montaigne, [alternately, any one language from your campaign setting], Tumble +11, Use Rope +5; Feats: Ambidexterity, Exotic Shield Proficiency (three prong main gauche), Exotic Weapon Proficiencies (firearms, three prong main gauche), Expertise, Parry, Pirate Trick (Dagger Ride), Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier).

Nicole du Lac – Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2
TN to be hit: 20
Attack Rolls: 5k2 rapier, 5k2 triple dagger
Damage Rolls: 4k2 rapier, 3k2 triple dagger
Skills: Attack (Fencing) 3, Attack (Knife) 3, Balance 1, Bind (Knife) 2, Climbing 1, Dancing 2, Disarm (Knife) 2, Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 3, Etiquette 2, Exploit Weakness (Gaule) 2, Fashion 2, Knotwork 1, Navigation 4, Oratory 2, Parry (Fencing) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Rigging 1
Note: Speaks Montaigne. Gaule (Apprentice)

Nicole is a navigator for the Montaigne ship *Le Beau Visage*, a post that she has only recently gained. She encouraged the idea of ambushing the convoy, believing that the others would not go through with it and that she could blackmail them for even considering it. She says very little, preferring to allow her actions to speak for her.

Allette du Paix (d20™)

Montaigne Highwayman 3/Spy 3: CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+6+3d8+6; hp 41; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+ 3 Dex); Atks: Musket +7 ranged (1d10) OR pistol +7 ranged (1d10+3) OR 2 pistols +5 ranged (1d10+3); SA Clever Shot, Double Pistol, Sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Alias, Brilliant Getaway, Contacts; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15; AL NE; Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +9, Hide +10, Intimidate +9, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive 9, Speak Language (Avalon, Castille, Montaigne, [alternately, any three languages from your campaign setting]), Tumble +10; Feats: Ambidexterity (only with a pistol in the off hand), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Expertise, Improved Initiative, Off Hand Accuracy, Point Blank Shot (only with firearms), Precise Shot, Quick Draw.

Allette du Paix (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3
TN to be hit: 5
Attack Rolls: 8k3 musket or pistol
Damage Rolls: 5k3 musket, 4k3 pistol
Skills: Acting 1, Ambush 3, Attack (Firearm) 5, Dancing 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Oratory 4, Reload (Firearm) 5, Seduction 4, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3
Note: Speaks Avalon, Castillian, and Montaigne; Appearance (Above Average), Dangerous Beauty, Pirate Trick (Quick Draw)

Allette is the illegitimate daughter of a Montaigne nobleman who raised her as one of his servants. Her long auburn hair and beautiful face distract men from the intelligence behind her eyes. She has been a spy for the Montaigne Navy for several years.

Jeremiah Berek

(See *Heroes, Villains and Monsters*,[™] pg. 24; *Waves of Blood*,[™] pg. 174).

Der Kire

(See *Heroes, Villains and Monsters*,[™] pg. 25; *Villain's Handbook*,[™] pg. 21).

Jacques Renault

(See *Heroes, Villains and Monsters*,[™] pg. 25; *Villain's Handbook*,[™] pg. 22).

CHAPTER THREE:

Plot Seeds and Adventure Hooks

This chapter contains a series of brief adventure ideas, each of which can easily be developed into a full-fledged evening of gaming. They have been divided up by geographical region, and begin with a lengthy introductory adventure.

Introduction to the World of 7th Sea – There Goes the Bride

Adventure Overview

The continent of Théah is a big place, a rich and detailed environment with opportunities for action and adventure literally around every corner. While this can be a blessing for experienced GMs, it can sometimes seem overwhelming for those new to the venue. With this in mind, *There Goes the Bride* is intended as a doorway for new players to step into the setting and immediately become a part of the world.

There Goes the Bride has been structured into three acts/parts for ease of use by new GMs, complete with introductory passages to be paraphrased or read aloud to the players. More detail and options have been placed in Act One because this is often the area new GMs have difficulty fleshing out. Acts Two and Three have fewer “official” details so GMs can have more freedom to invent their own. Act One focuses on a pirate raid on Altamira, a famous river

port city in northeastern Castille and the most important city in the Rancho Soldano region. The characters have their hands full amid all the chaos and, despite their best efforts, discover they cannot save everyone — especially a young bride being carried back to the pirate’s ship.

Act Two takes the characters to Geschäftsstadt, a crumbling little Eisen coastal town not far from the Montaigne border, in search of the bride and the Montaigne sorcerer who captured her. Here they deal with a dock riot and hopefully gain the respect of the Master of the Docks. If they do, he draws them a map to where he believes the sorcerer may have stayed.

Act Three occurs as the characters reach the sorcerer’s hideout, a seemingly abandoned mine that holds the bride and the villains responsible for her capture. Not only will the characters have the opportunity to save the girl and win the day, they may also uncover part of a terrible plan that could alter the fate of the world.

While this adventure is set at the beginning of the year 1668 (and therefore gives GMs the opportunity to use any or all the previously published setting material in later adventures), it may be run at any subsequent date with little change required.

Getting Started

This adventure can be used with any characters who have heroic inclinations. Characters need not know one another at the beginning of the adventure, as the pirate raid on Altamira should be enough to get them to work together. To keep the players’ interest, each character should have

something at stake in the adventure. It can be as simple as riding to the rescue of a damsel in distress or as complex as getting involved because Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse's family seized his family's lands when the character was a child.

Scene One: Happy New Year's!

Overview: The characters are enjoying New Year's Eve in Altamira when pirates attack the city.

Goals: By the end of this scene, the characters should be working together as a team and in agreement to go after the kidnapped bride.

IMPORTANT NPCs:

- Fortunado Alfonso Cortez de Cordoba
- Aniya Reyna Cortez de Cordoba
- Garritt Engnestangen
- Captain Fernando "El Gato Negro" Lopez
- Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse

The Action: The GM should read or paraphrase the following information:

Our story begins in northeastern Castille, in the area known as Rancho Soldano. Nestled within the far western cradle of La Selva de Fendes on the banks of the great River (the largest waterway on the continent) is the city of Altamira. It is the eve of the New Year, El Año Nuevo, as the Castillians call it, and every part of the city is celebrating in grand style.

The docks are filled with ships from almost every nation, from Avalon sloops to Vodacce caravels. As Altamira is a famous trade city, its population is always a diverse mix of local and international merchants and sailors. What makes tonight unique is the sheer number of visitors strolling around and adding to mix.

The district directly off the docks, El Paseo Largo, "The Long Walk," is alive with activity. Parades have been the attraction here all day, closing the shops, merchant courtyards, and flea markets as people gather in throngs to participate in the fun. Tonight there is plenty of music, drinking, dancing, and fireworks along the city streets.

Giant bonfires can be found on almost every corner, symbolizing a fresh start for the year to come. This is especially true at La Vengaza, the local bullfighting arena, where two dozen fires have made things almost as bright as day. The daring (and beautiful) matadora, Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro, is performing here until sunrise, pitting her skills against some of the most dangerous bulls ever corralled. Fans and gamblers alike bought every seat in the stadium weeks ago, and their cheers echo for blocks around. Tonight, there is standing room only.

Gamblers and partygoers have also gathered at the Guild of San Marcos, the local branch of the Swordsman's Guild entrusted to handle matters in Castille, Montaigne, Vodacce, and Eisen. Tonight, Eduardo Montevada, the proprietor, is staging exhibitions and contests between swordsmen from all over Théah, promising an exquisite sword of Aldana steel to the winner.

And then there is the spectacle over at La Universidad de Arciniega. While having gained some notoriety since its founder and former headmaster, Alvara Arciniega, fled from the Inquisition as a heretic, it is still a place of ornate beauty. Never has this been truer than tonight. La Trinidad, the university's one hundred and fifty-

foot tall cathedral, is adorned with lanterns, and each of its three separate bell towers softly tolls for the event going on below. Fortunado Alfonso Cortez de Cordoba, a man whose commercial and money-lending interests have shaped modern Castille's economy, has spared no expense for the wedding of his only daughter to the only nephew of Master Red, head of the Moneylenders Guild and influential member of the Vendel League. The wedding is, without question, the social event of the season, and tonight reputations are being made and broken with the drop of a casual but well-placed word.

While many consider Altamira to be the most peaceful place in Castille, tonight it may be the most festive place in Théah. Everyone agrees that 1668 holds incredible potential — but the potential for what exactly remains to be seen.

The characters may engage in any of the activities listed above or pursue other personal goals as they wish. It is a night of seemingly endless possibilities, and GMs can use this opportunity to help new players get a better feel about their characters by providing a few well-placed roleplaying opportunities. Below are a few ideas GMs can expand on to better customize the setting to their players' interests and provide intriguing subplots for the rest of the adventure.

At the Docks

A PRESSING MATTER

What's better than cheap labor? Slave labor! A press gang is out looking to increase their crew size, kidnapping drunken sailors and hauling them back to their ship. After successes all evening, they are beginning to feel overconfident in their abilities, and have decided the character(s) look like an easy mark, drunk or sober.

NO ONE EXPECTS THE INQUISITION

While everyone else in Altamira is enjoying themselves, the forces of the Inquisition are still hard at work. With so many ships in port, plain-clothed Inquisitors are taking the opportunity to search for any illegal (i.e., heretical) cargo. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Crescents (the people)
- Syrneath artifacts (of all kinds and under all circumstances, but remember they are forbidden by the Inquisition)
- Objectionist and other heretical propaganda (this is Vaticine Church territory)
- Scholarly works (outside the hands of authorized Church researchers)
- Religious texts (unless on the person of authorized clergy)
- Sorcerous items of any kind (including blooded objects, runes and rune-scribed items, and Glamour objects)

Any characters with a docked ship (or just in the area) can be subject to this search. Depending upon the whim of the GM, this could be anything from a simple annoyance to having an Inquisitor actually plant illegal items. Of course, the Inquisitor might "overlook" the heresy if an indulgence is paid — or if the character(s) are willing to perform a service for the Inquisitor at some future time.



El Paseo Largo

I LOVE A PARADE

The unpaved streets of El Paseo Largo have seen parades all day, drawing large crowds. Each new parade brings a new spectacle, and when the masses see the team of white horses from Rancho Aldana, they stand in awe. Then a string of firecrackers are set off and the horses panic, charging into the crowd. Peoples' lives are in danger unless the character(s) can think and act fast.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

With so many people gathered into such a relatively small area, thieves are bound to take advantage of the situation. The character(s) spot a thief just as he is about to cut the purse from a grandfather holding his grandson on his shoulders. If there is any interference, the thief grabs the little boy and threatens his life until he can make his escape.

La Vengaza

A BUNCH OF BULL

The rivalry between Castillian matadors is legendary and, until Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro came on the scene, it was a profession for men only. While her success and talent have won the love and devotion of the Castillian people, it has caused no small amount of resentment among her peers, leading to a series of "accidents" at every venue she performs. When she squares off against the fierce La Vengaza Septima (the direct descendent of the bull the arena was named after) and her sword's blade detaches from her handle, the character(s) could be the only thing preventing a gore-y end to her career.

A FRIEND IN NEED

Gamblers have followed Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro's career with great interest, winning and losing money with each of her exhibitions. Unfortunately, an old friend of the character(s) has been on a losing streak and his creditors are closing in. If he sees the character(s) at tonight's event, he can't resist coming to them and asking for financial assistance (and maybe some muscle for extra protection).

The Guild of San Marcos

TO THE DEATH

While the competition at The Guild of San Marcos is intended to be to the first blood, one Swordsman has plans of his own. Ernesto Villones has entered the competition for only one purpose: to kill a fellow Swordsman, Big Bill Davis from Avalon whom he holds responsible for the death of his father. Whether or not this is true, the character(s) learn his motive when his drunken assistant blabs about it between duels.

EVERYONE HAS A PRICE

Eduardo Montevada wants his Swordsman competition to be fair and square, a perfect example of the honor and integrity the Guild represents. Unfortunately, several contestants are more interested in a financial reward than winning the sword of Aldana steel. A Vodacce merchant is paying them to intentionally lose their duels, moving his favorite challenger ever closer to success. Between bouts, he approaches any participating character(s) about taking a dive, threatening bodily harm from his "associates" if his "offer" is refused.

La Universidad de Arciniega

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Fortunado Alfonzo Cortez de Cordoba's family owns the Altamira docks and everything within easy sighting distance (save the university where his daughter is getting married). They command a slice of every penny made in every shop in town, so it is no surprise that many groups and individuals seek their patronage. Lady Adrienne Leach is a member of the Explorer's Society and plans to use the wedding as an opportunity to approach Fortunado about sponsoring an expedition to the Synchronic Isles. By mistake, she assumes one of the characters is part of de Cordoba's family. She pursues the character (and any of his friends) to help her get closer to Fortunado. Even if told the truth, she will assume it is just a ploy to throw her off the road to sponsorship.

A BROKEN HEART

While almost everyone at the wedding is in great spirits, one young woman is not. She is almost beside herself with grief. Her name is Betje Boekholt, a Vendel, who is desperately in love with the groom, Garritt Engnestangen. She traveled all the way from Kirk to stop the wedding, but when she expressed her true feelings to Garritt in private, she was rebuffed. Garritt asked her to leave, not denying his own love for her, but saying that he has to go through with the marriage for the good of his family. She is in desperate need of a sympathetic ear and a shoulder to cry on. Then she sees the character(s)...

Whatever pursuits the characters are engaged in, everything comes to halt at midnight. Fireworks burst overhead and every bell in Altamira rings out the arrival of the New Year. Then, one hour later, everything stops again when the three Castilian galleons in the harbor simultaneously explode and begin to sink, their powder rooms sabotaged from within. Through the smoke and destruction, a frigate flying the Jolly Roger begins to fire on the city. At first, no one knows what to make of this turn of events. Then a seemingly endless stream of pirates row to shore and chaos is truly unleashed.

The pirates are attacking for two reasons. First, on the eve of the New Year, it has become customary for the High King of Castille to release any prisoner who has been held for more than ten years (five if the King is being particularly generous). This is a relatively modern notion, and no prisoners of La Bucca were ever released when it was still operating as a prison. As a result, some of the pirates who escaped now pillage Castilian seaports during the first hours of each new year. This year, the pirate Captain Fernando "El Gato Negro" Lopez, has decided to take his vendetta up river and strike terror into Castille's heartland.

The second reason has little to do with revenge and everything to do with money. *El Gato Negro* picked up a Montaigne passenger, Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse, who paid him a small fortune to attack Altamira with the understanding that the pirates could keep anything they pillaged — except for a young woman named Aniya Reyna Cortez de Cordoba. Absolute bedlam is not a strong enough phrase to describe the rampage of the pirates and the panicked flight of Altamira's citizens. Glass shatters, guns fire, swords clash, and cannonballs fall from the night sky, crashing into buildings and people with equal aplomb. No matter where the charac-

ters are when the attack begins, the fight is quickly taken to the streets, which is a great place for a GM to force together characters who have, until now, spent the adventure apart. The superior number of pirates should quickly convince the characters that it is in their best interest to work together.

It is wise, perhaps, to let them have a few successful encounters with the pirates before letting them come up against *El Gato Negro* and Devon. This will help bolster their spirits and inspire them to tackle more powerful opponents. For example, the characters could begin by protecting a young mother and her child from a pirate gang, quickly followed by rescuing the passengers of a hijacked carriage, which leads them to seeing Aniya being forcibly carried away from the cathedral and back to the pirates' frigate.

However, the GM arranges it, the characters should eventually become aware that a bride is being abducted from the university. The characters are likely to come close to rescuing her, which will make it all the more frustrating when Devon uses his *Porté* magic to rip open a portal and carry her through it (kicking and screaming, of course). Particularly sharp-eyed characters will see Devon drink from a small vial before using his sorcery, and may even recover the vial on the ground after he is gone. If they do, they find it completely drained of its contents, the label "No. 673" being their only clue as to what might have been inside.

Once Devon and Aniya are gone, the tide of battle turns against the pirates. The end truly comes when other ships in the harbor begin firing upon the pirates' frigate, cutting off their only means of escape. Boarding parties (including the characters, if they are on the ball) eventually take command of the vessel, and the fighting stops at last. Many pirates are killed in the process, but enough should survive for questioning and imprisonment.

The most important questions the characters should ask the surviving pirates (and will certainly be asked by Fortunado Alfonzo Cortez de Cordoba) is, "Who was the Montaigne sorcerer?" and "Where did he take Aniya?" Surly until the bitter end, all but one pirate refuses to speak on the matter. This last scoundrel reveals Devon's name and the fact that the crew picked him up in *Geschäftsstadt*, a coastal town in Eisen.

If the characters are hesitant about rescuing Aniya, Fortunado promises to make it financially worth their while (the exact amount offered is up to the GM.) Garritt Engnestangen, the groom, was wounded in the attack but almost has to be restrained to be stopped from going after Aniya himself (nonetheless, Betje Boekholt is making sure he stays put and receives proper medical care). If any characters are still reluctant to take up the rescue challenge, Garritt taunts them without mercy, resulting in negative penalties for all social situations in Vendel and Castille — which will require future adventures to repair.

Castillians hate a coward.

Scene 2: *Geschäftsstadt*

Overview: Following the only lead they have about the kidnapped bride, the characters arrive in *Geschäftsstadt*, Eisen and have to deal with a riot at the docks.

Goals: By the end of this scene, the characters should have gained the trust of the Master of the Docks and learned the possible location of Devon's hideout.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- Bendix Hayner
- Dolphus Hayner
- Falko Hayner

The Action: There are literally dozens of routes the characters can take to reach Geschäftsstadt from Altamira — too many, in fact, to be listed here. Suffice it to say that they can travel overland (after crossing the River, of course) or sail around to the Trade Sea. GMs are encouraged to create their own encounters/side-adventures to flesh-out the journey but, for the sake of brevity, Act 2 begins when the characters arrive at their destination. The GM should read or paraphrase the following:

While the rest of Théah may be enjoying the new year, the people of Eisen have other things on their minds. Still ravaged by the War of the Cross, the country remains a miserable, muddy mess. Icy rain falls from a heavy gray sky, pelting the infertile fields and soaking everyone and everything to the point of numbness. Eisen is a desolate, haunted place where mere survival is an act of heroism.

The small coastal town of Geschäftsstadt rots in the northwestern corner of the country, twenty miles east of the Montaigne border and in the foothills of the Weissbergen [vice-burg-en] mountains. It is part of the Wische, ruled over by Eisenfürst Reinhard Dieter von Wische, the self-proclaimed “Prince of Ashes.” Before the War of the Cross, Geschäftsstadt was a prosperous city where merchants and sailors from Avalon, Vendel, Montaigne, and even Ussura came to trade their goods (Geschäftsstadt literally means “Trade Town” in the local dialect). Eisen fishing boats plied the waters of the Trade Sea, bringing even further prosperity to the region. But, like a dream, those days are long gone. Geschäftsstadt is now little more than a series of crumbling stone buildings and cemeteries.

Despite the poor weather, this morning the docks are alive with activity. Men, women, and children, all dressed in rags, shuffle about like animated skeletons, their eyes as empty as their stomachs. Groups such as this are common across Eisen, but especially here in Wische. Collectively, they are known as “die waisen” or “the orphans” — roaming packs of the homeless, hungry, and displaced.

These waisen have surrounded a stack of crates and barrels, which are being guarded by one man with a massive zweihander sword and another armed with a rusty boar spear. On top of the crates, wearing a dracheneisen helmet that is far too big, is a short and pudgy man with a drooping moustache. He waves his arms frantically, trying to get the crowd’s attention. In one hand he holds a miner’s pickaxe.

“Damen und herren!” the man barks. “Ladies and gentlemen, please! I’m sure there is plenty of food to go around. Just give us the opportunity to open the crates and distribute it properly!”

There is no verbal response. However, one man in the crowd, his face gaunt and wrinkled, staggers past the guards and smashes the side of a crate with the broken handle of a shovel, spilling its contents all over the docks. He is rewarded with the pommel of the zweihander bashing his face, dropping him to the ground. As if possessed by one mind, the crowd surges forward.

Their angry cries are not just for their fallen comrade. The food in the crates is spoiled!

The three men guarding the crates are outnumbered ten to one. While they are better armed than the crowd, it is clear they are holding back from using deadly force, fighting only

to defend themselves and not to cause permanent injury. It is also clear that the waisen are beyond reason, and that without the characters’ help, the defenders are going to be torn to shreds. At that point, the waisen will come after the characters, to whom they will show even less mercy.

If the heroes join the fight, the defenders are grateful but also quick to admonish anyone who appears ready to take lethal action. The waisen are innocents, civilians whose lives were shattered by the War of the Cross and its aftermath. Though it may seem strange to outsiders, the three men protecting the crates will actually give their lives defending these lost souls because they (like almost everyone else in Eisen) can count friends and family who share the same sad fate.

Mere words do not affect the waisen, no matter how eloquent a speaker the character may be. They are simply too far gone. They can be frightened by loud noises, however, and will flee if confronted by fire or the certainty they cannot win (such as having over a third of their number knocked unconscious, restrained, or otherwise put out of the fight). Another alternative characters have is to distract them with food, though the distraction is likely not to last very long if the characters did not bring enough for everybody. As long as the characters help the defenders, though, they should eventually triumph. The defenders are used to repelling waisen, just not in such numbers.

Once the riot is over, the man with the helmet introduces himself as Bendix Hayner, Geschäftsstadt’s Master of the Docks. The other two men, Dolphus and Falko, are his younger brothers. He explains to the characters that the waisen were after the food in the crates, imported from Montaigne in the middle of the night by sloop. The food is a monthly payment made by a mysterious nobleman who has secluded himself in an old mine west in the Weissbergen mountains. In exchange for the food, the people of Geschäftsstadt are not to let anyone know of his whereabouts and send warning if anyone ever comes looking for him. However, for the past two months, the quality of delivered food has deteriorated to the point of being inedible, so Bendix has no qualms of telling the characters everything he knows (this is especially true if the characters behaved like proper heroes in dealing with the waisen).

Likely to the characters’ surprise, the nobleman is not Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse, but a minor Duc named Auguste Danceny du Rosemonde. After some careful thought, Bendix finally recalls a man matching Devon’s description passing through Geschäftsstadt early last month, setting sail on a docked Castillian frigate. He says the man identified himself as a naturalist returning home from studying plants at the edge of die Schwarzen Walden, “the Black Forest,” to the south, but that it seemed rather odd for a Montaigne to board a Castillian vessel. In truth, the ship belonged to the pirate Captain Fernando Lopez, but Bendix never saw any evidence of piratical activity and is convinced it was nothing more than a group of traders blown off their regular course. Of course, this is the exact cover story El Gato Negro always used when he did not want to reveal the true nature of ship or his crew.

Bendix is more than happy to draw a map and provide instructions to the Duc’s mine, and offers the characters what little hospitality he can before they leave. He would be con-

sidered impoverished in most other nations, but he is proud to offer what meager supplies he and his family possess to help fight the Duc and return the bride to her family. Characters can expect a warm (but sparse) meal, fresh bandages, a hearty handshake, and nothing else.

Scene Three: Mine, Mine, Mine!

Overview: Using Bendix Hayner's map, the characters travel to an old mine and find the kidnapped bride and her captors.

Goals: By the end of this scene, the characters should have rescued Aniya Reyna Cortez de Cordoba and discovered clues as to the reason behind her abduction.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- Aniya Reyna Cortez de Cordoba.

Action: The GM should read or paraphrase the following:

Countless mines pockmark the hills and mountains of Eisen, most having been dug long before the War of the Cross. Those precious few still capable of yielding the occasional deposit of iron, coal, and (even more rarely) dracheneisen are heavily guarded, a vital resource for whichever Eisenfürst happens to be fortunate enough to own the land. All the others have been abandoned, gaping holes gradually being reclaimed by the forces of nature.

Upon first approach, the map Bendix Hayner has drawn for you certainly appears to lead to the latter. The front entrance of the mine is covered with thorny shrubs and giant cobwebs. The continuing rain has destroyed any footprints or tracks, and there is no light or other sign of activity from within.

Just as you begin to wonder whether Bendix got his facts mixed up or played you all as fools, a low rumbling sounds — reminiscent of distant thunder, but much, much, closer. Then the ground begins to shake and you barely have time to hide before a concealed door opens out from under the mud you were just standing in.

A lone figure climbs out of the hole, adjusting the high collar on his coat and the tilt of his tricorner hat to better keep off the rain. "Smoke outside. Mon Dieu!" he mumbles to himself in Montaigne, wrestling a pipe and tobacco from his pockets. "How am I supposed to smoke outside in this accursed weather?" He strikes a match that is almost immediately extinguished but, in the brief moment of illumination, it is clear the man is no other than Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse, his hands still stained red from Porté use!

At this point, it should be clear to the players that they are in the right place and have finally caught up with their quarry. There are plenty of options they can pursue, from attacking Devon to sneaking back down the trapdoor after him once he has finished his pipe. Whatever the decision, an eventual encounter with Devon is practically unavoidable, so here is what is going on behind the scenes.

Devon Henri Praise du Rachtisse is only a half-blooded sorcerer, and not a very talented one at that. All of his life he has felt inadequate, a fact he drunkenly bemoaned to Duc Auguste Danceney du Rosemonde at a party last summer in Charouse. Finding a kindred soul in the much younger man,

the Duc confessed his own feelings of inadequacy, but also that he was taking "treatments" to make his Porté abilities far more potent than he ever imagined.

As explained in the *Invisible College™*, Duc du Rosemonde is in league with Alvara Arciniega, Théah's most notorious scientist. Unbeknownst to the world at large, Arciniega is pioneering a new (and very dangerous) science, Blood Alchemy. Through careful research, sorcerous blood is transmuted into elixirs capable of enhancing sorcerous ability and, in some cases, even transcending it with new powers (*for a full description and explanation of Blood Alchemy, refer to the Invisible College™ or Swashbuckling Arcana™ sourcebook.*) The Duc has become addicted to the elixirs and is now doing everything in his power to make sure Arciniega and the other scientists working on Blood Alchemy have plenty of raw material to use in their experiments. He has also set up this laboratory in the abandoned mine as a refuge for Harland Carlin, a scientist he has been sheltering from the Inquisition for the better part of a year.

Carlin has been quick to explore the mysteries of Blood Science, and become obsessed with the idea of restoring some of the old sorceries now believed to be extinct — especially El Fuego Adentro, the Castillian fire magic. After poring over stolen genealogy lists, Carlin came to the conclusion that Aniya Reyna Cortez de Cordoba was likely possess some modicum of the sorcery in her veins, thanks to direct ancestors on both her mother and father's side of the family who were El Fuego Adentro sorcerers of great renown. He sent his theory to the Duc, who in turn sent Devon to go and kidnap the girl and take her back to Carlin by any means necessary. Having a flair for the dramatic, Devon made contact with El Gato Negro and set up the raid on Altamira.

