

Fates Unravelled

Foreword

I'm exhausted. Let's keep this short. This story is called **Helion's Advocates**. It bridges what was once classically designated as *the* Renaissance. It's an attempt to distill everything that intrigued me about **Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade**.

It is also an experiment with episodic writing as opposed to a session-by-session feedback loop of player character action driving the story. This is because players accumulate over the years and schedules become more difficult. Some priorities can't be reasoned with. The idea was to oversubscribe on players and whenever they could make it, that's who was in the episode.

This meant that each session had to be self-encapsulating and this turned out to be one of the greatest joys. I think there's more original writing in these twenty-three episodes than any longer-running chronicle in our continuity.

That said, what follows is fraught with unedited textual trespasses. As I said, I'm exhausted.

Before you go any further, remember to play some Paper Gods and Hexentanz.

"The world is on fire."

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Dramatis Personæ



From left to right: Alypius, Felice, Leif, Noella, Carlos, Fredi, and lastly Smet, who replaced Alypius.

Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"It's colder in the hearts of many surrounding my grounds than it is in whole of Russia."

Name: *Alypius*
Concept: *Pessimist*

Zodiac: *Leo*
Home: *Pereslavl-Zalessky*

Nature: *Renunciate*
Demeanor: *Martyr*

Attributes

Physical (1)		Social (4)		Mental (4)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●●○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (1)		Skills (4)		Knowledges (4)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Law	●●○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Meditation	●●○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	●○○○○
Instruction	●○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	●●○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	●○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	●○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies	●○○○○
Daemon	●○○○○
Library	●●○○○
Mentor	●●●○○

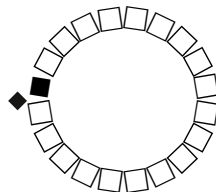
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5				

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

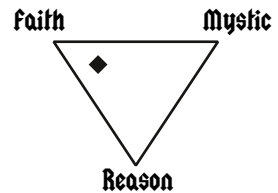
Arete

●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Daemon: *Saints*

Paradigm

Essence: *Dynamic*
Culture: *Isolated church*
Belief: *God created mystics*
Practice: *Magick should conquer us all*
Instruments: *Bible, cross*
Flaw: *Blind to people's kindness*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"There is a logical explanation for everything."

Name: Felice ap Tudur
Concept: Scholar

Zodiac: Aquarius
Home: Wales

Nature: Waif
Demeanor: Theorist

Attributes

Physical (II)	Social (III)	Mental (I)
Strength ●●○○○	Charisma ●○○○○	Perception ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●●○○	Manipulation ●●○○○	Intelligence ●●●●○
Stamina ●●●○○	Appearance ●●●○○	Wits ●●●●○

Abilities

Talents (III)	Skills (II)	Knowledges (I)
Alertness ●○○○○	Animal Ken ○○○○○	Academics ●●●●○
Artist ○○○○○	Archery ●○○○○	Culture ●○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○	Crafts ○○○○○	Enigmas ●●●○○
Awareness ○○○○○	Etiquette ●●●○○	Investigation ●○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○	Leadership ○○○○○	Law ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○	Meditation ○○○○○	Linguistics ●○○○○
Expression ○○○○○	Melee ○○○○○	Lore ○○○○○
Instruction ●●○○○	Research ●●○○○	Medicine ●○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○	Riding ●●○○○	Metaphysics ●●●●○
Larceny ○○○○○	Stealth ○○○○○	Occult ○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○	Survival ●○○○○	Science ○○○○○

Spheres

Connection ●○○○○	Life ○○○○○	Prime ○○○○○
Entropy ○○○○○	Matter ●○○○○	Spirit ○○○○○
Forces ○○○○○	Mind ●○○○○	Time ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Resources ●○○○○
Library ●●●○○
Sanctum ●●●○○

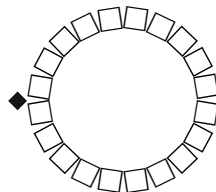
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5				

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Quintessence



Scourge

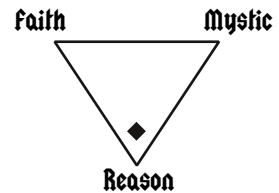
Arete

●○○○○○○○○○

Daemon: Inner voice

Paradigm

Essence: *Questing*
 Culture: *Welsh nobility*
 Belief: *Discovery is a goal in itself*
 Practice: *Experimentation*
 Instruments: *Alchemy, geometry, botany*
 Flaw: *Will not acknowledge spirits*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"This is my tale. I have told it to the fullest extent and veracity that I could think of, and you are free to verify that with your own talents."

Name: *Leif Haraldson*

Concept: *Disappointed believer, melancholic and doubting after seeing the wonder of Norse Mythology disappear, fatalist, brave, stoic/introvert, wanderer hermit, yearning for wonder*

Zodiac: *Virgo*

Home: *Nomad in Scandinavia*

Nature: *Supplicant*

Demeanor: *Sage*

Attributes

PHYSICAL (1)		SOCIAL (III)		MENTAL (II)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

TALENTS (III)		SKILLS (I)		KNOWLEDGES (II)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	●○○○○	Culture	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	●●○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	●●○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○	Lore	●●●○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	●○○○○
Entropy	●○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Arcane	●○○○○
Daemon	●●●○○
Destiny	●●○○○
Resources	●○○○○

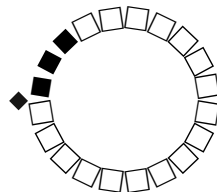
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5					

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

Arete

●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: *Corvids*

Paradigm

Essence: *North*

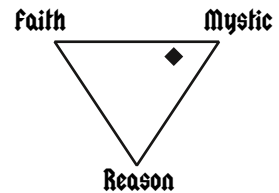
Culture: *Pagan Scandinavia*

Belief: *The old gods and old ways are best*

Practice: *Preserve Norse mythology and wonder*

Instruments: *Runestones, staff, hammer, sword, sacrifice,*

Flaw: *Change is inevitable, embrace it. Wonder can also be found elsewhere.*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"The observer makes the art work."

Name: Noella

Zodiac: Leo

Nature: Architect

Concept: Corrupting people/illusionist

Home: Brugge

Demeanor: Sage

Attributes

Physical (III)		Social (I)		Mental (II)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents (I)		Skills (II)		Knowledges (III)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	●●○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	●●●○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●●●○○	Melee	●●○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Instruction	●○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	●●○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Daemon	●●●●○
Resources	●●○○○
Allies	●○○○○

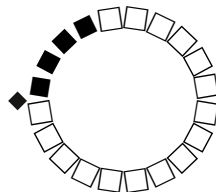
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5				

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

Arete



Daemon: Shadows

Paradigm

Essence: Mercury

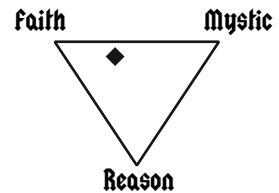
Culture: Northern Renaissance

Belief: Full Devil's appeasement

Practice: Corruption, spread the word

Instruments: Pain, torture, blood, suffering

Flaw: The Devil is an asshole



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"If a tree falls in the forest, and crushes a family of four... was the blindfolded guy with the saw guilty? We do things. Sometimes we know why!"

Name: Carlos della Sorella
Concept: Unrepentant heretic

Zodiac: Pisces
Home: Rome

Nature: Renunciate
Demeanor: Sensualist

Attributes

PHYSICAL (III)		SOCIAL (II)		MENTAL (I)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

TALENTS (III)		SKILLS (II)		KNOWLEDGES (I)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	●○○○○	Culture	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Awareness	●●○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Lore	●●○○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	●●○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	●●○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Arcane	●●○○○
Resources	●●○○○
Daemon	●●○○○
Library	●●○○○
Allies	●●○○○
Cray	●●○○○

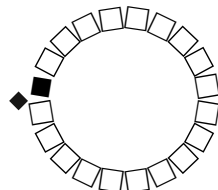
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

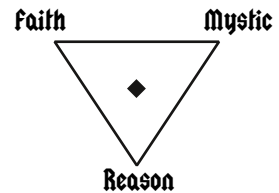
Arete

●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: Flames

Paradigm

Essence: Primordial
Culture: Theologians
Belief: The Devil is real
Practice: Expose demons, drag into service
Instruments: Ancient writings, blood
Flaw: Estranged from Church, denies virtue



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

*"Heal the world, make it a better place,
for you and for me, and the entire human race."*

Name: Fredi Junius
Concept: Impatient learned healer

Zodiac: Virgo
Home: Brocken

Nature: Sensualist
Demeanor: Sage

Attributes

Physical (III)		Social (II)		Mental (I)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (III)		Skills (I)		Knowledges (II)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●●○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	●●○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	●○○○○
Instruction	●●○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●●●○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Riding	●○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	●○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Cray	●●○○○
Familiar	●●○○○
Mentor	●○○○○
Daemon	●●○○○
Resources	●●○○○

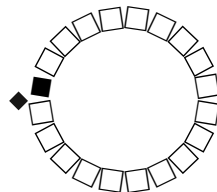
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

Arete

●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Daemon: Treegnome

Paradigm

Essence: Water

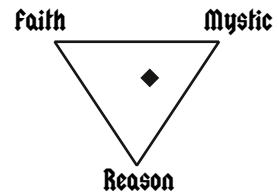
Culture: Rural forest, natural beliefs

Belief: Everything has an energy

Practice: Align people and spirits, healing

Instruments: Plants, ritual, elements

Flaw: Blind to progress



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"Peace and harmony, together, except for the rich."

Name: *Smet*
Concept: ?

Zodiac: *Pisces*
Home: *None*

Nature: *Benefactor*
Demeanor: *Benefactor*

Attributes

Physical (1)		Social (4)		Mental (3)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (4)		Skills (1)		Knowledges (3)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	●●●●○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●●●●○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	●●●○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Law	●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	●○○○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●●●○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	●○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	●○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies	●●●○○
Spies	●●●○○
Destiny	●○○○○

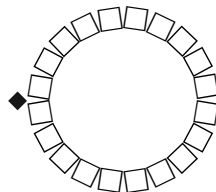
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

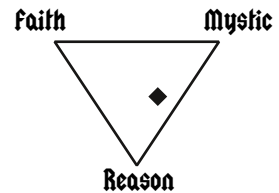
Arete

●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Daemon: *Imperceptible*

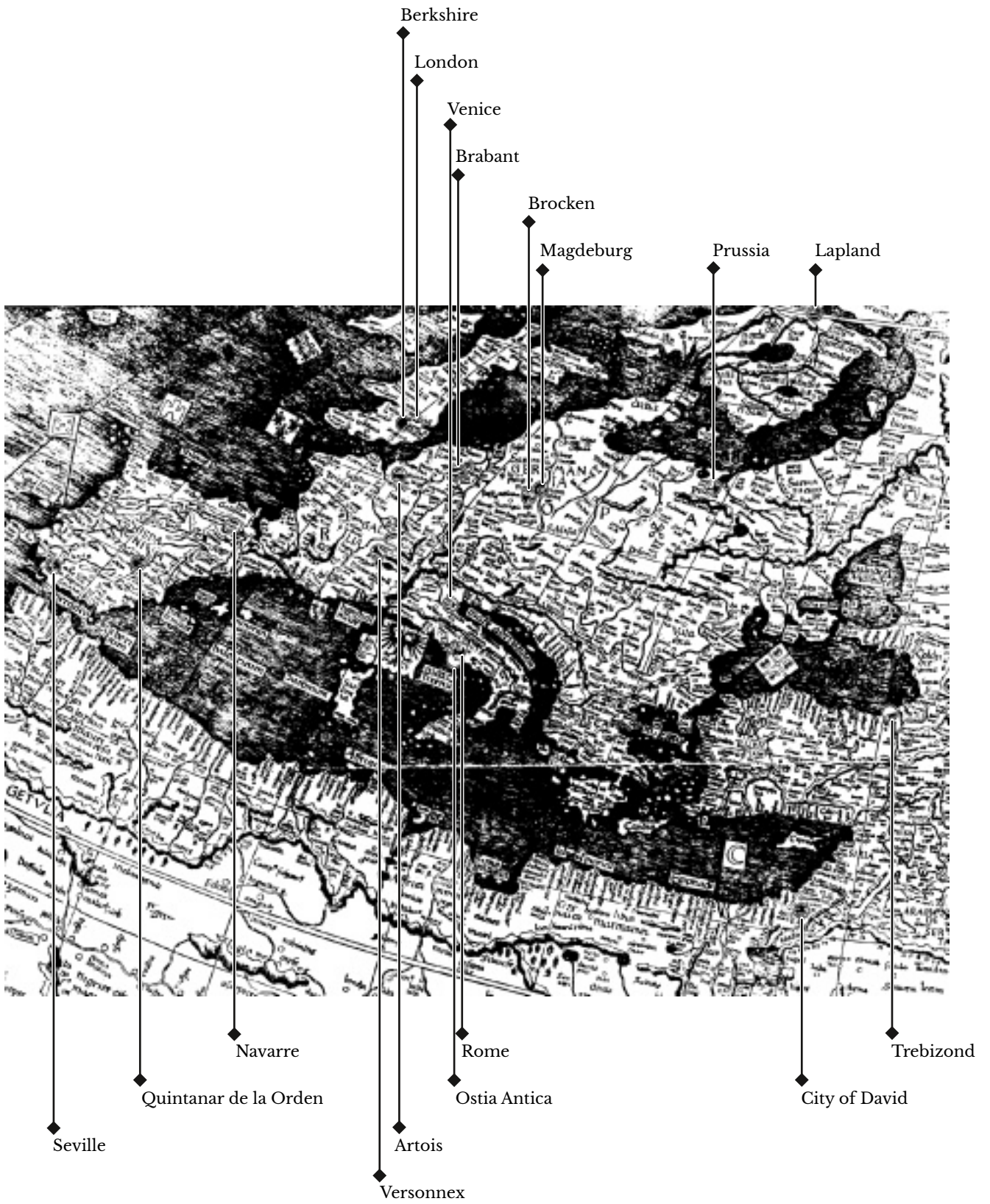
Paradigm

Essence: *West*
Culture: *Serbian*
Belief: *Society dies, nature grows*
Practice: *Destroy empires*
Instruments: *Bird whistle, animal skulls*
Flaw: *Empires cannot be good*



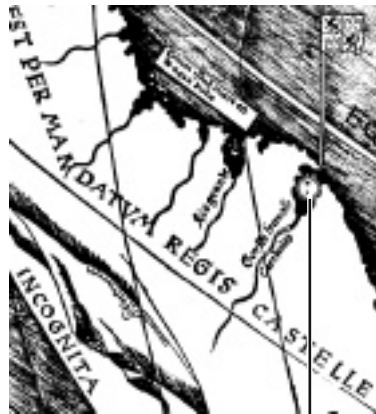
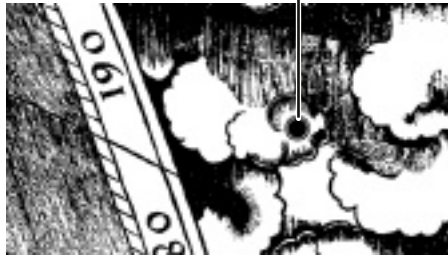
Dramatis Loci

I	PROLOGUE	1456 A.D.	VARIOUS LOCATIONS
II	CAMINO DE SANTIAGO	1456 A.D.	NAVARRÉ
III	HUNTSMAN OF BERKSHIRE	1457 A.D.	BERKSHIRE
IV	THROUGH BRICK AND MORTAR	1459 A.D.	VENICE
V	VAUDERIE	1460 A.D.	ARTOIS
VI	PLAGUE'S DOCTOR	1460 A.D.	VERSONNEX
VII	SOULMATES	1461 A.D.	TREBIZOND
VIII	DEAD GODS	1463 A.D.	PRUSSIA
IX	ASCENDANT ADVOCATE	1466 A.D.	OSTIA ANTICA
X	BUCKRIDERS	1467 A.D.	BRABANT
XI	SEEDS OF WRATH	1470 A.D.	SEVILLE
XII	FOUL BLOOD	1474 A.D.	MAGDEBURG
XIII	LIGHT OF DIVINITY	1474 A.D.	MAGDEBURG
XIV	TRICHOTOMY	1476 A.D.	MAGDEBURG
XV	FANG AND CLAW	1479 A.D.	MAGDEBURG
XVI	BRIEF ACQUAINTANCES	1483 A.D.	LONDON
XVII	JOIN OR DIE	1492 A.D.	QUINTANAR DE LA ORDEN, KUR
XVIII	WALPURGIS	1493 A.D.	BROCKEN
XIX	MUNDUS NOVUS	1499 A.D.	THE NEW WORLD, MARAJO
XX	WORLD ON FIRE	1500-1520 A.D.	VARIOUS LOCATIONS, CITY OF DAVID
XXI	WED IN BLOOD	1523 A.D.	LAPLAND
XXII	LAST ROMAN EMPEROR	1527 A.D.	ROME
XXIII	EPILOGUE	1531 A.D.	VARIOUS LOCATIONS



Dramatic Loci

Kur



Marajo

I

Prologue

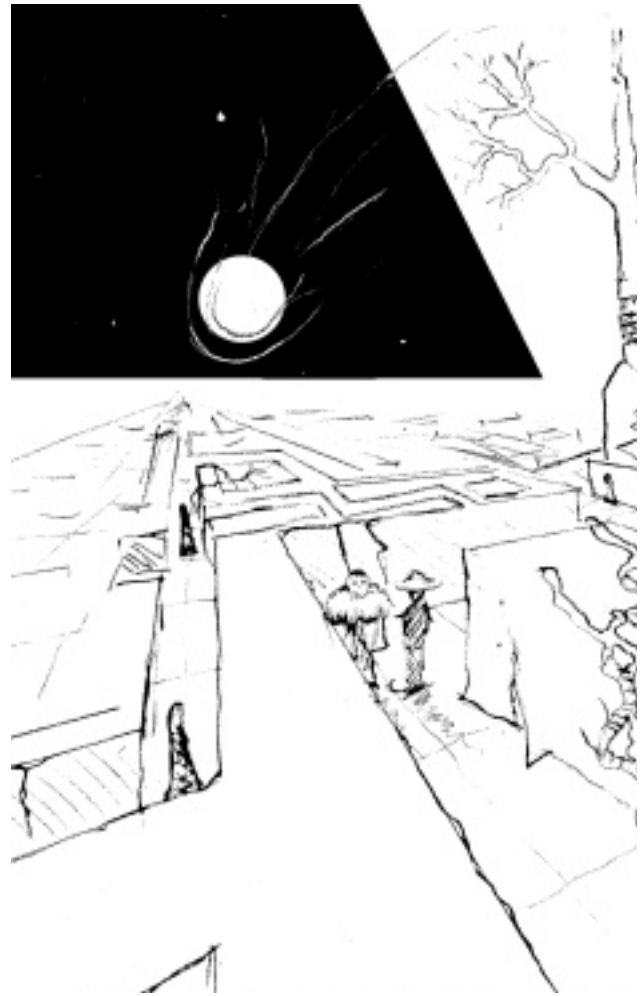


he characters each have their existence in a corner of Europe in the year 1456. All of them have a few delights, but more grievances. The players are welcome to elaborate on which these may be. These lives each stand still and watch as one summer day, there is a bright light in the sky. All castes of civilization stop what they are doing and turn their gaze to the heavens. For each of the characters, the experience goes much further. The moment they set eyes on the comet, they felt like they are standing at the edge of something great and previously unknowable. A revelation comes to them as they watch the comet. It inspired them somehow, or directed them.

Each character sees the comet streak in the direction corresponding to their own Essence. As it climbs toward the horizon, they feel the revelation slipping away from them, feel the world around them return to a mundane pallor. For some, it whispers their name. For others, its glow illuminates a road through the fields they had never seen before. Each character who follows the direction of the comet soon finds themselves wandering a landscape that no longer resembles their home.

The characters have crossed across the Gauntlet, following a tear created by destiny. The realm they enter deceives each of them differently. Nothing is fixed. A distant shrub appears to have been the edge of a forest as they get closer. A mountain range becomes a crashing wave. Always, in the direction the ever-present and ever-growing comet reveals, there is a tower. Depending on





the character, it may take the shape of an enormous mound of bones, Babel itself, concentric rings of fire, a tree whose canopy reveals the stars, a ladder made of light, a tall snow-covered peak, a monolith of glass as of yet unimagined by mankind, a vortex of swirling clouds and lightning drawn to the ground, an endless recursion of steeples, a vast chimney spewing forth black clouds, an enormous fortified palisade, or a mysterious unsupported staircase.

Before reaching the tower, each character enters a maze surrounding it from a different direction. They hear others equally mystified in corridors beside them. Slowly, they converge and take on the winding paths together. Always there are more voices of unseen strangers drawn by the comet in the distance.

The characters, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, encounter manifestations linked with the nine spheres. When the characters are faced with a bed of blooming flowers and budding seeds; do they step over it (Entropy) or go back to look for another route (Life)? When the characters enter a region of the maze where the skies darken around them until they can no longer see in the dark, do they follow a white doe to show them the way out (Spirit), or do they light a torch from the

wall which makes both the dispels both the phantom and the darkness (Forces)? When the characters keep coming across the same turns and seem to go in circles

Helion

Helion is a phenomenon that can be seen from Earth every seventy-five years. In a future fate, it will be known and observed as Halley's comet. In the Late Middle Ages, however, it is much more. Helion has a profound effect on the Earth's population on its entry through the solar system. It ensnares the Daemons of a small number of Awakened beings. Those who lose their Daemons usually don't recover from its loss. Helion does not carry these Daemons off with it, however. Instead, it releases the Daemons again. These in turn latch onto different beings, causing new Awakenings.

The origin of these cyclic Daemons and the implications for the lives of the protagonists who receive Awakenings through Helion, constitute the main arc of Helion's Advocates.

no matter which direction they go, and they come upon figures much like themselves, only more weathered, who insist that they must keep walking forward or else doom this version of themselves, do they obey their future selves (Time) or see what happens if they walk backwards (Connection)? Note that in that last one, those who chose according to Time will be confronted with a younger version of themselves before finding a long stretch of tunnel where younger and older versions of themselves fold and warp into each other, breaking the loop and returning them to the original maze. Those who chose according to Connection indeed doom the other versions of themselves, but backtrack into the original maze effortlessly. When the characters confront a monstrous serpent blocking their way, coiling itself around and blocking their retreat, but revealing hints that it is only an illusion, do they close their eyes and will themselves not to be tricked (Mind), or do they try to throw something at it or even walk through it

(Matter)? Lastly, there is mysterious fountain of scented purple liquid, do the characters drink from it (Prime)? When the characters reach the base of the tower, all goes black.

When the characters next open their eyes, they have wandered far from their homes. They recognize their surroundings, but they have hours to walk back in the dark to get home. In their hand, they clutch a glowing piece of silvery rock, a fragment of the comet. A painful mark has scorched into the flesh of their palm. It resembles a streak with a bright and deep nucleus, surrounded by flecks. Its orientation conforms to the character's Essence. Before they next rest their eyes, a drive and hunger has settled in each and every one of them. The comet has passed, but a link remains. The world is not as they thought it was. They Awaken and yearn to discover more. In that night's dreams, their Daemons comes to them.

II

Camino de Santiago



Discovery

he characters sift through all the news and oracles they can gather in the months after their conjunction with Helion. Many leads they pursue do little to advance their knowledge. They feel they cannot learn more in their own small worlds. As they start to gather news from ever further away, a rumor that is slowly growing into a legend reaches each of them in their corners of the world.

From the length of the pilgrimage from the heart of the Holy Roman Empire to the sacred Santiago de Compostela, different stories arise about a man in armor performing miracles, proclaiming he was blessed by the comet. Those characters who decide to walk the Camino de Santiago in search of this figure will hear stranger details as they go along. Some claim he is one of the twelve paladins of Charlemagne risen from the grave to return virtue to the world. Others say he preached about reuniting all borders under the Holy Roman Empire. Others still say he is a self-confessed murderer in league with the devil. All the stories agree that he wanders the pilgrimage in rusted fragments of armor, though none can agree on the arms he displayed on his frayed tabard. The miracles he is said to have performed include the healing of a sick child.

Drawn by their shared fate, the characters sooner or later encounter each other on the road and in the monasteries that accommodate pilgrims.

Culture

It is the beginning of autumn in 1456. The characters



may prove ignorant of the recent history of the region of Navarre as they leave the borders of the Kingdom of France. France itself has just concluded its victory in the Hundred Years War, but the king's own son has risen in rebellion against the crown. The Basque lands the characters now enter have just concluded their own civil war and tensions rise for a new one.

Miscellany

Roadside Bordello

Along the route of the pilgrimage, outside a small city's walls, a farmhouse has been converted into a brothel. Its location has increased its infamy. It's rumored to be the end of many a man's pilgrimage, or

indeed, a woman's for seeking employment there.

Peddlers

Near roadside inns, plenty of opportunists try to exploit the pilgrims. For sale are not only the seashells that are a symbol of St. James, but also various remedies, patches of cloth belonging to the vestment of various saints, and supposed holy oils.

Shrine of St. George

The characters may pass a particularly holy shrine on their way. Under a small alcove, St. George is depicted in a mural, slaying a serpentine dragon. Any who approach it who are not devoutly Christian, start to feel a little uncomfortable. The shrine emanates a little True Faith.



Hostavalem Caravanserai

Several caminos for the pilgrimage merge in the Kingdom of Navarre. At their crossroads in a small commune called Hostavalem, there is a caravanserai. Merchants and pilgrims are served by a proud family. The first thing the characters notice is a monstrous head fixed to one of the balconies. Its features are like a snake's except for the enormous beak in place of its mouth from which a slit tongue emerges. It has partially atrophied and started to rot in the sun.

Any of the family members who own the caravanserai will proclaim it to be a basilisk slain by Saint Jacob not four weeks past. The description matches the pilgrim the characters have been tracking, though this is the first time anyone has called him a saint. He slew the beast and returned with its hoard of silver, then donated all of it to the local church. The crossroads has been very wealthy ever since. The locals are awaiting his return, expecting him to arrive soon. The basilisk is said to have plagued the town ever since a trader sold a cockerel who could lay eggs to the local fool. One day, while Sirius was rising up above, someone may add, the basilisk hatched in the coop and devoured the other hatchlings, then its father. It roamed the country-side ever since, growing larger every year.

Jacob of Aachen

When the characters at last meet the folk hero, he is traveling back up the pilgrim's road with an entourage. His followers consists of knaves no older than 14 with dreams of becoming holy knights as well as one mute greybeard who once lost his tongue to a torturer's pliers. The old man is the only one who is allowed to handle Jacob's armor and sword, both of which still appear to be as rusted as the rumors said. Only the bright tabard he

wears is new, showing a blazing red Cross of the Order of Santiago.

Upon seeing the characters, Jacob stops in his tracks. He sees something in them, just as the characters feel drawn to him. He removes his left gauntlet for the old man to hold and shows the characters Helion's mark. It points downward on his palm.

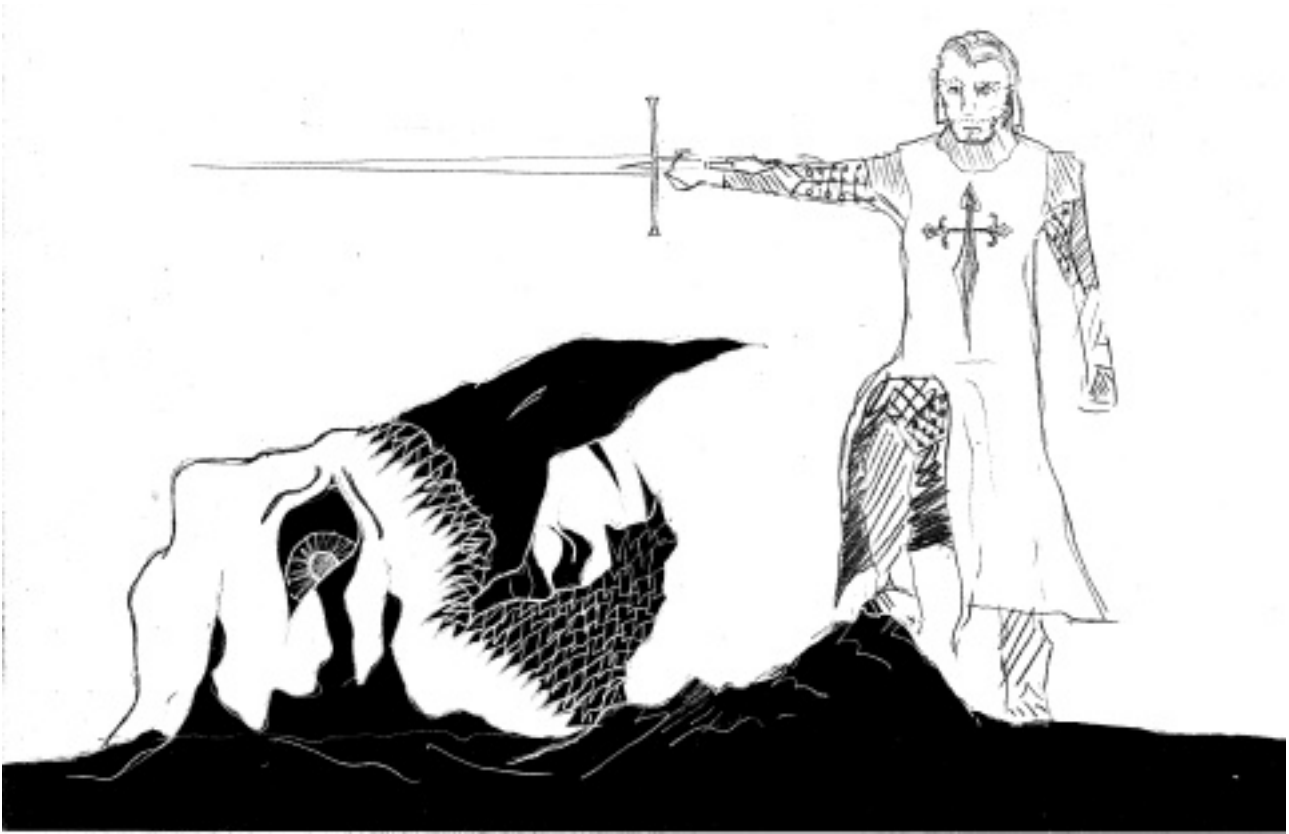
Should they get to know each other, Jacob can confirm much of the experience they had with the comet. Before this, he was a soldier from Aachen. He dishonored himself, but will not say how. The pilgrimage was a part of his atonement. The comet came while he was walking it.

Moorish Gold

At the Hostavalem caravanserai, Jacob is received gladly. While he is fawned over, a Moorish merchant from Granada makes an offer of gold to the owner of the establishment for the basilisk's head. The Moor claims to have alchemical recipes written by Hermes Trismegistus himself, where the ashes of a basilisk may turn silver into gold. When Jacob hears of this, he becomes outraged, shouting of attained devilry and Muslim sorcery. He demands the return of the head. The Moor demands more gold. Unless the characters intervene, Jacob will draw his sword. If the merchant dies, his assistants cry out, call him a murderer, and flee on horseback.

Granada's Wrath

It is up to the characters how greatly they indulge in the feast being held for Jacob's return. None of the locals seem too bothered about the day's events. The head has been returned to the balcony. The Moor's stall has been looted. If the characters ask, they may learn how the Moors have been slowly expelled from the Iberian



Peninsula over the last centuries, and that the Emirate of Granada on the Mediterranean coast is their last stronghold.

That night, the combined might of several Moorish merchants and their soldiers ride into the caravanserai for revenge. They set fire to the buildings and destroy carts laden with wares, all the while demanding the murderer be brought to them in the name of their god. Again, the characters' actions may determine whether Jacob is captured and taken to Granada, or whether the Moors are pushed back.

Pilgrimage

Some of the characters may decide to continue on the last stretch and complete the pilgrimage at Santiago de Compostela. Others may reject this and return home. A blessing at their destination may take the form of Quintessence, or even a more permanent consequence of faith.

Future Fates

Have tensions between Granada and Navarre been fostered?

Has Jacob been captured by the Moorish host?

III

Huntaman of Berkshire



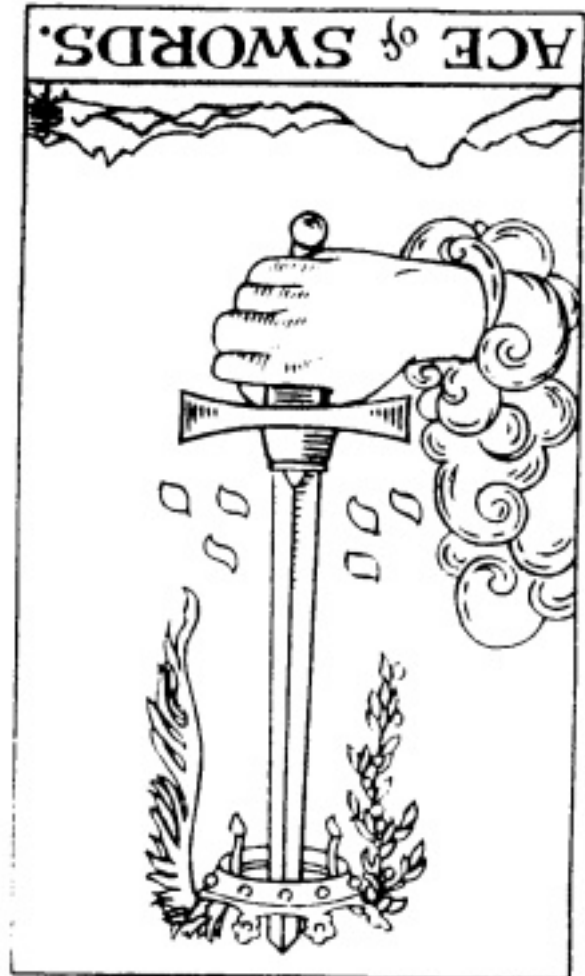
Discovery

By the next winter, the characters have each developed a method of seeking beyond the news of the mortal world. One may enter the deepest dreams to receive a vision of bare oak trees and antlers, another may hold a pendulum over a map from their library to find themselves drawn to Berkshire, England. By this time, the characters who wished to do so have been able to exchange instructions for sending letters to one another. By the last frost before spring, the characters may reach England and their destination.

All around the characters are woods thick with briars. It's the deepest part of winter. Everyone's larders are empty, their winter supplies are at their lowest. Spring is around the corner and all in this land are caught between hope and despair. The characters themselves want nothing more than to get out of the cold.

Culture

It is late in February 1457. Berkshire is home to Windsor Castle, which is currently unoccupied by the royal family. The king and queen are touring the country, setting up court at Coventry. King Henry VI has recovered from a long period of catatonic isolation caused by news of the loss of Bordeaux. In this state, he was even unable to acknowledge the birth of his own son. He is already spoken of openly as a weak king whose queen is waging his feuds. Brazen peasants speak of the full larders they must keep at the castle while the upper classes speak of the House of York and support for the



white rose in favor of the red. Those who look favorably on King Henry VI remember his founding of Eton College on the north side of the river, where 70 students of poor birth are receiving a free education.

Windsor itself is a small town bordering both the castle and forest. It has one market square and five main streets. The most accommodating tavern is called the Fox and Castle.

Miscellany

Eucharist

The characters may witness the townsfolk of Windsor going to the chapel and hear whispers of the increased attendance during this winter. Some may gossip or even

admit that it is for the mere nourishment of receiving the Eucharist. Even the thin unleavened wafer of bread is held dear in these times.

Blind Quinn

In contrast to those in chapel, the characters may meet a woman weaving wool through milk-white blind eyes. Quinn never goes to church and is not afraid of saying so. There are already rumors and accusations of witchcraft made against her. She is bitter and pragmatic. Most of all, she remembers stories her neighbors never heeded. She can prove a source of information about Herne and the Gauntlet as well as a source of stigma by association.



Burial

One of the first sights that greets the characters as they wander the farm roads near Windsor is a solemn family burying a child in the frozen soil. The parents are silent. Only a little girl sings: "Hoof and horn, hoof and horn: all who die shall be reborn. Bread and grain, bread and grain: all that falls will rise again." They do not wish to speak with strangers and head inside away from the cold when the mound is finished.

Fox and Castle

Near the fires inside a large two-storey tavern, the characters can warm themselves. The owner speaks enough French to make it easy to find a common dialect. To overhear the locals without approaching them, however, the characters need a better understanding of the English language.

Food is rare and ridiculously expensive, though ale is in plenty supply. Every bite the characters eat is watched

by envious glares. Above all other troubles in the land, the locals share a grievance over the scarcity of food. It has become forbidden to hunt in the Windsor Forest. The punishment for poaching is to have one's eyes put out, though the last man they caught in the act was riddled with arrows and killed. A younger man mentions he saw the bucks fighting less than a week ago. The snow is thick enough for clear tracks. Just one hunt could feed whole families.

After night falls and the characters retire to their rented rooms, they come to share the same dreams that affect the villagers, though they might interpret them better. The spirit of Herne the Hunter is reaching across the Gauntlet. The characters see his strong figure stalking under a great oak tree. Antlers grow from the back of his head. He reaches for a horn at his side and blows it, making the winter forest erupt with the sounds of horse and hounds. There's a portion of the dream that becomes hazy and difficult to recall, but when they wake up, they remember a fireside feast.



Ancient Oak

The great oak from the characters' dreams can be found in nearby Windsor Forest. When they approach it, an owl comes to rest above them in its branches. It does not stop staring at them. Characters attuned to the thin veil separating them from the spirit world in this place may hear Herne's voice penetrate the Gauntlet: "After all these years, the people call to me once again. I will answer their prayers. There will be a hunt."

The tree itself may reveal itself to be a powerful Cray. It is centuries old and was worshiped by the first people to settle in these lands. By drawing from it, the characters may realize they weaken the veil to the spirit world.

It is for the characters to decide whether they would aid Herne's arrival. They may not have the insight to be wary of a leader of the Wild Hunt and they may not yet have the power to truly bring him into the world, nor hold him back. Through conversation with Herne, lore, research, or many other means, the characters may come to learn that nothing bars the huntsman's way after three of his names have been spoken by an indigenous man, woman, and child, respectively. These names may include 'Herne', 'Herla', 'Erlking', 'Gwyn ap Nudd', 'Cernunnos'. Each character may remember such a name from one of their dreams. Encouraging locals to speak these names is easier than trying to prevent them.

One way to banish Herne is for a devout priest to invoke three names God, such as 'Heiland', 'Christ', and 'God', or 'Elohim', 'Yahweh', 'Jehovah'. Another way is to fell his ancient oak tree, or to kill the owl that preceded his arrival.

The Wild Hunt

As Herne the Hunter crosses into Berkshire, storm clouds gather in the skies. Above the setting sun, a different blood-red light cuts through the sky, heralding a horde of spectral riders bearing spears and bows. In a trance, the townsfolk of Windsor step into the hail and rain bearing pitchforks and staves. They brave the cold. Men, women, and children alike run into Windsor forest for the hunt.

No longer Sleepers, the characters are not immediately enslaved by Herne's spell. If they choose to accompany the townsfolk, they will witness their frenzy and their success. Blazing campfires are lit in the woods where rabbits, grouse, and deer are roasted in ever greater numbers. There is a mania of delight in the air. Peasants reach towards the skies venerating the cavalcade that shows them the way. Some of the hunters in the sky ride horses, others goats, or even stranger creatures.

As the night deepens, the last barrels of wine from the Fox and Castle are brought into woods for the feast. Maidens and farmhands sneak into distant clearings and



add their cries to the night's revelry. Then, at midnight, the Wild Hunt descends. Screams of delight turn to confusion before true terror is heard in the woods. Herne is seen commanding his kin to seize the women and the children and take them back to Faerie. Their targets are delirious and no match for the warriors from the sky. The characters may see the last daughter of the family who buried their son in the woods at their arrival being lifted at the waist by a bright bearded figure.

Parting Words

Sooner or later, the characters may succeed in banishing Herne the Hunter. As the gate in the heavens closes and the spectral riders return home, Herne addresses the characters: "I am banished, but the Wild Hunt can never end. Another will take my place as their leader. By denying them their quarry here, you have only forced the hunters to descend in some other corner of your world. Farewell, wizardlings." Herne's spectral form is then devoured by his hounds, before the hounds devour each other, and only the flapping of an owl's

wings are heard, and finally the Gauntlet is once again closed.



Future Fates

Will Blind Quinn change her brazen ways to avoid being condemned for witchcraft?

How many of the townsfolk have been carried away by the Wild Hunt?

Has the little girl from the burial become an orphan? Has she been taken by the Wild Hunt herself?

Has Herne the Hunter been banished from the mortal world?

IV

Through Brick and Mortar



Discovery

Those characters who are reachable at a fixed address as opposed to those who live somewhere truly rural receive a letter long in transit. It is signed Lucio da Eraclea and it invites the characters to visit his laboratorio in Venice. It is not too explicit regarding the purpose of their meeting. The message indicates only that the characters have much to learn and many questions to answer.

Culture

It is somewhere before 1461, depending on the order of episodes the players have chosen. The Republic of Venice stretches across coasts and islands all across the Mediterranean, including Dalmatia, Euboea, Aegina, Crete, Argos, as well as a colony within Constantinople. Under Doge Francesco Foscari, also the inland terraferma were contested in a war involving Milan and Florence, ending in the recent Peace of Lodi. Foscari has since passed away and the Council of Ten have elected Pasquale Malipiero as the new doge.