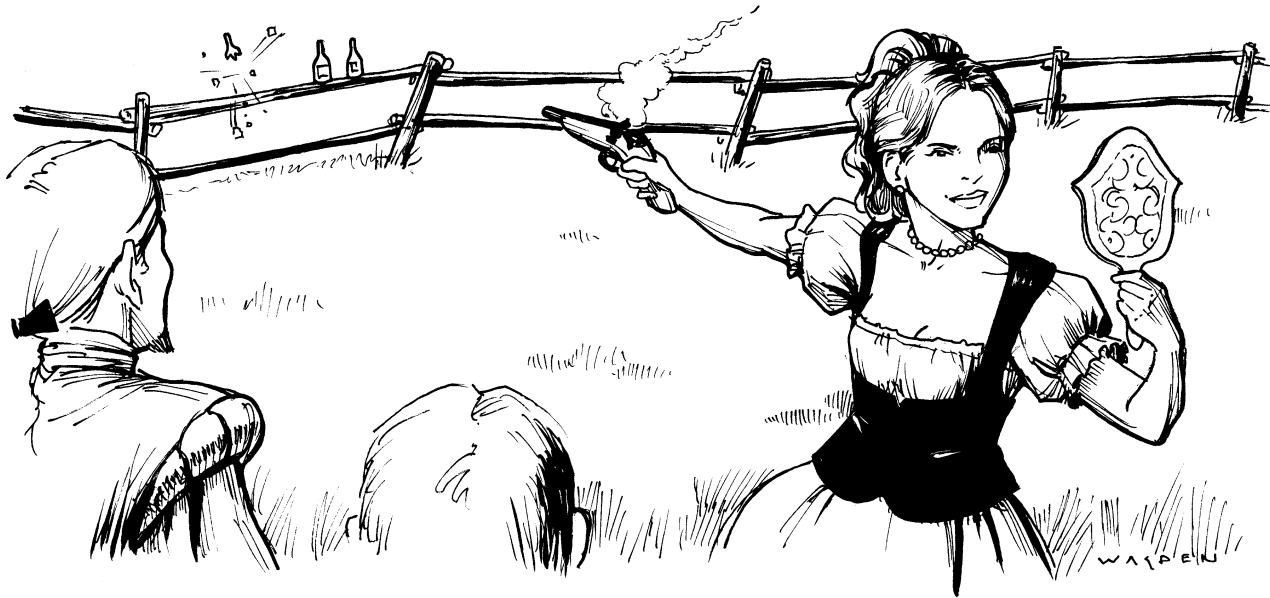
The trapdoor leads roughly thirty feet back into the mine, ending with a heavy wooden door. On the other side are Carlin's lab and a small living quarters, complete with a writing desk filled with incriminating letters to the Duc. Aniya is tied to a table in the lab, where she has been bled three times a day since she was first brought here. She is tired, frightened, and weak, but still very much alive.

If and when the characters attack, Carlin's goal is to grab as much of his research as possible and try to escape. Devon, on the other hand, uses the opportunity to ingest as many elixirs as he can get his hands on, juicing himself into a truly lethal combatant.

Aftermath

Once Carlin and Devon have been defeated, there is ample evidence about the nature of Carlin's experiments. They have a paper trail leading right back to the Duc, and how they act upon this information could steer the course for many adventures to come.

Then there is the matter of Aniya herself. While grateful for being rescued, she does not wish to return to Castille. She explains to the characters that she is no more in love with Garritt Engnestangen than he is with her. Again, how the characters act upon this information could steer the course for many adventures to come.



Avalon

Syrneth Ship in Sea Dog Hands

After *Cabora* rose from beneath the waves, Jeremiah Berek and the Sea Dogs returned from the *Mirror* on a mysterious vessel built of a strange alloy and a blue crystalline substance that they christened the *Syrneth*. It does not require sails or oars for mobility, but rather seems propelled by the magnetic forces of Théah. So far, no one truly understands how it functions, but the Explorer's Society and the Invisible College are both eager to examine it. They have petitioned Queen Elaine, but she has refused them so far. Berek secretly took the ship to a small cove near the University of Bedegrane where Professor Ian Garloise is trying to discover its secrets. Although Garloise is loyal to Elaine, several of his assistants are not so reliable. They have spread the word that the ship is available for sale but the buyer has to bring a crew to sail her away. Once word of the ship's disappearance reaches the Queen, she will probably need a vessel that can retake the mysterious ship.

The Pirate's Daughter

No pirate rouses fear and horror like Captain Reis of the Crimson Rogers. The bloody swath he cut across the waters of Théah has inspired nightmares in the bravest of sailors, and the cockiest of captains blanches at the call of "Red Sails Ho!" While the Sea Dogs insist that Reis met his end on *Cabora* at the hands of Bloody Bonnie McGee, attacks from the Crimson Rogers in the southern waters have not slowed down much. To make matters worse, another legend has begun to spread.

In the waters of the Trade Sea, a new pirate vessel named the *Beatrice* has been preying upon ships. Her captain towers over most men and her physical strength is said to be that of five sailors. They say her red hair comes from washing it in the blood of her victims. This fearsome woman refuses to give

her name to anyone, answering only to the title "Captain." While her name is shrouded in mystery, her lineage is not — she has proudly declared herself to be none other than the daughter of Captain Reis! She has taken up her father's predilection for ordering her men to slaughter everyone they attack, although she insists that one man always be spared. After cutting off a hand or gouging out an eye, she sets him free to spread word that she plans to kill every Sea Dog she can find. Word is that she has even placed a bounty of 50 Guilders on Berek's terrier.

So far, the Sea Dogs have publicly scoffed at her claims but privately they have offered a reward for her head. How Reis feels about this woman — should he still live — and whether her claims have any shred of veracity in them is another mystery.

Avalon Shall Be Free!

The Reflecting Pool of Carleon is a monument to the relationship between humans and Sidhe in Avalon. Statues of King Elilodd and the Lady of the Lake face each other across the Pool's crystal clear waters as familiar sights to the inhabitants of the city. Which made the theft of one of the statues such an unthinkable act. Not only is the marble statue of the Lady incredibly heavy, but it was ten feet tall! The statue disappeared a few hours after sunset during a blinding down-pour. When the sun rose, the streets were drenched and the statue was gone. Sir Bors MacAllister suspects a *Rilasciare* cell of working to prove that Avalon does not need the Sidhe. Truthfully, he does not really care who took the statue or why. He simply wants it back in place by sunset.

Riddle Me This

Arroy's mines are the most productive in the Glamour Isles. While the iron and gold shipments continue undiminished, the silver shipments have recently dwindled to half of their previous amount. Sir Gavarn of Lovaine insists that the mines are infested with Unseelie who sabotage the miners' every

effort. Pick axes turn to paper and something gnaws through the timber support at night. Queen Elaine accepted these excuses but has asked one of her Knights to visit the area and investigate the problems.

The truth is that Sir Gavarn has diverted several wagonloads of silver for himself. He knows that if he is discovered, he will be ruined and may be executed for treason, since the mines belong to the Queen and their production belongs to her alone. Even the Unseelie's sabotage is his fault since he intentionally angered them recently to cover up his thefts.

When he learns about the imminent arrival of investigators, Gavarn devises a new plan. He will smuggle his ill-gotten gains out of the country to Vendel while the Queen's investigators continue to focus on the mines. Unfortunately for him, the Unseelie are fully aware of his deeds and will taunt the heroes with a series of riddles designed to lead them from the mines to the small harbor where the silver is located. Whether or not they will arrive in time to stop the shipment and save the Queen's silver depends upon their sharp wits rather than their sharp blades.

The Queen's Visit

Within the county of Breg, a group of heroes recently foiled a plot to assassinate the Queen. Aware of the dissention, Elaine plans to visit the area and spend time with the nobles. She hopes to engender more patriotism and loyalty among the citizens while giving her Black Knight, Sir Bors MacAllister an opportunity to investigate the place in person.

Meanwhile, the core group of assassins has been hiding in Teneborc. They narrowly avoided discovery recently when a beggar wandered into the caves they are using as a base of operations. His death still troubles several of their members, but as a group, they remain dedicated to their mission to free Breg from the Queen's stifling restrictions. Their current plan is to kill her when she visits Teneborc.

The local carpenters in this cabal have begun construction on a platform in the city square where Elaine will address the populace, while the others dig a tunnel from a tavern basement to directly beneath the platform. They mean to fill the tunnel with gunpowder and set it off during the Queen's speech.

The heroes could be agents of MacAllister, members of the court preparing the city for the Queen's arrival, or simply travelers who notice the sounds of digging coming from beneath them while they eat lunch at the tavern.

The Game's The Thing

The people of Fenshire in Camlann are among the most fanatically loyal citizens in all of Avalon. Their passion for the Queen often leads the men of the town into trouble. After a few drinks, they like to raid nearby Breg and cause trouble. Growing tired of the violence, Duke Mark Garloise has devised a means of keeping tensions under control. He created the Fenshire Derby, a series of local events where the populace of Camlann and neighboring Breg could come together in peace and engage in a games and sports. Garloise believed that a little friendly competition would teach the people to embrace each other in the spirit of good sportsmanship.

However, such was not to be. The rivalry between Breg and Fenshire has grown increasingly rancorous. Every defeat is met with fights, profanity, and the occasional riot. Now Garloise has opened the competition to anyone who cares to participate, hoping that if an outsider wins a competition, the Breg and Camlann peoples will band together against the winner. While it lacks friendly spirit he had hoped to create, he will settle for anything to prevent further escalation of the violence between the two groups. The competitions vary from month to month, but in the past have included archery, pugilism, fencing, golf, horse racing and even croquet.

Curses, Foiled Again

Mayor Randolf Wolff of Canguine died a month ago without heir. Since then Avalon pirates have struck ships in the vicinity on five occasions. Duke Neville Cholmondeley-Featheringstonehaugh of Percis owned two of these ships himself. The Duke knows the pirates are operating out of Canguine, but without a mayor to keep them in check, he is powerless. While Canguine lies on the border of his lands and the Balig province, neither province has been willing to take responsibility for the city of smugglers, pirates and scum until one of His Grace's nobles, Earl Thomas Chandlerwise, approached him with a proposal. The Earl's lands lie next to Canguine and he believes the city is under the curse of a Sidhe known as Duchess Peaseblossom. The Earl offered to bring order to the city in exchange for the mayordom and the right to use any means necessary to pacify it. Still furious over his ships, the Duke has agreed and hired a hundred Eisen mercenaries and two armed frigates to aid the Earl.

The first that anyone in the city knew of this was when Earl Chandlerwise arrived at Canguine with troops at his back and a proclamation of the Duke giving him control of the city. The commoners and thugs of Canguine sneered at first, but were unable to organize themselves against the well-trained Eisen troops. For the first few weeks, things have remained at an impasse. The pirates were unable to launch against the nearby shipping because the Earl's troops checked every inbound load for contraband or stolen goods while the Earl seemed caught up in dozens of pointless meetings and the building of an extensive fairgrounds outside the city. The announcement that he would provide free food and drink upon Elaine's Day, a festival celebrating the renowned Queen, made the Earl far more popular among his new subjects.

Little do they know that the Earl has his own plans for the holiday. When most of the town's inhabitants leave the city to visit the fairgrounds he has constructed to the north, the Eisen troops will quickly sweep through and seize anyone remaining. These prisoners will be set free at the fairgrounds with everyone else and then the troops will take up position around the city, preventing everyone from reentering while the frigates blockade the harbor. The Earl has learned from ancient bardic tales that the curse will remain upon the city until one full day passes in which everyone in the city is polite to one another. He believes the city will never prosper until the curse is broken, a difficult prospect since it fosters hostility and disorder. His solution is to simply ensure that no one remains in the city for the entire day. His long meetings were actually logistical sessions to plan and coordinate food, drink and shelter for Canguine's inhabitants at the fairgrounds.

The Highland Marches

Ghoulies and Ghosties and Long-Legged Beasties

The Earl is a thin, proper man with a habit of looking down upon his social inferiors and speaking in pompous tones. He has never had to work in his life, but regards himself as a brilliant tactician thanks to the prodigious amount of historical texts he has read.

At least some of his assumptions about the situation are indeed true. The curse does exist, placed there when a former mayor treated Duchess Peaseblossom disrespectfully. It affects the area within two miles of Canguine's Town Hall. If twenty-four hours pass without anyone within the curse's area acting rudely or fighting, the curse will indeed be broken.

7th Sea™: In this area, each Drama Die the GM spends to activate a hero's Hubris counts as two; scoundrels receive an extra Drama Die at the start of each story, and heroes get Drama Dice for arguing with each other and causing public disorder.

D20™: In this area, the GM may activate the hero's Hubris twice per day instead of once and any heroes who argue with one another or cause public disorder receive a +1 circumstance bonus to any one roll of their choice within the next hour.

Of course, when all is said and done, the plan is unlikely to succeed. There are simply too many people within the city for the Earl's men to find them all. Nevertheless, the situation is ripe with possible ways for the heroes to become involved. Sir Bors MacAllister is fully aware that the Duke has hired Eisen mercenaries and ships, an act that might be the first step towards a revolution. MacAllister is likely to send agents into the area to investigate the Duke's intentions.

Another possibility is that the party may have been hired by Earl Chandlerwise to help clear out the thousands of beggars, pirates, jennys, merchants, sailors and peasants who live within the city. Every one of them must be outside the city by noon or the plan will fail. Of course, it is likely that the sweeps will fail to snare every inhabitant, so patrols will continue to scour the city and politely escort anyone found beyond the city limits. That is unlikely to deter thieves and rogues who will see the city as an enormous unlocked treasure chest ripe for the picking. A party who encounters either group and does not remain polite is likely to undo the Earl's delicate plans.

Scholars of the Sidhe who hear of the Earl's plans will likely believe that if the curse is about to be broken, Duchess Peaseblossom is likely to return to the city. The opportunity to meet a Sidhe is a rare occasion and not to be missed. Druids are sure to notice that the curse is about to be lifted and will want to observe the city during the process. Alternatively, the heroes might simply be enjoying a festival for the Queen outside of town when rumors begin to spread of the White Plague or the Black Freighter within the town. Why else would there be guards posted to ensure no one could return?

Few care to make their homes on the northern shore of the Highland Marches between Eirainay and Lintonholm, near Duncaithe, ruined seat of the long-dead MacEacherns. It is a desolate place, cold and windswept. Yet, for all its loneliness, the region is by no means abandoned. Lintonholm is a major port of trade with the Vendel, and since the MacCodrums restrict sea travel around Eirainay, for many it is quicker and easier to travel overland. Quicker and easier, perhaps, but not nearly as safe. Brigands and highwaymen are a frequent danger, despite Crown efforts to prevent them.

Yet mere brigandry cannot account for the sheer number of travelers in the area who have disappeared over the past year. All the victims traveled alone or, at most, in pairs. Eerily, no bodies have been found nor any signs of ambush. That is, until recently. Now, the unknown attackers are becoming bolder, striking at larger groups — entire small caravans have gone missing. More disturbing are the dismembered human limbs carried by the current as far east as Lintonholm. Even more horrifying are the jagged bite marks on those same dismembered limbs, made by nothing recognizable.

Theories range from an Unseelie monster roaming the coast to angry, restless MacEachern spirits, lashing out against those that did not aid them in life. But of late, more and more people cast their accusations at the MacCodrums. Some simply blame them for refusing to allow ships to sail near their shore. Others mutter that the MacCodrums are Sidhe-lovers, and spread rumors of fanged monsters cavorting in MacCodrum coves.

The heroes may be employed by the MacCodrums to clear their name or they may come to the aid of a frightened populace to expose the truth behind the Fae-struck freakish events. Regardless, it is becoming evident that if the heroes do not resolve the situation, the MacCodrum clan may meet the same fate as the MacEacherns.

...Let All Put Asunder

Lachlan O'Toole, the Inish ambassador to the Highland court, is the victim of an assassination attempt. Suspicion immediately falls on Fergus MacBride — the ambassador was one of the loathed O'Tooles, and MacBride has *told* them to stay out of Highland politics. Yet MacBride is not the type to stick a knife in a man's back in the dark. Moreover, young Lachlan is the black sheep of his clan. A holdover from the reign of the O'Tooles, he has continued to do a fair job of smoothing out trade agreements and handling the day-to-day problems that crop up so the O'Briens have not removed him from the position despite his family ties.

MacBride, of course, holds the Highland Separatists in his iron grip and most people believe the clan would not dare to make such a move without his approval. Friction between Inismore and the Marches serves the cause of the Separatists well; anger the Inish *ard ri* enough, and the MacDuff will have to sever the alliance out of self-defense. Perhaps some among the Separatists have grown tired of all the talking...

Of course, there are other possibilities. The O'Tooles certainly would not hesitate to sacrifice one of their own (and a less than adequate one, at that) to further their plots. MacBride has persistently refused the "assistance" of the O'Tooles in the matter of Highland independence, and the O'Tooles are rather the vindictive sort. Then again, it might be the Rilasciare, finding their efforts in Avalon itself stymied, have decided to undermine one of the other two parts of the Triple Kingdom.

It will be up to the heroes to find out the truth before it becomes the spark that sets off a civil war.

The Honor of the Flag

The enmity between Clan MacDonald and Clan MacLeod has never been so bitter as it is now, nor have the MacLeods been so desperate. Disaster stalks the embattled clan after the theft of the Flag. Moreover, it's not just the MacLeods who are suffering — their troubles are spilling over into neighboring clan holdings, and clashes between MacLeod and MacDonald are becoming more and more frequent. Blood has been spilled on at least half a dozen occasions, and the MacLeod laird has openly accused the MacDonalds of the theft at a recent High Council meeting. However, the High King refuses to take action without proof. If the MacLeods had the flag, now would be the time to wave it...

Of course, if they had the flag, there'd be no need to wave it.

Dark Unseelie lurk about the MacLeod lands — the Wild Hunt has been heard no less than three times and the Hounds of Night and Fog roam the moors at their leisure. The MacDonalds, too, are beginning to notice the occasional haunt outside their doors. While the Sidhe are angry with the MacLeods for allowing the flag to be stolen, they are also not pleased with the MacDonalds for having the temerity to steal it. Or perhaps they have become aware of Sarah MacDonald's plan to destroy the flag.

In any case, this conflict has the potential to tear the entire Highland Marches apart, thanks to the amount of power each clan wields and the alliances they have formed. Someone has to recover the flag and return it to its rightful owner before ruin strikes not just the MacLeods, but the entire country.

Inismore

A New Guild in Town

Three years ago, Ryan O'Malley was a homeless drunk without prospects or hope. That all changed when he took a swing at "Fighting" Roary Finnegan in a drunken rage. The founder of the Finnegan Pugilism School saw something within the young man. When Ryan woke up in a back room of The Flying Fist in Tara, Roary took him under his wing and began teaching him how to focus his rage rather than be consumed by it. The young man flourished under his tutelage and within months had stopped drinking himself senseless every night. O'Malley displayed a far greater sense of business than anyone expected until they realized that his father was Sean O'Malley, a rich local merchant.

O'Malley became Finnegan's assistant and quickly doubled the School's income, becoming a relatively powerful merchant in his own right. However, that was only the beginning; he has set his sights upon something far more grandiose. He wants to create a Pugilism Guild, similar to the Swordsman Guild, which will create a unified system of rules for unarmed fighting. He hopes to expand pugilism from tavern fights to a respected sport like fencing or fox hunting. He means to do so partly because he hopes to make money from the bets and increased prestige of his school and partly because his father always insisted that any Guild other than the Merchant's Guild was a waste of time. Ryan despises his father and will pursue any opportunity to prove him wrong.

Ryan has drafted a preliminary set of rules, but so far, only members of the Finnegan School have joined his Guild. He needs to recruit more members and will approach any skilled unarmed fighter to see if they were interested in joining. He holds matches every month at a local tavern with a prize of 50 Guilders to the winner. He will also hire adventurers to travel to other cities with the draft of his rules in an attempt to convince new followers to join with him as well. Unfortunately, many members of the Swordsman Guild strongly oppose the competition of these upstarts and will attempt to destroy any of the messages before they can be delivered.

In addition to the sponsorship from Roary Finnegan, another person has decided to support this new School — the *ard ri* himself, Mad Jack O'Bannon. In fact, the O'Bannon is intrigued (or amused; it is always difficult to tell) by the notion of fists replacing swords. The fact that this will infuriate thousands of professional duelists means little to Jack; there is even some speculation that Jack is doing this as a show of support for the Vestenmannavnjar against the Rasmussen School.

An extension of this adventure might include a truly great competition for "Grand Champion of the Isle" which means that every local "Champion" will want to make his (or her) way to Tara to claim the title. Characters with their sights set on the prize may have a hell of a lot of fighting to do...

[Note: GMs are welcome to create "entrance requirements" [stats] for a Pugilists School but it is not intended as a formal Swordsman-type school. This is an opportunity for role-playing and a lot of good old-fashioned furniture-breaking fun.]

The Ghosts of Dun Donnel

The O'Toole garrisons a good portion of his "army" amongst the (now fortified) ruins of Dun Donnel. The site was originally the ancestral home of the O'Donnel clan but back in the 14th century, a fierce and terrible storm rose up from the crashing waves below and dragged the west wall (kitchen attached) into the sea. The family burial grounds remain more or less intact, although lately some of the O'Toole forces claim to have heard strange noises and seen spectral figures moving about, clad in ancient armor. Sure and it could be the *uisge* — then again, it may be that the O'Donnels are tired of having the O'Tooles tromping about on their graves...

Queen in Her Own Right

The O'Toole has eight children: seven sons and one troublesome daughter. He might be able to marry her off but strong-minded Meg is not exactly the most obedient of children. She is also the only one with the Gift. While her father tries to figure out ways to work her abilities into his master plan, Meg has other ideas. She wants to be Queen of Inismore and she's looking for a few good men and women to help her get there.

A Plague of Rats

Newport, the largest city in the MacKenna's holding, sits on an island joined to the mainland by bridges. Over the years, sea-faring traffic has grown and now there is a thriving merchant community. Unfortunately, there is also an increase in thievery and back-alley violence. The merchants of Newport need to flush the warehouse district of the two-footed vermin, but with all the family politics in Inismore they do not want to insult anyone, so word has gone out that only non-Inish need apply. The work is dangerous but the merchants are prepared to reward generously. (This can be a classic "dungeon crawl" through the alleys of Newport. Throw in a few trap doors that lead to tunnels and pathways under the quays and you will be able to provide ample opportunities for both skulking and swashbuckling!)

Bryn Bresail

Just Like Sidhe

While roaming the Sidhe city of Summerfall, the heroes hear whispered tales of brave adventurers performing epic deeds, tales that evoke a sense of *déjà vu*, for the adventurers in these stories bear a striking resemblance to the heroes themselves. And that's not all — as they explore the city, they are greeted by people they do not know, cheered for deeds they did not perform, and attacked for insults they never gave. It becomes apparent that someone has stolen their identity... but who?

The heroes have become the focus of attention of a group of relatively young Sidhe. Enthralled by tales of the adventurous exploits, the Sidhe seek to emulate their icons of the moment in every way possible. Using Glamour magic, the impostors have learned nearly everything there is to know about the heroes — possibly including secrets that the adventurers would rather not have bandied about in public. The Sidhe think nothing of re-igniting old rivalries or pursuing old enemies. Worse still, every harebrained scheme the heroes have ever hatched is now possible through the Glamour of their impersonators. Since the Sidhe are unable to tell the difference between a good idea and a bad one, they will likely imitate even the schemes abandoned as cowardly, cruel, brutal, or just plain insane.

Now it will be up to the heroes to track down their doppel-gangers and put a stop to the potentially deadly charade. However, even younger Sidhe are not to be trifled with, and it's not as if they're doing any harm — they are simply acting the way they think heroes act! Can the adventurers deal with such earnest flattery without delivering a deadly insult? It's a race against timelessness!

[*Note to the GM:* This particular adventure can be played either as a tense drama or as a comedy in which the gaming group's previous misadventures are brought back to haunt them.]

Arrows of Love

A Sidhe noble (or noblewoman) has fallen in love with one of the heroes, and conceived of a plan that she is certain will make the adventurer return that love. She sends a band of her servants to "kill" the hero with a Sidhe arrow (it actually casts him into a deeply enchanted sleep.) At that point, using her Glamour to entrap him in the Land of Mists will be a simple matter. She will appear to him as his savior, his protector, and the woman of his dreams. He will fall in love with her, and they will live happily for a long ever after.

Of course, there is no guarantee that the Sidhe lady's servants will succeed in their task, especially when the hero's friends come to his defense. Sidhe are notoriously jealous creatures, however, and any interference in her plan will earn the heroes her ire. She may become convinced that the adventurers are trying to keep her from her One True Love, and steps up her relentless pursuit of her chosen paramour.

Sooner or later, she may very well succeed in her quest, and the heroes will have to follow their comrade into Bryn Bresail. The quest will not be easy: they must follow the Path of memories and madness, confronting their own dreams and nightmares, to find their friend. That is only part of the task. They must then free him from the clutches of his loving captor — assuming, of course, that he wants to be liberated.

The truly resourceful might consider requesting an audience with the Queen of the Air, and petitioning her to intervene, as her dislike of Sidhe dalliances with mortals is well known. However, she will undoubtedly demand a high price for this intervention.

Cabora and The Mirror Sea

How Do You Spell "Cabora"?

Cardinal Sergio Bilardo of Vodacce is seeking qualified linguists to decipher an ancient non-human text. All other details are sketchy, but he appears willing to part with a substantial amount of money for successful completion of the task. He is, however, unwilling to accept the help of the Explorer's Society, something that has only fueled their determination to place one of their own members on the team he is assembling. The document he wants to have deciphered is an ancient rubbing from a plaque discovered deep in the catacombs that riddle Vodacce. The group he is gathering should contain scholars and historians to search through ancient texts for any other mention of the strange symbols of the rubbings or any details on where the plaque might be located.

The text is a large block of symbols alongside a human figure whose internal organs are partially exposed to reveal a multitude of gears, wires, and struts. The monk who took the rubbing back in the second century claimed that the plaque predated mankind, a claim with which the Cardinal still

struggles. The language is extremely difficult to decipher since it appears to contain no connection with any human tongue.

This should provide any scholarly hero with an opportunity to shine. Allow the party to work on the project long enough to determine if they can find patterns within it. This may involve going on expeditions to ruins as well as doing research in ancient texts to compare the text to samples of other languages. (The GM is encouraged to create game aides that include the text itself so players can enjoy the excitement and frustration that their characters are experiencing; they should feel motivated to work on the code between sessions.) Deciphering this text is one of the most difficult assignments a linguist could ever undertake and should be treated as such.

This adventure can begin in Vodacce and take the players east through the Crescent Empire and onto Cabora or it can begin on the island and lead them even further east. It is also an excellent opportunity to present a range of villains, rogues, and allies, each with his or her own agenda and reason for wanting to gain possession of the document and its translation.