Causalities

From this point in the story onwards, the order of the episodes was often up to the players. They would have a choice between just the corresponding Tarot cards. In this case, it was between the Three of Pentacles, or Death.



Venice's vast armada of thousands of ships is driven by competing merchant families ever growing their trade. Their desire for prestige among their peers has in turn resulted in some of the greatest mansions and other architectural marvels, commissioned from the greatest artistic talent in the known world.

Miscellany

Lazzaretto Vecchio

A beggar approaches the characters. They may have avoided him, but never have they seen a beggar in such relatively fine guise. They are begged for alms, not for the poor soul's sustenance, but for a donation in San Rocco's homage, for a cure of the discoloration on the beggar's limbs, and a reprieve from being sent to the lepers' isle of Lazzaretto Vecchio, where the sick are quarantined.

Compagnie della Calza

The characters may notice a specific style of clothing among a portion of young men in the city, where dull

outer layers of clothing are slashed to reveal brightly colored tight-fitting hose underneath. Groups of these young men seem to associate only with others wearing the same faintly obscured colors.

Code Duello

Should the characters ever find themselves in the position of offending a local merchant's son, there will be little hesitation on their adversary's part in demanding satisfaction. The characters may have been informed that there is a degree of ritual involved. First, there must be witnesses. Also, the offending party has the opportunity to apologize and offer restitution to end the conflict. Otherwise, the challenged party may name the weapon used for a duel. The challenger may then name a place for the duel. If both parties are agreed, further measures follow. Both parties are encouraged to bring a physician, the field of honor is marked in a square by dropped handkerchiefs, and finally both parties must agree whether the duel is to first blood, or beyond.



Reception

The characters step onto the Venetian docks to be surprised by not only its wealth, but also its cultural diversity. Their eye is constantly drawn to the presence of exotic wares, from primate pets to damask fabrics. The address they seek is a guild hall on the Piazzetta di San Marco, not far from the Doge's Palace. By asking directions, the characters may be intrigued by locals referring to the place as a home of the Mysteries, a name the guildsmen have long since left behind them. As the characters may later learn, they shun ignorance and secrecy, and instead embrace enlightenment for all.

At the guild hall, they are greeted by an apprentice covered in dust from head to toe. Behind him, the labors of masons, sculptors, and carpenters can be heard. The apprentice soon calls for a journeyman, who lets them in after an interrogation.

They are led to Lucio's workshop, one of many rooms hung with scattered tables and tools. Along the way, they pass through a great hall of elaborate design in both stonework and painted murals. A great centerpiece to the hall shows an enormous triptych. Ignorant characters will see first a builder in a labyrinth, laying the walls to confuse its wanderers, then the same builder but older imprisoned with a younger man, dribbling wax onto the floor, finally the builder in old age weeping in front of a bright sun. More knowledgeable characters will recognize Daedalus and his son Icarus, the building

of the labyrinth for King Minos, their escape using wings of wax, and finally the mourning of Icarus and his flight eclipsing the sun. This guild appears to idolize Daedalus for his craft and modesty. Also, they ward themselves against hubris and the perils it brings.

A table in the middle of Lucio's workshop shows a model and many drawings of the same building, titled the Porta Magna. Foreknowledge may reveal it concerns a new main gate of the Arsenale di Venezia, the largest industrial complex in all Europe. Those who study the drawings carefully and paid attention to the city around them will realize it is uniquely the first neoclassical work in all the city, constructed as a solid building around the center element of an Ancient Roman triumphal arch, incorporating the winged Lion of Venice.

When Lucio does enter, he apologizes for the rudeness of his brothers in the guild. Since he has no refreshments to offer the characters here, he suggests they join him for a meal in the city, his treat.

Interrogation

Lucio da Eraclea is a short, skinny man with long, copper-colored hair dangling in curls. His garb is less extravagant than most in the city and also in his mannerism he is more matter-of-fact. Beyond appearances, Lucio is Awakened and has been for almost a decade. The comet is a complete mystery to him, but he realizes that discovering its secrets will gain him special favor with his master in the guild. Observant

characters may notice obscure hand signals Lucio uses as they enter a restaurant, similar to those they may have glimpsed him using in the workshop to his fellow guild members, which immediately garner them the best of service.

When everyone is seated in a private room with a view over the harbor, wine in hand and various plates of bread and meat before them, Lucio starts telling an anecdote. He mentions his master's description of a phenomenon in the sky: "as large as the eye of an ox," and its tail: "fan-shaped like that of a peacock." He further mentions that his master has referred to it by the name Helion, as an astral shape springing forth from the sun and continues to describe a similar account by an Arab scholar, who embellished only by saying it resembled one of their scimitars. Their forces attacked the city of Beograd soon after, seeing it as a sign of war.

Then, Lucio proposes a game of questions. For every question the characters wish him to answer, he will demand one of them. He speaks of the belief that no knowledge, no single fact or opinion, should ever be censored or hidden. Visibly enjoying the sense of mystery nonetheless, he allows the characters to begin.

Concerning truths Lucio may reveal, he has allied himself with a sect spanning several guilds such as those he belongs to, the Craftmasons. He will never refuse to answer a question, but will grow increasingly vague as the subjects approach the secrets of his guild and the identity of his master. He believes himself to be a witness, an allegorical apostle even, to the great revelation that is soon to come. He believes that by infusing the glory of the past with the innovation of the future, paradise awaits all humanity. He believes he is doing his own small part to achieve this dream.

Concerning truths Lucio intends to extract from the characters, he wants to know the following. Are the characters aware of a comet visible in the sky with the naked eye in the first half of 1456? Can the characters recall its trajectory related to any landmarks? Can the characters explain the origin of the scar Lucio has noticed on each of their hands? Do the characters admit to a experiencing a revelation coinciding with Helion? Have they met any others who experienced the same? Do the characters believe they are close to Ascension?

After the game is done, Lucio will visibly relax and announce that they will speak no more of the matter. He is willing to host them in Venice for the remainder of the season, as long as they wish. He admits to being eager to show off his latest accomplishment, the Porta Magna. If the characters stay long enough for his relaxation to turn to inebriation, his inhibitions on modesty will fail him. He will start to hint and boast at the wonders he could show the characters. He speaks of a kite his friend made that can reach the Sun. He speaks of a contraption his master made that allows a door to open in Venice and

close in Rome. He claims to have grasped these concepts himself.

Immurement

Should the characters follow up on Lucio's invitation to his building site, they will find him there from the earliest hours of dawn, controlling and inspecting everything down to the last brick. They characters may notice that he is more than stern with the laborers, unrelenting in his vision, and demanding total control.

The base of the arch the characters saw designed in Lucio's workshop is being finished this very day. In the space adjoining the gate's thick walls, a strange hollow has been left in the masonry. As Lucio greets them, he enthusiastically explains all that they see before him. It may dawn on the characters that what he describes encompass immeasurable hours of lives all spent on further immeasurable numbers of components to create what they see before them. This covers the bricks which were dug, hauled, molded, baked, shipped, and laid, but no less, the scaffolding which was logged, sawed, joined,



and erected to facilitate each stage of the constructing, not mentioning the sourcing of mortar, the sculpting of lintels and keystones, the shaping and maintenance of tools, the digging of foundations, and the feat of engineering that kept the canal water at bay through it all. Lucio asserts that it is the pinnacle of cooperation, proof of the effectiveness of a common goal for all, of the power of a single vision, and a unity that may spell the future.

The characters may then bear witness to a horror. With great ceremony, members of the naval elite personally escort a maid in a thin white dress down to the dock. Lucio seems surprised himself, more at the date than the act. He forewarns that this is not a part of his design.

The characters watch as the young woman, reeling and supported by her escort, is lifted into the hollow of the wall. If asked, Lucio will explain it's the tradition of immurement, where a construction, be it a bridge or building, is blessed with the soul of guardian. He shrugs, saying that people believe in it. He does not know who the girl is or where she came from. He has decided not to involve himself, but rejects the mysticism of it. He may mention friends in the guild who believe these are brutalities which should be left behind in history where

they belong. Lucio ends by conceding that they can't afford to let traditions like these tether them and hinder them from proceeding to the future.

Before the Flood

At their parting, Lucio does not spare a thought for the maiden. Instead, he marvels at his construction and asks the characters their opinion: "If all our craftsmen applied such inner genius, Venice would stand tall even in the floods of God's next wrath."

Should any of the characters engage in a longer correspondence with Lucio, he is open to the idea of an apprenticeship.



Future Fates

Did the characters save the maiden from immurement?

Do any of the characters now believe Helion to be more, or less, than a celestial body orbiting the sun?

Will Lucio become anyone's mentor?

V

Vaüderie



Discovery

The next mage the characters meet is from the Verbena tradition. Unlike the others so far, she seeks out one of the characters most suited and approaches the potential apprentice directly under the guise of the discovery of a Cray nearby their home. It may start with rumors about a stranger in the area, an old woman selling strange and seemingly useless trinkets, like a bone in the shape of a heart, the eyes of a once-blind cat, or a bezoar. She hides her face behind a grey veil and assumes the posture of a feeble old woman. Before she has a chance to reveal her name, their introduction is interrupted by a vision at the very moment they first touch hands.

In the vision, there are a dozen revelers in a wintry forest. They drink greedily and paint their faces grotesquely, as if preparing for a mummery. The director stands in the shadows, horned and hooved.

After the vision ends, the stranger curses someone names Bies and asks for the character's help. She promises there are many things she could teach and she poses that perhaps a trial by fire is best to determine the worthiness of an apprentice. The old woman introduces herself as Zima and asks the character to meet her in Arras in the land of Artois at the first thaw.

Culture

It is the late spring of 1460 in Artois. The land has been ruled under the dukes of Burgundy for almost a century. The city of Arras, where the characters may meet to assist each other, has been the subject of an



inquisition long before their arrival. Its Gothic cathedral is one of the most beautiful on the continent.

In a trial for heresy in Langres, a man named Robinet de Vaux accused residents of Artois of witchcraft. Inquisitor Pierre le Broussard returned to Artois to follow up on these charges. The first to be accused was the prostitute Deniselle Grenier. She was captured and tortured by local clerics until she revealed others of guilty witchcraft, including Jean Lavite, a starving artist and leader of a wandering theater troupe. Lavite's torture led to eight further arrests.

While misgivings exist about the prosecutions, the dean of the cathedral Jacques du Bois has exploited the

count of Étampes to order the church to move forward.

Miscellany

Rumors

There are many local rumors that surround the coming trial. It is said that the first accusation in Langres was the result of a trial for heresy, a conflict between Dominican and Franciscan preachers. Also, the theater group has performed a play in Arras where they portray widows who murdered abusive husbands after being advised by a mysterious figure painted all in black, played by Lavite himself.



Inaugural Trial

The characters are swept into tumultuous rumors of a trial for witchcraft occurring at the cathedral of Arras. When they arrive, there is a vast crowd gathered before the steps, where a tribunal of priests stand in judgment before a scaffold. Before long, the accused are brought forth onto the scaffold, each wearing a mitre of sack cloth painted to represent each individual kneeling before a goat. Five of them are women, a combination of prostitutes and mummies. One of them is Jean Lavite himself, leader of the theater troupe. Lastly, the corpse of another man is dragged on to the scaffold, having committed suicide in the night.

Pierre le Broussard, a stern-faced man wearing a white tabard over ceremonial armor, rises from his seat among the priests and accuses the seven of them of vauderie, witchcraft. While the characters can do little to sway the trial conducted by the inquisitor, they can gauge and influence the audience. It is during the trial that the Verbena mentor reunites with her apprentice-to-be, only she is difficult to recognize. Now, she appears as a young maid around fourteen years of age. She stills wears a grey veil, but she no longer hides large blue eyes behind them. She introduces herself as Wiosna.

By the end of the trial, the accused have each confessed to attending a ceremony in the woods. Here, they anointed branches of wood with an oil given to them by the Devil and once they spilled it onto their hands and placed the stick between their legs, they flew over the forests of Artois. They feasted on wines and meats with the Devil in the deepest parts of these forests. They adored the Devil and gave them their bodies and souls. They held burning candles and kissed the Devil on the anus. After they paid this homage, the director Lavite, also called the Abbot of Folly, commanded them to spit on a cross. The inquisitor sentenced all of them to

secular punishment with the might of the Archangel Gabriel and in the name of God.

Chasing the Beast

After the trial, Wiosna finds a secluded moment to tell the characters about an acquaintance of hers called Bies, although the characters may have understood 'Beast' at first. She describes him as a scoundrel who followed her on her travels from her homeland. "He is the kind of creature every mother warns her children about. Only now, he is in foreign lands among gullible folk." His skin is black as night. His legs were stolen from a goat and his tail from a bull, as well as his phallus. If the characters want to join her, Wiosna proposes to hunt the creature and banish him before he does more harm. This hunt will take them deep into the Artois forests and last for weeks.

Following descriptions from the trial, they find an abandoned wagon outside the city. It contains costumes, painted board of scenery, and even puppets of a scandalous nature. Some tracks of goats' hooves remain in the area, though all footprints that follow them disappear somewhere in the woods as if they indeed took flight on brooms.

Following the tracks of hooves, the characters find a hermit's shack. The hermit is welcoming enough, especially when he suspects there are wise women among them. He fled to the woods in debt to his in-laws after his wife died in labor. Now, his



prize sheep haunt him. They have given birth to lambs black as night without the presence of a ram. The lambs bleat all through the night, depriving him of sleep. When he tried to slaughter one, it bit off his ear. While Bies' influence on the flock is clear, his trail ends here in muddy ground stained by countless hoofprints.

Deep in the night, while the characters are still enjoying the hermit's hospitality, a lone figure stalks through the woods on horseback. The clinking of armor is unmistakable. The characters may glimpse the knight riding through the night, following a trail passed down to him by visions received while clutching the cross around his neck. The knight's passage left a horseshoe behind near the hermit's shack, which Wiosna entrusts meaningfully to her potential apprentice's keeping, saying that cold iron has power over creatures such as Bies.

Following the knight's trail and rumors of his passing through the towns, the characters spend many days outpaced until they reach a small cloister near the coast. There, they find a spectacle of locals gathered before the gates of a cloister. Now, the characters also recognize the knight they have been chasing all these past days. It is Jacob of Aachen, clad in gleaming steel rather than the rusted armor he bore when they met. Subtler yet more distinguishing are the sunken eyes and trembling hands that speak of the scars of torture endured at the hands of his captors.

Banishing the Beast

The characters find Jacob of Aachen as the center of attention in a trial far less organized than the one they witnessed in Arras. He holds a sword upright in his right hand and strangles a bishop by the collar in his left. Again, the characters find themselves in a position where they may influence the crowd, but not the jury. The bishop is accused of seducing the nuns of the cloister, and testimonies confirm his lechery. The accused claims it was not him, but some devilry instead. The testimonies suffice for Jacob of Aachen. Unless the crowd objects, the bishop commits his soul to the judgment of God as he is executed on the cloister steps.

If the characters approach Jacob afterward, he will recognize and embrace them. Wiosna will keep a safe distance from him, however. If they ask about his imprisonment, he will say that the Archangel Gabriel came to him and rescued him, that he has been shown a new path, and that he does not walk it alone any longer. More urgently, he insists that evil persists even with the bishop's reckoning. He has been tracking what he calls a demon and he intends to vanquish it like he did the Basilisk of Hostavalem. Here, the characters must choose whether to follow Jacob to slay Bies, or to follow Wiosna and banish it from foreign lands.

Jacob's and Wiosna's ways converge on the shore of



the North Sea, where the black-skinned Bies is confronted. His horns, hooves, and tail are unmistakable, though he stands a full foot shorter than any of the characters. As the characters stare into the beast's black eyes, he embraces a pregnant fisherman's wife and promises her that her husband will hurt her no more and that her child will be nothing like its father. Bies also slips a hand under her dress. Seeing the characters and their intent, Bies refuses to release the woman. Anything they intend to do to him will befall her as well, he promises.

Jacob meanwhile trembles and seems on the verge of falling to his knees in tears. He relives past horrors as he unsheathes the sword stained by the bishop's blood. Wiosna remains at a distance and stares with appraising eyes at her potential apprentice. If the characters take the cold iron horseshoe to Bies, he will return to his homeland. If the characters take up Jacob's sword, they will spill more than only his blood.

Sentence

By the time the characters return to Arras, it is June. Wiosna appears to have aged a year for every week that has passed, now appearing as an almost fully grown young woman. The characters learn that the secular punishment has resulted in a burning at the stake for each of the accused. Worse, a further dozen of citizens have been accused of witchcraft since.

Jacob is reunited with his mentor, the inquisitor Pierre le Broussard. They can be seen arguing briefly until Pierre insists: "A confession drawn under an oath before God can only be truth!"

Here, the characters can decide to part ways with Jacob and leave Arras to its fate. They may also press on his own doubts and sway him into leaving the Gabrielite path behind. The only way to save the citizens of Arras from further trials is to stop both the dean of the cathedral Jacques du Bois and the inquisitor Pierre le Broussard.



Future Fates

How many are found guilty of witchcraft in Arras before the year's end?

Does Jacob of Aachen belong to the Cabal of Pure Thought?

Do any of the characters enter a road towards the Cabal of Pure Thought?

Will Zima/Wiosna/Lato/Jesien settle near one of the characters to teach her ancient pagan ways?

VI

Plague's Doctor



Discovery

The characters are visited by prophecies of a great power, of a primordial darkness, and the conjunction of its domain with this world. Ever since meeting Herne the Hunter, the characters have become more attuned to such premonitions. There is no doubt however, that this power piercing the veil between worlds has a far more distant and alien origin. The location of its arrival can be divined as an approximate region in the mountains on the borders of the Swiss Confederation and the Duchy of Burgundy. The characters are likely to approach from the side of Burgundy, to avoid going through the mountains.

Culture

It is somewhere before 1461, depending on the order of episodes the players have chosen. The characters venture to the lands of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. Through purchase, inheritance, and conquest, these lands have grown considerably in the last decades. Caught between the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Emperor, he has made an ally of the English. His court is described as the most extravagant of all his neighbors. Knightly chivalry is kept in high regard here. Philip the Good has even created his own Order of the Golden Fleece, modeled after legends of the Knights of the Round Table and the Greek myth of Jason.

As the characters approach the mountains, they may learn that only one settlement lies in the direction



they're headed. It's called Versonnex and its people usually keep to themselves. The Burgundians believe they associate mostly with the Swiss. If asked, the Swiss would say they believe the town mostly associates with the Burgundians. The mountain pass happens to be hazardously populated with ticks.

Miscellany

Beauty's Honor

Traveling through Burgundy, the characters come across a knight's tourney field where young nobles are practicing their skill with lances. Near the road, one such knight is enjoying a picnic with a noble lady, served by squires and handmaidens. This knight halts the characters on their way and asks them if the Lady Montclair is not the most beautiful woman they have ever seen. He asks the question with one gauntlet on the pommel of his sword. If there is any doubt or hesitation in the characters, he will announce his is willing to

defend her claim to beauty with his honor and blade.

A duel to first blood may follow, if the characters go along. Lady Montclair is visibly aroused by the whole splendor. Meanwhile, a squire and handmaiden make use of the distraction to sneak away into the woods for a tryst.

Repentance

Passing through one of many of the larger Burgundian towns, the characters witness a spectacle on its main square before the church. Nearly all its townsfolk have gathered around the priest, who starts by chastising them for the lack of attendance on the previous Sunday. His eyes fall over the characters' group several times though as his pronouncements become ever more dire: "It's not too late to turn back!" "When did you last make confession before God?!" "Change your ways!" "Renounce the Devil before it is too late!" "Commit your soul to God!"



Pestilence

As the characters climb the mountain, they slowly discover something is seriously wrong. The first sparse cabins they encounter contain the corpses of the inhabitants. They died in awkward positions, clutching their heads and writhing. Though the bodies are stiff with rigor mortis, they still give off heat as if stricken with fever.

By the time the characters near the heart of the town, they may see a figure, the first living soul in Versonnex, standing high on a ledge in the distance. It appears to be shrouded in cloaks from head to toe. It stares at them for a moment, then turns around. As it does, it reveals a large beak protruding from its head. It may take the characters a moment to realize it is a mask fully covering the face. It reminds them of a raven.

In one of the houses, the characters may find evidence of a practitioner of rituals. Knowledgeable characters may realize these were no mere pagan ceremonies, but truly demonic rites. The self-styled Pelerin Seduit has left a grimoire behind which the characters may find. It describes his fascination with what the characters can identify as a Succubus. Some pages of its pages have been torn and scattered, including those that describe a ritual to condemn one's very soul and the final page, which heralds the arrival of an infernal servant named Anzillu.

Necropolis

In the town's center, the characters will run in to the figure they saw from a distance. He is indeed covered

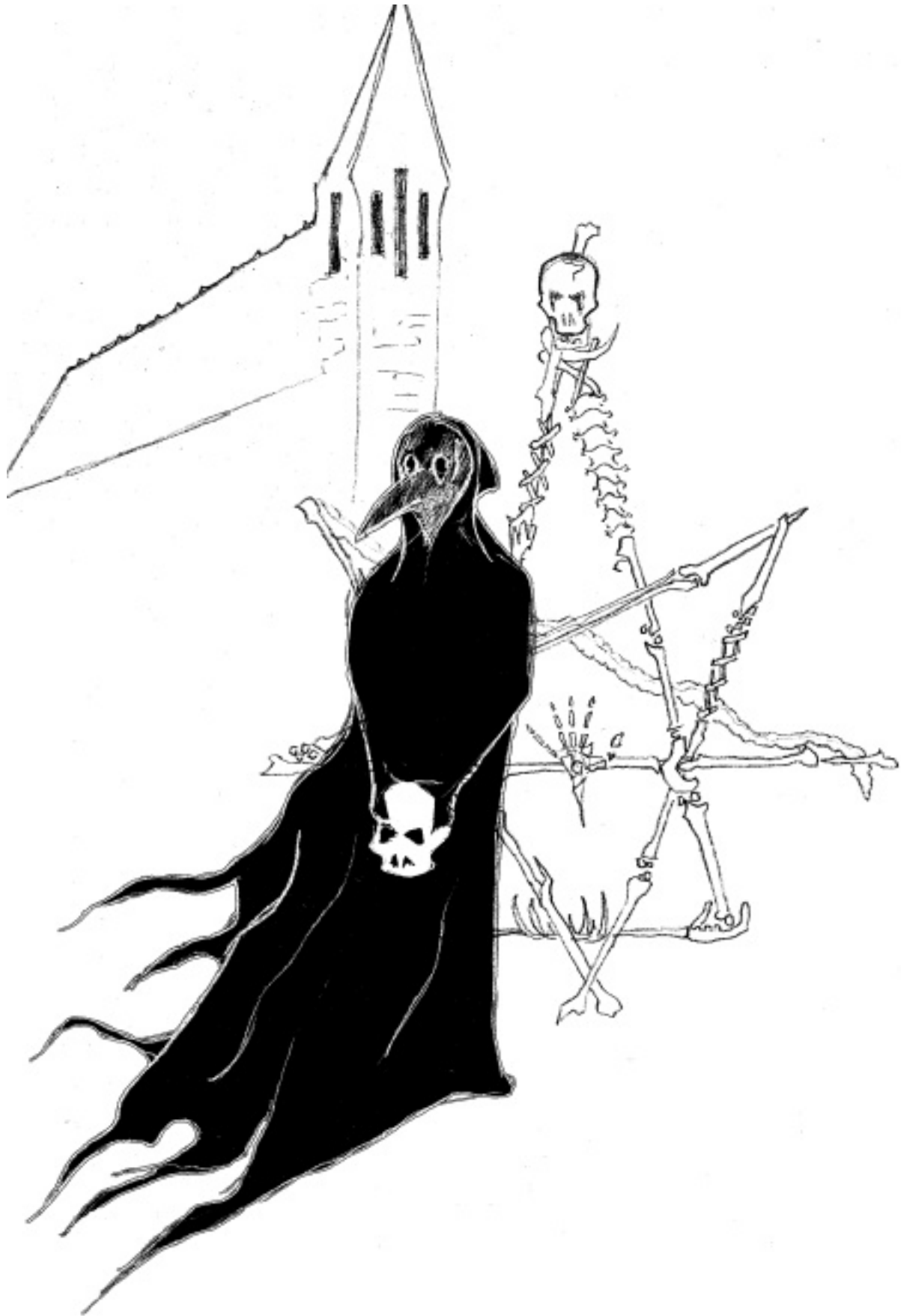
head-to-toe in leather, except for small glass lenses in front of his eyes. He smells of strong spices. His voice distorted by the mask and his expression unreadable, the man asks the characters' purpose here. He explains that they are witnesses to a powerful disease. He calls himself a physician and alchemist. The characters can hear screams coming from the church behind the man. He explains that he is treating the last surviving victims there. He offers to fortify the characters against the disease and recommends that they do not enter the church.

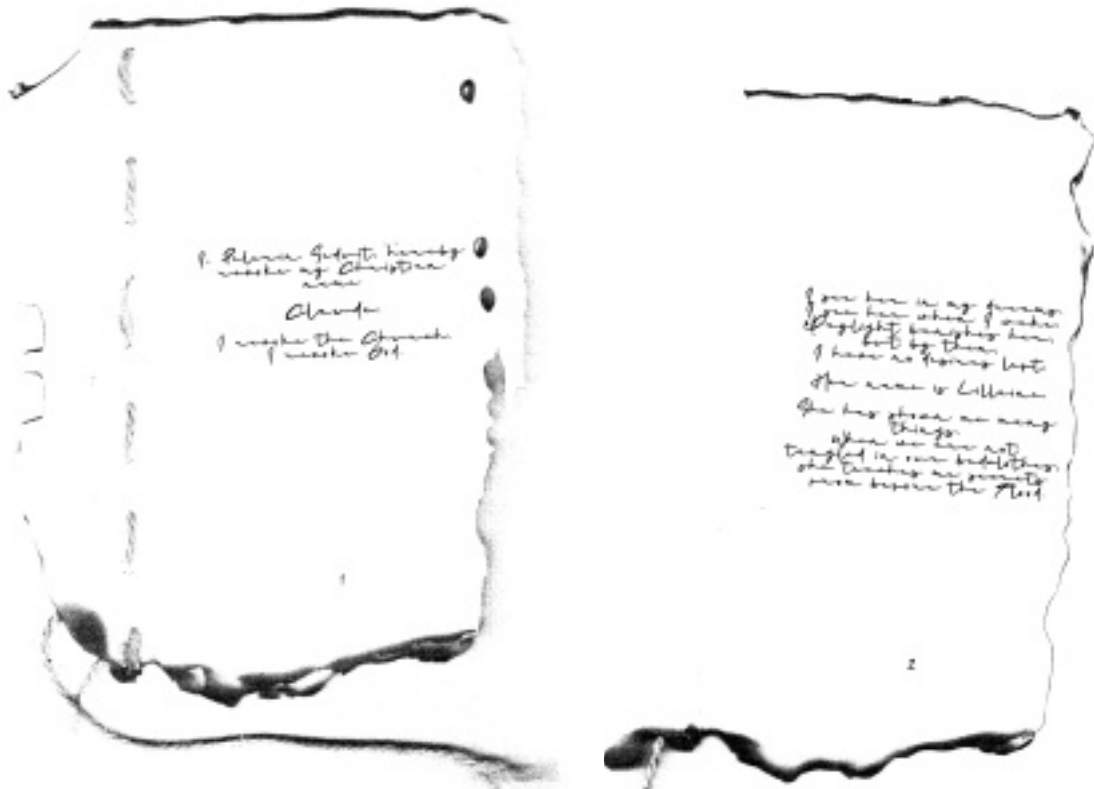
Pelerin's grimoire might have given the characters enough information to mistrust the figure. The characters could also interrogate him on his presence here. He brings them a liquid which smells like a fungus and burns the nostrils. If the character refuse to drink the concoction, he will reveal himself to be Anzillu. He is indeed here to treat the villagers' condition, but that condition is life itself. "What are lives but candles which need to be extinguished before the wick runs out?" he poses, alluring to his work on a panacea, a cure for all humanity.

Damnation


Inside the church, the characters will find the last villagers dead in the pews with a rictus of horror on their faces. There is a heat to the room they can't quite explain. Hooves have left scorched marks on the floor all throughout.

The screams had been coming from the pulpit. There, a young man has been tied to priest's corpse, but





Lilliana speaks of
 another word
 This word must be etched
 upon my soul
 I have long known
 I own the Devil
 This will make me His own



I stigmatize myself
 with a black blade
 I breathe myself
 in black victims
 I cover all that is holy
 with a black tongue
 I tear my soul and turn
 its outside upon myself
 I have no more eyes for it

I do not know how long
 have been waiting
 I do not know what
 which things I am
 actually working
 I know that Lilliana has
 abandoned me
 I know what is about to
 happen
 The Great One is
 coming I see only the
 burning mark
 There is a secret in His
 smile
 who walks this earth
 upon He talks as
 I will be judged
 He talks as I must
 prove myself worthy

hung upside-down. The characters can recognize Pelerin from the marks on his naked flesh described in his grimoire. The last ritual pages that were torn from it are laid out before him. His eyes wide, he screams about seeing hellfire. He tries to start a prayer of forgiveness before he cannot contain the screams at unseen horrors. He confesses to desecrating his parents' graves. He confesses to mutilating a girl he was in love with. He confesses to poisoning the communion wine to spread Anzillu's disease. He screams as hellfire claims him.

If the characters have not attacked Anzillu, or even convinced him that they are intrigued by his work. He will explain that Pelerin displeased those who wished to serve. Pelerin still believed in fleeting things like his own existence. He was not actually willing to give up his soul to eternal torment. Anzillu did not let this alter the acolyte's destiny.

The church further contains a laboratory set up on the desecrated altar. There are vials full of tinctures and advanced instruments of alchemy scattered around a scribbled recipe. This is the latest iteration of what may one day come into being as the Sweating Sickness. Written in Latin, it describes the hellfire rising through a victim's very soul.

Confrontation

Sooner or later, the characters may confront Anzillu. They may detect the black ripples in his aura and the very nature of his mutilated Daemon, or they may see through his half-lies. If attacked, he will rely mostly on alchemical devices he has prepared. Some vials may explode on impact, others may blind and torment with a noxious gas everyone who does not wear his protective

clothing. When pressed, he will most of all try to salvage his laboratory in the church. With cold determination, he whispers to the characters that his work, though interrupted, cannot be undone. If he sees no chance of escaping the characters on foot, he will try to destroy the evidence in fire and meet his masters in its midst, screaming in unison with Pelerin as he too is dragged to Hell.

Contraction

Taking their leave of Versonnex, it's possible some of the characters contracted the forebear of the Sweating Sickness. Some may have made the mistake of trusting Anzillu's panacea. It's also possible for a medical prodigy among the characters to notice the density of ticks in the pass and their attraction to the heat of the villagers' corpses. Untreated, the characters will start feeling flushed before they reach the valley again. They may not realize it has nothing to do with the climb until they reach the next village.

Future Fates

Has Anzillu become one step closer to bringing the Sweating Sickness into the world?

Have any of the characters become more devout in their worship of God?

Are any of the characters (still) on the byways that lead to the Path of Screams?

VII

Boûlmates



Discovery

he characters (as well as others of Helion's Advocates such as Jacob of Aachen) are each visited by a mysterious and powerful mage.

She is short of stature, bronze of skin, clad in wisps of silk, adorned with chains of gold, and undeniably beautiful. Each time she appears, there is a gust of hot, dry wind before she materializes out of sight. "Every seventy-and-five years, I lose you, my love. Is that you hiding behind this one's flesh?" "Every nine hundred moons, you leave me, my love. Is that you burrowed into this one's soul?" She leaves each of the characters where she found them, disappointed, until she meets the one among them whose Daemon is known to her. "My rooster," she whispers, reaching out with a trembling hand, "don't you recognize your Iris?"

Iris believes that any lover she has ever had was the personification of the same man, an incarnation of the same soul. Fate has a way of always uniting them over the centuries. Now is the first time she has actively sought him out. She believes the world is on fire. She has seen it in her visions. She believes there will be no renewal after this.

Meanwhile, curious characters may puzzle the matter out when there is no response from one among them. Either by stepping through the conduits Iris has left behind her or by communicating and traveling through the physical world, they may come to the final conduit that both Iris and the fated character have stepped through.



Culture

It is 1461, though this story describes events into the summer of 1462. These include the expelling the greatest battle in the Wars of the Roses and the crowning of King Edward IV, the painful death of Charles VII of France, the Fall of the Byzantine Empire, and the Night Attack by Vlad the Impaler.

Specifically, the characters observe these events in the form of prophecy from Iris' home, the ruins of a temple to Hecate in Trebizond while it is under siege by the Ottoman Turks. Trebizond is the capitol of the last state of the Byzantine Empire (still called the Roman Empire), spread over the coasts of the Black Sea. Its location places it directly in the Silk Road's way. It is a historical melting pot of religions and has played a large role in the mercantile expansion of the Renaissance.

During the characters' stay, the city will be besieged. A total of 200 galleys and 10 warships cut off all escape except by land. Emperor David Megas Komnenos relies on reinforcements by land but is soon to be crushed by troops marching across Anatolia after the surrender of Sinope.

Miscellany

Attraction

The character Iris has selected may be overwhelmed by what she proposes. There may be an undeniable physical attraction to her, but beyond this, depending on

the strength of the character's Daemon, there may be more. The Daemon does feel itself being drawn to Iris'. If the Daemon is weak, this may not be noticeable to the character without deep meditation. If the Daemon is strong, the character may find himself overwhelmed by its desire to be with her.

Queen of Heaven

The characters have the opportunity to investigate the temple Iris dwells in. While most of it is clearly in ruin, Iris maintains several now-outdoor shrines. A few locals still come here to worship. At first glance, the most likely conclusion about who is being worshiped leads a scholar to Hecate. She is present in threefold along with her symbols of key and torch. However, closer inspection reveals these statues are relatively new in the temple, placed here, but not a part of the original architecture. Faded murals depict goddesses much like her, but include lions trampled beneath her feet, owls by her side, entirely nude, wings sprouting from her back, and stranger symbols still. The names of these incarnations of gods are not yet known to the cultures the characters originate from, though by mystical means, the characters may glimpse visions of the Mesopotamian Ereshkigal who dwells in the Underworld, Babylonian Ishtar who rules over the sky, and Sumerian Inanna who dispenses justice, all held as unconquered queens of beauty and desire.



Last House of the Mother

The characters emerge through the last of Iris' conduits, carried by the motes of a desert wind. They are surrounded by coastal mountains and trapped on a high hill in the center of a fortified city.

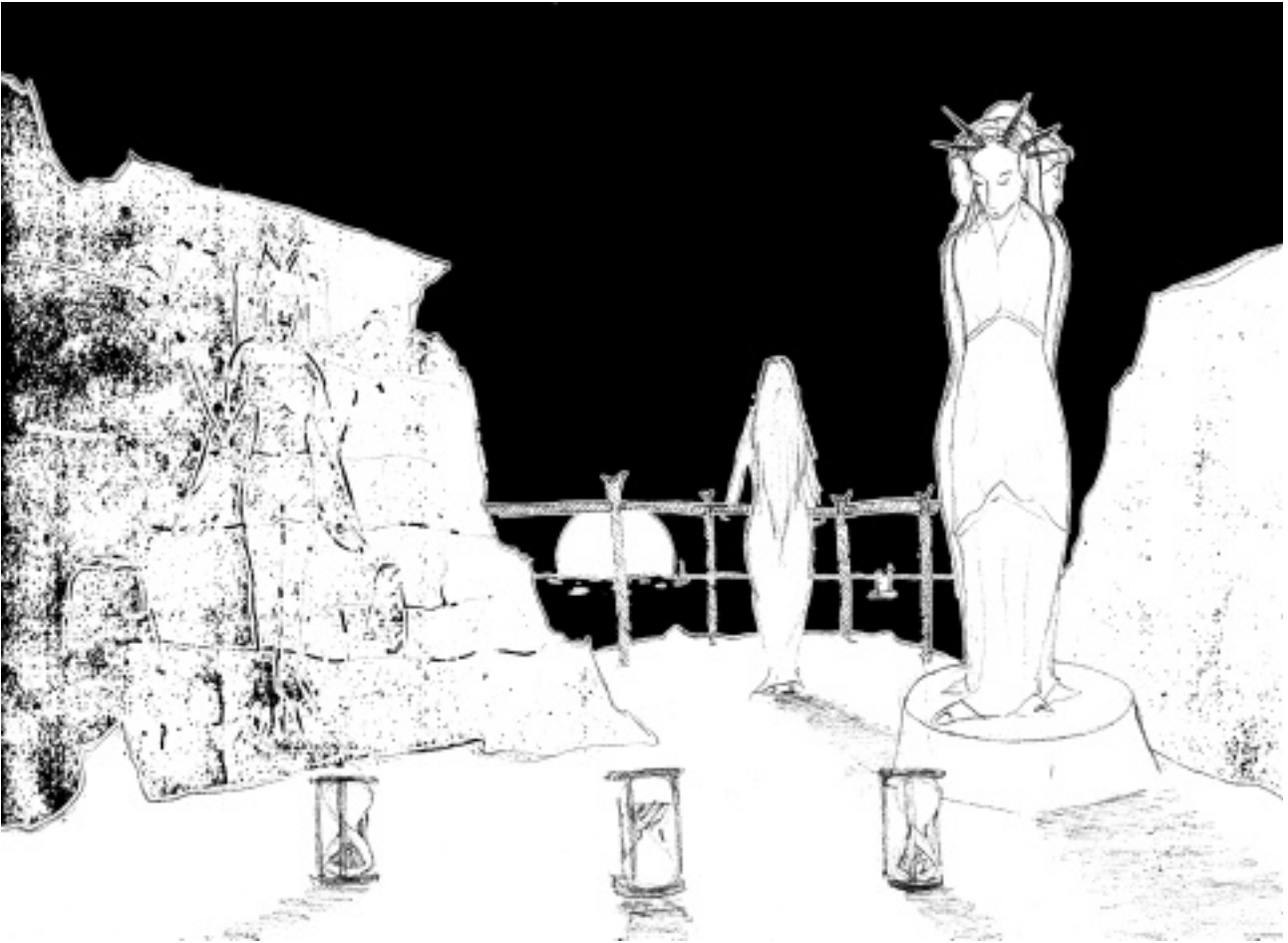
"This world is on fire," Iris repeats. "There is no more room for reincarnations. There are no new names to take. There is nowhere left to run. The Mother in all her forms will be rejected, reviled, and finally forgotten. This is the last of her temples. All its power will have left it when the new age treads upon its dust." "We need not stay to join the ashes, my rooster. Love of mine, we can leave this world. We can go to the Great Earth where Mother is queen." With a gesture, Iris invokes a conduit of wind again. This time, black sand falls from her hand as she opens her palm. She does not expect the character to blindly take her word for it. She has cast her gaze far and wide. There are three hourglasses set in the corners of the temple. Iris invites the characters to peer into them and see for themselves what fate has in store for this world.

The hourglasses represent different visions of the coming year. Some are fuller than others, all slowly running out. Each time the characters gaze into one and return, time in the temple passes by months at a time. Sometimes what they have just seen has already come to pass by the time the vision is done, as indicated by the sand in the hourglasses running out.

Blood in the Snow

In the hourglass with the least sand left in it, the characters see themselves caught in a snowstorm on English soil. It is March 29, 1461. Possibly through their own choice, though more likely swept by the madness of the age, the characters find themselves fighting for either the red rose, or the white. The Lancastrian king has been deposed. The Yorkist successor has been murdered. Today, here at Towton, the Yorkists under Edward IV and the Lancastrians under Henry VI are to affirm the victor's right to rule over England through force of arms. Sixty thousand souls take to the battlefield.

Those of the characters on the side of the Yorkists



find themselves greatly outnumbered. Those of the characters on the side of Lancastrians find their archers falling short of range due to strong winds. After the Lancastrians are forced to abandon their defensive lines due to the hail of arrows, a melee ensues that results in the greatest and bloodiest battle ever fought on English soil.

By the end, the House of York has lost eight thousand men against the House of Lancaster's twenty thousand. Edward IV emerges as the victorious king, though Henry VI escapes, flees to allies across the borders, and survives.

As the characters pull themselves back from the hourglass, they notice the air is stifling and hot. All around them in Trebizond, summer has come. With it, they see mighty black ships approaching by the sea. Iris tells them that though the battle they have just seen is already past, its land's wars of succession are far from over. She says its towers will yet run red with royal blood.

Dauphin's Crown

In the middle hourglass, the characters see themselves gathered around a royal deathbed. It is July 22, 1461. King Charles VII of France has suffered from

infections that would not heal for the past three years. Most recent of these have caused abscesses in his mouth, rendering him unable even to drink water. The characters are family members and councilors, among them the younger son of the king also named Charles, and his chief physician.

The king alternates between deliriums, asking after his son Louis and whether he has agreed to come, muttering about Jean d'Arc and forgiveness, then fiercely accusing all at his deathbed of treachery, of poisoning their king in the service of the dauphin, Louis. The characters all know that Louis has fled to Burgundy under the protection of Philip the Good after inciting a revolt against his father, that he is living a life of leisure while simply waiting for his father to die.

Among the characters is a physician who has indeed found the king's deterioration consistent with poisoning over the last weeks here at the castle of Mehun.

Another, the fifteen-year-old prince, remembers one occasion where Louis chased the king's publicly recognized mistress (the first official royal mistress in history) Agnès Sorel through the castle with a bared blade until she leaped into the safety of their father's bed.