Recruiting Run

The Explorer's Society ship *Searchlight* recently docked and began off-loading her cargo at Puerto de Azul, on the southwestern coast of Castille. Since there was no Explorer Chapterhouse located here, the captain began selling off Synchron artifacts from the dock, which astounded the locals — especially since the captain was none other than Guy McCormick, the noted Explorer who was rumored to be lost upon Cabora last year!

While the left side of his face gleamed with a steel prosthesis of some sort, several sailors still recognized him. After the impromptu auction, McCormick and several members of his crew visited the local pubs and hired a dozen swabbies as crew. After the crew boarded the *Searchlight*, she set sail again for parts unknown.

Afterwards, the harbormaster noted that the ship's heading took her back towards the Mirror and Cabora. Unfortunately, a few hours later, the local Don realized that his son was missing. The young man was a scholar and amateur archaeologist who purchased one of the artifacts McCormick was selling. Several sailors recalled seeing him again board the *Searchlight* before she set sail. The Don's wife is hysterical, so her husband is looking for a group of heroes to bring the young man back.

Meanwhile, aboard the *Searchlight*, there is more here than meets the eye. No one was allowed aboard her while she was docked and she took on no supplies. This is also not the *Searchlight's* only visit to western waters. Four times over the last four months, McCormick and his crew have come ashore, sold a cargo of trinkets, and used the money to hire themselves a small crew, none of whom have ever disembarked although they have been seen on deck.

The truth is that the ship's true crew is an assortment of clockwork automatons that have escaped from Cabora. They are slowly "recruiting" crewmen, then returning to Cabora where they remove the skin from the human sailors and "clothe" more of their number in it, absorbing the humans'



memories and skills. McCormick and his men mean to outfit a fleet and for that they need experienced sailors. The fleet's purpose is unknown, but given their inhuman nature, it can scarcely be a pleasant one.

If the heroes act quickly, they can overtake the *Searchlight* and rescue the newest members of the crew. Failing that, a daring raid on Cabora's twisted tunnels might free the Don's son. However, the automatons are dangerous adversaries and anyone who fails will most probably end up as the newest member of McCormick's inhuman crew!

Back to the Text

Elena Franzini may have been the greatest genius Théah has ever seen. The actress sought to revenge herself upon her beau's killer, and while she pursued him relentlessly for over a decade, she learned about the world as she traveled. She noted her observations and findings in a series of journals that are highly prized for their startling insights. Each journal focuses on a different aspect of the world including navigation, architecture, court life, biology, chemistry, ship construction, fencing, and military command. Those familiar with her works decry the fact that she spent so much time pursuing a killer rather than doing even more research. On the other hand, the writer revealed by the journals seems content with her quest and life. No one knows her final fate, but artisans and scholars alike now eagerly seek her journals. Many of the books still reside in the hands of common workmen and sailors, a testimony to the information's usefulness.

A wealthy individual has hired the adventurers to obtain as many of these journals as they can and turn them over to him upon the first of the year. The task should bring them into contact with nobleman and peasant alike, the perfect background for a series of exciting adventures.

Franzini's knowledge of the world goes even deeper than most realize. The final page of each journal is blank save for a few freehand lines and scribbles, a fact that has attracted little attention. However, when the final pages of several journals are placed together, it becomes clear that the meaningless lines and scribbles actually form a pattern. The lines begin to form a human figure, but a figure whose internal organs are visible and clearly not human. The creature is actually constructed of gears and mechanistic parts, then covered with skin. Further, the overlaid scribbling forms words. When enough journals are placed together (minimum of 12), the entire text and picture can be seen. It is a description of the creature Franzini was pursuing, the one responsible for her beau's death. While it looked human, it was actually a machine wrapped in human flesh and came from a strange island sunk deep beneath the waves. The text explains that while the creature seemed almost unstoppable, the scholar has discovered several weaknesses. A sword thrust from the creature's lower right up into its torso will immobilize it while decapitation will destroy it forever.

The text also states that Signorina Franzini possessed a ring she found within a Syrneth ruin that generated some sort of invisible energy field that interfered with the creature's ability to move. The text ends with the statement that after years of pursuit, she was finally going to destroy the creature, no matter how difficult the process. However, she wanted the information she had learned about these creatures to remain

safely hidden in case another of its kind should appear again, in the hopes that someone would find her message and be able to use it.

Once the heroes realize what they hold, they will face a difficult decision. Should they turn it over to their employer? Are they even certain that he is indeed human, especially since the clockwork automatons mentioned in the book have become aware of the journals' existence? Might they mean to gather the books themselves to ensure there is nothing damaging contained therein? If that is the case, have they discovered the secret of the final page? Others seek these journals, including noble collectors and printers looking for something interesting to publish. It is up to the heroes to decide what shall become of Franzini's notebooks and the secrets they contain.

[Note: This can be run in conjunction with the previous adventure, or by itself as the launch for a series of adventures that will take the party on a "grand tour" of Syrneth ruins.]

Castille

Vengeance is Mine!

The war with the Montañños has ended and life is returning to normal for most of Rancho Zepeda. Recently, however, a rash of unexplained fires has sprung up, destroying the houses and estates of several minor nobles. The homes have burned to the ground, usually before anyone can escape. On at least two occasions, servants and townspeople have tried to put the fires out, only to be driven away as the flames seemed to *attack* them. All the homes that have been burned so far have one thing in common — they each belonged to a Castilian noble family who fled the province when the Montañños invaded.

El Malvado (see *Castille™* for more details) has slipped further into madness. He now holds every noble who fled responsible for the death and destruction that has tortured him so. If the people of Castille had stood united against invaders, the massacre of San Juan could have been prevented.

The local Dons, driven by fear, are organizing a manhunt. Soldiers and nobleman alike roam the hills throughout the province. Strangers are accosted and detained, and members of the Inquisition are beginning to move openly, arresting and trying people for collusion and witchcraft. It is time for someone to find El Malvado and bring him to justice, before his madness tears Castille apart!

Patriots or Sorcerers?

Doña Albra de Trejo has approached the party with a plea for help. Her ancestor, Don Louis de Trejo, died in an insane asylum almost two hundred years ago, but not before he cursed the family for not believing his stories about "men bathed in blue fire, shot through with the Shadow of Death." Now her father, Don Ricardo, has sunk into madness, which she is convinced is due to the curse. She begs the party to discover the secret about Los Nublados, the Cloud People, evil spirits who have possessed her family for so long.

There are some who believe Los Nublados are the ghosts of those who refused the wisdom of the Second Prophet and perished in immortal peril. Some say that it is one of the focal points of Legion's power. Still others claim that they are an ancient sect of El Fuego Adentro sorcerers. Still others believe they are fierce *campañeros* who defend their way of life against any who would seek to change them.

No one knows how many people live in the treacherous but beautiful mountains that reach from the southern end of the Peninsula of Oranges to the edge of the El Rio. They have very little contact with the outside world. While they are not plagued by the artificiality of court politics, they are very superstitious and extremely set in their ways. [Note: It will, of course, be up to the GM to decide what Los Nublados really are, and what their tie is to the de Trejo family.]

A Play in a Play

The party has just finished an exhausting adventure. Now they are looking forward to some rest and relaxation in Altamira. They are sitting in the *coralle grande* in their assigned places (according to gender and social standing) waiting for a new performance to begin when a commotion in La Cazuela catches their attention as each realizes that they see their greatest nemesis!

Somehow they have to get themselves down to the pit before their enemy can escape. Naturally he (or she) will have accomplices, and it will be a challenge because the audience will think it is part of the play, especially when the party has to deal with curtains, portable planks, and crashing scenery. And naturally it will be a perfect opportunity for typical swashbuckling fun!

The Eye of the Storm

When brilliant artist Lucrecio Thale died in a mysterious fire, two-thirds of his collection burned with him. However, his good friend Doña Consuelo Nuñez took the remainder to a monastery she designed. Word has now reached her that one of the more famous pieces may not have burned, and now forms the centerpiece of a private collection in the home of a Vodacce nobleman whose wife is a *Sorte* witch. Doña Nuñez is convinced that the woman might be part of the conspiracy that killed Thale. Apparently there was something about his paintings the Vodacce ladies did not like.

Doña Nuñez tells the party that Thale's paintings had a definite "esoteric" theme and that he was fond of burying little codes and secrets on the canvases that hinted at hidden knowledge about the Bargainers' arts. She does not feel powerful enough to move against the Vodacce family, especially because the lady in question traces her roots to the vengeful Serranos.

[Note: This hook gives the GM a wide range of possible scenarios. Doña Consuelo may not be as innocent in Thale's death as she claims. Thale may not be dead. The *Sorte* witch may be part of a group determined to gain more of the Dark Arts. She may be in league with Doña Albra as members of Sophia's Daughters. The possibilities are endless...]

El Olentzaro

The mountain people of Castille anticipate the arrival of El Olentzaro every year on 24 Decimus, La Noche Divina. Legends tell of an old man who went from village to village to tell of the Prophets and share the warmth of the hearth during the fierce winter weather. Children especially love it when El Olentzaro visits because he brings with him a hollowed-out piece of bark that he hangs on a beam or hook in the ceiling. One by one, the children are blindfolded, handed a big stick, and spun around three times before they get to take one whack at the "tree." They each take a turn until one of them breaks it open, showering the room with little gifts, nuts, and candies.

The party finds itself celebrating the holidays in a mountain village of rural Castille. When the tree is finally sundered, the floor sparkles with bits of cheap metal and gilt paper and something else...

[Note to GM: Perhaps it is a Syrneth item, or maybe a ring, or it might be a medallion. Whatever it is, the adventurers will want to know what it is, how it got into the tree, where it came from, and how the man playing El Olentzaro came by it.]

La Llorona

In the early 17th century, a legend arose about a woman who drowned her children during a harsh winter rather than watch them starve. She died shortly afterwards, either from starvation herself or by her own hand. When winter comes, her shade haunts the countryside, wailing and moaning and sending children diving under their quilts in terror.

Winter is approaching and it looks to be a hard one. One of the party has received an urgent message from a family member (if Castillian) or a close friend that one of the family's children has fallen deathly ill, walking in his (or her) sleep, and claiming to have seen a wailing woman at the window.

If there is an Avalon in the party, she or he may recall the story about Fiona dubh Gaoithe: "*Every drop of rain is a tear she cries. Every rumble of thunder is a bellow of her anger. Every toppled tree or drowned child is a victim of her bottomless rage, for she is the Witch of the Black Wind...*" Is there a connection? Have the Sidhe come to Castille? Or is it some dark plot to terrorize the local inhabitants?

[See *The Sidhe Book of Nightmares™* for more information about Fiona dubh Gaoithe.]

La Revolución Científica

The Third Prophet renounced quackery, endorsed learning in all forms, and help found the first modern universities. Many of Théah's most amazing inventions have come out of Castille, especially Galeno Rioja. Blessed with a brilliant mind and the Castillian predilection for categorizing everything, he advocates the open exchange of information, both within Castille and with neighboring nations, including the Crescent Empire and Cathay.

Unfortunately, the Inquisition is adamant that such interaction will not be occurring any time soon. This leaves Rioja in a difficult position. A devout Vaticine, he believes that his work is a reflection of the Third Prophet's teachings. He does not want to end up in hiding like Arciniega but neither does

he want his research tainted by the Church's censorship. How can he prepare for a trip without the Inquisition finding out? He has some ideas, most of which involve decoys who will be well paid for their services.

Para Mi Familia

A young man is seeking revenge for an injustice against his father. A common enough story, but when the man is Torvo Espada, one of the deadliest swordsmen in Théah, the story is far more compelling.

Torvo's real name is Miguel de la Riviera and his father developed the Aldana Swordsman School before Don Hector Aldana framed him for treason. Riviera was forced to flee his home in Castille and turn to a life of piracy with Captain Phillip Gosse. The two sailed together for years before retiring to the island of Utopia. When Gosse and his crew returned for one last adventure, Miguel sailed with them. Gosse cautioned him about his father's past and Miguel immediately swore vengeance against the man who had betrayed his father and changed his name to "Torvo Espada," a take-off on the name "Grim Sword."

However, Torvo delayed his mission while he aided Gosse in destroying the Black Freighter, a ship of villainous undead. When Gosse and most of his men died during the final battle, Torvo rededicated himself to avenging his father and retook his true name. Now as Miguel de la Riviera, he has decided to attack one of the Aldana Academies and defeat everyone within its walls to prove to the world that they are all followers of an inferior style of fencing. Of course, he is not insane — he is gathering a half dozen other swordsmen to help him in this task, and he did send a letter ahead to warn the Academy of his approach. After all, a sneak attack would be dishonorable.

A Harmless Prank

The Veinte-Nueve is a group of mischievous rascals who have plagued Castille's officials for years. While they rarely injure anyone, their constant pranks have driven the authorities wild. Although their identities as Castillian noblemen remain a mystery, their time of reckoning has come. They have smuggled a cannon into a village that is holding a festival to be officiated by Cardinal Verdugo. While they do not mean to injure anyone, they have discovered an apparently harmless green gelatinous goo in a Synchron ruin, which they find fascinating and they mean to study its ballistic properties by firing it out of the cannon at the Cardinal. Unfortunately, the local constabulary has gotten word of this and they are lying in wait.

Since rumors indicate that the Veinte-Nueve are allies of the infamous Pirate King Allende, leader of the Brotherhood of the Coast, the authorities have redoubled their naval patrols in the area. Allende has heard of the ambush, but his ship is simply too well-known for him to reach his friends in time. So he must now find a group of heroes to stop the noblemen before they prank themselves to death.

Secret Ways

Cowan Cooper arrived in Xi Huo Guan as an ambassador from the Knights of the Rose + Cross. His public mission was to learn the native customs and protect visitors to Cathay from harm in the foreign land. Cooper and his fellow Knights have traveled throughout the Seven Kingdoms, meeting the local population and helping out where they can. This has been difficult as the Cathayans have been very polite yet distant to travelers from the west.

Secretly, Cooper and the Knights are seeking out those who display amazing physical abilities. Rumors have reached the Order of those who can achieve physical miracles and the Knights would like to discover the source of this power. The effects described have in many ways mirrored those of the secrets known to the Knights. If this is an extension of their training, the Rose + Cross could gain a powerful ally in their war against sorcery. There is equal chance that the powers are gained by yet another bargain with Legion, which would place them at odds with the Knights.

Any Knight who can find and befriend a practitioner of these arts stands to gain promotion within the Order. Any Knight that could learn these secrets, should they not be inherited, could return to Western Théah and begin training others of the Order as well. A pair of Cooper's Knights may have found a method of gaining that trust. A small temple that is rumored to serve as a school for a style called Huan Shu has been suffering attacks from a rival for reasons the Knights have not been able to translate. The situation has all the markings of being a white rose call for help. Cowan is seeking a party to offer assistance.

Naadam Festival

The grand Naadam Festival of Xian Bei looms on the horizon and the heroes are on their way to the games when a mythical Talking Beast stops them outside the region. Its request? Steal the grand prize of the games, which is a fabled horse. Why? It is a matter of love and enchantment. (See *Cathay™* for more information about the Naadam and the Kingdom of Xian Bei.)

Crescent Empire

Treasure of the Empire

Trebizond is a city under the thumb of old laws that renders it a shell of its former self. Stripped of its treasures on a regular basis and forbidden to mint its own coinage, the city struggles. Once it was an independent kingdom with a rich past and a future of wealth; now it stagnates. The trade from Ussura has kept it away from the hungry jaws of poverty, however, and the recent influx of travelers who seem more than a little interested in the contents of the Mirror Sea.

Kelfia bint Moula is a local scholar who has taken to rabble-raising and speaking against the Empire's control of her city. While many of her followers wish to see Trebizond split off from the empire, Kelfia only wishes to see her city restored to

its former glory. Her passion for justice and her naiveté make her unable to see that the two goals are inexorably linked. Recently she sent some of her contacts to the home of the local administrator to recover certain documents that would detail the activities of the spies who had betrayed Trebizond decades ago. She believed that by sending these documents to the Sultán, the enlightened ruler's sense of justice would set the people of Trebizond free. Unfortunately, her followers had other ideas.

Omar V'siaovich, Kelfia's half-Ussuran lover and lieutenant, handpicked the messengers going to the Sultán. Unbeknownst to Kelfia, he sent them with a secondary mission. Deep within the recesses of the royal palace lies the Kilik Parlak dagger, the symbol of the wealth and submission of Trebizond. Omar has spent years planning the theft of the knife. He selected men he knew could either get away with the theft or place the blame on others if they got caught. With the knife in Omar's possession, he could easily set himself up as the new leader and incite all of Trebizond to rise up against the Sultán.

His plan was perfect, except for one minor detail. Omar V'siaovich talks in his sleep.

Kelfia is horrified by what she has learned. Unfortunately, she has not been able to learn all the details of the plan, but knows that those she sent to the capital are untrustworthy and could light a powder keg between her home and the empire. The expedition to the sultan's palace left days ago. Kelfia is desperate to find adventurers of good character who would be willing to help her in a "matter of great discretion." She needs to stop whatever her own representatives are planning in Iskandar, but at the same time protect the reputation of her beloved Trebizond. Even more than discretion, however, she needs haste. Whatever her delegation has planned, they have a head start and need to be stopped before the worst can occur.

Passages Beneath the Sands

"Thanks, mate. It's rare enough to find friends in this area, much less friends with alcohol. Here, let's have a drink and toast to fortunes. What sort of fortunes, you ask? Well, let's just say I've found something of interest. Something quite valuable to the right people. Or, for that matter, the wrong ones, eh?"

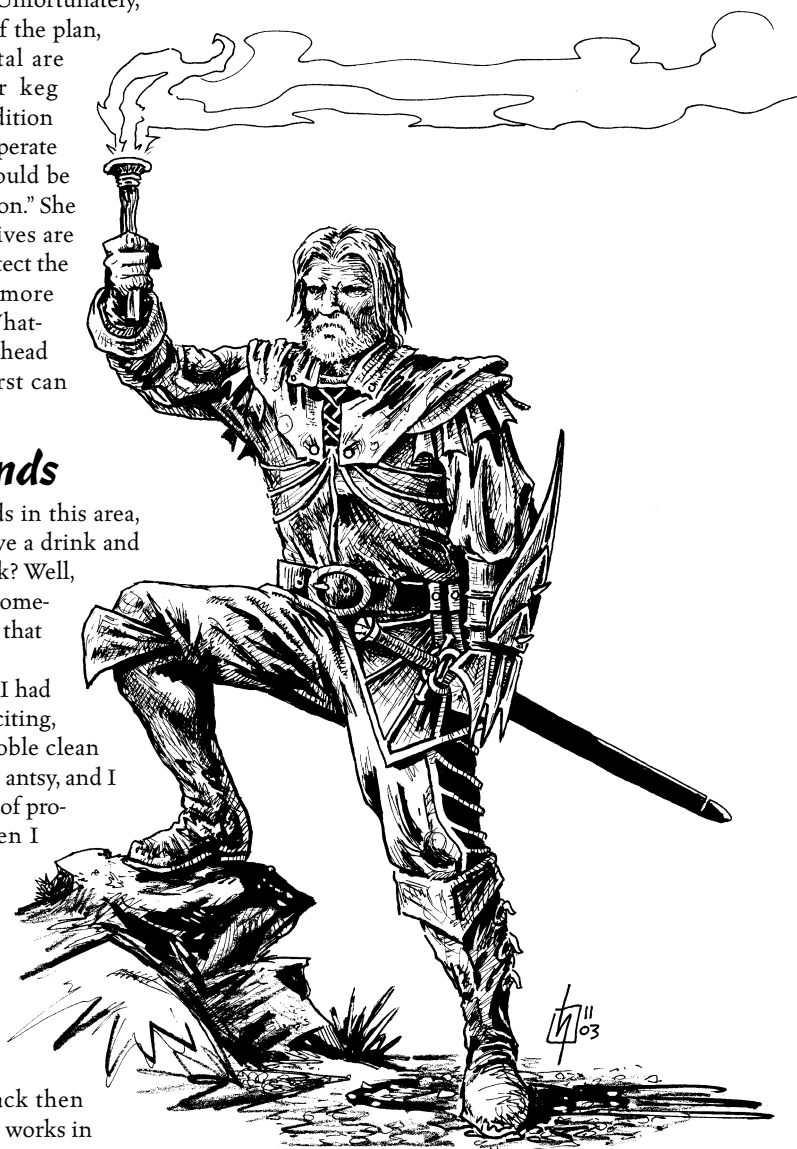
The *yavanci* takes out a small journal, "Y'see, I had a job for a little while in Vodacce. Nothing exciting, just keeping the libraries of some stuck-up noble clean and vermin-free. But after a while, I gets a little antsy, and I start reading some of the things myself — out of professional curiosity, of course. Which is when I comes across this."

The book is hand-written in cramped *altabaraji* with small diagrams and cryptic references. "I can't read it all, mind you, which is part of why I need ya, but I've been able to piece together some of it. It's about Alexia. Way back when, er, my people came there, and did some not-so-nice things, they missed a spot. Apparently, some of the librarians back then were sneaky buggers, and hid some of the best works in

an underground vault. This book, if you look at some of the passages I marked, tells a little bit about 'em, and the... security measures they took to keep 'em safe.

"Now, let's face facts, mate. I'm not going anywhere quick with this gimpy leg, and besides, foreigners aren't real welcome in Alexia at the moment. S'why I figure, maybe you could sneak in, all quiet-like, and get your hands on some of these texts? I mean, think of the wisdom... what do they call it? *Malamad*? Think of all the lost *malamad* down there. I'm willing to pay you for it, of course. Oh, and, I hate to say it, but time is of the essence. My former employers? Some Vodacce by the name of Bernoulli. And yes, I think they're looking for me..."

This adventure can be run as an overland race with multiple encounters in Alexia while the party tries to sneak into the locked portions of the library. Or it can be something of a traditional maze crawl as they investigate heretofore-undiscovered sections of the most valuable library in Théah. Or perhaps the difficulty is not in finding the books so much as in keeping them safe from Bernoulli agents and whatever arcane knowledge might be released when one peeks inside for just a moment...



In the Path of Vengeance

Yakub al'Marikk, in his thirst for *davasi* on those whom (he believes) murdered his son, has long kept an eye on one particular subject: Khan Atagun Bahadar. The spies Yakub dispatched to Atagun's camp have sent back messages that they were on the trail of something of great importance, which might involve the *Qatihl'i*. Unfortunately, almost immediately after these messages were sent, contact with the spies was lost. Yakub fears the worst, and has alerted the Eyes of the Peacock to keep more than their usual careful watch on the Sultán, especially as His Highness is traveling to Edirne to witness the national *vurmak* and wrestling matches at the invitation of Atagun himself!

The heroes find themselves in a tricky situation. The last surviving spy of Yakub's team has kept her cover intact, and is looking for anyone to whom she can relate her information. Yakub should be informed immediately that some of Atagun's underlings, unbeknownst to the Khan, have hired members of the *Qatihl'i* to seek a most unusual target: one of the Sultán's guests, a pale, thin man from a place called "Vendel." The assassination is to occur at the end of the day, when the wrestling champion is decided. The spy can tell the heroes about this, but little else, as she must keep her cover intact amongst Atagun's people.

The challenge now lies in getting to the Sultán or Yakub with this news. The Eyes of the Peacock have the place very well guarded, and there are members of the military as well. Add to this the rogue members of Atagun's tribe and at least one *Qatihl'i* agent. Getting to someone who can do something to stop all this chaos before the assassination will be difficult indeed. Then again, this is a festival, with many events and matches, and the busiest marketplace in the Empire. In one single day, who knows what could happen?

Eisen

The Adventure of the Emperor's Armor

Gauz der Schächer is the shadowy head of a gang of thugs and miscreants that has spread throughout the shadows of Théah. He has sent an invitation to an auction to various "special patrons." The letter implies that among the other ill-gotten items in this thieves' auction is one of the missing pieces of the Emperor's armor. Whoever gets their hands it would suddenly be thrust into the center of Eisen politics. Even if the adventurers are uninterested in such intrigues, keeping one of Gauz's vile cohorts from acquiring that power should get them interested in pooling their Guilders and attending the event.

The party could receive the letter a number of ways. Perhaps it was in the personal effects of a recently defeated villain. One of the adventurers might receive the letter by mistake or perhaps through less heroic means. Once the letter is opened and the contents shared with the rest of the party (you *were* going to share it, weren't you?), the excitement begins.

If this rogue really has such an item, why is he intent on selling it?

A Deadly Ruse: Gauz does not have the piece. He was put up to it by one of the party's least-favorite villains. The whole auction is a set-up for the villain to spring a deadly trap on the adventurers and eradicate them once and for all.

A Den of Vipers: The auction is real and the adventurers find themselves in the company of some of the most despicable personalities in Théah. Brute force will only get them killed; guile, intrigue, and a few well-placed bids may keep the bad guys from getting their hands on these powerful trinkets.

A Harmless Prank: Gauz had nothing to do with the letter. The whole thing was a moneymaking scam devised by a *Rilasciare* cell to separate greedy patrons from their Guilders. Now the cell is caught between those patrons, their powerful friends, and the real Ussuran ruler who is not amused by the affront to his reputation. Of course, the worst part is one of the Free Thinkers is related to one of the adventurers or is in the same cell...

The Adventure of the Dark Festival

Ask any Eisen from the Iron Prince to the lowliest beggar about the *Schattenmann* and you will see just a touch of fear flash in his eyes. This dreaded being, which lives in the *Schwarzen Walden*, is the source of a thousand tales of blood, death, and evil. Some scholars wonder if the Grim Lord of the Forest was always this powerful or if he gained his power through more bloodthirsty means. Those who live near the edges of the woods can feel his presence on the chill nights of autumn.

The tradition of the Shadow Fair began in those villages. Before the onset of winter, each community holds a feast and sets an empty table set for the Grim Lord and his minions. The villagers feast too, hoping that the show of joy and happiness will stave off the creatures' attack or if not that, at least the food and sweet treats will satiate their hungers. Children dress as ghosts and ghouls so that they might be mistaken as evil beings and avoid being devoured by a hungry monster. But some remote towns supposedly adhere to the darker origins of the Fair born before the coming of the Prophets and engage in practices involving blood and murder. Most rational Eisen laugh off these stories as Inquisition propaganda.

The time of the Shadow Fair is at hand, but something has been attacking the small towns in the midst of the celebrations. Some worry the *Schattenmann* wishes for a return to darker times. The last thing the Iron Princes need on top of the other problems in Eisen is the increased agitation of an already superstitious population. Who...or what...is responsible for the raids on the Shadow Fair?

The Fires of Heresy: A small and sorely misguided band of Inquisitors has taken offense to the pagan ceremony that still goes on at the end of the forest. They sweep through on horseback, wearing black hoods instead of their usual red. Verdugo claims no knowledge of their activity. An astute tracker may catch on to their identity by the fact that all the towns that have been disrupted have a basically Objectivist leaning.