A young woman, once lady-in-waiting to Queen

Marie of Anjou, now nurse to the king, recalls poisoning the royal mistress on her queen's orders, resulting in the death of her and her unborn fourth daughter while they journeyed to support the king on his campaign against civil war.

The attending bishop recalls the scandals surrounding Agnès Sorel, how her dresses at court would leave her breasts exposed, how her rivals both scorned and imitated her, how the king was sleeping with her cousin Antoinette immediately after her death, how the king had been sending Antoinette wildly inappropriate gifts including lands ever since he first saw her at court as a young girl.

Antoinette, the current mistress of the king, eagerly awaits the king's slow death to take its final course, as she has been keeping the dauphin, soon to be king Louis XI of France informed of her efforts to poison him, and he is getting impatient.

Other councilors may recall Jacques Cœur, the king's financier, who was arrested for poisoning Agnès Sorel, his lands seized and distributed among Charles' intimates. Some may sit in disgust at the thought of the Louis becoming king after patiently waiting for his own father to die, refusing to answer his summons.

In King Charles VII's last hour, each attendee of his deathbed would benefit from discovering the king's poisoner. Before any of them do, they must decide whether they will accuse the culprit, or ingratiate themselves before one who is in good graces with the new king.

As the characters pull themselves back from the hourglass, the month of August has come. Trebizond is under siege by sea and by land. The streets around them reek. The city is quiet in fearful anticipation. Only one hourglass still has sand left in it. Iris watches as the sultan's armies march down from the west, where the empire had expected reinforcements from allies who now have also been conquered. She tells the characters that the kingdom of France could have been an example of national stability, but that not all sons are worthy of their inheritance, and that just as France has a new king, so will Burgundy have a new duke. After four generations of war, the peace King Charles VII created for France will prove to be brief, and new empires will tear at its heartlands for countless generations to come.

Night Attack

In the hourglass with the most sand left in it, the characters see themselves marching in the dead of night. It is June 17, 1462. They are soldiers from Târgoviște, the capitol of their land of Wallachia. They have come down from the mountains to mount a raid on the Ottoman forces camped on the road to their beloved city. Their commander has placed them in the vanguard with strange orders. There is a man with them, his face veiled,

disguised as a Turk. They are to strike for the heart of the encampment and protect the man in disguise.

Before long, they are surrounded by screaming horses and tents aflame, always just ahead of the rest of the Wallachian army, pressing ever deeper into the Ottoman camp. When their group is confronted by Turks sounding the alarm, their disguised companion turns on the characters, pretending to assault them on behalf of the enemy. It is a feint intended to confuse the enemy. The characters may understand what the disguised man says when he tells them "Leave these to me! Protect the sultan!"

If the characters catch on to the ruse, they may join in stalking the other Turks to locate the sultan's tent. Instead, they enter a tent belonging to two commanding viziers. In the ensuing skirmish, their companion's disguise is unveiled and the characters recognize their voivode, Vlad III Dracula himself. Outside, they learn that the sultan managed to escape. Vlad rounds on his soldiers, furious, and begins to give them new orders.

As the characters pull themselves back from the hourglass, the city is being invaded by the Ottoman Turks. Iris tells them that these fires will never go out. Ottoman, Wallachian, and countless other warbands crowning themselves empires will bring fuel the fires with blood for centuries to come. One of the soldiers from this last vision will be captured and tortured by the Turks. Another will be found to have caught the plague and ordered to leave his countrymen behind and die among the Turks so that they may be infected instead. The rest march on Târgoviște the very next day to order all its residents to leave, to fill its streets with the corpses of the Turks impaled on spears, its gates wide open for the sultan's armies to enter.

Final Breath of an Empire

Below the hill, the city of Trebizond is being sacked. It is the twenty-first and final day of the siege. The elite warriors of the Sultan, his Janissaries, have surrounded the imperial castle. Iris continues to prophecy that Emperor David will be promised estates under the new rule, but both he and his three sons will be executed. His daughter married off to the Grand Vizier. Over a thousand children will be captured in the city to be made slaves. All its boys will be forced to convert to Islam and disciplined into becoming the next generation of Janissaries.

"Join me, my rooster. This world is flawed and broken, where the delusions of the few determine the fate of the many. Wars are no longer fought in the name of gods." "It is the Underworld for us. Break the cycle of nine hundred moons and be with me instead. We shall make an empire of our own and venture where we wish, when we wish."

Iris conjures forth two conduits, one with harsh

Soulmate

desert winds which will take the characters back to Europe, another which eats all sound and pours out a fine black sand, perhaps like ash. The invitation to join her in the Underworld extends only to the character she believes to be a reincarnation of her soulmate. If refused, the character may return to Europe like the others and Iris will never be seen again. If the character agrees, he enters a cold place that at first seems to reflect the crumbling city of Trebizond until Iris guides him deeper and deeper by the hand. They wander across black plains past ruins of civilizations long forgotten until they come to a temple of many carved statues of the same woman in different likenesses. Iris welcomes him to the temple that will forever be and forever was the home of the Mother of the Earth, the Queen of the Heavens, the Empress of Love and War. His place in the story continues, although his time in between episodes is spent in this corner of the Dark Umbra, a Dark Kingdom of ancient religions. The Dark Umbra will slowly leave its mark, starting with a steady source of Jhor.



Future Fates

Will one of the characters join Iris, exist beyond the mortal world, and possibly find the first way to break the cycle of Helion for himself?

VIII

Dead Gods

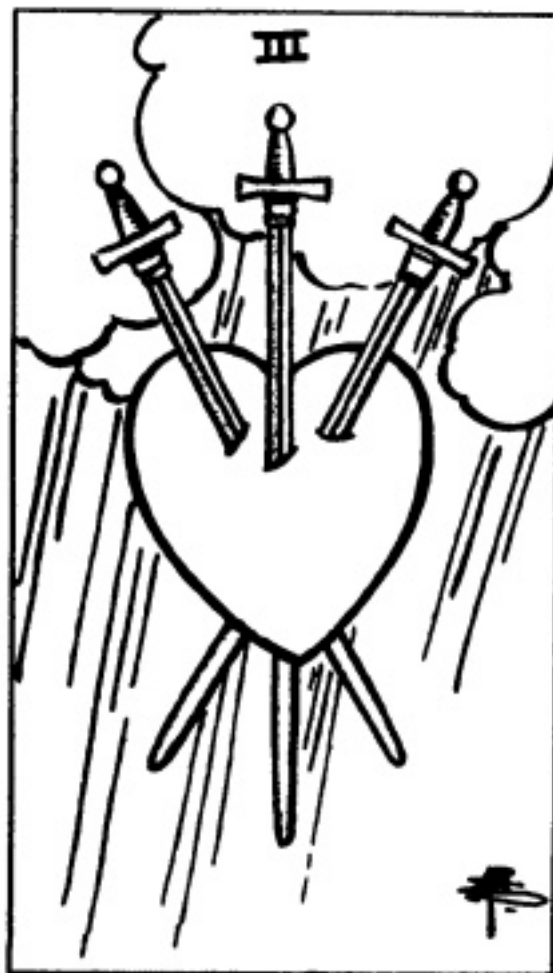


Discovery

In the north, a lone figure stalks the night in search of dead gods. The characters may hear strange accounts of the thin old man asking after local legends if they are anywhere near these lands. Iris in particular may send her lover back to the physical world to give the man a good death in his noble effort towards a lost cause. The stories of his passage spread far among the locals, and with them rumors of the legends the man chased. His name is alternately given as Konchak, Kozel, Kaschz, or simply 'the khan' for the old armor and sword he wears. In search of these rumors and legends, the characters follow in his tracks. It all seems to have started on the island of Rugia, where a man was seen walking out of the sea in the dead of night.

Culture

It is the end of the summer of 1463 along the coast of the Baltic Sea. The story features Rugia, Pomenaria, and Prussia, all regions which have a deeply-rooted pagan past preceding Christianization around three centuries ago. Rugia, for example, was settled by the Slavic tribe Rani from the 7th century until their autonomy was destroyed along with their pagan temple by the Danish in the 12th century under the banner of the church. Pomenaria and Prussia both show evidence of pagan worship continuing even after the Northern Crusades, which resulted in the founding of a Teutonic State within the Baltics. Currently, the lands around this state are in conflict the Teutonic Order in what history will



call the Thirteen Years' War. This has been preceded by conflicts all throughout the 15th century.

Last year saw the Battle of Świecino, where Pomeranian strategy resulted in the utter defeat of the Teutons who outnumbered them. Currently, the city of Mewe is besieged and Ludwig von Erlichshausen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order is leading the Teutonic fleet via the Vistula River to aid it.

Returned from the Veil

When the character from the previous episode returns to the lands of the living, the others are likely to be surprised to be contacted by him. They likely thought he had willingly stepped towards his death or his afterlife at least.



Rugia

By asking around in the coastal towns of the northernmost reaches of the Holy Roman Empire, the characters may piece together the events of some weeks ago. Depending on who they ask, some of the following may become known to them.

A fisherman living on the mainland south of the island of Rugia went to the sea in the middle of the night to secure the lines of his boat, fearing for a storm. As lightning struck from the sky, he watched as a tall figure with a long, thick beard walked up from the sea floor onto the shore. His chest was bare and he wore a golden blindfold over his left eye.

A few days later, after the fisherman's story had spread far and wide, Koschei showed up in the village, asking after him. He was dressed in strange old armor, unlikely to be recognized as 12th century Polovtsian, a Turkic nomadic tribe, and bore a long, thin flamberge which he sometimes used as a walking staff. Behind his back, the locals called him a grave robber. After speaking with the fisherman, Koschei threatened to kill him and stole his boat to get to the island. The next day, the boat was found back on the mainland shore and a young girl from the village had gone missing. A man matching Koschei's description was seen heading east in the company of a young girl. Several men from the village set off after them to retrieve her.

If the characters decide to visit the island before heading east themselves, they may encounter the temple ruins. Locals near there may tell them of the past pagan worship, though it was destroyed three hundred years ago. Careful investigation and perhaps a bit of excavation may reveal attributes of a spear and helmet belonging to a god who was primarily worshiped here. Combined with knowledge of Slavic mythology, the figure may be identified as Radegast, whose name means 'welcome guest'. He was known as a god of war, fire, night-time, and the evening sky, often painted completely black. One of the traces of history through which the characters may know of Radegast is that Johannes Scotus, Bishop of Mecklenburg was sacrificed to Radegast, also called Svarog, in 1066 in a Slavic revolt against Christianization.

Pomerania

On the road east, the characters may encounter a group of sullen men. Should they ask, they may discover these are the locals who set after Koschei and the young girl. While the villages ahead confirmed someone matching Koschei's description was seen, the girl was no longer with him. Some of them still carry the hope that she escaped and made her own way back.

By now, the characters have heard different accounts of Koschei, including variations on his name. Most focus on his tall, gaunt appearance, his long, sparse white hair, and his wide, unblinking eyes. He stalks through towns or farmland asking strange questions about the landscape, threatening with violence, and stealing supplies.

In a town called Gryffenberg, the characters learn that Koschei harassed locals over the course of a few days. He did not come by the road, but instead went back and forth between a nearby wood. He had heard stories of this region's past, when the priests under the direction of Otto of Bamberg (canonized a saint in 1189) Christianized much of Pomerania. An account from 1120 claimed the locals of this very town buried a statue of the god Triglav in its heart. The statue was meant to protect the village according to this account, though it may also have been a matter of hiding evidence of paganism from the church.

On the third day, Koschei uncovered the statue, but was driven off and forced to leave it behind. According to the rumors the characters hear, the local clergy threatened him with holy water and he fled. They also forbade the villagers from burying the statue again. One of them secretly keeps it above his mantle now. If the characters can earn their trust, they may be allowed to inspect it. It shows the god Triglav's three heads merged into one, with three noses and four eyes.

When the characters investigate the nearby woods, they discover an abandoned shack Koschei stayed in along with the murdered remains of the young girl he had kidnapped. She has been placed on her back on an ancient burial mound nearby and stabbed through the heart. An exceptionally alert character may notice a third set of footprints around the mound.



Accounts from villages further down the road confirm Koschei is still moving eastward. Another young girl has gone missing from one of these. When asking about strangers, the characters also hear an account of a tall, bearded wanderer with a blindfold much like the first account of the fisherman near Rugia. Attentive listeners may notice that this time, the blindfold was on the figure's right eye. Koschei's journey takes them closer to the war against the Teutonic Order.

Prussia

The trail the characters follow takes them across the Vistula river. The ferry only crosses a few times a day, giving the characters the opportunity to meet a nervous-looking young girl heading the other way. She is Koschei's most recent victim, yet she managed to escape. If pressed, she can reveal her traumatic experience with him.

He showed her a scar on his chest where he claimed to have torn out his own heart. He told her that her blood would raise a god from the dead. Perun, god of war, would walk the Earth again, just like his kin now did, Svarog, god of fire, and Dazhbog, god of wealth. Each night when he lay down beside her, he would whisper their names in her ear. A band of mercenaries came across their camp in the night and they demanded that Koschei give her to them. In the struggle, she managed to escape. She can tell them where this camp was in the Prussian lands to the east, between the Elblag and Pasleka rivers.

This part of Prussia was once home to the Pogesanians, one of eleven native Prussian clans. Their centuries of resistance against Christianization resulted in their survivors being turned into serfs. Western colonists were invited to repopulate their lands and grew to outnumber them.

Koschei's camp is not difficult to find. It is littered with the desiccated corpses of the mercenaries who came upon it in the night. One appears to have been dragged away, still alive. Following the trail through the bushes, the characters spot Koschei himself in the distance on an old Pogesianian battlefield still called the Field of the Dead. They called their god of war Perkunos.

The sun is slowly setting, painting the skies red. Koschei appears as he was described, gaunt and ill-kempt. His skin is darker than expected. The helmet on his head looks faintly like a battered old crown. He has

strung the surviving mercenary from a tree upside-down, ready to cut his throat and let him bleed on the soil. Koschei appears to be talking to the ground, saying that he has whispered in the grand master of the order's ear, orchestrating a grand battle by land and sea nearby, worthy of a god's attention.

The only way to stop the resurrection of Perkunos is for no blood to be shed on the Field of the Dead. The characters may stop Koschei from bleeding the mercenary and they may reason with him. If they overcome him by bloodshed, however, the same result is reached. There is very little the characters could say to change Koschei's plans. He fights with surprising speed and strength for his frame and his flamberge is deadly.

Blood in the Sea

If all three gods walk the Earth again, they will join by the shores of the sea overlooking the Vistula Lagoon. There, as the Teutonic Order's naval force is crushed by the Prussian Confederation, they revel in a new age of warfare. Their three bodies merge into one, with the blindfold over Svarog's left eye matching perfectly with the one over Dazhbog's right.

If Koschei is still present, he will kneel before the threefold god and address him as Triglav. "A khal kneels before you, All-High Triglav. Grant me your blessing. I long for immortality. I will serve you in whatever way you wish." Triglav speaks with a powerful voice, agreeing to let Koschei into his service.

If the characters are present, the threefold god will remove the golden blindfold and reveal a hideously scarred socket. He seems to study them with this blind eye, then says: "I see the road you have walked and I see the fate ahead of you. I see the light that was kindled within you." He takes a step closer and seems to stare right through to the characters' souls. "And I see that it will not endure. The light will abandon you and the wheel will turn anew."

Future Fates

Have the characters made an enemy of Koschei?

Have the characters stopped the return of the threefold god?

Will Koschei become immortal?

IX

Ascendant Advocate



Discovery

Those characters who have maintained contacts with the Order of Reason through for example Lucio, receive invitations to join an expedition. At first seen as a social occasion and a privilege of knowing the right people, they propose to explore the site of Ostia Antica, once a Roman harbor, now a well-known but long-neglected ruin.

Culture

It is December 1466. This is a time before the term of archeology existed. Instead, there are rare paragons of fascination with history seeking empirical evidence of the past. They are called antiquarians. Some are driven by a desire to acquire relics for display in private collections, others feel a compulsion to record what remains today and may be lost tomorrow.

Ostia Antica was once a harbor at the mouth of the Tiber river. One reason for its preservation is the silting caused by the river. It has drowned the ruins in a fine sand and it has pushed the shoreline further away under its banks. This left the site of the ruins further inland than it was at the time of its construction. Today's harbors were built far away from the ruin's foundations.

Miscellany

Delegates

Joining the expedition are several distinct representatives of different factions within the Order of Reason. Among them are some the characters have met



before, like Jacob of Aachen, the troubled knight, and Lucio da Eraclea, the hopeful architect, as well as several strangers. Depending on their actions, the characters may come to know them beyond the superficial.

Alessandro Greco is a chronicler. He wears a signet ring like Lucio's but concerns himself more with his writing than any of guilds' feats. By profession, he is an accountant, though he has made quite a name for himself as a historian. Only the greatest scrutiny may reveal one of three daggers he has hidden about his person and the fact that his accent is feigned. In truth, he belongs to the Ksirafai.

Helleboria is a proud member of the Hippocratic Circle. While she will enjoy a discourse on the nature of medicine and afflictions of humanity, her interest is limited to the diagnosis and not the treatment or cure. If asked, she will explain that mortality is the only real

symptom she cares to alleviate and the trifles that result from it are distractions.

Hemitheus is Lucio's master. He does not accompany the expedition from the beginning, but he does respond to the urgency of its discoveries. He is surprised to find the characters there and they seem to fascinate him more than the mithraeum.

Rumors

Among the explorers, there are rumors that Lucio's master, Hemitheus, intends to visit the excavation. Lucio can confirm it and if asked more about Hemitheus, he may describe that his apprenticeship started in 1456. This was shortly after Hemitheus' previous apprentice left. They had been together for 75 years. Lucio hopes to rise above apprenticeship long before that time.



Excavation

The characters join the other enthusiasts just inland of the mouth of the Tiber river. Parts of old ruins are exposed and clearly visible to the eye. Lucio is the first to comment on the disgraceful habit of architects from Rome to pillage the ruins for marble. Characters whose paradigms recognize the old gods may be able to sense that this is a place of significant power.

Initiates of various guilds toil with hand-dug channels creating a detour from the river. The characters watch as carts arrive to assemble a sequence of water wheels driving shafts coupled by a thick rope. These concentrate on a vertical wedge-shaped drill being slowly forced into the ground. By the time it has sunk into the ground over its full length, two of the water wheels have broken down. A winch is deployed next, which is meant to lift the drill again, tearing open the earth below. To their dismay, the initiates' construction cannot provide the force required to lift it up again, though the wood can be heard creaking and cracking.

An insightful character may take the opportunity to improve on the contraption's design and earn the respect of peers among the Order of Reason. If no suggestions are forthcoming, Lucio suggests digging a wider channel and feeding it with a sluice to wash out the loose sand. This carries the risk of drowning the excavators if the sluice fails. The last alternative is to dig by hand.

Bathhouse

The excavation uncovers an arch leading into a several large halls. They consist of domed ceilings, still intact despite their age and the weight of the earth

above. The upper rooms are inaccessible, leaving several on the floor the characters entered and more below. The bathhouse is impressive, a stunning feat for what is guessed to be over a thousand years old.

The characters may discover the remnants of the central boiler which could heat the entire establishment. In between the walls of these rooms, there are gaps that require some explanation. In fact, they were used to bring up and spread warm water across the pools and to heat the floors and walls. The wooden wheels that carried the water have long since rotted away. It's a puzzle most minds present turn themselves to. Should one of the characters guess at the original purpose, it's another point of recognition among peers.

There are mosaics of sirens that have survived the test of time. A loose statue is left in one of the dried-up pools. It portrays the god Vulcan, though the characters may find a shocking likeness to the gods called Svarog or Radegast in the Baltic lands. Another statue is discarded in a corridor. It portrays the goddess Minerva, with the slightest hint of an owl on her shoulder. Both the furnace and the lintel of the entrance to largest room have a broken off piece of masonry where the statues belonged. Should the characters return these to their rightful places, the earlier sense of power grows. At this point, the place can be considered a one-dot Cray.

Flood

Should the diverted river have been used to open the excavation before, the initiates upstairs may make a further blunder to cause the characters panic. Whether it's due to the failure of a sluice some greater failure, water may start streaming down into the ruin around the characters. The exact threat to their life depends on

the nature of the error above, but at whatever water level the stream is resolved, the characters may notice the water runs away on its own. This in turn may reveal a staircase hidden in the back of one of the rooms.

Mithraeum

The time the explorers estimate the ruins were still in use stretches to years where Christianity was still persecuted by a Roman emperor. A room in the back of the bathhouse leading to the stairwell into the cellar includes a basin and a monogram of the name of Christ.

Along the way down in the cellar, the characters may notice a faint sentence in Latin, its long-faded paint still staining parts of the decayed plaster. Interpreted, it may have read: "At the winter equinox, our savior is born." The tense of the phrase is particularly difficult to distinguish.