Another Shadow Rises: Die Schattenmann is not the only force of evil in the Schwarzen Walden, just the best known. Something is tired of playing second fiddle to the Grim Lord wishes to ruin the Fair as a declaration of war. The adventurers need to learn the new monster's identity and more importantly, how to stop it.

Look Beyond the Red Hoods: Bandits often use the legends of the forest as a weapon against the townsfolk but this particular band has a specific agenda. The leader is a militant Objectivist and knows that a few well-placed hoods and religious babble will turn more people away from the Vaticine Church and her Inquisition.

The Adventure of the Riverboat Race

While Eisen is a country steeped in tradition, not all things are done out of fear or pride. With the end of the War of the Cross, some enterprising riverboat captains decided to hold a race in celebration. It has come to be known as the Muddy League and gained quite a following in the towns along The River. The race brings hundreds of rowdy sailors with pockets full of money into town.

In the past years, winners received only bragging rights as the fastest boat in Eisen, but this year, a Vendel merchant by the name of Sven Hennig has put up a purse of 5,000 Guilders to the winner. This has made the competition even more heated. Most of the captains still take it in good sport but with big money on the line, it's only a matter of time before things get ugly. The three boats favored to win this year's race are:

Duncan's Dregs: William Reilly found himself on the wrong side of the O'Bannon and somehow made it to Eisen. Generally regarded as a good man, he has been known to pull a prank or two on opposing captains to give his boat a slight advantage. He expects the same in return and will respect any adventurer able to pull one over on him.

The Mud Tide: Marko Scheinbach wanted to be a mercenary but found his tactical abilities and charisma to be somewhat lacking. He blames it all on the formal training the nobility receives and holds a deep resentment for people of noble bearing. He has also made a pact with Hennig to sabotage the other boats so he can win and Hennig can save his money. In exchange, Marko will receive a well-paying post on a Vendel Merchant Marine ship.

The Pretty Sail: Three years ago, Nanette Devereaux was sitting in a villa, fanning herself and enjoying a life of luxury. After the Revolution, she became penniless, unskilled, and forced into exile. Faced with starvation, she taught herself Eisen and learned to sail. She does not do anything by the book but she possesses an unflappable will and a sunny outlook. She is a dark horse to win the race, but the other competitors may be too concerned with each other to notice her sneak through the finish line.

THE EISEN RIVERBOAT (D20™)

The Large Barge (see *Swashbuckling Adventures™*) is too wide for the smaller rivers of Eisen, and only works well on The River. Eisen riverboats are small shallow draft vessels built to carry traffic and cargo. A crew consists of a pilot, eight oarsmen, and a linesman who calls out the river depths. When

winds are favorable (off the quarter or stern) they may step a small mast for additional speed.

Base Cost: 2,500 G

Cost Per Additional Level: 200 G

Length: 40

Width: 12

Draft: 0

Cannon: 6 boarding cannon

Masts: 0 (25) May have a single small stepped mast, which can be taken down for going under bridges.

Oars: 8

Movement Rate: 1 (2 with sail if wind conditions are favorable)

Cargo: 2 tons

Rudder: 2

Crew: 10

Armor Class: 12

Hull Hardness: 5

Hit Points: 480

Starting Feats: Oars

Special Notes: It takes 15 minutes to step or unstep a mast. When not using oars, the rudder changes to 3.

EISEN RIVERBOAT / MEDIUM BARGE (7TH SEA™)

Brawn (Guns): 0*, *Finesse (Crew):* 1, *Resolve (Hits):* 2, *Wits (Maneuver):* 2, *Panache (Speed):* 2

Modifications: Shallow Draft (5), Oars (1)

Flaws: None

Draft: 1

Crew: 1

Cargo: 2

*Technically 6 boarding cannons would equal about a half a brawn. Boarding cannons are like big shotguns mounted on swivels.

The Adventure of the Bloody Panzerhand

The people of Sieger have fallen on hard times. Their Prince has left to fight in a foreign land and the Mörderbunde, the handpicked thugs he left in charge, are running things into the ground. Now they have turned their sights to the city of Starke for their current bloodthirsty revels. A few members caught one of the *wasserkampf* fights and are gathering for the next big tournament. Some members themselves have entered the fight and the rest have been betting heavily for and against these fighters. It's a chance to settle old scores and to create new ones.

A *wasserkampf* takes place in a pit of standing water, and normally involves unarmed combatants but the next tournament will allow fighters to wear their panzerhands. The winner is the one that remains conscious. The fighters fight in knee-high water, which many use as a weapon, locking opponents in grapples below the water. The new rule changes the way the fights are fought, leaving many to wonder who are behind these changes.

- The Mörderbunde pressured the organizers to let them in. They are looking to recruit the fighters who do well and weed out those members they feel aren't worth it. Of course, this also means the winner will most likely be one

of these villains, as most fighters won't have the benefit of such equipment (they have to spend prize money on things like food).

- Wolfgang Vogel, leader of the Clenched Fists, made the change. The Fists are the few Iron Guards still completely loyal to the Prince, and Wolfgang sees this as an excellent opportunity to send in some ringers and take out a few of the more troublesome members. He won't risk his men, but he could probably find some people to do his dirty work.
- Die Kreuzritter is using the tournament as a recruitment drive. They're afraid they will have to move in if things get worse with in Sieger and want some agents on the ground. The interesting thing about this outcome is that the winner of the tournament will not only be asked to join but will instead receive the famous Nightblade. If accepted, the winner will bear the Nightblade; if not, he may have it driven into his or her heart.

(For more information on the *Mörderbunde* and *wasserkampf*, see the *Eisen*™ sourcebook.)

Midnight Archipelago/ Pirate Nations

Marauders!

The Midnight Archipelago contains dozens of strange islands and mysteries. One of the newest surrounds the crew of a new pirate crew preying upon the ships in the area. A half dozen ships have been attacked, but the pirates seem uninterested in gold or silver. Instead, they seize the crew, ransack the cargo without taking anything, and then disappear. The authorities in Marcina have posted a reward for the capture of the pirates they call the Marauders, but have no clue on where to begin.

The truth is far stranger than anyone expects. While there are many pirate crews who inspire fear or horror, the crew of the *Digger's Doom* is truly inhuman. The entire crew are ferocious beast-men led by the monstrous Aleksandros, a man whose upper torso is covered with leopard spots and whose face is more feline than a human.

Three months ago, the *Digger's Doom* was a supply ship headed for the Setine Islands. One of the Ussuran crew, Nodar the Falcon, urged the others to land at the Isle of the Red God after receiving a series of visions. The visions warned him that a man upon the island was engaged in blasphemous acts, but the warning was not enough. Aleksandros and the island's beast-men swarmed the Explorers and handed them over to Dr. Feodr Markov, an Ussuran madman who began torturing them for information. When he learned that they were hoping to find the remains of a civilization that existed before man walked upon Théah, he immediately ordered Aleksandros to find those remains and bring any unearthed treasures to him. Markov's experimentation provided the man-beast with a new crew of creatures who were less twisted than his earlier works, and taking command of them, Aleksandros set sail.

Whenever he captures a ship, he brings the crew and any skeletons or other archeological materials back to the Isle of the Red God. So far, he has not found what he seeks, but when he does, Dr. Markov plans to use the Syrnych remains in his experiments. (For more information on the Isle of the Red God, see the *Islands of Gold*™ sourcebook.)

El Tiburón Diabólico

The old salt glared through darkness at the men surrounding him. His voice was cracked, but it retained its strength. "You say you've faced leviathans, eh? A brave feat, but leviathans for all their strength and brutality are merely beasts. They ain't got the cunning or evil of a true monster, a monster such as *El Tiburón Diabólico*. I was on a ship bound for the Midnight Archipelago and we'd well nigh run out of drinking water. So, when we came to the first island, barely more'n a rock, the captain ordered a shore party out in the long boat to fill the water casks. They weren't happy ta go since the sky had gone from perfectly clear to overcast over the past hour, but we all wanted the water, so off they went.

"The skiff had barely touched the water's surface when a huge mass of muscles, hide, and blazing red eyes leapt out of the water and overturned the boat. The men tried to swim back to the ship, but before they could make it, the thing returned and now we could make out a terrible maw as it swallowed man after man. It didn't even devour them whole, though it could have. It cut 'em in half with a single crunch of its jaws so we could see what it had done. After the men had died, the entire ship shuddered. Again. And again. The thing was smashing into her hard enough that we could hear the planks shifting and see the masts swaying. Well, we none of us wanted anythin' to do with that island, I tell you. So, the captain ordered the riggers to raise sail.

"As we sailed away, I looked back and I saw it again, but this time it was lolling on top of the waves and I saw it clear as day: a shark, big as a galleon, and when it opened its jaws, I could see behind the rows of teeth a hideous green glow coming from within its gullet. I tell ye, lads, that voyage was the darkest of my days. The ship had sprung a leak from the brutal attacks and the storm descended upon us a few hours later. Theus was with us, 'cause nothing else could have saved that ship as we sailed and bailed through the night. I decided after that voyage that I weren't never going back to the Midnight Archipelago, but talkin' t'other sailors, that shark ain't staying there neither. It's been seen in every sea and by every type of sailor. I even heard where that green glow came from.

"Seems a few years back it attacked a fisherman who owned some mystic doohickey that could control the weather. He tried to use it against the shark, so it swallowed him, his boat and his gem. I'd heard that that man's twin brother is out there even now huntin' ol' Tiburón with another gem just like it. Don't know for sure. All I do know, is that fish scares me a lot more than any leviathan ever did."

The old salt looked down at his glass sadly and then continued. "Of course, even ol' Tiburón ain't as scary as navigatin' the bottom o' me glass. Care ta help an old salt out here?"

Courier Duty

Doña Margaretta Orduño became a hero to the Castillian people when her small ship launched an attack upon the naval ships bombarding San Cristóbal and drove them off. Then the widow of the famous Admiral Enrique Orduño approached King Sandoval and requested the right to investigate rumors of new lands to the west. With his blessing, she has set out to explore these new lands. However, while many await her return with great anticipation, others are determined to see that she never makes it back to Castille. The Inquisition lies in ambush in the waters of the Midnight Archipelago, ready to sink the willful Castillian captain before she reaches her destination.

Fortunately, this information has come to the attention of friendly hands in Castille, but it will take a captain with a fast ship and a hearty crew to reach Doña Margaretta in time to ensure that she escapes the Inquisition's clutches. (*For more information, see the Waves of Blood™ sourcebook.*)

The Wreckers

Sailors hate many things: weather, cat o' nine tails, creatures that dwell deep in the sea, their officers, and pirates. However, they have a special detestation for that breed of seafarers known as wreckers. These scalawags turn off the lights in lighthouses, provide sailors with forged charts, or simply smuggle strong liquor to a navigator — whatever means they can devise to lure ships to wreck upon rocks and reefs so they can plunder the sinking vessel. All who live by the sea despise these murderers and scoundrels, so when a survivor of such an attack summons his former crewmates together because he has discovered those responsible, they arrive without delay. Although his crewmates have all taken very different paths, they are ready to honor the pledge they made to each other years ago.

Mordekei's Casket

A dozen treasure maps can be purchased for a Guilder or two in ports across Théah and sometimes the map is actually genuine. This adventure begins when one of the heroes buys a set of squares (a game similar to chess), made of teak and blue marble. Shortly after the purchase, a beautiful red-haired woman named Angela Gallegos offers to buy it for twice the price paid. The discussion turns physical when she will not take "no" for an answer. During the ensuing altercation, the board is knocked over and breaks open to reveal a parchment map. The board once belonged to Mordekei and the map leads to his fabled Casket, a chest that enhances any blade placed within it. Dozens of collectors, pirates, and privateers would kill to own the chest so the heroes will have to fend them all off — starting with Señorita Gallegos — if they want to find the magical relic. In addition, there are tales of a legend associated with the Casket, that anyone who uses its power for evil will be consumed by that evil.

MORDEKEI'S CASKET (7TH SEA™)

When the blade is inserted into the casket up to the hilt, the weapon glows red and becomes empowered by something unnatural. For the rest of the Act, the wielder gains 1 Kept die for Attack, Parry, Throwing, and Swordsman Knacks with

that weapon (but not Tinkering or Natural Philosophy). The weapon also gains 1 Kept die for damage and the TN to Hit the wielder who uses the weapon for Passive Defense goes up by 5. (*See Waves of Blood™ for more information.*)

MORDEKEI'S CASKET (D20™)

Any blade placed within the casket gets a +2 magical bonus and the wielder's armor class increases by 2.

The Root of No Pain

On the island of Kanuba, Explorer Society member Greta Stausser has made an important discovery. During her exploration of the jungle, she collected various trophies and roots of native plants. Recently her neighbors' terrier got into her room and began chewing on one of the roots. Suddenly, in mid-chew, the dog began making strange faces and pawing at its muzzle. Although the dog recovered completely, Fraülein Stausser mentioned the event to one of the other Eisen villagers, Doctor Wilhelm Kessler, who examined the root. He found that when ingested, it had a remarkable anesthetic effect. He would like to test it further, but first he needs someone to go into the deep jungle in search of more roots.

The Great Western Ocean

When Captain Cosette and Jacob Faust of the Explorer Society returned from their voyage of discovery in the Mirror, they brought with them a map of the Midnight Archipelago, one far more accurate than anyone had ever seen and made of inlaid gemstones. Faust was also able to confirm that he obtained the map from a Syrneath ship he discovered deep beneath Caligari Island. While the Explorers are not advertising the fact he was responsible for the island sinking beneath the waves, they did spread word of his other discovery. The map originally showed two more landmasses to the west of the Midnight Archipelago and a barrier that prevented anyone from reaching those new lands.

When Cabora rose from the depths, the barrier upon the map shattered, destroying the section to the West. Faust insists that some sort of Barrier that prevented anyone from reaching the lands to the west has now been destroyed. Acting upon his discoveries, the Explorers quickly financed a major expedition to the West. They sent a dozen ships, each traveling separately, so that no disaster would destroy all of their hopes and plans. Warren Abbotsford and Captain Cosette's *Discovery* have reached the Midnight Archipelago, but have not yet ventured further. Several other ships were forced to turn back through sabotage, bad weather, and similar mishaps. The fate of the remainder is as yet unknown.

Cosette has another reason for her voyage west. Her Master of the Tops and close friend, Maggie Malone, is plagued by doubts of her humanity since she has begun exhibiting strange powers such as levitation and the ability to move things with her mind alone. She still bears a strange tattoo on one foot, her only clue to the past she cannot remember. Faust showed Cosette a marking upon an island in the Midnight Archipelago that closely resembles that tattoo. Cosette means to lay her friend's cares to rest and hopes that some clue upon the marked island can do that. Of course, to do that, she is going to need a heroic crew to explore the island and brave the dangers it holds.

Escape from the Chains

Kheired-Din and his Corsairs rule by fear and intimidation. They keep their slaves chained below decks and punish them unmercifully for any transgression. While every nation in western Théah wishes them destroyed, their greatest danger lies in the hearts of their slaves — who outnumber their masters ten to one. Should they free themselves, the Corsair officers will be overrun in minutes.

Many of the slaves have simply accepted their lot in life, bound not by only chains, but by despair and resignation. To these people, any flicker of hope can re-ignite their yearning to be free and their fighting spirit. Ernesto Castillus did just when he escaped from Kheired-Din's own ship along with several dozen crewmen. The fact that he used the sorcery that Kheired-Din considers so blasphemous is just icing on the cake. Now the slaves are far more unruly and constantly seeking any means of gaining their own independence. The Corsairs know that the only way to destroy the hope once again is to find and destroy the escaped slaves including their leader. They will use any means at their disposal, including hiring mercenaries to assist them, so long as Ernesto Castillus and his ship, the *Freedom's Key*, are destroyed, once and for all.

Find the Sorcerer!

Castille is proud of the fact that it eliminated the scourge of sorcery from its nation. This makes her a most implacable foe for those sorcerers who survive. Ernesto Castillus is one of them, a man who used his control over fire to escape from slavery aboard Kheired-Din's own ship. However, escape was never his true goal — he wanted to rescue a Corsair officer from the Black Freighter, his beloved Dalia.

Even after accomplishing a task that many would call impossible, he is still hunted by the Corsairs who wish to punish him for escaping. Now the Castillians have placed an even greater bounty upon his head: a huge prize that many are eager to earn (in Guilders, coin, jewels, whatever the party deems the most valuable).

Montaigne – Pre-Revolution

The Final Heir

The heroes in this scenario are either Musketeers or somehow involved in the war with Castille, presumably as soldiers in the Montaigne army. They have been on leave in Charouse, and are about to return to the front when their commander summons them to his manor.

It seems that Luc Leveque d'Aur, the son of Duke Victor Leveque d'Aur, is traveling to the front to join his regiment, which is currently assaulting El Morro. The

Leveque family is famous for the long line of brilliant military minds it has produced, but snipers have killed both of Luc's brothers while they were commanding the assault on El Morro. Luc is now the last Leveque brother in the family, and his death would leave the powerful clan without an heir. In recognition of the sacrifice Luc's father Victor is making by sending his only remaining heir off to war, High General Montegue has granted Luc a *garde d'honneur* as far as San Juan in western Castille. The characters have been chosen to escort the young man safely to San Juan where he will meet up with his regiment to complete the journey to the siege at El Morro.

The commander is somewhat disgusted at having to provide "special treatment" and explains that rather than expend valuable troops, he has chosen to send the characters. The task, he explains, is purely nominal, since no danger is anticipated so far from the front.

(*Note to the GM:* Make the players believe that this is largely a "personality" adventure. Luc is young, and while his extraordinary natural tactical and strategic abilities have been further honed at the famous Leveque War College, he is still quite unworldly. Luc knows nothing of women, and treats the commonest streetwalker with the same courtesy as a

Duchess. This can have comic consequences when he sees a local prostitute being "assaulted" by a customer, and rides to her rescue.)



The fact is, however, that Luc's life is in danger! The Empereur has long considered the Leveque family's military prowess a potential threat to his hegemony, and is taking this opportunity to cripple it. Through Remy du Montaigne he has assigned a band of assassins (the size of the band being dependent on the number of heroes) to murder Luc somewhere in southern Montaigne and make it look like the work of Castillian agents. If any of this garde d'honneur is also killed, *c'est la guerre!*

There should be at least two attacks on Luc before he reaches the relative safety of the battlefield. The first should occur when the heroes least expect it, perhaps as part of the encounter with the streetwalker described earlier, or in the guise of a helpless peasant whose cart is stuck in a ditch. The second attack may occur at night, or on the road, and be more overt, since by this time the heroes will be (or should be) watching for an attack. Note that should any of the assassins be captured they will be unable to tell the party who hired them, and the most ardent inquiries will never get the heroes any further up the chain than Remy.

Should the heroes manage to get Luc to his regiment safely he will be very grateful and offer them an opportunity to join him, at an increase in rank. If they turn down his offer, he tells them that they always have a friend in the Leveque family. However, this may not be much of a reward, as it carries with it the Empereur's deep distrust....

The Campaign Against the Brotherhood

This is a mini-campaign for a group of naval officers in the Montaigne navy. The heroes are currently serving under the General, who has been tasked with exterminating blood-thirsty pirates who prey on Montaigne's shipping. To date, the General has been very successful in catching and destroying individual pirate crews, and he has now turned his attention to the Brotherhood of the Coast.

The General summons the heroes to his flagship, the *Grenouille du Grâce*, and charges them on their peril to stop the flow of supplies which is allowing the Castillians defending La Muralla Ultima to hold out against the superior Montaigne army. It is rumored that the Brotherhood itself provides those supplies, but the General neither knows nor cares. He simply wants it stopped.

The Castillians are, in fact being supplied by the Brotherhood, specifically by a fleet of small boats that can navigate the shallow waters around San Teodoro. The small boats are under the protection of the *Prisoners' Revenge*, one of the large ships of the Brotherhood. The *Revenge* travels to La Boca every month or so and picks up a large cache of supplies, which it unloads on La Isla Poquita, a tiny island off the coast of Castille.

The heroes have several goals. The first is to discover where and how the supplies are being delivered. This can be accomplished by questioning local farmers and fishermen or even trying to capture sailors in the Castillian navy.

The second goal is to stop the flow of small boats between La Poquita and San Teodoro. This is largely a naval operation, involving blockading San Teodoro and finding and destroying the Brotherhood craft as they move to and fro. This may involve a lot of night work in small boats, since the heroes'

main ship can only watch one part of the coast at a time.

The third goal is to eradicate the supply cache on La Poquita. Depending on the interests, abilities and resources of the heroes, this can be anything from a grueling siege of a well-entrenched defending force to a lighthearted buried treasure romp.

The fourth goal is to either capture or sink the *Prisoners' Revenge*, which can be found somewhere between La Boca and La Poquita with a hold full of supplies for the embattled Castillians. This should be an epic naval battle, with cannon fire and boarding. Ideally the heroes will capture the *Prisoners' Revenge* and deliver her and her supplies to the General, who will be suitably grateful.

With the destruction of the in-shore fleet, the supplies and the *Prisoners' Revenge*, the Castillian forces defending La Muralla Ultima should crumble, permitting the Montaigne forces to capture the western peninsula. (For more information, see *Castille™* and *Ships and Sea Battles™*.)

A Minor Inconvenience

The city of Vraie in Martise was once a thriving port. Around 1628, a Porté experiment went awry and today the place is hardly more than a ghost town. Stories abound of derelict vessels rising from the bottom of the bay and shipwrecks are almost commonplace. The locals agree that the bay is haunted by the fifty men Alissé Praise du Rachetisse took to the bottom with him.

The heroes are approached by a representative from Her Grace, Duchess Madeleine, who is eager to retrieve a item of great value that belongs to her family. It appears that a new band of pirates has taken up residence in one of the coves along the rocky shore and is actively involved in salvaging items from the wrecked ships. If the heroes could get the item (GM's choice but it should be jeweled and quite valuable) and oh yes, get rid of the pirates, Her Grace would be most appreciative. There is probably no truth to the rumor that the pirates are the very same creatures who emerged from the Porté rent almost 50 years ago...

Post-Revolutionary Montaigne

Days of Terror

Even in these bright days of liberty and justice, there are those who would turn back the clock, plunging the Republic of Montaigne back into privilege, oppression, and the evils of Monarchy. These bitter counter-revolutionaries plot in secret, thwarting the peoples' justice and sabotaging the Councils' efforts to bring the nation to a brighter future. One such cabal has vowed to exact a bloody revenge on all those who brought about the Revolution, revealing the folly of those who would change the lives of the people for the better. They have spoken amongst themselves, and they remember one man very clearly — a soft-spoken private in the Army, destined to die for raising his hand against his betters, who evoked such outrage from the people of Charouse that they were instantly transformed into a bloody, howling tide that swept away all

that L'Empereur had built. They remember Private Jerome and they want him to suffer before he dies.

A case of mistaken identity brings the heroes into the dark scheme when a shady denizen of the underworld approaches one of them with a piece of paper bearing directions to a small farm less than a day's ride from Charouse. "Make the woman die slowly," he hisses, "but leave the man alive to watch." After this, he informs the party that three "other" assassins have been hired, and the first one to reach the target will be paid 5,000 Guilders plus another identical sum when the husband's head is displayed at the foot of *le coiffeur*.

Whether the heroes turn this wretch over to the Musketees or not, the fact of the matter is that they have very little time to stop the murder of a possibly innocent couple who only ever wanted to live their lives in peace. (See the *Montaigne™* and *Montaigne Revolution™* sourcebooks for more details.)

An Unexpected Appointment

Note: This adventure works best if the heroes know about or are affiliated with Antoinette Fletchyr and the Rye Grin, although it could work if they are ignorant of the Grin's work and merely wish to save an innocent from execution before a baying mob.

The villainous Marc-Daniel Valroux du Martise, Vicomte du Coteau, has escaped the justice he richly deserved at the hands of the Committee of National Welfare. Outraged, the Montaigne people demand that the fiend who helped the Vicomte escape be brought to justice. Unfortunately for the heroes, Arvino Chevreuse, the smuggler who helped du Coteau escape, has pinned the crime on a person he selected at random — the last person to snub his dinner reservations, in fact.

By an unfortunate coincidence, that person is none other than Antoinette Fletchyr, owner of La Cercle de la Chanson and leader of the society known as the Rye Grin. While Antoinette is guiltless of saving the Vicomte, the attention of the Committee would be most unwelcome, and would doubtless reveal her part — and the parts of any heroes affiliated with the Rye Grin — in the rescue of many innocents from the blades of *le coiffeur*.

The heroes may have heard a rumor that Chevreuse smuggled le Vicomte out of Montaigne, or they may know where to find the evil man, or they may know or work with Antoinette to prove her innocence. No matter their motivation, they must find a way to volunteer their services to the Committee, plead Antoinette's case to the Revolution's notoriously unsympathetic bloodhounds, and hunt down Chevreuse to bring him before Marie Malvoire, head of the Committee, to testify.

If the heroes have previously crossed swords with a villainous Montaigne noble, he can be substituted for the Vicomte, giving the heroes added incentive to track him down. If they know Antoinette, they are also rendering an important service to their good friend; if they do not know her, she will become a valuable ally. In any event, their efforts to protect the Rye Grin are crucial if Antoinette is to continue saving innocent lives. (See *The Montaigne Revolution™* and *Strongholds and Hideouts™* for more details.)

Shadow of the Crown

Rumors filter in from outlying provinces to Charouse — rumors that have Parlement in a state of near-terror. They whisper that a son of l'Empereur has returned to claim the throne, a son long denied by his royal father and hidden far from the watchful eyes of the Court. Commonly thought to be illegitimate, this man — dubbed Henri le Noir by Hubert du Gloyure — is gathering support among the pro-royalists in the outlying districts of Montaigne and abroad. His base of operations has yet to be found, fuelling rumors that Henri possesses powerful *Porté* magic that he uses to evade the people's justice. Such rumors spread rapidly, claiming that the pretender has powerful support from outside the borders of Montaigne, possibly from the government-in-exile or embittered former nobles striking back at those who displaced them. Somewhere out in the provinces, this ambitious man is amassing an army to seize Montaigne for himself, an army that will bring all of the Council's dreams of freedom to ruin.

There are many ways to draw the heroes into this situation. Regardless, Henri should be little more than an impostor, perhaps intent on making a play for the throne but with baser or more sinister ambitions. Two possible outcomes are "The Liar" and "The Lie." In "The Liar," Henri le Noir is just a charlatan with some convincingly forged royal trinkets and a scheme to make as much as possible from the Royalists before disappearing. While not possessing *Porté* himself, he has allies with the gift who ferry him around to avoid the Committee while he builds up his "war chest." It is up to the heroes to expose Henri and defuse the situation before the provinces run red with the blood of Royalists and Republicans alike.

In "The Lie," a cunning and merciless agent of the Committee of National Welfare has crafted the entire situation to flush counter-revolutionary sympathizers out of the woodwork. If the players uncover this cruel deception in time, they will save the lives of many — just and the unjust alike. Even if they are affiliated with the Council or Parlement, they are unlikely to approve of this evil method of laying waste to the enemies of Liberty. "The Lie" can hold many twists and turns as it plays out, however, and perhaps the Committee's agent is not acting alone — perhaps a trail of deception that will endanger the lives of the heroes leads all the way back to Arnaud Maximilian du Charouse...

Ussura

Patriarch Rising

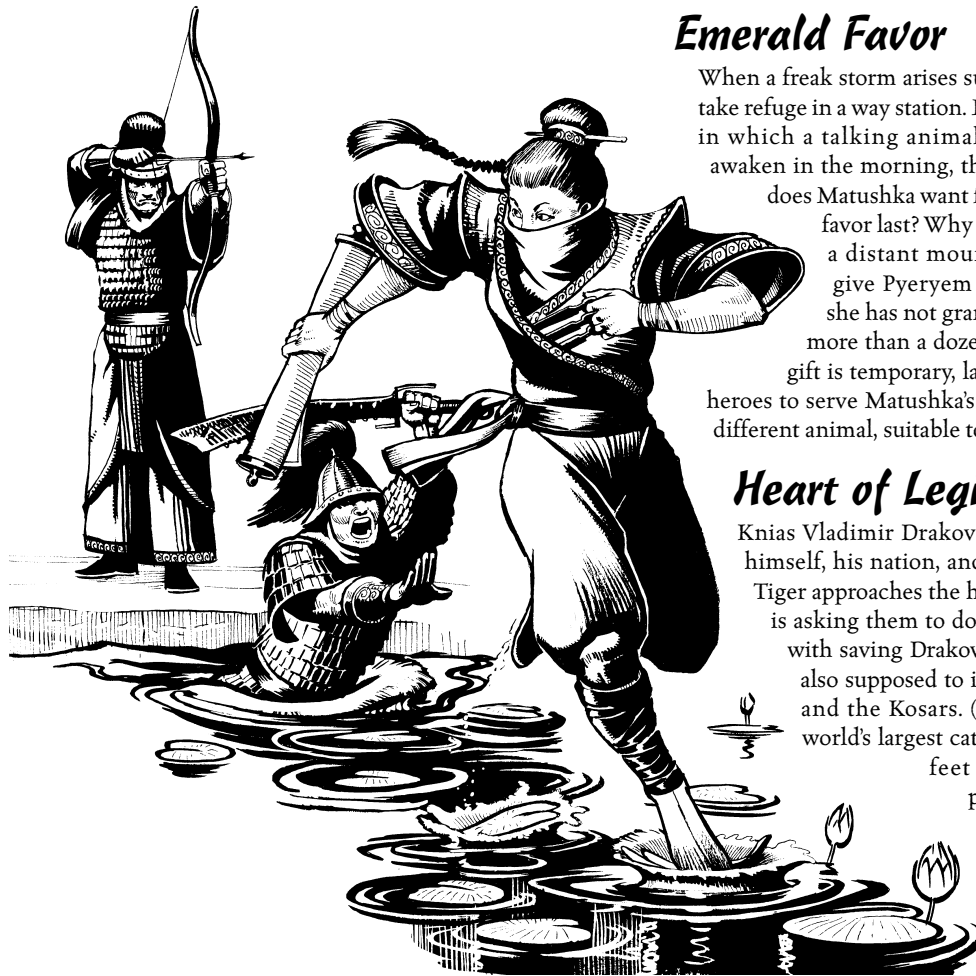
The Gaius has decided to move on the idea of appointing his personal confessor, Pontiff Grigori Malenkov, as Patriarch of the Ussuran Orthodoxy, which means that someone has to "remove" the current Patriarch. Will the heroes be fooled into performing an act of patriotism for the Gaius and aid in the murder, or will they play the role of protectors for the Patriarch? What is the price of success and the cost of treason?

Winter's Gift

The heroes are warming themselves by the fire in a wayside tavern when a strange man buys them a round of drinks and starts to talk about the court of the mythical Snow Queen. It seems that he is looking for someone to deliver a gift to her. He warns them that it is for her eyes only. He gives them a map of sorts, although it seems more like a page of riddles. They will be paid handsomely for their troubles, he assures them, as long as the unopened box is delivered. Even if they refuse, they find the box among their gear in the morning. So, they wonder, what's in it? Why is it so dangerous? Who can make sense of the map? Is the Snow Queen a fairy tale? Why did Koschei seek *them* out for this task? (Note: This adventure is ideally suited for a group of players who like solving puzzles, and it will enable the d20™ GM to bring a lot of snow and ice-related creatures into the game.)

Dracheneisen

A vein of the treasured Eisen material is found inside the Ussuran/Eisen border. The Knias of Somojez and the Gaius are both keen on receiving visitors from the Eisenfürsten who wish to court them for the privilege of mining it. The heroes are there to ensure that the negotiations are conducted properly: some would do anything to gain access to this fabled element.



Icon

An Icon of Faith, once touched by the First Prophet himself, has come up missing. The artifact supposedly holds great powers, ones that could be manipulated to perform wonderful miracles or bring Théah to the most terrible of ends. Can such a thing be, or is it simply legend and myth?

Family Ties

When the heroes awaken in a dank Somojez cell after a heavy night's drinking, they are even more surprised when none other than the Knias himself, Borin St. Andresgorod v'Pscov, comes down to ask them a favor. "There is a monastery, deep in the mountains," he tells them. "I want you to go there and rescue a family being held against its will." Who is the family and why couldn't the Knias send his own troops? How deep in the mountains? Is this family being imprisoned... or have they sought refuge?

Backfire

In the days surrounding Montegue's retreat, the Wolf has uncovered Pyotyr Siev Andropovich's plan to make the city an explosive death trap for any who try to breach its walls. Now the Wolf wants to catch the Gaius (or someone close to him, like Ketheryna) in that trap and lay the blame at its creator's feet. Once the heroes uncover the plot, can they defuse it in time to prevent death and civil war?

Emerald Favor

When a freak storm arises suddenly, the heroes are forced to take refuge in a way station. Each of them has a strange dream in which a talking animal appears to them. When they awaken in the morning, their eyes are bright green! What does Matushka want from them and how long will her favor last? Why do they feel a longing to travel to a distant mountaintop? [Note: Matushka can give Pyeryem to anyone she wishes although she has not granted such a gift to a non-Ussuran more than a dozen times in recorded history. The gift is temporary, lasting only as long as it takes the heroes to serve Matushka's will. Each hero was visited by a different animal, suitable to his or her persona.]

Heart of Legion

Knias Vladimir Drakov needs someone to help to save himself, his nation, and his people. When an Arkanun Tiger approaches the heroes they have little doubt who is asking them to do this. Not only are they charged with saving Drakov from his darkness, but they are also supposed to inspire him to take care of Jyrgal and the Kosars. (Note: The Arkanun tiger is the world's largest cat, which can reach a length of 20 feet and weigh as much as 1,650 pounds. It is a spirit skin reserved only for the Gaius or one whose power exceeds that of even the most adept Pyeryem mage.)

Bear Necessity

A local Veche nobleman has fallen prey to some malignant spirit or force and his anguished family asks the heroes to help him. The secret of his survival lies with the bears of Ozero Medvyed (Bear Lake). The journey will be extremely difficult because the evil force does not want its truths known. Will they help the heroes, and might they even awaken the ancient warrior who sleeps at the bottom of the lake? Is the nobleman cursed somehow by Saska Tomiech from her icy prison? Or will the heroes' journey take them to the fabled Thrice-Tenth Kingdom of Murom?

Enemy of My Enemy (Pre-Revolution)

As Montegue's war rages closer to Pavtlow, Odyesse now lies under the authority of the Montaigne occupational force and the Marquis du Martisse. While little has changed in the city's daily life, a man who recently lost his family has gotten the strange idea to find the Firbor, the Giants of Estermarch, and trick them into ousting the Montaigne invaders. He must be stopped before he awakens the fury of these tremendous creatures. Once they are set free, they will undoubtedly want to reclaim the city that was taken from them.

In Plain Sight

A *krashenka* (a rare variant of the *pysanka* or painted egg) has been crafted with some dark, malevolent purpose. Perhaps it is poisoned, cursed, or some Eisen shadow-monstrosity lies trapped within its decorated shell. The egg comes into the hands of someone close to the heroes (or perhaps they learn that the cursed item is on its way.) They must now race to stop its arrival or fix what harm the egg has caused. Finding out who sent it might be even more dangerous.

A Momentary Lapse of Treason

One dark-spirited night Knias Tamara unleashed her plan to assassinate the Gaius' wife. It was a moment of weakness fed by loneliness and desperation of a love never to be fulfilled. Having returned to her senses, the Knias seeks out the heroes to stop the assassin. In her shame, she tells them it is a plot hatched by her missing brother. Can they stop the men? And what would be the odds of Dreng knowing the truth and using it to his advantage in some way?

Vendel

More Questions Than Answers

The Vendel regard themselves an honorable people, an open-minded people, a hospitable people, but the fact remains that they are still people. So when three Vestenmannavnjar warships are sighted rowing straight for Kirk, their first thought is to destroy the invaders before they can land. A short battle ensues in which dozens are injured until the Vendel realize that the Vestenmannavnjar are fighting defensively and their ships' shields are painted white. A parley is called and the barbarians explain that they had come to speak to the Vendel

League. The naval commander reluctantly escorts the ships into Kirk where the Vestenmannavnjar wait for three days, refusing to meet with anyone until they can address the full League.

Once the League gathers, the Vestenmannavnjar leader strides forward and announces himself as a representative of High King Gjaeving Asbjornsson, who accuses the Vendel people of abandoning the ways of their ancestors, seizing lands that did not belong to them, and destroying their Vestenmannavnjar brothers. The High King demands gyld, monetary compensation to the victim, in the staggering amount of one hundred thousand pounds of gold!

For many Vendel, it is the first time that anyone has ever placed a monetary amount on their actions. While everyone agrees that the amount is far too extravagant, some are eager to begin negotiating with the High King and avoid the open war that once seemed inevitable. Others think that this is simply another example of the Vestenmannavnjar stealing what the Vendel worked so hard to earn. When the representative finishes his speech, he promises to return in one year's time to receive their answer. The Vendel are left with more questions than answers, but Val Mokka plans to send a group of heroes to find out what is really going on.

Stop the Presses!

Since finding a copy of the Grumfather Cycle, a written transcription of ancient Vestenmannavnjar legends and perhaps the oldest written book in Théah, Master Bens Postma has poured over it, studying every line and phrase. Convinced of its authenticity, he means to turn it over to the Explorer's Society. However, the printers of Kirk are a hungry lot, always seeking more material for their ever-growing market of readers. Postma discovers that the manuscript is missing and assumes that one of the many local printers stole it, but who?

Pages of text have mysteriously leaked to the public — apparently practice runs of the difficult print job. Postma is appalled to see that the unknown printer apparently wants his or her new book to appeal to the rich merchants of Vendel and Montaigne, so the names of the book's heroes have been "modernized." Whatever good the publication of this book might have will be lost if even one name is changed: the Vestenmannavnjar will take it as an insult of the highest magnitude and descend upon Kirk with righteous indignation and very sharp weapons. Postma happily takes any help that he can get in recovering the manuscript.

A Merchant's Day

The Merchants Guild of Eskilstuna has instituted a new competition called Merchant's Day. A group of merchants gathers at dawn and each places a specified amount of money into a cast iron pot. In turn, they each receive a small item of little value. It could be a barrel of ale or a bag of flour, perhaps a single longsword or a pillow. Without using anything except their guile and knowledge of the city, each must trade the good they have received for something of greater value. They may make as many trades as they like, "upgrading" one good for another, over the course of a single day. In fact, it is common to see a merchant make a dozen trades within a few hours time. They gather again at midnight and show each other what they have obtained. Whoever made the most

profit on their trade wins the money in the pot. This game has grabbed the imagination of the Vendel and many visit from other cities to try their hand at it. Newcomers and foreigners are welcome, but only a few can equal the skill with those native to the city.

Money Changing Hands

The rules regarding Guild money exchangers are quite strict. All exchange rates must be posted and adhered to, and all exchanges under 300 Guilders must be made within 24 hours. The accepted method of ensuring this is for each money exchanger to keep enough currency on hand to satisfy their customers. When one does not have enough to cover, he must send a courier to obtain more funds.

Hans Brok is looking for a reliable courier to do just that. Five men walked into his shop over the course of business today, each wanting to exchange 250 Guilders for Eisen Marks. He agreed to the transactions on the condition that the men return at noon the following day. He knows Franz Hransh, a money exchanger in a city three hours away, has enough Marks on hand to handle the transaction. Now he needs a courier to bring him Guilders for exchange at Hransh's shop and the heroes look like perfect candidates. Hans hands them a small chest and reminds them that they must be back by noon. Unfortunately for them, the road between here and Hransh's shop has far more than its share of bandits, cutthroats, and villains. It seems that someone knew a courier would be passing through that area with a large amount of cash....

The Guilder

The Guilder is the basis of the Vendel economy and the backbone of trade throughout most of Théah. However, when the Vendel Guilds began printing paper currency, they knew that safeguards were absolutely necessary.

There are three tests of a Guilder's authenticity. The first is that by using a printing technique known only to a handful of members, bills are printed with two colors of ink. The borders of the money feature knotwork or vines in alternating colors, serving as a strong safeguard.

The second is the symbol in the upper left-hand corner. There the knotwork is most convoluted and in a counterfeit reproduction of a Guilder, this image is often blurred and splotched. The third test is that when viewed from the side in sunlight, the ink on a true Guilder is slightly iridescent.

The first two tests depend on the artistry of the top masters of the Printers Guild who hold the secret of their printing presses extremely close. Anyone who experiments with similar methods is either bribed or warned off the project. The third test relies solely on a strange powder that is sprinkled on the Guilders just after they have been printed. The powder clings to the wet ink and gives it that sheen.

Only three men know the secret of this substance and the barrels are kept carefully guarded. When Val Mokk realizes that one barrel has been stolen from his carefully guarded warehouse, he knows that the matter requires a thorough (and quiet) investigation, and sets about hiring just the right people for the job.

Vestenmannavnjar

A Snake in the Grass

Gjaeving Asbjornsson was a rogue and a scoundrel who stole from Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar alike before he stumbled on the cave of the Grumfather. There, he lost an eye and gained the title of High King of Vestenmannavnjar. Gjaeving, however, has not proclaimed himself out of fear for his life. He made too many enemies during his earlier years and he figures the Vendel are likely to assassinate anyone who could rally their belligerent cousins to war. To escape the voices of his ancestors that whisper secrets and advice to him, he takes refuge in the small village of Arndskeep where he hides his face within his hood, waits, and watches.

The Jordsfolk tribesmen of the village are fishermen, untouched by the hatred of other Vestenmannavnjar, and faced with a most fearsome adversary. A serpent as long as four men ravages their fishing waters. It lies in wait in the chilly waters for a fresh meal and then strikes, hurtling out of the waters and into the fishing vessels to feast upon the crew. Perhaps a band of heroes strong enough to defeat this menace will give the High King the courage he needs to face his destiny.

For Want of a Necklace

The Tillitsfolk hold to the old traditions stronger than any. They do not trust even other Vestenmannavnjar, so they rarely aid their brethren in the struggle against the Vendel. However, marriage has a way of bringing people closer and the wedding of a young Tillitsfolk lass to a Larsfolk lad has the potential to add hundreds of axes to the Vestenmannavnjar long boats. But a great deal of tension surrounded the courtship, with the promise of unbound fury should something go wrong. When several pieces of jewelry disappear from the girl's dowry the night before the wedding, each tribe blames the other and tensions flare into rage. Now it's up to the heroes to find and return the dowry before the morning. The only clue are a handful of acorns left in the place of the jewelry...

Crew Wanted

High King Gjaeving Asbjornsson is not a warrior. He's is a rogue with a quick mind and a glib tongue. He has already conceived of a way to save his people, but he cannot accomplish it alone. First, he must gather allies and guards to protect him. He learns from Gunrud Stigandsdottir that the man to help him with both is Magnus Brynjulfrsson af Larsfolk. While Magnus had hoped that the High King's title would be his, he is a devout Vestenmannavnjar who truly believes in the ways of his people. He will provide Gjaeving with whatever he needs. However, even he is taken aback by the request for three warships manned by fierce fighters who can be counted upon to obey orders without question. Despite his reservations, Magnus has begun looking for a suitable crew and is willing to take foreigners if they pledge their loyalty to the cause.



The Althing

The Bodilsfolk hold an annual althing in Thingvallavatn and invite every prominent jarl from across the islands. The althing this year promises to be far larger than any ever held before. Yngvild Olafsdottir has returned from a voyage to the Mirror and rumors abound that she discovered one of the Living Runes in those distant waters. Others claim that the Vendel traitor Jorund Guttormson has discovered another of the Living Runes residing within Kirk itself. Still others say that the Grumfather's chosen, the High King, has been seen traveling throughout the islands. No one knows if any of these rumors are true, but all believe that this year's althing could provide the answers to these strange tales.

Most importantly, Master George Skard, Head of the Brewer's Guild, has brought several hundred barrels of his finest. Many Vestenmannavnjar are glad to see one of the Vendel Chairs attempting to bridge the gap between them, and even happier that he brought beer. They intend to hold a drinking contest where the last man standing wins. While Skard has received several death threats, he hopes that the heroes can ensure nothing untoward happens.

Extreme Winter Sports

The Enhedsfolk people of Ormsbeard are plagued by a foe they cannot defeat. While it appears to be a man, it descends from a cave high in the mountains above their village and attacks in the dead of winter. Smashing their defenses aside, it seizes one man and then retreats to devour him. The skald of the village believes that the creature was once a member of the tribe who was cast out. Its rage forms the source of its power and as such it can only be defeated if an outsider brings the shield it used in life back to the tribe. While the villagers do not want to rely upon the heroes, they have no choice. Unfortunately, anyone who enters the cave will find that the creature has stolen dozens of shields over the years and hung them upon its lair's bloody walls. This may prove a perfect opportunity for the heroes to discover the art of tobogganing while pursued by a bloodthirsty monster.

Vodacce

Scogna's Lament

It is said that no good deed goes unpunished and that is especially true in Vodacce. Captain Sebastiano Scogna once performed a very good deed and now he is paying for it. He helped a woman named Juliette smuggle a Fate Witch out of the country. Not long after that, several of his crewmen died. Some were slain in barroom brawls, while some met a grisly end at the hands of robbers and cutthroats in the alleys of a dozen different ports. Others had tragic "accidents." Entire cargoes were lost to rats or spoilage, or outright theft. His ship, the *Santa Cecilia*, caught fire twice while in harbor. Soon Scogna began losing business as well, as several of his regular clients cancelled contracts with him or flatly refused to pay after some minor infraction or another. His ill luck has followed him from Vodacce to Castille, Montaigne, and even Avalon, and the strain is beginning to show. Everywhere he turns, doors are closing in his face, and he feels slowly boxed in. He is right.

Giovanni Villanova discovered that the *Santa Cecilia* smuggled Valentina and Juliette out of Vodacce, and decided to make Scogna pay. He brought his considerable resources to bear on Sebastiano, with every intention of driving the good captain to the edge of madness... right before he kills him. Being one of the most powerful merchant princes in the world, Villanova has contacts and agents in nearly every city in Théah, and they have all been given one mission: make Scogna pay. Villanova realizes that the captain is only a minor pawn in the game, but until he can find the real players, Sebastiano makes an acceptable target for his wrath.

Scogna is not a stupid man and it didn't take much to figure out who was behind his misfortunes. He also realizes that Prince Giovanni will continue to toy with him until he grows weary of the game and then kill him. The only way out is death — either Scogna's or Villanova's — but going after the prince is a fool's errand. It would be easier to "kill" himself. After all, he reasons, if he's dead, Villanova will be done with him.

Now Scogna needs to find a group to help him fake his death, so he can retire to a nice quiet island somewhere. That shouldn't be too hard to do in Vodacce, should it?

A Few Good Sailors

Shortly after Cabora's rise and the wind pattern changes that accompanied it, one of Prince Bernoulli's merchants named Luigi Catavase discovered something astounding. In the area directly south of Cabora between two tiny islands, an area once known for its prolonged calms now experiences strong and steady gusts of wind. The winds are always blowing from one of the islands to the other. After experiencing this phenomenon on two voyages, Catavase mentioned it to several other noblemen during an argument over which of them was the best captain. They resolved to race between the two islands and settle the matter once and for all. However, someone who did not want anyone traveling near Cabora must have heard of their plans because several crewmen were incapacitated by sabotage... including Catavase himself. Now he is back in Vodacce looking for a crew willing to brave the dangers of the Mirror, to help him prove that he is the greatest of sea captains.

The question is who has taken Gabrielle? Perhaps the Council of Eight? The Church? Some political enemy of the Duc or members within the College itself, even Arciniega? Perhaps men still loyal to the now dead L'Empereur have learned of the Duc's traitorous acts? Or most wicked of all, is it Gabrielle's own plot to seek revenge for something, knowing or perhaps not knowing her Grandfather's hand in it?

In any event, the heroes will be called upon to rescue his granddaughter regardless of the cause, the enemies, and the danger.

The Deeps

A ship and a lost treasure lie at the bottom of a cove and the College has been sought out to aid in its recovery before a villainous rogue acquires it. The College and its newly developed (and greatly untested) "diving apparatus" are exactly

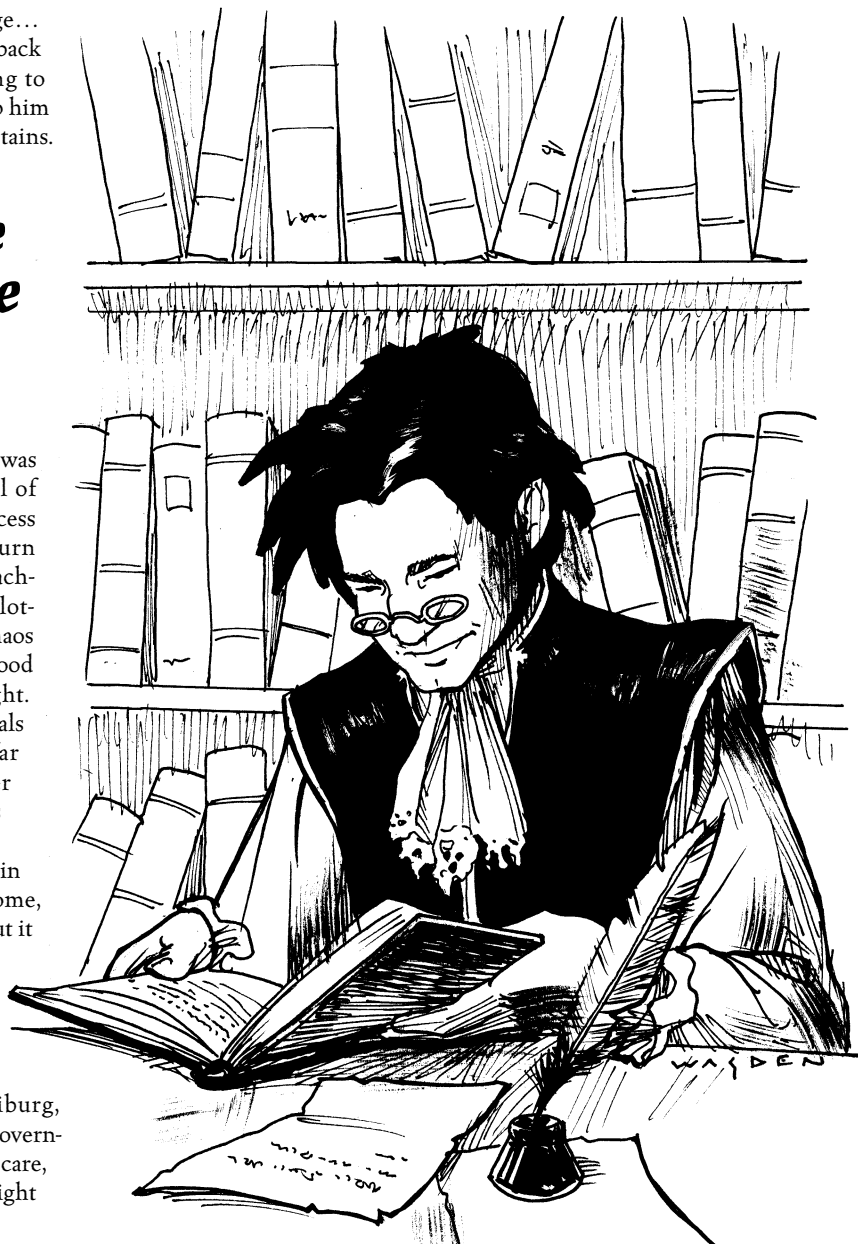
Invisible College

A Rosemonde By Any Other Name...

Duc Auguste Danceney du Rosemonde was responsible for Montegue's betrayal of L'Empereur in Ussura by warning Princess Dominique du Montaigne, who in turn warned Montegue, of her father's treachery. Now, a year after Rosemonde's plotting, the nation of Montaigne lies in chaos and confusion, knee-deep in its own blood under the iron-gloved Council of Eight.

The anarchy has served the Duc's goals fairly well and he's managed to get far more Porté-enriched blood than ever before. He is very close to achieving his goal, but something has interposed itself: his granddaughter, Gabrielle, is in danger. Anxious about the times to come, he moved her away from Montaigne but it seems that danger has found her despite his efforts. He must act to save her, but who can he call on (or manipulate) to aid him?

The heroes must race to rescue Gabrielle wherever she may be: Freiburg, Siegsburg (the seat of the Montaigne government-in-exile), some Vodacce Prince's care, or perhaps even an island in the Midnight Archipelago would all be good places.



what the task requires. As no one outside the College would likely know how to work the apparatus, heroes with some knowledge (and skill) in such things would be ideal.

The villain knows this too and will do his best to get his hands on the apparatus and do away with the heroes. He already has someone who knows the apparatus's intricacies (a traitor to the Order or perhaps a nemesis of the heroes...)

Dangers such as storms, pirates, sirens, and the inaccessible location of the ship itself are bound to make the recovery difficult. Assuming the heroes can get there, they will find that the ship is guarded by some unnatural entity. Perhaps it is one of the Sidhe, or a Syrneath watchdog or some other type of mechanica. It could be the item carries a curse. In any case, the heroes will have to think on the run, and overcome obstacles like how to see in the murky depths of Mother Ocean.

The Traitor Within

The war between Montaigne and Castille is over. With the exception of the Montaigne "expeditionary force" in Barcino, the borders of the two nations have returned to their pre-war days. Castillian noble families have slowly begun rebuilding and Diego Torres de Zepeda del Castillo is no exception. Like his fellow countrymen, he has returned to find the Inquisition imbedded in the post-war politics of Castille's western peninsula.