The first thing the characters see in the cellar is relief on one of the walls. It portrays a long-haired man at its center, surrounded by twelve faces deferring to him. These figures are difficult to distinguish and are likely confused with the notion of twelve apostles, while they are actually representations of the zodiac signs. Most significant, but difficult to spot, is a streaking star carved behind the central figure.

The cellar is wide and deep. A long channel runs down the center where water may have now have flowed into from above, recalling what it looked like in service. At the very end, the channel widens with an island in its center. Here, rising from the water, is an large marble statue of a man slaying a bull.

Different theories may rise from the company exploring the cavern. Alessandro will insist that if it is indeed Mithras, there should have been a reference to the unconquered sun. Now blocked up by earth, there is indeed a shaft that rises from the cellar all the way to the surface to shine light on the statue. Any character to discover it and subsequently clear the shaft will be rewarded with the sight of Mithras staring directly in the shaft's light. The place can now be considered a three-dot Cray. At noon, today at the winter equinox, the sun streaks straight through the shaft, and the place can be considered a four-dot Cray.

By the time everyone agrees it's Mithras, Lucio will make a point of returning to the original relief in the wall and explaining that it is less myth than one might suppose. It's dramatic, but what it clearly expresses is the sun, personified by the solar deity, and its place among the stars. He laughs muttering to himself "unconquered."

Hemitheus

While the characters marvel at their discovery, a latecomer can be heard coming down the stairs with heavy footfalls. Lucio recognizes the hulking, bearded shape in the corridor and asks after his master's health.

The characters may notice that Hemitheus carried no source of light when coming down. As he steps closer, they see that he is completely blind. Despite this, he seems looks straight at each of them, a look of astonishment on his face as he notices the scars on each of their palms.

"Mithras, I heard you say," he says, reaching out and touching the relief, tracing the comet hidden behind the central figure, then moving forward toward the statue with Lucio's apparently unnecessary guidance, "I must agree. It is Mithras. Places such as these are rare and yet wherever they appear, they have been right there hidden in plain sight." He speaks slowly, his voice matching his gait as an old giant.

"I've known a few men like these," he says, reaching out toward the statue's face, "a hero. Worshiped in their very flesh. I had an apprentice like that, before Lucio here." He smiles dotingly at the Venetian. "Somehow, he slipped those bonds. Outside of his own flesh, his worship only grew. What did he do to lift up the world so?" Hemitheus stares at the statue of Mithras, but he may just as well be speaking about his apprentice. "How did he do it? Did he deserve it?" Hemitheus shakes his head, looking down at Lucio, who cringes. "Where is he now?"

Tradition

Jacob is the first to break the atmosphere by suggesting to cut around the brick at the base of the statue instead of the marble it consists of. Lucio agrees and walks away to consult with the initiates above. If questioned by the characters, the others in the room reason that the statue is wasted down in the forgotten dark. They intend to present it to the world.

By the time the characters reach the bathhouse again, they will notice the statues and even some of the mosaics have been stripped from the walls. The initiates speak joyfully of an exhibition and how many people they will inspire. "And inspiration is the fuel of progress, the very lifeblood of the future," Hemitheus can be heard echoing.

By the time the characters reach the surface, they hear shouting. Only a few initiates were left to tend the contraptions that allowed access to the ruins' foundations. One of them has been struck dumb, deaf, and blind by a furious stranger. At first appearing to be a hermit, an Awakened local has found his Cray defiled on the very day he intended receive its greatest boons.

The initiates and the stranger are locked in a rage of curses and threats. The characters' dissonant appearance among those he calls 'Daedaleans' briefly gives the hermit pause. A crazed, short man who resembles some of the locals the characters have seen on their way here, this mage works old rituals out of the church's sight. Under the oppression of Rome's seat of Christianity, this



has rendered him close to brink of Quiet. The last intelligible accusations before the treasures of the bathhouse are brought into the light include a promise that something he refers to as the ‘Traditions’ and the ‘Council of Nine’ will crush these conspirators for their insolence.

The characters have a chance to avoid disastrous escalation. If they appeal to Hemitheus himself, they will find his blind gaze rest briefly on their palms again before conceding. “It need not come to war,” he may say

placatingly to the hermit while ordering the initiates to put everything back exactly where they found it. To the characters’ horror, one of the statue’s hands has come off in its transit to the surface. Hemitheus cannot help but end by saying: “See this as a gesture of good will.” “Know that the future beckons.” “Progress cannot and will not be allowed to die.”



The Fallen Monk

At this point, Alypius’ player decided to abandon the character after a long struggle with finding his footing. Along this painful road, Alypius had abandoned the church and forsworn all holy ways. He was about to explore the Path of Screams shown to him in Versonnex before the player decided a new character would be more suitable. Instead of a cheap death, however, Alypius would become a fierce enemy of the characters by indeed going down the Path of Screams, but as an NPC. He tried to kill one of them this episode on the orders of his new masters before control of the character passed to the storyteller.

Future Fates

Have the characters witnessed bloodshed in the Ascension War?

Have the characters kindled a great Cray in the ruins of Ostia Antica?

Are the ruins sealed once more?

Have any of the characters dared approach Hemitheus for guidance and instruction directly?

Has Hemitheus recognized the Daemon of his beloved former pupil in one of the characters?

X

Büchriders



Discovery

Zima calls for her apprentice at a time so deep in winter that the character had expected not to see her again until she was once more an infant. A frail withered thing, she warns with her dying breath of a terrible vision she had. They touch hands like they did the very first time they met and the vision is shared. A terrible conjunction threatens the world once again. The character receives impressions of thick mists and frost on thatched roofs. Zima says a storm is coming and that the character needs to go to the 'heathlands'.

Culture

It is the beginning of December 1467, in the Burgundian Low Countries. Charles the Bold has succeeded his father as duke six months ago. His wars predate his reign, however, as he has spent the past years putting down rebellions in the Prince-Bishopric of Liege on his father's behalf. He sacked and burned the city of Liege only last year. The year before, he avenged a slur spread in Dinant that he was the bastard child of the previous Bishop of Liege by killing its inhabitants down to women and children.

The neighboring duchies of Limburg and Brabant have felt these tensions strongly and continue in loyalty to Burgundian rule, providing the inland territories with its thriving economy. Its farmlands are clustered near monasteries, with the most rural areas bordering large heaths.



Miscellany

Along the Road

A traveling scholar mocks superstitions and mythical beasts in particular. He does not believe the creature placed in paintings today actually exist. He proposes the following riddle. All those who participate must draw what he describes. He meanwhile draws along, without showing his work. The riddle grows more rude as it goes

along. Several participants scoff and leave before it is finished. "Draw for me a beast with six eyes, with three mouths, with four arms, with eight legs, five on one side and three on the other, with three arses, two tarses, and a cunt upon its back." Tarse may be recognized as an archaic term for penis. When those remaining show their work, the scholar reveals his as well, a sketch of a man and a woman on horseback, the woman riding side-saddle. "We shall call it Gormagon!" he laughs.



Whispers

he closer the characters get to the northern borders of Limburg and Brabant, the more whispers they hear of disappearances.

People appear to have vanished from places all over the region since the start of autumn. Some speculate that it has something to do with the war Charles the Bold waged this October just a little further inland. Strangely, the disappearances never happen in towns, near churches, or near monasteries. People from here consider the rumors a superstition of the rural population, joking about the old notion of a world beyond this one still called the Schimmenryk.

Once the characters get into the rural areas, the rumors hit closer to home. It's specifically the disappearance of children that has every farmer worried. The weather also turn gloomy, decidedly colder with mists all throughout the day making it difficult to see further than one field. The characters need to follow specific instructions to find the families from farm to farm. If the characters ask about the mists, the locals will say it is not uncommon. The only thing that will drive it away is the frost, the coming of true winter.

Witte Dame

In their investigations, the characters may stop in their tracks when they hear something familiar. Local children can be heard singing a rhyme in the local language which sounds identical to one sung in Windsor ten years ago: "Hoef en hoorn, hoef en hoorn: iedereen opnieuw geboorn." The parents don't know where they learned it. The children themselves have sworn to keep it a secret, claiming that they have promised to be good. If a child can be convinced to tell the truth of it, he will say it was the White Lady (Witte Dame, locally). That very night, the child disappears, the only signs left behind a soot-stained hand print on the sheets.

The characters may witness the stranger come out of the mists and approach a group of children. It's a young woman dressed in a white gown. The mist gives the appearance of being slightly translucent. Her golden hair is braided and tied behind her head. Although the

characters may no recognize her, it is actually the same young girl who was taken Windsor. She teaches the children another verse: "Brood en graan, brood en graan: al ons vleys moet ooit vergaan." She furthermore instructs them to keep her secret. Those who are bad will be punished. Those who are good will be rewarded. She will flee back into the mists if she sees the characters, where hooves can be heard.

Joelbok

By this time, the locals are convinced they are haunted from the Schimmenryk. News reaches them from family far away across the border whose lands are also swept under the impenetrable mist. Panic flows from house to house as more stories are exchanged about strange sightings like the Witte Dame, but also riders on the back of goats, and dark-skinned men who are half goat themselves. Worst and rarest of all is a story about a spectral rider on a tall, white horse. The locals have called him Schimmelryder.

The next time the characters are nearby enough to witness one of the specters, they may be alerted by screams in the night on farm over. Once they're close enough to see it through the mists, they will see a large goat perched on its thatched roof. A man-sized creature with thick black fur, horns, and a sharp tongue lolling from its mouth walks out of the farmhouse, a sack over its shoulder with a struggling pair of children inside. The creature will try to frighten the characters more than fight them and will abandon the sack and the children in favor of fleeing back into the mists. This time, the characters can clearly see it mounting the goat and flying upwards and out of sight.

Schimmelryder

Despite their terror, the details of this last attempted kidnapping encourages some of the locals to start looking in the fields and the forests for any sign of where the children are taken. It appears they do not simply vanish and are not killed. With the thick mists clinging everywhere, however, most have little luck. Those who do find something are never seen again.



Either by reasoning where these have disappeared, or perhaps by means of the characters' magical arts, it starts to become clear that everything centers on the heaths themselves. Across all the lands now haunted, both the mist and the specters appear to originate near the local heath.

A cold night follows, where the people rise to find the soil outside frozen solid. They all agree that winter has truly come. An enormous horn is produced from one of the farms, called the midwinterhoorn. Traditionally, they would now sound it loudly to announce the season. Some debate whether it is wise to do so now. Perhaps the characters encourage it, or perhaps they share the locals' reservations. Those places that do blow the horn will have the mist almost immediately lifted all around them, and the Wild Hunt revealed.

High above the farms, the spectral cavalcade rides across the dark sky before dawn. Among them are shapes riding ghosts and brooms, dangling chains and sacks full of new victims. Shrieking in terror, the locals point out Schimmelryder, a strong white-haired man on a giant white steed, leading the procession. The characters recognize the Witte Dame at his side, just behind him. The Wild Hunt descends toward the largest of the heaths.

Joelkoning

The characters may feel brave enough to approach the heath and confront the leader of this incarnation of the Wild Hunt. The roads through the woods are littered with the corpses of those adults who went missing in search of their children, some hung from trees, others dropped from a great height. Surrounded by his

servants, the characters see the giant of a man with a staff in his hands. A wreath of oak and holly rests on his head. It is the Witte Dame who approaches the characters and bars their way. "You have no business with the Yule King," she says.

The mists have cleared and the hunters are satisfied. They are about to leave the world of the living alone for another decade. If the characters hope to reclaim the stolen children before they do, they will need a compelling argument. The Witte Dame remembers her youth among the living, when she was still called Hilda, but greatly prefers her existence now. She believes she is rescuing these children from a life of hunger, poverty, and drear. Most terrifying of all for the characters is the idea of how greatly the Wild Hunt's strength will grow with the addition of so many.

One weakness the characters may have identified for this incarnation of the hunt, is that it kept a great distance from the church. The abbeys and monasteries of the region also neighbor heaths, but were untouched.

Future Fates

Will the lands of Limburg and Brabant be robbed of a generation of children?

Has the Wild Hunt been repelled?

Are the characters preparing for the next visitation of the Wild Hunt?

XI

Seeds of Wrath



Discovery

Those characters who can be reached receive a startling visit from an armored host of knights. Two of their horses drag a wagon fitted with a cage of heavy iron bars with a ragged and hooded figure imprisoned inside it. The foremost of the knights remove their helmets to reveal diverse lands of origin, unified only by their armor, their white tabards, and their zeal.

One of them introduces himself as Harold fitz Turstin and begins asking questions. Is the character familiar with foreigners by the names of the other characters, including Alypius? Is the character aware of any blasphemy or heresy among these named? May the inquisitors inspect the character's palm? After the questions are answered to their satisfaction, one of the knight reaches a gauntleted hand into the cage and forcefully thrusts the prisoner's face into view, revealing it to be Alypius. Harold continues to explain that the creature in the cage has killed two members of their order of knights dedicated to the service of the Archangel Gabriel and is in league with the devil. He is being transported south for his trial before God. They ask if the character will accompany them to stand as a witness at this trial.

The Gabrielites might visit those characters who are most likely to be sympathetic to them first, as this may help persuade the others. They may also send delegations instead of the full caravan to characters not on a practical route from one to the other.



Culture

It is the summer of 1470 in Seville. The city was reconquered under Christianity in the 13th century, becoming a part of the Kingdom of Castile. The current king of Castile is Henry IV, nicknamed 'the Impotent'. His rule has doomed him to be the last of a line of kings. He divorced his first wife on the grounds of being unable to consummate the marriage. To prove this was due to a curse, prostitutes testified that they had been able to perform the sexual act with the king. For his second wife, he married the scandalous Joan of Portugal. Their marriage resulted in one offspring, Joanna, whose parentage is openly questioned. Most are convinced a royal court favorite is her father. The queen later had two recognized illegitimate children by another lover and was banished from court before she was divorced a second time.

The last decade has seen rebellions for the succession of the throne. One side favors Henry's half-brother Alfonso, another his (supposed) daughter Joanna. The last battle fought was the Second Battle of Olmedo in 1467, in which both sides claim victory. In 1468, Alfonso died of a sudden illness. His will proclaimed their sister Isabella, younger than Henry by 26 years, heir. Later in the same year, Henry signed a treaty to disinherit Joanna in favor of his sister.

Meanwhile, Joanna has eloped to the kingdom of Aragon to marry her cousin Ferdinand under a forged papal dispensation. The union of the heirs of both the lands of Castile and Aragon has given rise to the notion of a united kingdom called Spain.

Miscellany

Threats and Truth

If the characters approach Alypius during their journey south and ask him about his actions, the inquisitors will keep a close eye. Alypius has little interest in explaining himself as a fallen monk. He will try to frighten the characters, however, by whispering about the lies that he now sees through. He says each and every one of the characters are doomed, that he has freed himself from enslavement, and not to a notion of holiness or God, but enslavement to the comet.

Catedral de Santa María de la Sede

One of the most prominent sites the characters may see in the city of Seville itself is the massive Gothic cathedral being extensively reconstructed in its center. It was once a mosque before the reconquest and served as a converted catholic church since the thirteenth century. At the start of the current century, construction began on the ambitious goal of creating a cathedral to rival all others. It's a stark contrast for the characters to see such architectural devotion in the Gothic style after their travels.

It is claimed that its architects set themselves the goal: "Hagamos una Iglesia tan hermosa y tan grandiosa que los que la vieren labrada nos tengan por locos." ("Let us build a church so beautiful and so grand that those who see it finished will take us for mad.") It is nearing completion and it is by far the largest cathedral the characters have ever seen, larger even than the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.



Night Terrors

In each night on the road south as they set up camp, Harold will kneel before the cage holding Alypius and say a prayer to St. George before sleep. One night, Alypius starts cackling during the prayer. Harold seems to lose his concentration. He starts mispronouncing words, going so far as to say 'sodomy' in place of 'sanctity'. Unless the characters intervene, Harold will start coughing, then vomiting. His spew then bursts into flames and leap up into his throat.

Another time, so deep in the night that everyone not on guard should be asleep, Alypius can be heard whispering to himself. His mutterings end with "As you wish..."

Quarters

When the characters reach Seville, many will be surprised as they are led past all of its splendor toward a

ruin, the old alcazar. The knights may explain that the castle belonged to the Order of St. George of Alfama during the time of the reconquest of these lands from the Moors. They were disbanded at the start of this century and their fortress was neglected.

They use a small gate out of sight near the river side to enter the compound. The gate is locked firmly behind the characters after they enter. Alypius is taken in through a different route.

They characters are further told that the upper floors of the alcazar are in disrepair. They are led to quarters in the cellars instead. Three rooms have been allocated for them. Only one of them has a barred window high out of reach, letting sunlight in. The gate leading down into this section of the cellar is silently locked from the outside. A tray of simple bread and watered wine is brought down before too long. The servant who brings it to the characters has instructions to lock the door behind him again and displays a healthy fear for his

masters.

The first night, the characters can faintly hear the screams of torture from deeper down in the dungeons. It is only occasionally interrupted by the slow, repetitive questions issued from a deep voice.

Fray Herardo

The next morning, shortly after another meal of bread and watered wine is brought down, a priest in white robes covered by a black cloak, marking him as a Dominican, comes down to the characters' chambers. He invites the characters to his private chambers one by one to answer some questions pertaining to the trial of the known heretic and devil-worshiper Alypius and their connection to him.

In his chambers, the priest introduces himself as Fray Herardo. The room is still underground, but allows for significantly more light. An altar has been fashioned along one wall. Each character is invited to sit on a bench directly across from it while the priest takes a high seat near a lectern. He asks the knights to wait outside the door, then remarks on the poor condition of the chambers the characters have been given and promises to house them somewhere more comfortable after their interview. Indeed, each character is moved to a different section of the dungeons after the interview, ensuring they cannot share any information with those awaiting theirs.

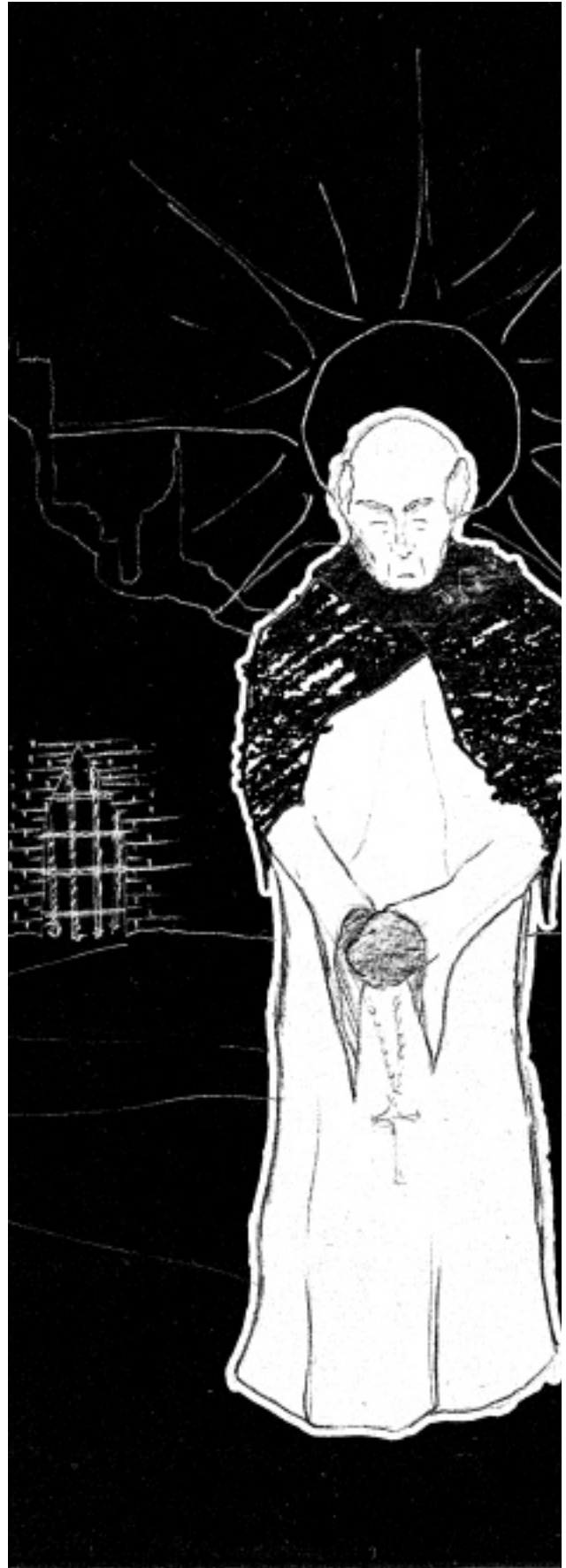
Fray Herardo asks the following questions. When did you first meet Alypius, the heretic and known devil-worshiper? When did you first learn of his depravity and his consorting with demons? Did he ever try to convert or recruit you to his side? Have you ever aided Alypius in his heresy? Can you list the names of those who shared in his beliefs and practices? Can you provide any character witnesses to your own innocence?