In the months since the treaty, Diego has moved very carefully for fear of Inquisitors who seem to be everywhere these days. When word comes of the need to get someone important to the College out of Castille, he must work most carefully. His plan is simple. Meet with the Collegian, get him into Barcino, and from there, smuggle him across the river into Montaigne.

This will not be so easy with the Inquisition spying about, and they will watch any river travel very carefully. Diego's only hope is that in the chaos and congestion of the city, he might be able to hide the Collegian more safely. He hires people he can trust (the heroes) to help him with the daring escape.

Unknown to all, the man seeking escape is not the person they expect, but an Inquisitor spy trying to undermine the College's efforts in the region. He will act out his part, but stands ready rouse his fellow Inquisitors at the worst possible moment...

The Pursuit of Ignorance

Doctor Richard Kailean is the Vaticine Church's foremost authority on the deadly White Plague, and has vowed to do anything he needs to do to eradicate the disease. He was befriended by Don Petrigai Ontiveros de Rioja del Castillo another brilliant researcher who deeply admired Kailean's work. During the course of their collaboration, Petrigai revealed his ties to the Invisible College.

Through their joint work, they have made great advances, and may come close to discovering the secrets of the deadly disease. Kailean and Petregai's work has already lead them to believe the disease is man-made, and therefore perhaps under the control of some organization. If they uncover any more about the plague, and tell the Church, there could be panic. Despite the secrecy, word of their studies has reached the ears of Sophia's Daughters who feel that it is time to intervene.

The heroes are either hired by the two scientists as bodyguards or by the Order to disrupt the men's work. This sabotage must be subtle, because if the scientists realize that someone has interfered with their research, they will go to the Inquisition without hesitation. The characters must gain access to their work notes, which may be in their lab or even secured at Kailean's home. Once they locate the current experiments they can insure that the two men get the wrong results. A few wrong readings could put the scientists on the wrong path in their research and keep the secrets of the plague safe.

The problem of course is that the scientists are very particular about their work. Not only do the characters need to gain access to their research lab, they need to distract the scientists in some way. Both men are so focused that the traditional ploys of seduction would be useless. One possibility is to play upon Kailean's well-disguised hatred of Petrigai. Once the Highland researcher has what he needs, he will denounce his colleague to the Inquisition. Just to make things worse, Kailean doesn't like sharing the limelight with Petrigai. If the heroes get a look at his private journal, they may discover this fact, which means Petrigai could become an ally, but only if he can be convinced of Kailean's treachery and of the Daughter's more altruistic motives.

Regardless of who hired them, the heroes will need to be extremely careful because they are dealing with two brilliant men with powerful connections — and access to a deadly plague.

Rilasciare

Down with the Queen!

It has been ten years since the sinking of the Castillian Armada. In celebration of this historic event, Queen Elaine has declared a national holiday. Huge celebrations, parties and parades are being organized, and the Queen herself will unveil a statue honoring the brave men and women who fought against the Armada. The Brothers of Freedom, a Guerilla Alliance cell in Luthon, plan to use the ceremony to stage an attack on Elaine. Elaine represents everything the Rilasciare stands against: an artificial ruling class empowered by an inhuman and sorcerous power. The Brothers believe that by assassinating the Queen, they can inspire others across Théah to throw off the yoke of oppression and stand free. Backed by mysterious sources both foreign and domestic, the guerillas intend to launch a brutal assault that will leave Elaine and several members of the Parliament dead.

The only people in a position to stop the cell are a few unaffiliated members of the Rilasciare living in and around Carleon. These Free Thinkers know that Avalon is a powder keg, and the only thing keeping it from exploding is Elaine's presence. If Elaine falls, the resulting civil war will kill thousands, including innocent civilians. The Triple Kingdoms will be shattered by infighting as every petty noble with a standing guard will try to seize the throne. Furthermore, Elaine is the chosen of the Sidhe, and an attack on her will bring the wrath of the Goody Folk down on all parties responsible. Until the Rilasciare can find a way to banish the Sidhe, Elaine must not be killed, at least not by the Free Thinkers.

Alerting the Queen or her Knights is not an option, since it will draw the attention of the hated Bors MacAllister. While he has greatly depleted the Society's resources in Avalon, the Highlander has yet to piece together the extent of the Rilasciare. If someone tries to kill his Queen, this will surely change. Now a band of rabble rousers, pranksters, and philosophers have to save a Queen they despise from a group of well-trained, well-funded, and fanatically dedicated assassins they once considered brothers and friends, all without alerting her Knights or anyone else. But they are going to need a little help...

Escape from Il Muro

For 16 years, Donnabella Zümerwindt has languished in the Vodacce prison of Il Muro. She used her captivity to pen several passionate treatises on the unjust nature of rule and the need for rebellion. Recently, a daring young burglar sneaked into Il Muro hoping to find more of her writings that he could bring back to the people. Instead he found Donnabella, hiding in the dark and plotting her escape. She told him her plan and sent him back to the Rilasciare.

Il Muro — the most feared prison in all of Théah — is reputed to be inescapable. Furthermore, it is controlled by the Villanova family, and anyone attempting to break in or out must deal with Prince Giovanni and his minions. Still, the Freeman's League has decided that the rewards are worth the risks. If Donnabella can be liberated, it will send a powerful message to the people. Combined with the recent successes in Montaigne, members of the Freeman's League are certain this bold rescue could ignite a grand revolution, in which the common people finally stand against the unjust rule of a decadent nobility.

With this in mind, the Freeman have sent the call out across Théah. Breaking into an impenetrable fortress will require many skilled people working in unison. Couriers must organize the cells to act together. Burglars must once more infiltrate Il Muro and locate Donnabella, then spirit her past a legion of guards. Once she is freed, Donnabella then has to be spirited out of Vodacce and taken somewhere safe and secure.

Now, more than ever, the Rilasciare needs heroes: brave men and women who understand the meaning of the words, "Vero Coraggio."

The Rose and Cross

The typical Rose and Cross mission is the stuff of Dumas novels or Errol Flynn movies: rescuing kidnapped nobles, thwarting corrupt officials, or delivering critical messages to the great and good of the world. However, some aspects of the Order are more secretive, and do not always come to the public attention.

Issue 1

On an unusually stormy night, an exhausted and panicky Miles Valroux du Martise arrives unexpectedly at the Chapterhouse where the group is staying. Before he is ushered away into secret discussions, the characters hear him saying the same thing over and over again, "He is gone."

It turns out that the Poor Knight who stood immobile for centuries on the borders of the Crescent Empire has vanished. The group is soon tasked with journeying across the dangerous Vodacce mainland to the fringes of the Empire to see if this is true, and hopefully find out what happened to the Knight. Rumors have already spread through the Chapterhouse, so the senior members will stress the importance of secrecy as they try to contain the speculation within their walls.

Issue 11

The Master Knight of one of the Montaigne chapter houses calls on the group to perform a very delicate rescue. One of the secretive Invisibles, Knights who distance themselves from the Order so they can act independently, has been tracking the location of the missing Montaigne archbishops. Apparently he was close to finding at least one of the churchmen in an isolated area of southern Montaigne, when all contact with the agent was lost. They have found out through contacts in the Musketeers, that he was captured by operatives of the Committee for Public Welfare (*see The Montaigne Revolution™ for more information*), who are currently unaware of his true affiliation and instead believe him to be a royalist agent provocateur. The real Royalists are planning to attack the Committee headquarters in Buche where the Invisible is being held, so the group can use that distraction to free their comrade or at the very least secure the information about the location of the bishop.

When found, the Invisible is in a very bad state, having been tortured by members of the Committee to reveal his supposed treacherous connections. If it comes down to it, he will gladly give his life to buy time for the Knights to escape with the crucial information. Whether the group then reports back to their Chapterhouse or acts on the intelligence is a whole new adventure (and can tie in to the archbishop's rescue, detailed on page 35).

Issue 111

An informant in the Avalon underworld reveals that an assassination is being planned against Miles Valroux du Martise. (The information comes from Sergeant Knight Rachel Milligan unless the group has seedy underworld connections of its own.) The group must very quietly stop the attempt and more importantly find out who contracted the hit, so that the Minister remains safe from future attempts.

The evil mastermind behind this plan is actually Phillipe Ambrose du Gloyure, the Senior Knight of Crioux House. He believes that Miles is mentally unstable and therefore a liability to the Order, one that the other senior members are unable or unwilling to do anything about. This puts the Order in an extremely conflicted position. Removing Phillipe will raise questions that the senior members do not really want to answer and at least one Master Knight will admit to seeing the logic behind the action, even if it goes against the very tenets of the society. If confronted, Phillip himself is unrepentant and it will take a great deal of skill and diplomacy to resolve this issue without causing more problems in the future.

Issue IV

Francesca, the widow of the late Merchant Prince Alberto Lucani, contacts the Order in a very distressed state. One of her daughters, thirteen-year old Dahna, has gone missing from their family estate in Gorivari. With the inherent Sorte abilities of the Lucani line, it is most likely a powerful noble or even one of the other Merchant Princes have taken her. Prince Donello Falisci himself has been trying to secure her hand in marriage for his nephew Guido, which makes him a prime suspect. If challenged on the issue, Prince Falisci denies all knowledge or involvement in the disappearance and even offers assistance in locating the girl.

Perhaps surprisingly for a Vodacce noble, Prince Falisci is actually being entirely truthful and has no idea what has happened to the girl. He is genuinely concerned for her well-being, although not entirely without selfish motives as he still hopes to secure a political union. However, his young nephew Guido is not quite as innocent as he may appear and Dahna can in fact be found at one of his estates in the hills above Medico. The twist is that she was not kidnapped but left Gorivari of her own accord to be with him. While she initially considered the young noble as debauched as the parade of other suitors, he demonstrated a quality that other Vodacce often lack: sincerity. She grew increasingly worried that her mother will marry her off to one of the more powerful (but terribly loutish) alternatives, so she did something very unlikely for a female in Vodacce. She seized her own destiny.

Depending on how the group deals with Guido, he can be very friendly and open. However, when they discover the truth, his uncle and Francesca are not quite so forgiving. The Prince will send agents to deal with the shame that Guido risked bringing down on their family, in a very terminal manner. The Knights can stand back and watch as the young man is utterly destroyed or risk the anger of a powerful Vodacce lord by acting on their conscience.

Issue V

A messenger arrives from Heinrich von Salva, the new Master Knight of Tannen house. A rich Eisen patron bequeathed the latest Chapterhouse of the Order, making it an important foothold for the society in southern Eisen. However, the new house has been beset by problems, from suspected sabotage to missing laborers to nighttime thefts. So far, the culprits have evaded all efforts at capture, although the Master Knight believes that they are not isolated events. One rather superstitious carpenter claimed to have seen a rather dubious character "disappear into the night" during one such incident. A very important shipment of supplies and funds is due to arrive at the port town of Prachtig and Master von Salva wishes to have it escorted, since no shipment with a Knight in charge has yet been attacked.

Those aware of the various societies of Théah may realize that the sabotage is the act of die Kreuzritter, who certainly do not want a base of Rose and Cross Knights so close to their own headquarters. Remnants of their chivalric order have so far stopped them from acting directly against the Knights, but their operatives know how important this shipment is to the feasibility of the new Chapterhouse. How the confrontation proceeds could open the doors to an entire shadow war between two of Théah's most powerful organizations.

Issue VI

An Explorer Captain who is a patron of the Order in good standing contacts Caerleon House with a problem. Over the last few weeks a number of their ships being outfitted for explorations to the Western Oceans have been sabotaged and they have so far proved unable to catch the perpetrators. Although the Order worries about this new Age of Exploration, they want to dispatch a small group to Cardican to assist for a number of reasons. Firstly, although relations between the two groups are generally good, it does not hurt for the Explorers to owe the Order a favor. Senior members also wish to get an operative on board the ship, so that they can better deal with whatever lies out beyond the western seas. They leave it to the heroes to decide whether the agent hides onboard in secrecy or negotiates passage openly.

Issue VII

Two weeks ago three Crescents arrived in the Vodacce city of Porto Spatia making inquiries about the Poor Knights. It seems that they are descendants of the troops that served the Knights during the Crusades, and have kept the Order alive in a certain sense, unaware of its destruction at the hands of Philip IV of Montaigne. With the relaxing of the borders between their nations, they now seek to restore connections to the mother organization.

A small group of Knights is quickly and very quietly dispatched to meet the visitors and bring them in total secrecy to Crieux House. However, a number of groups (including at least two Merchant Princes) have taken an interest in the foreigners, so a stealthy extraction from Porto Spatia may be more difficult than first imagined.

Die Kreuzritter

The Mark of the Cross

On 4 Tertius, Father Werner Gerbeck was found dead on the altar of the Chapel of the Flame in Insel. Hauptmann Kessler investigated briefly and arrested a trio of Objectivist insurgents for the crime. The arrest never sat well with Ernst Gibbler, a guardian of Insel for die Kreuzritter. He had been following the suspects on the night of the murder and knew they went nowhere near the Chapel or Father Gerbeck.

After leaving a coded message for his fellow guardians, Gibbler broke into the Chapel to investigate the murder himself. Ernst left a letter in an established drop location for the town guardians, but did not arrive at the meeting. The letter informed die Kreuzritter of some important information seemingly ignored by Hauptmann Kessler, namely that Father Gerbeck had apparently been strangled with the sort of chain that normally carried the Vaticine Cross around his neck. The cross itself was missing but Gibbler left no mention of its suspected location. There was another telling mark that had not gained mention in the public discussion. Father Gerbeck was found with a Vaticine Cross drawn in what appeared to be blood on his chest, blood that must have been provided from another source, as he had no open wounds.

Die Kreuzritter town guardians continued to search for clues and Ernst Gibbler over the following days. Gibbler's body was discovered three days later in a secret Black Cross Sanctuary near the Städtwatcher Barracks, the victim of a severe beating and probable torture. His forehead was painted with a Vaticine Cross in blood, quite possibly the mark of the same murderer. With their Sanctuary discovered, the guardians scattered into hiding, but there is a murderer in their city. Justice must be served and the killer caught, even if that means tasking outsiders to do the job...

A Matter of Faith

The Hospital of the First Witness is renowned for its impartial neutrality. It has never refused to treat any faction, and the city leaders (whatever their position) respect that important gift. However, in the last month, that has changed.

A mysterious group of men, shielding their identity with masks, have begun to stage attacks upon the hospital. Doctors have been attacked while traveling to tend to the ill in various sectors, and the hospital itself has witnessed no less than three assaults. Die Kreuzritter has called back various members in the Crescent Empire to assist in protecting their home. Sigrun Mastof refuses to let these threats stop the service of the Hospital, however. Every morning she makes her rounds about the city inquiring to the needs of various missionary clinics. Her routine route has created a security problem for the Black Cross Guardians assigned to protect her from harm. The Honor Guard of the Founder's Tomb has volunteered to serve as her personal bodyguard, and acquitted itself quite well in the streets of Zafara. In a matter of hours, their combat skills reminded many of what earned these Knights the privilege of guarding the remains of Die Kreuzritter's founders.

Unfortunately, their new duties have left the tomb at the center of the Hospital of the First Witness unattended. During this time, vandals made their way into the sepulchre and vandalized the tomb. Nothing appears to have been stolen but the crypts were overturned and a message was scrawled across the wall in tikaret-baraji, "Your false faith has no place here." The Knights would like very much to learn who is behind such desecration. Very much indeed.

Los Vagos

Will the Real El Vago Please Stand Up?

The heroes are members of a band of Los Vagos, either under the command of an El Vago or perhaps one of them is El Vago him/herself. On one of their patrols through the region they come to San Felipe, a good-sized village they rarely visit. Although in the past the villagers have greeted them with great friendliness, this time they are all hiding in their homes, with the doors locked and weapons ready. A hidden sniper even fires a shot from a rooftop. The party must find and either force or convince one of the locals to reveal why the village has suddenly turned against them.

Apparently, about a week before the heroes arrived in San Felipe a band of thugs attacked the farm of Victor Herrera, the most successful farmer in the region. Victor is no don, but by the sweat of his and his family's brows he managed to build a good, working *rancho*. The bandits burned a number of the outbuildings and stole what little money and treasure the family had (including a pair of candlesticks that have been in the Herrera family for generations). There were several witnesses, and all of them swear that El Vago himself led the thieves!

Obviously someone has appropriated the Vagabond's identity to perpetrate crimes on the loyal citizenry of Castille. The heroes will have to go to the Herrera holdings and convince Victor that it was not they who robbed and beat him. Then they need to find out enough clues (tracks, a ring on the false El Vago's hand, one of the thieves who walked with a limp or had a strange accent, etc.) to track down the impersonators.

The GM can decide the exact nature of the thieves, but some possibilities include:

- Simply a local bandit chief, perhaps an old foe of the local Vagos.
- The indigent son of a local noble who is raiding local villages for "kicks"
- A local priest who believes El Vago to be a spawn of Legion, and wishes to destroy his reputation among the locals.

An Ungentlemanly Calling (Pre-Revolution)

The heroes receive word that the Montaigne leader, Commander Luc Leveque d'Aur, is traveling southward to assume command of the troops besieging El Morro. Castillian snipers killed both his two elder brothers who had held the command before him. Leveque must be prevented from reaching the front lines because he is a brilliant tactician who may very well figure out how to crack El Morro. He will be taking a carriage from the Montaigne-held city of San Juan to the front lines. The bad news is that he travels with a squadron of troops from his regiment; some unknown assassin has already made an attempt on the young Commander's life, meaning that the troops will certainly be on their guard.

The trip takes roughly five days. Because the Commander is now extremely paranoid, he will not stay in any inns or taverns on the way. He prefers the open road to the risk of being trapped in an inn by determined assailants. If Commander Leveque can be stopped, it is possible that the Montaigne invaders would give up the siege of El Morro, and with it any hope of pushing east into the rest of Castille.

Sophia's Daughters

The following scenario hooks work best if the majority of the party are members of or affiliated with Sophia's Daughters. Members of the Order are quite adept at using dupes and puppets so it is just as possible for the group to become involved at the behest of a friend. It is also possible for them

to be manipulated into helping the Order by a member of their own group, who has kept her involvement a secret until now.

A Stolen Word

Every member of Sophia's Daughters keeps a journal so that her secrets can be passed on to the Order if something should happen to her. Many are written in code, to prevent the wrong eyes from seeing it should disaster strike.

Just such a disaster has befallen a jenny by the name of Annabel Diego who plied her trade in the town of Barcino, one of the last bastions of Montaigne rule on Castillian soil. Here she made contact with Las Muñecas, a group of jennys who are also members of Los Vagos. For the past year Annabel had been their liaison to the Daughters, and the two groups had finally begun to work together. With the war mostly over, many members of Las Muñecas felt that their work was done, although most wished they could do more. This attitude allowed Annabel to recruit some of them into the Daughters as well.

Things went well until Annabel's journal disappeared. A rather perverse Montaigne soldier named Gérard LeVaraque took it after his last "liaison" with her. He thinks it is the diary of a jenny, and therefore full of scandal and lurid sexual details but he struggles with the code in which it is written. Unfortunately for the Order, LeVaraque has no clue about how truly scandalous the information is. If he can decode the writing, he will blow the cover of both the local Daughters and Los Vagos.

The heroes may become involved when they are hired to retrieve the journal, or they may be called upon to help break the code. In either case, they will be privy to secrets that could affect the fate of all Théah.

Dangerous Liaisons

One of the Daughters is in danger and has sent a coded note to the Order to plead for help. However, she was too frightened to use her real name in case of discovery so all the Order knows is that she is in a house in the wealthy district of town. The house belongs to a highly placed politician or noble from whom the Daughter periodically gathers information.

Luckily, the heroes arrive just in time. The first thing they see is the lady of the house being abducted. A masked man is taking her unconscious body down a ladder from her room. He will flee if things look bad for him, hopefully with his prize.

The lady's abductor is actually her lover, and they are running away together. She loathes her husband, who often slips her a sleeping draft (as he did tonight) to ensure she does not engage in any clandestine activity. Both the lover and the lady will be very surprised — and probably not too pleased — to have their plan interrupted. The lady asks the heroes to save her maid from her vile husband and then flees to the night with her lover.



The characters return to the house to see if they can contact a maid named Lysette. Regardless of the state in which they find her (calmly going about her business, hiding from the husband, or about to leave the estate), they learn that the master of the house plans to take terrible advantage of her. His wife's abduction may be just the distraction he needed to visit his desires on the poor girl. He is a powerful man, socially and physically, so any resistance on Lysette's part will have dire consequences for the young woman. He is accustomed to getting what he wants, and will not take "no" for an answer. At some point during all of this, the party learns that Lysette is also a member of Sophia's Daughters. This opens up a number of possibilities — is she there to spy on her master? Is she trying to make contact with someone? Was her mistress involved in the plot or merely a conveniently unhappy noblewoman?

Much of this adventure depend on the group's first encounter and how involved they are with the Order. It could become a race against time or a subtle investigation to assist Sophia's Daughters.

The Business of Love

The half-Sidhe knight Sir Padyrn of Summersfall has fallen in love. The object of his affection is a jenny named Nicola Prentice, a young woman very much out for herself. She was rather pleased at hooking a man as dashing and fair as this knight — so much so, in fact, that she very nearly considered not charging him for her services. When he began romancing her and pledging undying love, she knew he was worth milking, so she appeared to reciprocate the feelings for as long as she could.

Unfortunately, the naïve Padyrn took this to mean she felt the same passionate and deep-seated love that he felt for her. He trusted her far more than he should, and made the terrible mistake of telling her all about himself — which included his adventures in Bryn Bresail, and his membership of the "Sons of Lugh," the Sidhe side of Sophia's Daughters.

Nicola realized this information was worth a great deal of money. While her ardent lover was away, Nicola made contact with the local Inquisition and arranged a meeting. Luckily Sir Padyrn had a habit of speaking openly about his life with his friends, so when he told them what he had done, they realized his obvious mistake. They bring in the heroes to help defuse the situation, and put Padyrn under lock and key for his own good until the whole mess can be resolved.

Meanwhile, the lovely but cold-hearted Nicola waits in the nearby inn for the Inquisition to make contact and offer her money for her information. However, now that she has had time to think, she is having second thoughts. She is beginning to realize the feelings Padyrn has for her are real and worse: that she is beginning to feel the same way for him.

The heroes need to find a way to talk Nicola out of telling the Inquisition. Failing that, they need a back-up plan. The Inquisitor will be arriving soon after they confront Nicola (unless they manage to burst into the room at Just the Right Moment), expecting to be told a great secret. They may even find themselves trying to rescue Nicola (the girl they were hired to "deal with") from the very Inquisitors she contacted!

The Witches of Escavalon

Escavalon was once one of the most bountiful farmlands in Avalon. Now it is a center of unrest and suspicion. Neighbors cast a nervous eye towards each other and constantly whisper rumors and innuendo. It all began with a series of inexplicable events including curdling milk, sick farm animals, and strange illnesses. At first, most blamed some mischievous Sidhe, but the normal protections (such as rings of clover and cast iron) have had no effect. Now things have escalated and constant reports circle of eerie chanting at midnight, men sickening or even dying, and the worst harvest in years.

A group of young women claimed that they were bewitched by three spinsters and forced to cavort with the forces of Legion. While most dismissed the accusations, the strange activities are beginning to form a pattern around the three. Most of the illness has been within an hour's walk of one of the three women. Mysterious voices come from the ponds or streams passing through their lands and while none of the three interacts much with outsiders, they always seem well informed about the world at large. Finally, a mob could take no more and seized the three, meaning to put them to death. However, Henry Cardigan, a legal scholar on sabbatical, insisted that the women must have a fair trial. When no one would defend the spinsters, they put the question to a group of strangers traveling through the area: defend the witches or allow them to die without a trial. The people of the area refuse to wait for a judge or Knight; they insist the trial must be tomorrow before the first night of the full moon.

Despite the peasants' suspicions, the three spinsters are guiltless of the accusations. They belong to Sophia's Daughters, a group with many mysterious powers and the ability to see events transpiring across Théah. All three retired from any active participation in the group, but their presence presented a threat to the true culprit, Henry Cardigan. Cardigan made a pact with the Unseelie for mysterious powers that even he does not truly understand, and means to form a coven of witches in the area. He will use the trial to foster suspicion and hatred among the innocent peoples of Escavalon.

The Vaticine Church

Sheep Among Wolves

Cardinal Carouso della Spada Lucani has invited members of the Gnostic Order to hold their annual Forum in his Archdiocese. In the last two years, the Gnostic Order, an organization consisting of priests dedicated to the study of the Creator's Puzzle and the dissemination of knowledge, has come under increased scrutiny from the Inquisition. The Cardinal could shield the Order from the Inquisition, however, his radical reputation might drag them down with him, should the Cardinal himself be put to the Question.

Although the leaders of the Gnostic Order decide not to risk attending Lucani's gathering, the last thing they want to do is snub the Cardinal, so many of them end up sending subordinates in their stead. One of the priests invited to go chooses a hero as his representative. Unbeknownst to the Cardinal, the Inquisition has sent their own spy, posing as a humble friar from Eisen.

The panels and presentations that the Cardinal puts together for the Forum turn out to be a bit much even for the open-minded Gnostic priests, and run the gamut from Crescent art to a collection of Syrneth artifacts fished from the sea. The Cardinal is unaware that these artifacts, when kept in close proximity to a sleeping human, have the ability to draw forth ghosts from the sleeper's mind and render them visible to the waking eye. Recently masked men, hands covered in blood, have appeared wandering the halls of the Cardinal's palace at night. A few have even begun speaking to the Cardinal's guests.

If anyone were to discover the origin of these strange visions, the Inquisition would reap a terrible bounty. The players must find a way to banish the spirits without bringing down the wrath of the Defenders of the Faith.

A House Divided Against Itself

Cardinal Sergio Bilardo has fallen gravely ill. He is not expected to live much longer, and the Hieros Council has convened in Vaticine City to discuss his replacement. In the meantime, a trio of monastic scholars has been assigned to put the Cardinal's papers in order.

While going through these papers, the monks discover a trunk containing etchings of the human form, along with what appears to be a copy of a block of Syrneth text, and a journal written in Cardinal Bilardo's own hand. The journal theorizes that the etchings could be instructions for creating human life, or a formula used by the Syrneth to transform themselves into human beings. Further, the journal posits that these Syrneth creatures may walk among humanity even now, and contains evidence of a conspiracy within the Vaticine Church that actively conceals the existence of these creatures from the rest of Théah.

The monks choose to report the matter to their Monsignor, who asked them to keep the matter quiet and turn over all controversial materials to him. The Cardinal is on his deathbed and the Monsignor wants to avoid a scandal. Unfortunately for the Monsignor, one of the monks doesn't have the stomach for the deception and reports the matter to the Inquisition... which dispatches a group of Defenders of the Faith to collect the materials and arrest everyone involved. Luckily, Largo Gallegos de Aldana, a die Kreuzritter agent within the Inquisition, passes along the information regarding the journal to his society. A group of Black Crosses is sent to retrieve Bilardo's journal and eliminate any evidence of the society's goals and activities.

The Defenders of the Faith arrive at the Monsignor's apartments just as the Black Crosses are rummaging through them. A fight ensues, and the Monsignor is caught in the crossfire and killed. The remaining two monks witness the Monsignor's death and flee in the confusion. Cardinal Verdugo, who knows of die Kreuzritter's existence but little about the group's size, capabilities, and true motives, decides that these heretical documents are the key to uncovering a vast conspiracy within the Church itself. He publicly denounces Bilardo and launches a purge of the Church, starting with the fugitive monks. Cardinal Carouso della Spada Lucani voices his opposition to Verdugo and offers the monks sanctuary in his Archdiocese in Vodacce. Lacking a Hierophant and without a tenth Cardinal, the Church itself may

schism as the remaining Cardinals align themselves with either Verdugo or Lucani.

Cardinal Christina however, has other plans. She contracts the characters to quietly intercept the monks before they reach their destination, liberate Bilardo's papers, and return them to her. She explains that once the lightning rod of this controversy disappears, the storm will abate. In reality, Christina has a group of powerful patrons interested in the etchings, patrons who do not want to become directly involved. Even if the heroes manage to stop the Vaticine Church from fragmenting, they may end up delivering the secret of creating human life into the hands of Alvara Arciniega.

(Alternately, the characters could be brought in by one of the other factions. Die Kreuzritter could send them in to retrieve Bilardo's journals and sanction anyone unfortunate enough to have read them. Or they could be importuned by Cardinal Carouso to fend off the Inquisition long enough for him to study the documents. The players might even be devout Vaticines, driven into the arms of the Inquisition out of fear of the intellectual excesses of Carouso and his adherents.)

Regardless of how the characters enter the story, their pursuit of the monks should lead them through parts of Castille, Eisen, and Vodacce, and put them at odds with agents of the Inquisition and die Kreuzritter, in addition to elements of the Vaticine Church and perhaps even Novus Ordum Mundi. (Note: if you adhere to the timeline, see Chapter Four for specific events relating to this adventure.)

The Objectionist Church

Nearer My God To Thee

On the cold and sleeting shores of Avalon dwells a small sect of Objectionists known as the Theites. Fiercely austere souls, Theites are strict in their observances, solid in their devotion to the written word of the Prophets, and unwavering in their condemnation of sorcery and its trappings. Those trappings, as far as the Theites are concerned, include wealth, dancing, drinking, and foppish dress. These dour souls, though hard-working and honest, are widely disliked in Avalon. Their faith has been known to make the Sidhe queasy and Glamour rarely works in their presence, as they see straight through it to the reality beneath.

To escape some sort of mysterious curse, a group of Theites has decided that Theus wishes them to make their homes in a new land — a land they can devote to His worship, free from sorcery and Legion's Imps. A group of them approach the heroes, seeking to hire them on for protection, transport (if the party has a ship; if they do not, the Theites charter one), or both. They work hard and spend prudently, and can thus afford to pay the heroes very well for their assistance on the voyage to the Midnight Archipelago, where they intend to settle on an uninhabited island.

Unfortunately, shortly after the voyage departs from Cardican, it becomes apparent that the mysterious curse has followed the Theites, as ill luck and minor accidents plague the vessel. A disguised Sidhe, angry that the Theites' devotion to their god allows mere mortals to resist the will of the Goodly

Folke, has impersonated a member of the congregation to teach the mortals a lesson in respect — and have some fun while he is about it. It is up to the heroes to discover, then drive off or placate, the angry Fae before the vessel sinks or worse.

Such a task is far more difficult than it appears. The party has a powerful Sidhe angry with them, and all they have to count upon are their wits, their swords, and the faith of the Theites. (See *The Church of the Prophets™* and *Avalon™* for more details.)

Thine Be The Glory

A council of Apostles selected from each nation has spent the past fourteen years gathering songs of worship from their various congregations. They have gathered in Siegsburg to debate which to include in the first Objectionist Hymnary, a collection of songs, paraphrases of the Prophets' teachings, and devotional chants. The Council hopes that as the faithful raise their voices as one in devotion to Theus, the disparate strains of Objectionism will be united.

Unbeknownst to the Apostles, agents of the Vaticine Church are creating a false Hymnary that will fan the flames of controversy and argument among the heretic Objectionists. They plan to substitute the forgery for the real Hymnary as it makes its dangerous overland journey to Prachtig where it is to be printed and distributed throughout Théah.

Where could the Objectionists find heroes brave enough to take this important manuscript on the perilous trail through the Weissbergen and the Schwartzwalden?

A Mighty Fortress Is Our Lord

A small farming community in Vestenmannavnjar has cast aside the worship of the Grumfather and the Living Runes, eschewing their peoples' warlike ways in exchange for the peaceful teachings of the Prophets. Taking up the lives of Liberans, they have angered a local *skjæren* who has besieged the hapless farmers with storm and blight, withering their crops and shattering their simple homes.

The characters find themselves in Kirk where they meet an influential Vendel merchant and charity patron who tells a heart-rending tale about a community of devout Liberans. He would be profoundly grateful if someone could save the community from the wrath of the *skjæren*. All they have to do is run a cargo of food across a hostile sea to a community of proud and stubborn Vestenmannavnjar who are likely unwilling to accept their help. Oh, and fight off a furious and powerful *skjæren* and her axe-wielding cohorts before they burn the village to the ground and slay the Liberans (and the heroes) for the insult they have rendered to Grumfather. (See *The Church of the Prophets™* and *Vesten/Vendel™* for more details.)

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

Early one morning a polite, soft-spoken Highlander traveler approaches the heroes. Although he is obviously tired, he refuses to sit and partake of refreshment. He states his case simply and succinctly — he represents a group of Objectionist scholars who wish to print a rare volume on doctrine. It resides in the private collection of a wealthy patron of the arts who lives in the local area. Having heard of them by reputation, he beseeches them to obtain the volume for him, playing to whatever the party is renowned for — helping the needy, furthering the cause of philosophy, or accepting money in exchange for services.

After speaking with him, any scholars particularly well versed in Objectionist theology may recognize him for an Apocryphast, a member of a small Church of Highland Objectionists who collect works on religion banned by the Third Prophet (whom they are convinced was a charlatan). They firmly believe the Third Prophet has yet to appear and seek to prove to the wider world that the doctrines of the "Third Prophet" should be cast away from the Church for the corrupting influences that they are.

Of course, getting the book will be very difficult as the collector is suspicious of everyone and has hired large dogs and larger guards to patrol the gated grounds. He has also installed pressure pads that ring alarm bells beneath certain tiles on the library floor. He can, however, be flattered into allowing the heroes to see the book, and may gloat about his impenetrable fortress, offering quick-thinking and fast-talking characters an opportunity to fool him into revealing its weaknesses before they steal the book.

Regardless of how the heroes get the book, if they peruse its pages before handing it over to the Highlander, they will discover that their troubles are far from over. Rather than the 10th Century liturgical discourse the cover announces it to be, the book is nothing less than the *Prophecies of Marius of Tyana*, a tome written shortly after the time of the First Prophet. The Third Prophet declared it heretical, and all copies were thought destroyed. Written in a small Numan port in southern Montaigne and based on conversations with the disciples of the First Prophet, Marius details what will be expected of future prophets. His description of the Second Prophet is accurate to the finest details, but his description of the Third Prophet is nothing at all like history describes.

The revelation of this book would likely shake the Vaticine Church to its core, and bring fierce persecution down upon the Apocryphasts. It is up to the heroes to decide whether or not they turn the book over, which would validate the arguments of the radical Highlanders, or destroy it and maintain the status quo. (See *The Church of the Prophets™* for more details.)

CHAPTER FOUR:

Where Do We Go From Here?

About Metaplot

Loosely defined, a “metaplot” is the overarching or most important storyline in a plot. It is the plot from which all the other subplots are derived. When AEG released *7th Sea* in 1999, the designers built an elaborate world with subplots that wove in and out of a master or metaplot. Debating the relative merits of a metaplot is one of the favorite pastimes of gamers and game designers alike.

Within the *7th Sea* community itself there are those who follow the metaplot to the letter, those who take from it what they want, and those who disregard it almost completely — and all of them are equally correct. It behooves designers to present the metaplot as fastidiously as possible, which gives the players the maximum number of options for their campaign. Those who have built their games around the story won't be left out in the cold, while those with different notions have the widest array of possibilities from which to pick and choose. In the case of *7th Sea*, we have tried to balance stories in this book with Théah's metaplot, and offer suggestions on how the characters can be involved. For while the sourcebooks detail the exploits of kings and villains, your characters are always the center of the story. They are Théah's heroes, far more than even the most important NPC.

Below is a series of brief vignettes outlining the major events in Théah for the next five years of game time. They are painted in broad strokes, rather than fine details, and are intended to help GMs so inclined to plan out their campaign. Many of them are left open-ended, allowing your heroes to take a hand in shaping the events which unfold

(or even replace certain NPCs if they fit the role). As always, GMs are encouraged to take what they want from the material and use it for the benefit of the group. In the end, it's not so much whether you know the exact moment that a major NPC did a specific thing but whether you had a good time playing the game.

1670

Montaigne

Impressed with the courage and dignity of her prisoner Montegue (and egged on by back-room negotiations with the Vaticine Church; see the “Tower of Faith” adventure on page 35), Fauner Pösen decides to let him go free. In fact, she offers to give him funds and troops to march on Montaigne and restore the monarchy. She hates chaos, and has seen more than enough in her own nation. It is clear to her that the Revolutionary government in Charouse has no idea how to run a country, and that their good intentions have deteriorated into terror and bloodshed. Montegue agrees with her in principle, but wishes to learn the whereabouts of his wife before committing to restoring order in Montaigne.

Thanks to her intervention, Montegue has a very secret reunion with Anne and Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, the heads of the government in exile, who agree that he is the best man for the job. They pledge their support and that of Cherie Montaigne de Aldana as well. The stage is set for a triumphant return to bring peace to the greatest nation in Théah. Only one thing remains to be done...

The night before Montegue de Montaigne was due to cross the border into his homeland, he sat in the back room of a heavily-guarded inn awaiting the arrival of the woman he had not seen in more than two years. Although he was a brave and sometimes reckless man, his heart was pounding and his hands were shaking like a schoolboy's. Dominique, his beautiful wife... He could only imagine what life had been like for her since he left for the snow-choked lands of Ussura. He had heard wild stories but he knew that once they were together, all would be well.

There was a knock at the door and he leapt out of his chair. The door swung open and the room was filled with his wife's heady perfume. A thousand memories rushed into his head as he watched her pull back the hood of her voluminous velvet cloak and remove a mask from her face. She was still incredibly beautiful but almost gaunt and her eyes showed great sorrow. Her smile was fleeting, but she came into his arms without hesitation and hid her face in his shoulder.

"Ma belle," he whispered as he held her tight in his strong arms. He could face anything now that they were back together. He never got over the amazement of being the husband of the Empereur's youngest daughter, and elevated to the heights he had achieved.

He led her to the bed but she pulled away and sat down at the table instead. He was surprised but realized that they had much to discuss. He poured a glass of wine for her and nodded. "I am so sorry to learn about our little son. Tell me what happened. What have they done to you?"

"It is a long story, husband, one that does not have a happy ending. It was a long and painful labor that lasted two days. Two days of blinding pain. I screamed until I had no voice left. Anna was with me, but neither my mother nor my father came to see me. I was alone. In pain. When I awakened, Anna told me it was a boy."

Montegue reached for her hand but she withdrew it and put it in her lap. Her expression did not change and her husband sat back, confused at the rebuff. He watched as the Princesse stood and shrugged off her cloak onto the chair. She began to pace as she continued her story.

"A son. A boy. I wanted to name him Douleur for the pain he had caused me but Anna said we must name him Léon after my father." She paused. "Anna and I had a little secret, though. The months of my confinement had not been idle ones. We spent the time poring through dusty old books. We read the ancient texts and she worked the Strands. And then we found it. A ritual. A dark deadly ritual. And my newborn child was the key to it. Nothing should have gone wrong. We were so careful."

The veteran of countless battles, the man who had seen his own troops die in the crushing snows of Ussura felt his stomach twist and turn in sickening loops.

"The child is alive?" he gasped.

"We told my father that it was stillborn. He was furious, of course. He came into my room and screamed at me. Told me that I had never been anything but a disappointment to him — of all his children, the one born without the sacred gift of Porté. He told me that as soon as I could walk I was to leave the palace and never return."

Montegue was unable to respond. What could he say? The horror of her experience, yes, but his son?! The son he thought had died upon entering this world, alive!?

"Wouldn't my father be surprised to learn that he was wrong? Oh yes, quite wrong."

The reality of her actions filled him with disgust. He looked at her in disbelief. "What did you do to my son?"

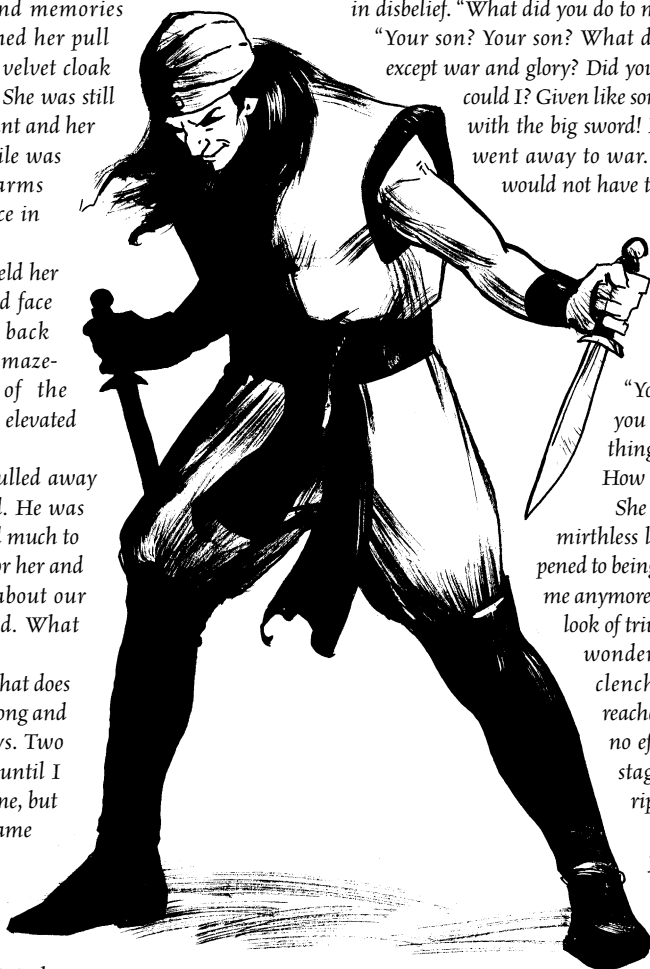
"Your son? Your son? What did you ever care about anything except war and glory? Did you think I actually loved you? How could I? Given like some cow as a prize to the peasant boy with the big sword! I hated you. I was glad when you went away to war. I prayed for your death. Then I would not have to submit to your fumbling caresses and your pathetic need to please my father. The child is mine, Montegue! As is his power..."

Montegue rose abruptly from his chair, which fell back with a thud on the wooden floor. "You selfish, spoiled monster! I gave you my heart! I would have done anything for you! I loved you, Dominique! How could you do such a thing?"

She threw back her head with a harsh, mirthless laugh. "A monster, eh? What happened to being your beloved wife? You don't want me anymore?" Her voice rose to a crescendo. The look of triumph on her face changed to one of wonder as she gazed at her hands. She clenched her fists several times, then reached out in front of her. With almost no effort, she parted the air. Montegue staggered back as his demented wife ripped open a rent in space.

"No power? No power, father? At last I will be free of you!" She flung herself into the void and disappeared. The last thing Montegue remembered before he slipped to the floor in a

faint was the sound of her triumphant, maniacal laughter.



Arnaud de Charouse had become an uncontrollable tyrant, and along with the Commission of National Welfare, continued the relentless pursuit of "enemies of the state." He feared for the loss of what he felt he had built, and saw a fearful future for Montaigne if the monarchy were to be restored. The Frenzy grew in intensity as the Council of Eight sent hundreds of people a day to *le coiffeur*. The populace began to realize that he was every bit as bad, if not worse, than the ruler they were so eager to depose.

Then came the rumors. Montegue was alive. Montegue had returned. Montegue was marching towards the capital with an army of liberators. Alarmed by the growing reports, the Council of Eight dispatched its spies to ensure that the People's General never reached Charouse.

1671

Castille

A somber Montegue emerged from the encounter with his wife determined to at last bring freedom to his country. With Pösen's troops in support — as well as allies in the Church and other companions — he led a growing army towards the capital. Peasants began to flock to his side. Swordsmen pledged themselves to his cause. The assassins sent by the Council were thwarted, and though the Musketeers threatened to cause some trouble, they too were sickened by the Revolution's bloody excess. Montegue could be no worse than the fanatics in Charouse.

As a man of the people, Montegue realized that the Revolution had brought some much-needed reform and pledged to create a more sensible political relationship between the Crown and the Parlement. He believed that Arnaud and the Commission should be brought to public trial and forced to face the people they had tormented. The Council of Eight tried to rally its most loyal troops, but Montegue's forces tossed them aside like rag dolls. They arrived in Charouse to cheering crowds, seized the Parlement building, and arrested the leaders of the Revolution. In a heartbeat, the Frenzy had ended, the bloodshed stilled.

The trial was swift. Members of Parlement, sensing a change in the political wind, denounced Arnaud du Charouse as a tyrant and sentenced he and his closest advisors to death. The Committee of National Welfare was to be disbanded, and its leaders (including Marie Paix) to be executed as well. In the interests of clemency, the remainder of the Council of Eight was spared, but sentenced to permanent house arrest and barred from ever holding political office again.

Montegue was hard-pressed to protect the prisoners from death at the hands of eager vigilantes, but he realized that the Frenzy could never truly end without one last display. On a cold and sunless morning, the architect of the Revolution climbed the wooden stairs and proudly offered himself as *Le Coiffeur's* last victim. His final words rang across the square.

"Tyrants surround you and tyranny's friends conspire to rob you of hope. I have acted only in the interests of my people, and I pray that my best efforts outlive the flaws for which you condemn me. You must smother the enemies of the Republic or perish with it. Vive le Revolution!"

With that, the Frenzy came to an end and the peasant General ascended the throne as King Montegue I, the new ruler de Montaigne. He wasted no time in putting his house in order. Quietly aided by his surviving sisters-in-law, he set about reforming the Montaigne government, using Queen Elaine's innovations as a guide. Parlement remained intact (though the more vocal members were quietly encouraged to step down) as an advisory body to the king, with provisions left in place to prevent the sort of abuses both the Revolution and l'Empereur's government had inflicted. The Musketeers returned to their position as defenders of the king and Montegue soon turned out a new set of tenets for them to enforce: guarantees of liberty, religious freedom, and due process. The Revolutionary flag remained intact (no one wished to be reminded of Léon), but in spirit only. *Le coiffeur* fell silent, and while deep problems still remained, Montaigne finally looked to the future with a sense of hope.

Despite the fact that Montaigne was a hated enemy, young King Sandoval felt emboldened by the actions of General Montegue to take a stand for his own freedom. He decided he would be king — a true king — and he could think of no one else to be his queen than Maria-Soledad Rivera y Aldana.

Maria-Soledad arrived at the King's personal training room for their weekly fencing practice. She had come to enjoy the time they spent together, perfecting the intricate moves of the Aldana School. While no match for the daughter of the man who invented the technique, he had steadily improved and what he lacked in talent he made up for in enthusiasm and eagerness to learn.

Their lesson did not go as well as usual, for the young King seemed distracted. The instructor finally ordered them to stop before someone got hurt.

"Forgive me, maestro," Sandoval said with a salute. "I have much on my mind."

"There is no need to apologize, Your Majesty. I just wish to prevent either of my students from sustaining an injury. In the future, you need but tell me when affairs of state press upon you and we shall postpone the lesson."

The handsome young Castillian bowed to his teacher, who returned the bow and left the room.

Maria-Soledad began to gather her fencing gear when she felt Sandoval's hand on her arm. "Mi amiga, one moment, if you don't mind."

She smiled at her king. They had grown up together and she was fond of him... perhaps more than fond.. "Sire, what troubles you? How may I help ease your mind?"

"Well, for one thing, you can call me Sandoval." He grinned at her and she smiled back. "Come, let us go for a walk in the garden."

He held the door open and followed her into the private gardens which offered a beautifully landscaped and peaceful respite from the commotion of the combat training room. They walked for a bit and Sandoval guided her to a stone bench set amongst a small stand of fragrant trees.

"It is so beautiful here, Sandoval, I don't see how you can stay away!"

The young king looked at her with longing.

"It is beautiful because you are here."

Maria-Soledad gasped slightly, her heart suddenly beating faster. The King of Castille continued. "I have not spoken to your father, but my heart is so full that I must tell you how I feel now before I lose the courage. You are... you are the most beautiful woman in Castille and I love you. I think I have loved you forever. I know that you may not return those feelings, but if you do, or if you think you can, I would ask you to be my wife." He had taken her hand at some point and held it tightly in his.

"I... I don't know what to say! I... your wife. That means I would be..."

"Yes, you would be the Queen." He smiled at her as he leaned forward and gave her a gentle kiss that lasted longer than either of them intended.

Maria-Soledad started to speak, but Sandoval placed his finger on her lips and shook his head. "Do not tell me today, mi corazón. I still must ask your father for your hand and I do not wish to anger the most powerful swordsman in Castille!"

They both laughed and walked back towards the training room with the light step of those under the spell of young love.

Even as the King professed his love for Maria-Soledad, Cardinal Verdugo launched a plot to bring down El Vago once and for all, and deliver the troublemaker into the hands of the Inquisition. Verdugo and his agents had spent months laying the plans and now the trap would be sprung. Little did he know what consequences his scheme would have...

Don Andrés Aldana was donning the white mask when his daughter slipped into the room through a secret doorway. "Father! What do you think you are doing?"

"I am riding to the aid of an old friend, my daughter, but I think it will be the last time. This old body of mine is not what it used to be," he said ruefully as he stretched a bit and turned head back and forth.

"Don't be silly, father. You are still the man you always were, but is this wise? The Cardinal has his spies everywhere."

"I know, but this is something that I and I alone must do." He kissed her lightly on the forehead and gathered his riding gloves. "Wish me luck!" he said as he slipped through the same door she had used to enter the room.

"Good luck, papa!" It was only after he had gone that she realized she had forgotten to tell him her news.

Sadly, luck was not with the good Don that day and he walked into betrayal with a trusting heart. Before he realized what had happened, he was surrounded by Inquisition guards and beaten senseless. When he awakened, he knew he was in a dungeon but did not know where. Every time he tried to query the guards he was met with silence and more blows.

He was half-dragged up from his cell into a large room where his nemesis, Cardinal Verdugo sat, looking like the cat that swallowed the canary whole.

"Ah, my dear Don Andrés! So, my suspicious were true. Forgive my guards' enthusiasm, but they are fanatically loyal to our good King and are angered that his thoughts might be poisoned by a heretic and a traitor."

"I am neither, Verdugo, and you know that." Aldana could barely speak but he found the strength to retort with some degree of contempt.

"I know no such thing, Don Andrés. That remains for your judges to decide."

"My judges? Only the King may judge a nobleman, Cardinal, not some hastily-assembled cadre of flunkies who do your bidding without question."

Verdugo smiled coldly. "I see that the heresy has done its work on you, my son. What a pity."

Aldana sat, because he was too weak to stand, before a panel of four Inquisitors that included Cardinal Verdugo. A list of his "crimes" were read and confirmed by witnesses whom Aldana had never seen. The sentence, swiftly delivered, was death by hanging. In the morning, Aldana realized that none of his people knew where he was and it would take a miracle for someone to betray the fanatical churchman amid such surroundings. All he could do was pray.

Much later than night, Maria-Soledad awakened from her sleep. A distraught servant told her that Don Andrés was a

prisoner in the Cardinal's dungeon and sentenced for execution at dawn for his crimes against the nation as El Vago. The girl flew out of bed and frantically began making plans for his rescue. She would lead the assault herself and batter down the doors of the Cardinal's estate until he released her father.

Before dawn, the small plaza outside Cardinal Verdugo's palace was rapidly filling with people. The execution of El Vago was to be public, to reassure the populace of the Church's strength. Some of them could not believe that Don Andrés was a vicious criminal. Surely the good Cardinal had made some terrible mistake! Others could not believe that he had been caught, and were prepared to take action. All they needed was a spark.

In the cold grey dawn, the crowd watched in stunned silence as Inquisition guards led a bruised and battered Don Andrés Bejarano del Aldana, nobleman of the highest rank and the most renowned swordsman in Castille, up the stairs of the wooden scaffold. As the hangman placed the noose around the Don's neck, the Cardinal, who was standing next to a stony-faced young king, spoke in a calm, steady voice. Much to the dismay of the assembled members of Los Vagos, Maria-Soledad was nowhere to be seen and more Inquisition guards moved silently into the plaza.

"People of Castille! You see before you a traitor of the worst kind." An angry murmur rose from the crowd, which was stilled by the Cardinal's upraised hand (and a threatening movement from the guards.) "A man who earned the trust of our young king, only to betray him at every turn, using his power and influence to foment revolution! At last we have found El Vago and now he must pay for his treason with his life!" A woman screamed from deep in the crowd but was immediately quieted.

Verdugo wasted very little time in the proceedings. He did not grant Don Andrés the opportunity to speak any final words for fear that his "poison would taint the hearts and minds of the faithful." The Cardinal did not even grant him the courtesy of a blindfold. The hangman placed the thick rope about Aldana's neck and waited for the signal.

At that moment, the sound of hoofbeats filled the plaza as a band of riders thundered up to the crowd. The figure at the front, pulled back her hood to reveal the white-masked face of El Vago. "He is here! El Vago is here!" someone shouted, and the crowd erupted into bedlam. In the ensuing pandemonium, the crowd rushed the guards and fighting broke out. No one but the executioner and the accused saw the Cardinal give the signal. Aldana smiled at Verdugo with a look of triumph and pity as the rope snapped around his neck.

The guards tried to move on the small band of horsemen, but the riotous assemblage gave them no opening. Those close enough to strike back were overwhelmed by the Vagos. Maria-Soledad charged forward onto the scaffold, sword drawn. She held the weapon to the executioner's throat and screamed at him to cut the rope. Gathering her father's body in her arms she collapsed on the wooden platform. A murmur rose and became a roar as the people saw what had happened. They turned towards the steps and the Cardinal, their mood ugly and threatening.