After writing down all the answers the characters have given, Fray Herardo walks over to the altar with the paper in hand, facing away from the character. He prays to God to show him the light and the truth before burning the paper in the candles. At the slightest lie (unless the character can devise a way to come between the priest and his Art), the character is sent to the deepest part of the dungeons. Similarly, if any character is named as a conspirator, or admits to aiding Alypius, they are sent for further interrogation.

Those characters who have come through the questions innocent indeed find themselves in better quarters, with more light and furniture. The doors to their part of the dungeon is no longer locked. Before long, however, they will notice that it is located directly above the interrogation chamber.

Rack Screams

Those characters who are not subjected to it



themselves are invited to accompany Fray Herardo when he interrogates Alypius (and any characters who have ended up being accused). Along the way, the characters realize just how vast the dungeons are as they descend into its dank depths. They pass cells with cowering men and women, flinching away whenever one of the knights brandishes a crucifix at them. Observant characters may be shocked to recognize the hermit from Ostia Antica hung from chains in one of them, barely able to breathe.

Finally, the characters are invited to observe from a balcony as Alypius (or any preceding characters) are strapped to a table and tortured. The characters are encouraged to leave if the sight conquers their constitution. One of the knights can be heard saying that there is not a soul walking this Earth who would not benefit from a little more fear of God.

Alypius laughs throughout the entire interrogation, repeating in different languages how this is nothing compared to what has been done to him already. He openly curses all the names of God, but the heresy that truly enrages Fray Herardo is Alypius' claim that they are all the same one. Eventually, Fray Herardo gives up, saying the trial cannot continue as planned without a confession.

Preparations

Over the coming days, the trial is repeatedly postponed as more witnesses are called for. The characters may be aware that others are subjected to the same process as the characters. Most will be strangers unless the characters listed witnesses of their own. The characters are granted the freedom of the city of Seville in this time.

Ars Malificarum

One day, either returning to the alcazar, or rising in the morning, the characters step into the dungeon's halls to the sight of blood. The thick walls which until now provided a welcome reprieve from the summer's heat radiate infernal fires. The trail of violently murdered

knights leads down into the interrogation chambers. The prisoners are all unharmed, but quake at what they witnessed pass through here, calling it nothing short of the Devil himself.

At the rack, Fray Herardo has become the victim of his own chains and tools. Alypius stands over him, having discarded the robes that hid countless scars all over his flesh. A barbed tail sprouts from his back and black spikes protrude from his spine. He recites Matthew 4:8-9 in Latin. ("Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And sayeth unto him, all these things will I give to thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.")

Alypius has received numerous dark investments from his masters, like breathing hellfire and flesh like a carapace. As one of Helion's Advocates, Alypius cannot trivially die in the material world. If the characters defeat him, he will regardless join his masters in torment, like Pelerin and Anzillu before him, but not without a knowing smile on his face.

If the characters free Fray Herardo, he will absolve all of the characters of their alleged crimes. If the characters decide the world would be better off without inquisitors like him and finish Alypius' work, they will complete his ritual. The room will grow dark and cold in an instant. Before the lights of the torches flicker again, something seems to have slipped through the shadows and escaped into the world, settling in this very castle.

Future Fates

Has Alypius joined his fate in inferno?

Will the Spanish Inquisition that rises from Isabel and Ferdinand's rule be fueled by the infernal forces conjured up by Alypius?

Have any of the characters acquired the fear of God?

XII

Foul Blood



Discovery

Rumors spread across Saxony and beyond its borders of a nobleman's daughter who has been cursed. In some versions of the story she is on her deathbed, in others she has turned into a monstrous creature. What the rumors agree on is that her father is offering a reward of titles and land to any who can bring justice and reverse what has been done. After digging through the whispers, the characters may confirm the pleas for help started in Burg Calvörde.

Culture

It is somewhere before 1475 in the Holy Roman Empire, specifically the Archbishopric of Magdeburg. Feudal and ecclesiastical rule border and overlap each other in dense borders which often move and change hands. Specifically the community and castle of Calvörde lies within the prince-archbishop's realm, is answerable to the emperor through the Electorate of Saxony, and still finds itself to be a highly strategical strongpoint defining the borders between five medieval principalities at the crossing of two rivers. It has been both an enclave and an exclave of its owners, and was most recently pawned to the House of Alvensleben, named for the castle in which they were once mere stewards.

Miscellany

Maid in the Tower

Even before the characters hear the rumors that lead



them to Calvörde, they may feel an effect of the sheer density of feudal territories ruled over by a local lord. Among the countryside, many of the fireside tales involve the notion of a cloistered beauty jealously kept out of reach of any who would even look upon her. Often it's a nobleman's daughter guarded for her dowry and an arranged marriage, sometimes the notion portrays here as a princess taken from her own home, begging to be rescued.

Youth

Surrounded by tales of envied youth, it may dawn on the players that almost two decades have passed since the coming of Helion. It may be worth emphasizing their age and the effects it has had on them.



Lordless Castle

Calvörde forms a small but crucial community on the borders of distinct feudal territories. The castle itself is surrounded by a wide moat of several tiers of bridges and islands. The building itself is distinctly Gothic, massive and circular, enclosing an inner courtyard with a wide tower in its middle. The characters are admitted just after dinner time for audience in the palas, a great reception hall.

Joachim von Alvensleben is still a young man, short of stature, but fine of speech. He receives the characters somewhat short on patience until they can attest to dealing with things beyond the known and mundane before.

As he tells it, his daughter Brunhilde has fallen under a curse. She has fallen ill before, but never like this. She ages a year for each day that passes. She is melancholy, bedridden, and can hardly speak. Her once-great beauty is lost, but Joachim fears for her very life. He is convinced that is no natural affliction, that she has been cursed.

Through asking the proper questions and observing the proper etiquette, the characters may not only be allowed to see Brunhilde for themselves, but they may also discover some facts behind Joachim's initial presentation.

For one, he is not the lord of this castle. While he is a member of the noble von Alvensleben family, he is only the castle's seneschal. His cousins Bernd and Frederick were lords here until a few years ago, a cruel and malicious pair. The people of Calvörde rose up against him and the prince-archbishop of Magdeburg besieged and arrested them for their crimes in the area. The care of the castle has fallen solely to Joachim since, and his family's reputation in the area has yet to recover.

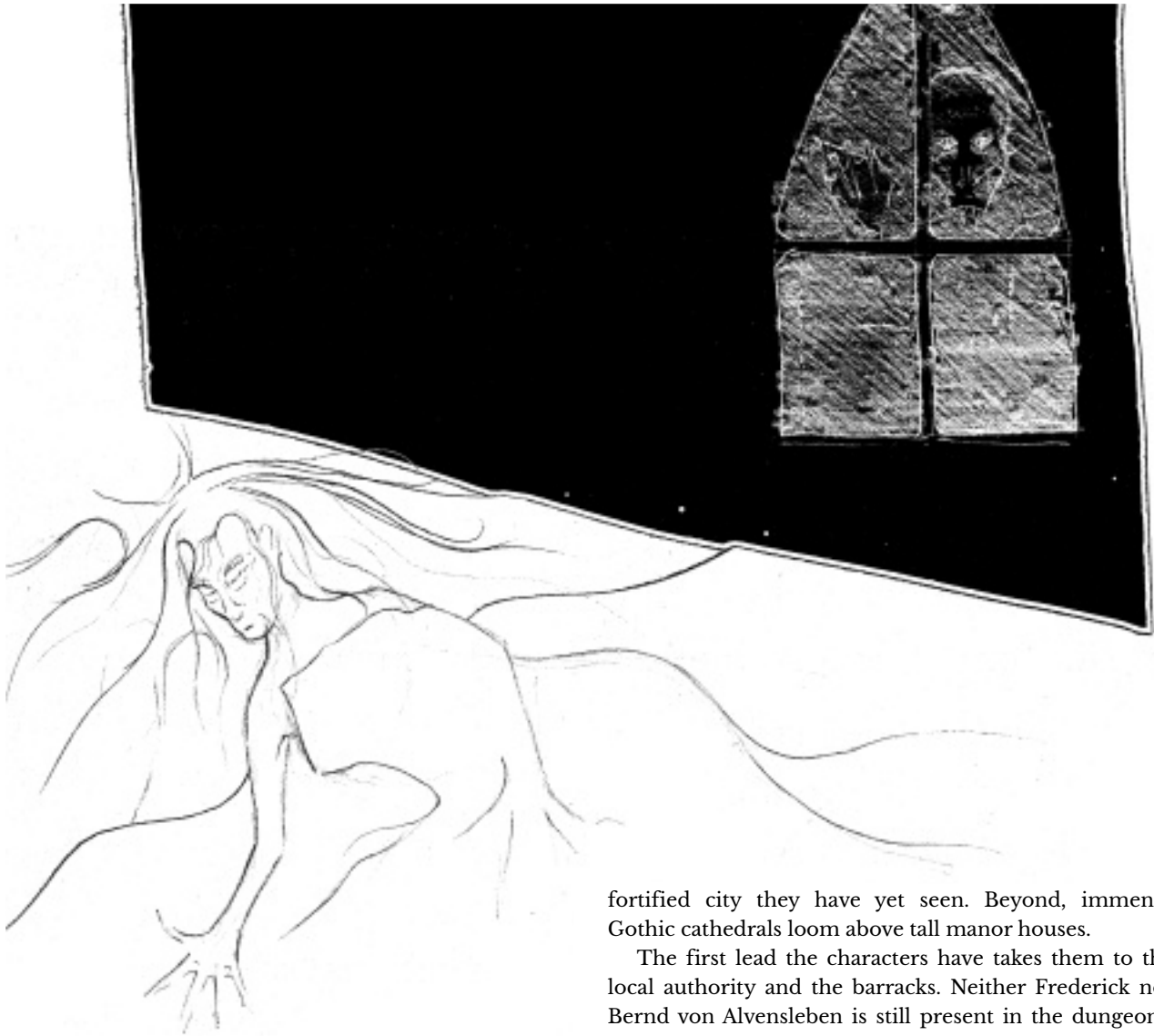
Furthermore, Brunhilde is not his daughter. By the sheer difference in their appearance and the relative youth of Joachim, the characters may work it out for themselves. In fact, she is his ward and he appears to be all the more protective of her for it. He intends to carry the greatest secret of her parentage with him to his grave.

Somehow, the great importance placed on her life is confirmed by the more senior members of his family, as Joachim von Alvensleben has been authorized to reward those who can save her with lands and titles. Anyone, regardless of their birth, who can find the one responsible for cursing Brunhilde, deal out justice, and reverse the affliction, will be granted the title of Vogt of Eggenstedt, a stout keep at the verdant foothills to the southwest of here.

Bloodless Daughter

Brunhilde von Alvensleben lies bedridden, soft moans the only sign of life. Whatever the origins of the rumors of her beauty, what the characters see before them is a gaunt, shriveled crone. She looks decades beyond her reported 17 years. An observant character may find a portrait of her on the corridors outside which attest to her beauty. There she appears tall, regal, and golden of hair. Less easy to find is a locket next to her bed which contains a picture of a similar figure of beauty, but older. This is her late mother. She died in childbirth. No one will speak her name. The only other hint of her parentage is a symbolic device on a cherished kerchief by her bedside: A.E.I.O.U. Only someone intimately familiar with the imperial office may realize this is a somewhat mysterious device used by the current Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III on all of his possessions, including his signum manus. Brunhilde is indeed the royal bastard child of the emperor and a minor noblewoman whose last refuge was sought in Joachim, a dear childhood friend.

By asking scant, soothing questions, the characters may receive brief and agonized answers from Brunhilde. They will have to direct other questions to her maid, Nele. It may be interesting to realize that the last time Brunhilde fell sick some years ago, she had similar symptoms. The physician believed it was a serious condition at the time, but she recovered quickly. Now these, same symptoms have returned: the cough, the blisters and oozing wounds all over her skin, and a foul smell to the blood. The aging was never a symptom of this disease. Nele further recalls a night when she heard



her lady shriek from her room. By the time Nele entered to find out what was wrong, Brunhilde was weeping from a nightmare she had, but Nele swears she saw the ghost of the former lord of the castle, Bernd, outside by her window. She widely discredited by Joachim and the castle staff as she appears prone to fantasies. For years, she has claimed to see a spectral rider on the road between Magdeburg and Calvörde whenever she goes to visit her parents' farm.

The characters may decide to take Nele more seriously when they put some of the facts together, especially given that the spectral rider's first coming coincided with Brunhilde's recovery from the disease those years ago.

Sraticide

The characters cross the Elbe on the eastern side and approach Magdeburg's massive walls, towers all along its length giving it the impression of the most heavily

fortified city they have yet seen. Beyond, immense Gothic cathedrals loom above tall manor houses.

The first lead the characters have takes them to the local authority and the barracks. Neither Frederick nor Bernd von Alvensleben is still present in the dungeons. The records show that they were held for less than a year after their arrest in 1467. Prince-Archbishop John II of Palatinate-Simmern refused two offers of ransom from their family, saying that what they offered was enough for either, but not both brothers. Then, the records state first Frederick died in captivity, then later Bernd. No cause is mentioned.

By bribing some of the senior guards whose memory stretches to the events of those nights years ago, the characters may learn that they believe Frederick was murdered. There was blood everywhere and the two shared a cell. Bernd was silent on the matter. A few weeks later, they opened Bernd's cell one morning and found he had died in the night. They discovered he had refused to eat his meals in all that time and suppose he starved. He was given a pauper's burial in an unmarked grave. Maybe as one last omen from their investigations, the characters hear muttered words suggesting it's a cursed man who murders his own brother, like Caine who murdered Abel.

Blood Right

From the moment the characters enter Magdeburg, they are followed, at least during the night. The characters may catch on and confront a young woman, hooded and cloaked, a striking beauty, noble, and far too young to be out alone. Despite this, the characters may notice a single grey lock of hair among her golden crown and wrinkles in the corner of one eye. She is torn between fleeing and speaking with the characters. She demands to know when 'he' will be back, where 'he' has gone. She mentions with some desperation that she 'needs' him to visit her again.

In the days that follow, the characters may pick up more disturbing rumors. Housekeepers and grooms speak of their masters' troubles in the city, stories of more bedridden daughters, and some who have disappeared. For some reason, everyone expects something terrible to happen very soon and avoid going out at night.

Whenever some wrong befalls the nobles of the city, a form of vigilantism follows. Magdeburg is still home to the Vehmic courts of old. They meet in secret and decide the fate of a suspect by their hereditary right of execution, the Blutgericht. The last time it happened, three men were captured and hung from a tree and the tree set on fire. Their screams could be heard all over the city. In the morning, a bright red banner marked the scene of the execution, the blood banner used in heraldry to signify the blood right.

The characters may rightly fear that the Vehmic court strikes before they can reach Bernd von Alvensleben. A miracle by the Art may be the quickest way to find where it convenes, though they may try to make more friends among the nobility.

Night Court

The Vehmic court is being held in the new cathedral, whose construction has been halted and continued over the past centuries and remains uncompleted. One by one, noblemen from the city arrive, as do several unescorted ladies. Even some priests arrive, whispering among themselves. There is something cold and menacing about each of them. This is a closed gathering and the characters will stand out as stranger immediately. If they are discovered, their fate will become a point on the agenda.

A man in plain, black robes with a black coif over most of his face steps forward to begin the proceedings. He places an antique sword on the altar and speaks the words: "Absit iniuria. Absit invidia. Be welcome to Elysium." His lips do not move as he speaks.

The first point the gathering addresses is something they refer to as 'the wolves at our door.' They speak cryptically of an elder being who has awoken, and that the reason they have been less troubled by the moons, is

that his followers have made sacrifices of their enemies in their old god's name. His power grows beyond the city's walls.

With the next point of order, a knight in blood-red armor carries in the most hideous corpse the characters have ever seen. A wooden stake has been rammed through its chest. With flawless memory, they may realize it resembles portraits of Bernd von Alvensleben, though all of his hair has fallen out and his face is frozen in a rictus. The body is placed on the altar and the sword is unsheathed and laid at his throat. The stake is then removed and to the characters' horror, Bernd's eyes open.

The first speaker condemns von Alvensleben's actions: binding mortals not for their service but for his own lust, and endangering the Masquerade with his carelessness. He asserts that a new age dawns and that they have agreed ally themselves with the new sect to protect against inquisitions and revolts. Von Alvensleben has broken and the First Tradition and he must pay the price. There is little opposition from the gathering.

If the characters do nothing, the speaker will gently fold back what appears to have been a thin mask over his face and sink his teeth into Bernd's neck. His blood will be reclaimed in a violent struggle which seems to impact their very souls. Bernd will be destroyed, but the characters will be no closer to lifting Brunhilde's curse.

Salvation

For the justice that Joachim von Alvensleben sought, the characters either need to witness what happens at the Vehmic court or bring Bernd back to the castle themselves. To make Brunhilde survive and continue her natural lifespan, they will need to heal the natural disease that lay dormant while she drank Bernd's blood. To make Brunhilde beautiful again, the characters will need to perform a wondrous effect to counteract the curse in Bernd's blood.

There exists an alternative to Brunhilde's salvation. The characters may realize what manner of creatures hold court in Magdeburg's night. If she receives a steady supply of their blood, she will live healthily indefinitely. Bernd's blood will not make her beautiful again, but another's might. A viler thought still is that she may become one of them.

Future Fates

Will (one of) the characters be made Vogt of Eggenstedt?

Will Brunhilde survive her disease?

Will Brunhilde be saved from damnation?

XIII

Light of Divinity



Discovery

ut of nowhere, some of the characters are contacted by Prince-Bishop Simon III of Lippe. They are invited to his bishopric of Paderborn in the Holy Roman Empire for an audience. The letter is personally delivered by a courier who cannot tell the characters any more than what the writing says: to address the characters' deeds in relation to the church.

Culture

It is somewhere before 1475 in the Holy Roman Empire, specifically the Archbishopric of Magdeburg. The events of the past centuries are culminating into something that will change the face of the empire and the lands beyond. The actions and excesses of the church in Magdeburg in particular will fuel these fires, as well as the enlightenment and education that becomes accessible to the public.

Miscellany

Founder

If the characters are interested in the origins of the Brethren of the Common Life, they may learn about Gerard Groote, a deacon who traveled the Hansaetic cities, studying medicine, astronomy, and even magic. He founded communities which upheld the *Devotio Moderna*, but it was left to his students to turn these canonical after he died of the plague, contracted while nursing the sick.



Silenced

On the road to Magdeburg, a man joins the traveling Brethren of the Common Life somewhat similarly to the characters. It takes them a while to realize his request. He helpfully joins in all chores and tasks with the hope of learning of to read and write. He is a mute, his tongue

cut from his mouth as he often tries to show his new companions. As he slowly becomes able to write, he may be able to explain that it was cut out by a Vehmic court in Magdeburg, where he stood guard. It was cut out, but his life spared, so that he would take what he saw there that night to his grave.



Decadence and Demands

he characters have never stood before such a splendid estate as where they are received by servants in the Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn. Past the stables, they are invited to wait in a comfortable room where they are served mulled wine and cured boar. Should they pay attention to the grounds, they may notice the arrival of a carriage and its entourage. Highly knowledgeable characters may realize its coat of arms belongs to the prince-archbishop of Magdeburg.

By sunset, the characters have heard many audiences make their way through the castle before a servant comes to collect them. In its inner sanctum, the characters find three figures standing by the fireplace. All around them are signs of a feast and many conclaves preceding theirs. Prince-Bishop Simon III of Lippe is the first to approach them and offers introductions to Prince-Archbishop John II of Palatinate-Simmern. The third figure does not move, does not speak, and is not introduced. Compared to the riches of office displayed in jewelry and decadence about the others, he is dressed in a bland black robe and his face is nearly hidden by a black coif.

Observant characters may further note the obvious display of wealth in the room's art and furniture and the subtly arranged chests of gifts on one table of the room. The further one looks, the more grotesque the display of power and wealth becomes, down to the imported wines, delicacies, and silverware.

It is their host, Simon III who speaks while John II smiles sardonically. The characters are told they were observed in Seville. A subtle glance toward the silent stranger may betray by whom. Even as they are offered to share in the feast before them, they are threatened with the consequences of their actions. The notion that they are deeply indebted to the church is followed by the prince-archbishop of Magdeburg's first contributions to the conversation. He admits to admire their resourcefulness. He admits to despising the Archbishop of Seville and his plans to create an inquisition independent of Rome. He offers to protect the characters from the Catholic Church's wrath. He proposes a friendship between them and asserts that his friends are often rewarded with lands and titles. He and

the prince-bishop were just speaking of a castle to the north of his city whose owners were arrested and convicted for their crimes a few years ago.