The King had the sense to pull the priest back inside the building and ordered the remaining guards to bolt the door. His voice was harsh and strained, but undeniably that of a ruler.

"It appears that you have made a grievous error, Cardinal. You have murdered an innocent man."

"Your Majesty knows that is not true."

“What I know is irrelevant. The people have seen you condemn Don Aldana as El Vago, yet El Vago even now stands over his body. In their eyes, you have executed an innocent.”

The Cardinal moved to retort, but Sandoval held up his hand.

“At this moment, I hold the power of life and death over you. The crowd is maddened. Unless something is done, they will batter down the doors and overwhelm my guards. Will you stand on that balcony and attempt to calm them before they tear you limb from limb? Do you trust your tongue enough to risk your life on it, Esteban?”

All of the color drained out of the Cardinal’s face. “You will tell them, your Majesty. You will go out there and speak to them—”

“Why should I do that?” Sandoval smoldered. “Why shouldn’t I command those doors to be opened and let the crowd deal with you as a traitor deserves?”

A long silence reigned. Then from ashen lips, Verdugo’s voice dripped with venom. “What do you want?”

Sandoval smiled sharply. “I want the title promised to me when I first took the throne. I want the authority that is mine by right, and which you have conspired to keep from me all these years. I want Rex Castillium, your Eminence.”

“That... that will take time,” the Cardinal sought to stall the inevitable.

“Time is something you no longer have. You have bled Castille dry for too long and now I plan to set my people free. What say you, then? Will it be my Crown or your life?”

Verdugo’s eyes were furious, defiant, unbowed. But he lowered them with greatest reluctance and bowed before the young man.

“I submit to your wishes, my lord King. It shall be as you command.”

Sandoval did his best to hide the surge of joy and perhaps of terror that he felt. “A wise choice, Cardinal.” The two men stepped up to the door and Verdugo shouted, “Open in the name of the King!”

A great state funeral was held and Don Andrés was buried alongside his wife with all the honors befitting a hero of the nation. After the services, the newly-crowned King came to pay his condolences privately to the girl he loved. Even in her mourning garb, her face as white as snow, she was impossibly beautiful and he thought his heart would break to see her so distraught. She made a formal curtsy but would not take his hand.

“I am so sorry. There was nothing I could do.”

She looked at him, her face white and shining with a flood of tears.

“He was a hero. He loved Castille. And he loved you.” Her voice was a harsh whisper. “El Vago was too late to save him.”

The young king placed his hand on her shoulder. “All of Castille mourns with you, my lady. We shall not see his like again soon.”

She nodded and then straightened.

“Your Majesty, you have paid me the great honor of asking me to marry you. I did not have a chance to share this news with my...” her voice broke slightly, “father before he died. I must now ask that you give me time to conduct a proper mourning period before I give you my answer.”

“My dearest love, you may have all the time you need. Know that I am ever your champion and I swear to you that your father’s death will not go unavenged.”

“Castille needs no more bloodshed, my lord King, but I thank you for your kindness. And now if you will excuse me...” She curtsied once again and exited the room, leaving behind a young man with the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Vestenmannavnjar

With the help of some like-minded heroes, the Raider Yngvild Olafssdottir managed to locate several of the Living Runes, including Kjöt (Flesh), Ensomhet (Solitude), and Host (Harvest). She admonished them to accompany her, though her purpose was at that time unknown. Kjöt refused, but the other two shook off their lethargy and followed her path.

Her task was not yet completed. As far as she knew, Stands (Calm) was somewhere in the Mirror Sea and Kyndighet (Skill) waited somewhere along the southern coast of the Crescent Empire. There had also been stories of a Vestenmannavnjar healer in Castille who might have been Bevegelse (Empathy). Hers was a quest for the hardest of adventurers with a desire to see parts of the world that most Théans will never hear about — let alone see — in their lifetimes.

(Assuming she or her allies can collect enough of the Living Runes, Yngvild then plans to prove that the legend of Gâte is true and sail to the West to find him. Should she find the means, she may even travel to the fabled lands of Valhalla to consult with the Living Runes trapped there: Krieg, Liden-skap, Kjølig, Styrke, and Villskap. As to why she needs them, it remains a mystery for now...)

1672

Avalon

Sir Bors was making his final pass through the halls of the private quarters before retiring for the night when he heard a commotion in the Queen’s chambers. His sword was out and he was through the doors practically before his heart beat twice. What he saw froze him in place as he tried to understand the picture before him.

There was blood everywhere. Sir Lawrence Lugh knelt beside the Queen’s bed, his sword on the carpet beside him, its pristine blade now crimson. A creature perched on the windowsill like a bird of prey, pointing at the scene and laughing maniacally. The inert form of Elaine, ruler of the Glamour Isles, lay motionless on the bed, her skin the color of ash, making a stark contrast to the blood that drenched her gown.

Meryth (for that was indeed who crouched in the window), looked at Sir Bors, her normally flat dark eyes gleaming with madness. “The Queen is dead! Long live the Queen!” With that she leapt out into the air and vanished into thin air.

Upon hearing those words, Sir Lawrence Lugh let out a strangled cry of such anguish that Sir Bors thought the iron-handed knight’s heart surely must have cracked. Lugh looked down at his hands and said in a strangled whisper, “Tis my hands that are bloody now. Farewell, my beloved.” Sir Bors moved towards his brother knight but the former Sidhe was too fast. Lugh rose to his full height and — before the guards who had gathered at the door could react — he pushed past them and fled.

“Follow him!” yelled Bors as he turned to attend to his Queen. A swift examination revealed that she was not dead but close to it. The knight began to shout orders as he worked to staunch the flow of blood from her side. “Where in the name of Legion is Derwyddon?”

Hours later, the royal chamber had been restored to some semblance of order. The Queen lay upon fresh bedding, her wound healed through the combined efforts of powerful Glamour mages and those wise in the ancient ways of healing. A steady pulse beat in her heart but she remained still as stone. There was no question that there was more at work here than a stab wound from a human blade.

Sir Bors convened the Knights of Elaine and the Queen's advisors in an emergency session and presented the problem. While the Queen still lived in a sense, she might as well be dead. When pressed to appoint a Regent, Bors declined and made it clear that his first duty lay in protecting Elaine, not replacing her. Any selection, he reasoned, would incite controversy, and could plunge the nation back into civil war. The assembled nobles agreed that a message must be sent to the High King James MacDuff, offering him the crown of the Glamour Isles, and a deputation was selected to head to the Highlands.

News travels fast but bad news travels faster. The High King knew about the attack on Elaine even before the nobles arrived with the message from Sir Bors. He entered the council chambers with a heavy heart to meet with as many of the Highland Council of Advisors as could be convened on such short notice. Even the MacBrides were there, more than a little interested in whether they would at last have their long-desired separation from Avalon.

The handsome MacDuff explained the situation, that the Queen of Avalon suffered an attack both physical and magical, and even now lay somewhere between life and death. When he told them that he had been offered the Crown of Avalon, to rule over both nations as one, gasps of surprise and anger met his words, as well as some expressions of incipient victory among the Separatists. As honored as he was by the offer, he explained, he could not in good conscience make a decision without discussing it in Council. Heated debate amongst the Highland lairds ensued. The MacBrides and the MacDonalds saw this as a chance for true independence — without a queen, Avalon would be in no position to argue.

In the end the decision was the MacDuff's alone, but he was a wise man and knew that he must do as he has always done. Were he to assume the throne, many Avalonians would consider him a usurper, and the Marches would be torn asunder as well. Civil War looked likely, and he would not allow the Marches to fall into chaos — not even for the sake of the queen he loved. With greatest reluctance, he concurred with the MacBrides, and declined to take the Avalon throne.

Jack O'Bannon of Inismore knew about Elaine almost the moment after it happened. That damned Maab! What was she about? Upsetting the balance in the Glamour Isles meant that he would be sucked into that stupid war among the sisters. Yet he, like MacDuff, declined to act directly, instead leaving Avalon to whatever fate lay before her.

With no clear successor and Elaine showing no signs of improvement, it didn't take long for things to deteriorate. Although Piram showed restraint in his public behavior, he felt a thrill when Meryth came to him and told him the whole story of how she had confronted the Queen and her heartsick lover Lugh in the royal bedroom. The Queen was shocked

into silence by Meryth's words — that she was the Elaine's unborn daughter — and Sir Lawrence flew into a raging fury. He then lunged at Meryth, who stepped aside at the last minute and watched with satisfaction as the knight drove his sword into his beloved Elaine's side.

For Piram, nothing could be better. Now that the Sidhe-loving wench was as good as dead, those stupid do-gooder knights would have their hands full hunting down that poor iron-handed madman. The way to Carleon was now cleared of his main opponents, save one. And while MacAllister could not be dissuaded, he could be distracted. The time had come for Piram to seize his destiny...

Shortly after the horrific accident, Bors received orders from the Sidhe Queen to meet him at a designated place and bring the Graal with him. This was what he feared the most, the moment when the Sidhe would take back the Cup and with it the gift of Glamour, leaving the Triple Kingdoms without the magical protection they had long enjoyed. With a heavy heart, he prepared himself as instructed, and risking his life once again for his nation and his Queen, undertook the dangerous mission to the ancient Grumweald to meet with the Sidhe Queen and plead for clemency.

In a secluded part of the forest, in a circle formed with the most powerful magic ever cast in mortal lands, Sir Bors and Sir Gwydd brought the Graal before the Sidhe Queen and the Lady of the Lake. The Queen's face was grave as she explained that Meryth's actions had greater implications than anyone realized. By striking Elaine, Meryth — and through her, the Sea Queen Maab — had stuck against the two Fae rulers. The Sidhe Queen could not allow such an insult to stand; the lands of Bryn Bresail would now be plunged into war. It would be war on a scale that most humans could not comprehend or survive, should they choose to aid either side. For the good of the human world, the Sidhe needed to withdraw.

Realizing that Elaine did not give up control of the Glamour Isles willingly, the Sidhe Queen decided that the Graal must be taken back under Sidhe protection until such time as peace and stability returned to the land. While she wished to take the gift of Glamour with her, she knew that without it, mortals would have no protection against the depredations of sorcery and its affect on the Barrier, and thus she agreed to leave its power intact. However, she warned, mortals must learn to respect the Sidhe or pay the consequences. She offered Sir Gwydd the chance to remain among his people for the war that is to come. The young knight was torn between his divided loyalties, but rather than take arms against anyone, he vowed to find Sir Lawrence Lugh and save him from his madness. That left Bors free to protect the comatose Elaine as best he could...

Bors himself disappeared, along with the rest of his Black Knights, after carefully leaving day-to-day affairs in the hands of a series of administrators. But he did not go far. As Elaine lay comatose in her castle, attended by a few loyal servants while the tapestries and finery around her slowly began to rot, whispers circulated of an unseen protector — of knights who never showed their faces, but watched and waited for signs of attack. Soon thereafter, the bodies of several men under Piram's banner appeared outside the castle, butchered like hogs. The severed hand of another would-be assassin arrived at Piram's castle some time later, clutching a parch-

ment which contained the seal of the Triple Kingdoms. Piram soon stopped sending attackers to finish the job on Elaine — it wouldn't matter once he seized the throne — and other would-be rulers took the hint as well. Elaine may have been helpless, but her Black Knight guarded her still... and no enemy could see him until it was too late.

Meanwhile, Piram's army grew, as did those of other petty lords willing to take advantage of a land without a ruler. Day-to-day affairs continued but an air of uncertainty settled over the Glamour Isles, and Elaine's Knights were hard-pressed to keep the peace. On the ocean waves, the Sea Dogs continued their patrols, keeping the other Théan nations at bay, but even their bravado diminished. When Priam struck, no one knew what damage he may do. Avalon hovered on the brink of chaos, marking a time of great danger and most certainly tragedy — the perfect setting for heroes willing to take up the cause and see it through to the end.

And where was Derwyddon in all of this? Maab dealt with him well before striking against Elaine. By the time the blow fell, he lay imprisoned in a single pearl, unable to influence a future which he could see all too well...

Bryn Bresail

The Highland girl raised her daggers at the approaching Sidhe, her blue eyes sharp as diamonds. "No," she spat. "Our bargain is done!"

The Lord raised an inhuman eyebrow. "But the story is ready. Captain Reis awaits you..."

"I've already killed him, again an' again an' again fer yer amusement! I've stabbed him, shot him, filleted him like a halibut... thousands of ways to tell the same bloody tale! And now a little bird tells me that crimson sails are flyin' on the seas of Théah — that Reis has returned to the world of the living." She leveled her weapons at the creature in front of her. "Ye lied to me. Ye reneged on our bargain. I'm leavin' this lookin' glass kingdom o' yers, an' I'll gut any of ye who tries to stop me!"

The Sidhe walked forward, his face condescendingly cruel. "You will do as we command, mortal woman, or suffer the consequences. The Court wishes to be entertai—"

With a flash the blade sliced across his cheek, leaving a gash that glowed with power. The Sidhe uttered an ear-piercing shriek as pain flooded through his body, the first such sensation he had ever felt.

The girl grinned through clenched teeth. "Was tha' entertainin' enough fer ye?"

The Lord looked down at her, his face sculpted fury. He raised his hands as the Glamour magic flowed across his fingertips, ready to wipe the insignificant speck in front of him off the...

"Enough!" The voice behind him was regal, imperious. "Lord Greenleaf, you forget yourself."

"She struck me, my Lady!" he growled, the evening's revelries forgotten. "She STRUCK me!"

The Queen of the Sidhe loomed over him, staring at his wound with cold disdain. "The weapons pain you? Good. It will not be the last time." She gestured with her hand. "Go. The war council is gathering. We shall have no feast tonight; this mortal is no longer your concern."

The Sidhe lord paused, his features frozen in pain and fury, then nodded curtly and vanished in a wreath of mist. The Highlander regarded the regal creature before her, her weapons still raised.

"In other circumstances," the Queen spoke without emotion, "we would find a most horrid punishment for your insolence."

The girl never blinked. "As opposed to what I've been doin'? How many thousands o' years did ye make me fight him? How many centuries did I spend killin' and dyin' fer yer amusement?"

"Only as many as you agreed to in our bargain."

"Not anymore. Ye lied to me, yer Majesty. Reis sails again."

"Does he?" The Queen smiled patronizingly, as if to a small child. "Then our agreement is sundered. As are many others — too many to count. War is coming, Highlander. Bryn Bresail is no longer welcome to your kind. You and your compatriots must leave. Now."

The girl considered her words for a moment, and then lowered her daggers. "Home? Yer sendin' me home, just like that?"

"The union between our peoples is broken. The Sidhe have come under attack from a deadly enemy, and mortals... mortals are a luxury we cannot afford." The Queen raised her hands and a shimmering pool of water appeared between them. "Go. We thank you for your service and warn you not to trifle in our affairs in the future."

The girl stared at the Sidhe Queen, understanding slowing creeping across her face, and then stepped into the pool.

"Good-bye then," she gripped her hat as the waters engulfed her. "May I never see Bryn Bresail again."

The Queen's voice echoed after her. "When you see what state your precious Avalon is in, Bonnie McGee, you may think differently."

The war within the Sidhe world meant a drastic change in the Seelie's relations with mortals. Many fae retreated from Théah back to Bryn Bresail, preparing to defend their queen from the forces of Maab. A few remained behind, preferring the comforts of the mortal world, but they were but a handful. The Unseelie, on the other hand, reveled in the retreat of their cousins. Dark creatures within Avalon grew bold and daring, tormenting the mortals as never before. The Queen and her cohorts paid them no mind. They had troubles of their own to worry about.

Similarly, the mortal humans within Bryn Bresail were released and returned to Théah — often without warning. The Sidhe knew that their fragile minds would crack beneath the coming conflict and, like any caring pet owner, set them free rather than let them suffer. Avalonians who had spent eons within the Seelie Court suddenly found themselves back in Théah — in some cases, thousands of years after they left. Not all of them could survive the return to a mortal life. Some went mad at the sudden shift in sensations. Some had already been driven mad by their captivity among the Sidhe. In the days and weeks after the exodus, hundreds of lunatics wandered the Avalon countryside, seeking respite from torments only they could see. Thankfully, many mortals possessed the strength of mind to make the transition back to Théan life. They brought with them valuable insight into Bryn Bresail, and some became valued experts on the Sidhe and their culture.

Most prominent among their number was "Bloody" Bonnie McGee, a Highland privateer who once sailed with the Sea Dogs. She had struck a dark bargain with the Sidhe in order to destroy the dread pirate Reis; in exchange for their aid, they expected her to reenact her climactic fight with the pirate for their amusement... over and over again. Bonnie found herself trapped in the same moment of time, engaging in the same fight against a phantom Reis in countless different ways. But her will was strong and as time went on, she chaffed against their prison. Finally, she broke free of the spell and was allowed to return to the mortal world. She

found herself back in the Highland Marches, Queen Elaine in a coma and her native island contemplating secession. Though part of her longed to return to the Sea Dogs, she knew she could never sail again as one of them; memories of those days were just too painful. Instead, she presented herself to High King MacDuff and offered her services as a sailor. The MacDuff tasked her with forming a new Highland Navy, to defend the island against external threats now that the Sea Dogs had other problems. Within a few months, she commissioned numerous new vessels, outfitted aging ships with fresh cannon and sail, and convinced several honorable privateer crews to swear allegiance to the Highland Marches. Her efforts ruffled some feathers among her old mates in the Sea Dogs, but she quietly smoothed them over, and now “High Admiral” McGee commands some twenty vessels from the deck of her flagship, the *Shattered Mirror*. Her privateering days over, she hopes to bring some legitimacy to her new-found position and perhaps close the widening gap between her native land and Avalon.

She never speaks of her days among the Sidhe, and smart sailors know better than to ask.

1673

Vestenmannavnjar

An emergency Althing was convened at which Magnus Bryjulfsson confronted Asbjornsson and forced him to accept the burden the Grumfather laid upon the one-eyed rogue. During the gathering, which Yngvild attended with the Living Runes she gathered, an old woman was carried into the hall on a stretcher. It was Gunrud who could no longer wait for Fate to bring Fornuft back to her and so swallowed poison. She expired with a last farewell to Fornuft who stepped forward from the crowd and stabbed himself before anyone could stop him. They were burned together on a funeral pyre and Bevegelse agreed to take their ashes to the west where they could be together.

Magnus realized that he would never be High King because his destiny lay in another direction. The time of the Vestenmannavnjar was drawing to a close; Gunrud’s suicide only sealed the impending sense of doom among the Althing’s attendees. Only two choices remained: stand and fight the inevitable, or draw away and seek a new home in the far western oceans. Asbjornsson’s path was clear: with the help of Yngvild, he would take the present Living Runes — along with those who wished their people to have a future — into the great Western Ocean to find a new home. Magnus, his ambition stymied, chose the alternate path. Gathering like-minded tribes and warriors to his side, he swore to give his king the time he needed to make his exodus. Ragnarok had come, and he would die so that his people might survive.

Over the past two years, relations between Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar had gone from bad to worse. As the boats were being built and the battlements readied, High King Asbjornsson sent a deputation to Kirk demanding gold. Vendel did not take kindly to be held up and extorted, and resolved to end “the Vesten question” once and for all. It was easy to find men to fight for you when you had a lot of money, so the Vendel Guild spearheaded an aggressive effort to hire the best money could buy and teach the barbarians a final, terrible lesson.

(Thankfully the war probably will not be long, but it will be deadly and most probably will spell the end of the ancient culture... save for those willing to leave their homeland behind without looking back and sail west with their king to whatever fortunes await.)

1674–75

The Church

Thanks to the efforts of a brave band of heroes (see Chapter 2, “*The Tower of Faith*”) the imprisoned Montaigne archbishops were rescued, paving the path to a restored Hierophant. The Vatican’s wheels turn slowly however, and certain factions within the Church had no wish to obey an unquestioned leader after so many years of near-autonomy. The archbishops selected Victor Allais de Crieux as the new Montaigne cardinal to replace the murdered d’Argeneau. With this election, the Hieros Council was restored and could now move to set the Church’s house in order.

Their first act of consequence was to judge Cardinal Verdugo’s actions against Don Andrés del Aldana. His callous miscarriage of justice had compromised him, harming the Church’s efforts to reassert its authority after so many years of setbacks. Although the Council agreed not to revoke his title, he was summarily removed from their deliberations, and allowed to vote only by proxy. Further ascent up the ladder was out of the question. As a sign of his repentance, Verdugo withdrew to a secluded monastery at the foot of La Sierra de Hierro to contemplate his actions and pray for the souls of those whose lives he took. His chair was draped in black as a reminder that even the faithful can be corrupted. The Council established a branch of the Church Guard to ferry important matters to him, and to collect his votes on those issues which the Council deemed necessary.

In exchange for his withdrawal, Verdugo convinced the Council to retain the Inquisition, for the forces of Legion remained whether men did good deeds or ill. A number of former Inquisitors betook themselves to the monastery to do penance with the Cardinal. Laymen joined him as well, including a Montaigne named Edward Boucher who served as the Committee of General Welfare’s gaoler (and who escaped King Montegue’s justice by the skin of his teeth). Verdugo believed that Boucher’s ability to detect sorcerers would be very helpful to his new “Order.”

With Verdugo out of the way, the debate about the new Hierophant began. The process was long, lasting several years and hampered by the logistical necessities of reestablishing the Council’s supremacy. Matters were further complicated by the sudden death of Cardinal Sergio Bilardo, whose advanced age finally caught up with him in the middle of a heated debate. After a review of possible candidates, an Eisen bishop named Ferenc Orlund von Durenstad succeeded Bilardo’s seat. Blessed with a classical education and an extremely fine mind, the new Cardinal was not an enthusiastic supporter of the Inquisition, which made him appealing to many of the others. He maintained a strict sense of justice and personal integrity, and always maintain the proper devotion to Theus even as he contemplated the ways in which the world is designed and what man’s role in it might be.

The Cardinals then launched an intensive internal review with an eye to finding someone who could withstand the political forces that plagued the Vatican Church. Cardinal Erika Durkheim was always been regarded as the frontrunner for the position of Hierophant, and with her hand in the rescue of the archbishops (it was she who arranged for Montegue's release), she seemed to be a shoo-in. But privately, she realized (perhaps with the encouragement of certain secret societies) that the evil within her could not receive that kind of power. Rather, she opted to serve as kingmaker, parlaying her political influence and hoping to do what good she could from behind the scenes. Cardinal Christina made a play for the position but Durkheim confronted her in secret and threatened to reveal her NOM connections should she pushed the issue. (No one is quite sure how Durkheim learn of such connections, but it is possible that a bad of noble heroes played some role...) In any case, Christina was rebuffed by her colleague and quietly withdrew her name from consideration.

Cardinal del Falisci declined the nomination because he wished concentrate on restoring Montaigne. Cardinal Lucani was too old and his Lorenzo blood gave some other Council members pause. Cardinal Mueso took a quiet back seat to distance himself from any association with the disgraced Verdugo, while Cardinal Ciosa made a strong initial showing, but also decline the position due to his age.

In the end, after nearly three years of often-interrupted deliberations, the Council decided that the Church needed new blood to pave the way to the future. The vote went to Ferenc Orlund, the new Cardinal from Eisen. Shocked and humbled by his rapid rise, he assumed the title of Hierophant just as Théah faced her greatest challenge...

1675 to the Future

Far to the West

Blue Heron was excited that she was finally old enough to take her place as a watcher on the shore. Ancient stories told of travelers who had come from across the water, and who would someday return to the vast continent which her people called home. Would the young Haudonosawnee girl be blessed by the gods? She scanned the horizon ceaselessly, looking for the tell-tale signs of white that moved above the blue waves.

Then it came. She saw it in the sunlight, far out to sea: something that was not a cloud! She danced along the pebbled shore, willing the vision to come closer, to prove itself real. Time moved slowly, as if it were a dream. But at last, there could be no question! Sails! Excited as she was, she waited a little longer. She wanted to be absolutely certain that the warriors did not laugh at her. With her heart almost beating out of her chest, she watched as the square sheets of white drew closer.

She blinked her eyes several times and rubbed them hard. These were not ships! They were huge creatures with arched necks and many long arms that pulled them through the water!

Blue Heron ran as fast as she could, making the call of the bird for which she was named, to let the warriors know that she had seen something. She was out of breath when she reached the first pair of guards, gasping out her story of great sea creatures headed for the shore.

They tried to calm the young girl. "Are you certain these are not the huge vessels of the people with corn-colored skin?" They drew a picture in the dirt.

"No! No! These are like birds, with arms!" She waved her own in the air in a rowing motion. "You must come now!" Giving the warning call, the warriors dashed for the beach as the dragon-prowed longboat drew slowly closer...

The Midnight Archipelago

The room was literally festooned with treasure — rich fabrics, strings of pearls, and gilt chests overflowing with coins and gems. A huge four-poster bed dominated the room, and a young Montaigne girl sprawled on the silk as she watched her sister get dressed.

After lacing her ornately carved leather corset, the beautiful brunette pulled on a pair of sturdy rose-colored boots and laced them as well. She stuck a wicked looking dagger in her wide black belt and a pistol in her right boot, then reached for her main weapon, a moiré-bladed Crescent scimitar. She placed an outrageous plumed hat atop a riot of waist-length dark curls as her bright blue eyes sparkled.

The girl on the bed smiled and said, "You know they call you La Reine de Nouvelle Charouse?"

The dark-haired girl smiled back at her sister and said, "Hmm, it has a good sound, does it not, Rosamonde? Isabelle, the Pirate Queen!" The two former princesses of Montaigne laughed with the joy of those who had escaped death.

"Do you ever think of going back?" Rosamonde asked quietly after a time. "They say the new king is doing quite well, and Anne is one of his chief advisors."

"Back?" Isabelle's blue eyes twinkled with mischief. "Why in Theus' name would we do that? All they can offer us is a palace." She threw open the window to her cabin, letting the warm tropical sun shine in. "Here, dear sister, we have the world!"

Somewhere in Western Théah

There were thirteen high-backed chairs arranged around an oval table. Some had occupants while others were empty, awaiting the arrival of late-comers. Alvara Arciniaga surveyed the men and women in the room. Two chairs remained empty but he did not wait for them to be filled.

"Thank you all for attending this meeting. As you know, events have taken a turn for the... interesting throughout our world. I'm sure you have all heard of the discoveries to the west, and I know you would be lying if you said you expected it. We stand at a threshold. Great danger awaits our illustrious order... and, if we play our cards right, great opportunity as well. We have chairs to fill, new members to induct. I ask you to consider your nominations well. As you know, ours is a daunting task and cannot be undertaken lightly."

"Well," said Hughes Sices du Sices with a typical Montaigne shrug, "it is what it is."

The Castillian looked at his colleagues and smiled coldly. "Actually, my friends, it is what we make it..."

If you could stall the southern wind

That's whistling in your ears

You could take what is

What is

What is

To what can never be.

— Katell Keineg, "The Gulf of Araby"

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