An uncomfortable silence follows, broken only by the characters' initiative to leap on the opportunity. Their host then explains that his domain of Paderborn was visited in the last year by a sect who call themselves the *Fratres Vitae Communis*, Brethren of the Common Life. They have been active in the Low Countries since the 14th century and now spread their teachings radically across their borders. Like-minded friends here present see their methods as underhanded and pernicious. They cloak themselves in piety. They have learned that they are at this very moment sending emissaries to Magdeburg. Again, their host glances at the silent stranger.

If the characters meet up with the brethren and infiltrate their ranks, the prince-archbishop will reward them with land and titles. He believes local nobility is funding them and wants to know who.

It is the silent stranger who walks the characters out of the estate late that night. By the stables, he explains that the brethren are expected to arrive in an abbey called Amelungsborn in a week's time. From there, it's a three-day journey to Magdeburg. It is then that the characters may notice his lips don't move as he speaks. In fact, he's wearing a horrific mask.

Brethren

The characters may meet up with the Brethren of the Common Life on the road to Magdeburg. They travel with two priests, Wolfram and Thadeus, and two nuns, Engeltrud and Hildegund, and are further accompanied by a dozen tradesmen and students.

So long as the characters do not expect others to shoulder their part of the chores, it is not difficult to infiltrate their ranks. Everyone will dutifully ask more about their origins as they travel and the characters will be rejected if they are caught in a lie.

The characters may decide to join in the lessons the brethren prepare for their followers. They notably follow the trivium of classical education: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. While they follow the brethren, the players may consider them a three-dot Mentor in the respective knowledges: Linguistics, Enigmas, and Academics.

If the characters try to ply the brethren for their purpose in Magdeburg, they may list their intention to discuss their experiences in the *Devotio Moderna*, the rediscovery of genuine pious practices such as humility, obedience, and simplicity of life, with friends in the city. Furthermore, they have arranged for a viewing of the original text of Mechthild of Magdeburg's seven books of *The Flowing Light of Divinity*. It describes her visions of God in a deeply emotional manner. Also remarkable is that the manuscript was written and spread in the local language, not Latin, not even High German, a pious notion to the brethren.

Indulgence

In the streets of Magdeburg, the characters witness a pardoner at work. Before the church by the marketplace, a disciple of the prince-archbishop's is publicly selling indulgences of up to hundreds of years of salvation authorized by the pope. Only the wealthiest of merchants can afford these, though a specific bill has even been drawn up which will forgive Magdeburg's poorer citizens to who had butter on their bread during lent. The brethren look on in disgust, but say nothing.

The group separates here, having several appointments to keep in the city. The characters are thanked for sharing the road with the brethren. Should they wish to receive any further education, they will be able to find the brethren at the old steepled house by the beguinage.

Daughter of Helion

Should the characters keep up with the Brethren of the Common Life while in Magdeburg, they may be able to extract an invitation to Hans von Halle's estate. Hans von Halle is a wealthy merchant both of whose children enjoy an education among the brethren. Their tutelage is covered by donations of books from his impressive personal library. The reason for the excursion is a viewing of the original texts of Mechthild of Magdeburg's works from his collection. The characters may also learn that Hans has a keen interest in astronomy.

Characters may lose themselves in the various topics and fine editions of Hans von Halle's library. If they devote themselves particularly to Mechthild's works, they may learn that Mechthild was born in the first decade of the 13th century and died at the turn of that century. As a teenager, she received visions of the holy spirit and left home soon after, growing to become a controversial figure with few supporters outside circles such as the beguines. Characters who decide to make effective use of the astronomy section of the library for their own purposes may search specifically for records of comets. Hans has marked a particular section of an Italian architect's journal, where the observation of a



star-like comet, *Stella Cometa*, was seen over Piacenza Cathedral during the final years of its construction in 1222. His collection truly is impressive and with careful research in the short time they have, it is possible for the characters to further uncover Helion's manifestation in 1301. Incidentally, these two manifestations correspond to Mechthild's first visions and her death.

If the characters focus on the purpose for which the prince-archbishop sent them here, they may pry into the relationship between Hans and the brethren further. This line of questioning may reveal that the Brethren of the Common Life need little financial support for their activities, but what little they do receive has been provided solely by wealthy merchants living in the city. The very building they now teach from is an example. Most of these donate to the brethren for the same reasons as Hans, namely an education beyond mere literacy, a privilege which was reserved only for nobility when they were growing up.

Soment

Only by paying very close attention to the brethren's

appointments and subtly positioning themselves as being of like mind can the characters uncover a purpose in the city which they have kept absolutely secret. There are meetings held in the private homes of merchants to which attendants come hooded and never through the front entrance. The gatherings appear to be sermons only at first glance as specific phrases in the bible are held against the light of the church's decadence. Defended by the virtue of academic freedom, they question (but not yet criticize) the actions of pardoners, the local prince-archbishop, and even the pope. Specifically, they explore the fundamental teachings in the bible around repentance and forgiveness and judge it to be a matter of faith, something that originates only with Jesus Christ. They conclude indulgences and even confession to the clergy are absent. Logically, payment in the physical world for past sins discourages acts of charity and mercy. Greed, finally, is a paramount sin.

Allegiance

The characters must decide where they stand between the enlightened piety of the brethren and the political power of the prince-archbishop. If they reveal the names of the merchants who fund the brethren, they will be rewarded with the von Alvensleben's castle and lands of Calvörde. If they further infiltrated and reported on the secret gatherings of merchants and brethren, their properties in the city will be confiscated and their wealth subsumed by the church.



Future Fates

Will (one of) the characters be made Vogt of Calvörde?

Will the fires of the reformation be kindled brighter?

Have the characters worked out the cadence of Helion's appearances?

XIV

Trichotomy



Discovery

Some of the characters find themselves the occupants of a castle and the owners of land.

As such, they may be first to hear of a strange tale originating in a town within their very domain. A terrified butcher comes to the local authority saying that a monster has come to live in his curing shed.

Culture

It is 1476 in the Holy Roman Empire, specifically Saxony. The characters have acquired lands in the area of Magdeburg, though they may have much to learn about their responsibilities.

Miscellany

Prophecy in Numbers

Should any of the characters be receptive to the conjunction of series and their expression in numbers, the year 1450 seems unavoidably significant as the year 1475 approaches its end. Characters may sift through the memories preceding the coming of Helion to wonder where they were in 1450 and what they had expected of life.

Jubilee

From Leviticus 25:8-13, the characters may know: "You shall count off seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; and there shall be to you the days of seven Sabbaths of years, even forty-nine years. Then you shall



sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. You shall make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee to you; and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself, nor gather from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall

eat of its increase out of the field. In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property.”

The tradition that occurs in 1475, however, only dates to the year 1300, when a Holy Year was first convoked. The previous jubilee occurred in 1450, when pilgrimages to Rome sent thousands southward. Two hundred of these souls were trampled to death on the Ponte Sant’Angelo. The 1475 jubilee brought the same promise as those that preceded it: vindication of sins and the granting of wishes. Thoroughfares were also widened.



Tall Tales

f the characters go to investigate the butcher’s claims, they will find a scene outside his curing shed. The local priest is being entreated by the locals to do something, but he is keeping a safe distance from the noise in the shed. The walls rumble. A cacophony resounds within. The shed has no windows, only a single door. The nearby pen of pigs is no less restless, howling and squealing at the shed.

When the characters investigate, they will be shocked to find crazed pigs within, trying to get out. These are not pigs as they are in the pen. They are the disemboweled, smoked carcasses that were hung in the shed to cure. They are blind, enraged, and smell delicious. Very little short of decapitation stops them.

By the time the locals have coped with what they have witnessed, they fall back to a habit of blaming outsiders. The first that comes to mind is a farrier that came through town. He had bought some sausages the day before. Everyone recalls how he stank, or perhaps it was his horse. They can indicate the direction he was headed, to the next town over east.

Widow’s Wish

If the characters follow up on the farrier, or keep an ear to the ground on rumors of other strange occurrences, they may notice a trail of sightings that grow in severity. The next town over recalls a man riding on a horse that looked sick. The next day, his trail has left people witnessing Death itself on its pale horse riding through town, toward a widow’s cabin in the hills. They whisper that the old motherless weaver hasn’t been the same since her husband died. They wouldn’t be surprised if she had hung herself and the grim reaper has come collecting.

In the hills, the characters see a cabin in the distance and encouragingly, smoke rising from its chimney. Less encouraging is the evidence of a large hole dug in the woods, discarded shovel still stuck in the mound, as if a grave had been dug up. Even less so is the first hand evidence of a horse with sloughing flesh revealing white

bones tethered nearby, grazing pointlessly on nettles as they fall from its throat back to the ground.

Inside the cabin, the characters surprise two figures standing all in black. The widow is much younger than they had expected. Beside her, a thin and pale man with a few days’ stubble is leaning over a sealed coffin set on the dining room table. A scraping noise can be heard from within the coffin.

In what ensues, the characters must leverage a distraught widow who only wants to look upon her living husband once more, a morbidly curious farrier who is willing to oblige her, and the reeking skeletal remains of the resurrected husband who can no longer distinguish the pleasure of touching warm flesh with eating it. The farrier is likely to become even more fascinated with the characters. After any ruckus has passed, he will say the words: “I wish I had powers like yours.” Before the characters can ask many more questions beyond his name, which is Markus of Prague, his eyes will roll into the back of his head and he will scream: “The sky is alight with fire!” before wandering aimlessly outside. “The monolith. Where is the monolith?” he will repeat as he wanders aimlessly through the woods until he collapses.

Newborn Advocate

Eventually, Markus opens his eyes again, Awakened. There is much for the characters to figure out with few clues. He has not gained a scar on his palm, though he does recall finding a tower at the center of a labyrinth.

Markus is from Prague, but travels a lot. His wife is waiting for him back at home. After they lost their second child before it could come to term, he started a journey further west than he had been before, telling his wife it would bring more profit. He has been away a full year now, but sends money regularly. Not long ago on his travels, he encountered a stranded merchant. His horse had lost two of its shoes and its hooves had split. He dared not leave his wares unattended and had been robbed of his money twice. Markus plied his trade expecting no pay from the merchant for he had none to



give. In thanks, the merchant gave him the most prized of his wares. The merchant traded in wines and it looked like just another bottle to Markus, though he had sworn he would open it sometime special, like when he held his firstborn son. He fell asleep thinking about having a son, and wished to have some control over life and death.

The next day, he was able to prevent his horse from falling ill. If the characters ask Markus about the pigs in the curing shed, he will look puzzled at first, then laugh with delight, recalling that he tried the same newfound power over life and death on a string of sausages he had bought.

Ecstatic about today's discoveries, Markus may even offer to open the wine and celebrate his good fortune. Two long cracks have appeared in the bottle. Markus curses his luck, saying they had better open it before its contents are lost. The shape of the bottle is uncommon, but it does appear to contain wine. The label is foreign. A well-traveled or well-read character may realize the language is that of Albania, a land torn between the invading Ottoman Empire and its unsupportive Christian allies. The text on the label personally addresses a man called Skanderberg and wishes him endurance and wisdom in his trials against the sultan. It is signed and dated to 1450 by none other than Iris of Trebizond. Especially knowledgeable characters may realize the date corresponds to a siege led by the current Sultan Mehmed II's father, Murad II, against Krujë.

Wisdom and Endurance

The characters may extract and reason enough to realize opening the bottle will have consequences. If the bottle is opened, its guardian will be released. The wine inside will evaporate into a cloud of mist, blown by the wind, and released into the air. If the characters first take the bottle, then pronounce a wish, it will be fulfilled and a last crack will appear in the glass to shatter it. However, if Iris is consulted first, she will take a reluctant step back into the world of the living.

Iris is not as the characters remember her. Her soulmate among them does not see it, but the others see a monstrous figure. Black wings sprout from her back and her legs end in feathers and talons. When she speaks, it is as if a dozen different voices resonate inside her throat. She recalls summoning and trapping the jinn. This was before her soulmate was taken from her. She still had hope then. She sent the jinn to aid Skanderberg, the revolutionary leader, and for a time there was reason to think he would succeed. Murad II died. Nothing could stop Skanderberg's unworthy death, begging for support in foreign lands, rejected by merchant and pope alike, less than a decade ago. Iris recommends the characters give Markus the death he deserves before he causes more harm, and claim the jinn's last wish for their own.

Markus will not stand for the theft of his bottle, especially if he realizes it holds a third wish. The characters may realize the danger in letting another of his wishes be granted. A conflict is nearly inevitable. As

they are all Advocates of Helion, however, none of them can die easily. Though, this may be the first time the characters realize it.

Consequences

By far the greatest aspect of the story to tell, in case the characters choose to do so, is the resolution of a third and final wish.

Advocate Lost

Afterward, it may take a while for word to reach the characters about Jacob's fate. He has died suddenly and unexpectedly. If the characters work back the dates, it is the very day they first saw the farrier. With his Daemon stolen by the wish, Jacob was no longer protected from his fate.



Future Fates

Will the characters forgive, perhaps even accept Markus?

Will the characters question their own limits after witnessing one of their own unable to die?

Do the characters realize the implications this has on Alypius?

XV

Fang and Claw



Discovery

By now, at least half of the characters have settled to varying degrees of permanency in Saxony. In the lands one of them rules over, locals come to them with a rare plea for their attention. A traveler's corpse has been found on the road to their keep.

Culture

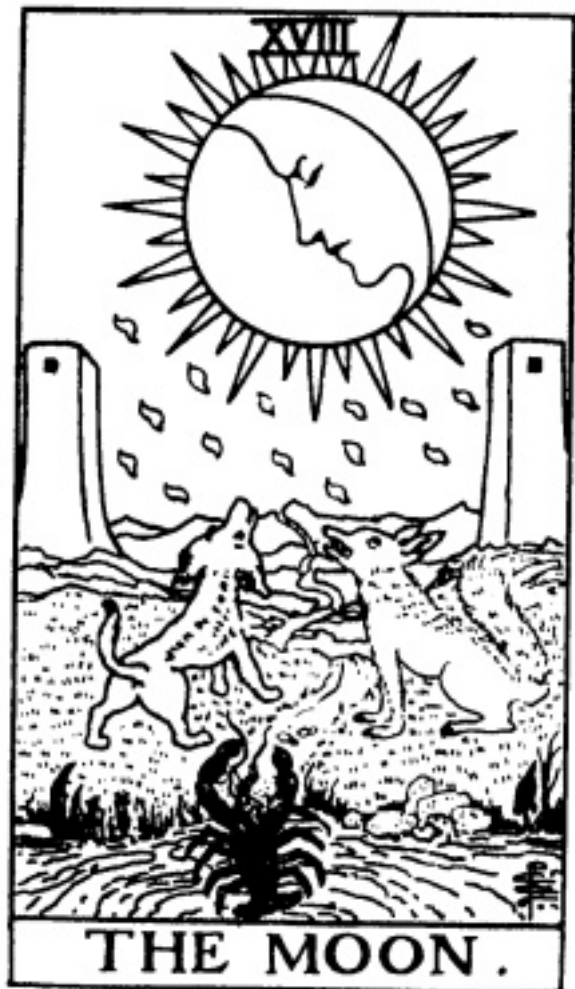
It is December 1479 in Saxony. The characters have gotten to know the area over the past years, and as such may have become sensitive to more detailed tensions in the feudal region. Most pressing is the growing disagreement between the two sons of the previous Elector of Saxony, Frederick II. Albert III and Ernest I rule the land together as the heirs to the Wettin dynasty. There are rumors that amount to a division of the lands, a sundering of the very dynasty into rival brothers' own lineages.

On a more primal note, the characters may recall that at the start of this decade, the woods surrounding Magdeburg were invaded by creatures of the night. At that time, the indigenous population was driven out. Now, Triglav's followers have moved on. Slowly, the woods are being repopulated.

Miscellany

Ignorance

There was a time when the characters were at the forefront of the development of the world. Now, as they



age and as they appear to settle more and travel less, the world seems to pass them by. They receive less and less news of the events abroad. The world has become smaller. The global has turned local. Time itself has slowed down.

Premonition

The characters may see a strange thing in the days preceding newcomers to their lands. In the woods, down

a rabbit hole, they hear screeching. A fox lurks in a brush nearby. Soon enough, a rat emerges from the whole, its face smeared with blood. The fox pounces on the rat. If the characters are in view, the fox will throw the carcass towards them before burying its head in the rabbit hole to finish the crime.



Savaged Stranger

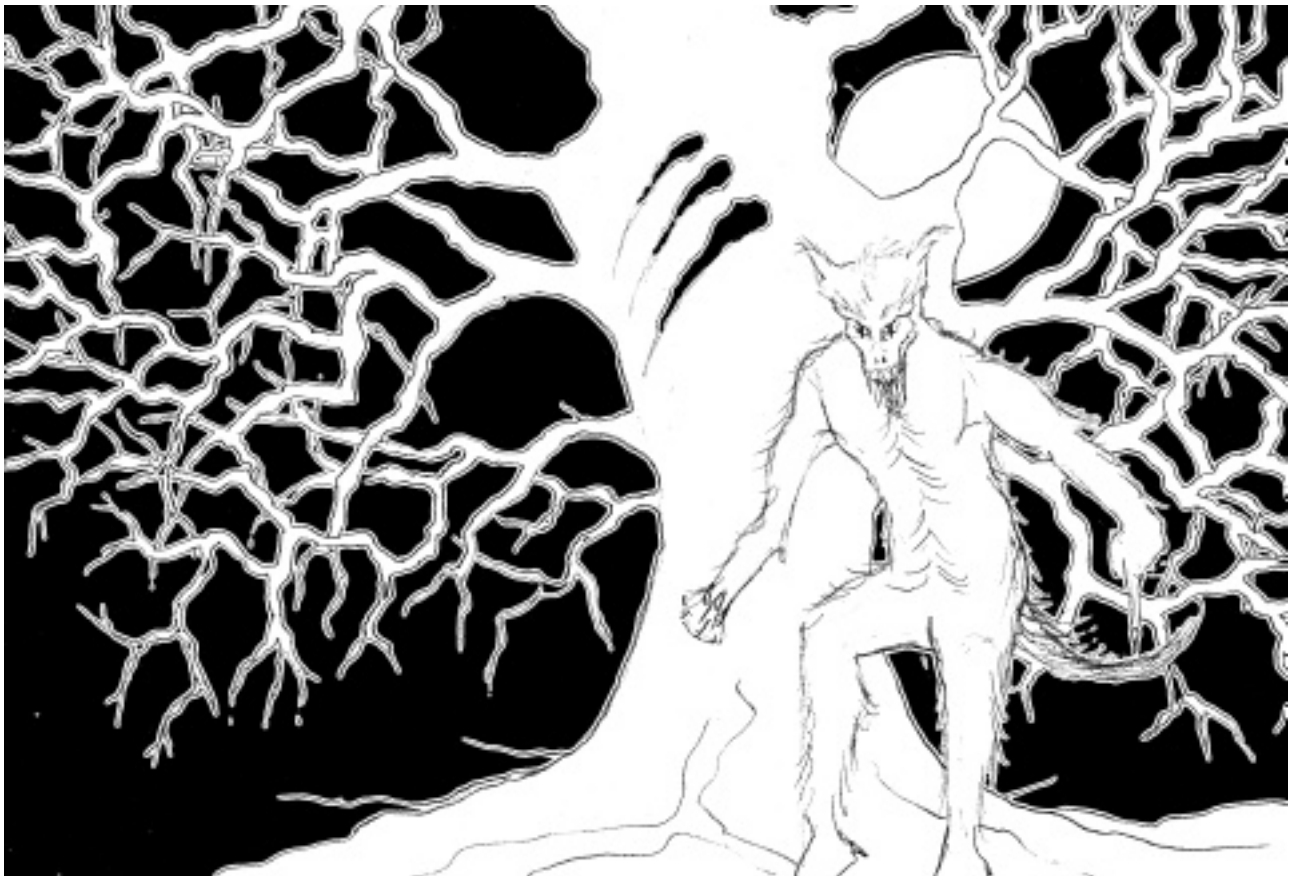
hen the characters go to investigate, they will find a crowd of locals whose curiosity outweighed their decency gathered around a corpse in the middle of the forest track. Some depart quietly upon seeing the characters, others try to inform them of what they've made of the situation. Sorting the fantasy from the fact leaves the characters with the knowledge that the man traveled through the area late in the day and was attacked by wild animals. His coat is torn by claws and his face is savaged by teeth. Some locals testify that their dogs have been restless for weeks.

When they inspect the corpse for themselves, the characters may discover a large scroll kept safe in the

pockets of his coat bearing the seal of the Elector of Saxony Ernest. To make matters stranger, he also carries a dagger made of an alloy of silver and a necklace of raven skulls. If they break the seal, the characters may discover that the scroll is a declaration signed by the elector himself. If agreed to, it would double the characters' lands in the area and designate them independent of the archbishopric of Magdeburg.

Strange Savages

Over the next few days, locals report missing cattle. Everyone agrees to hearing the howling of wolves in the night. Not much later, one of the indigenous wolves tries to approach the characters. It comes at them with its tail



and head down, whether they are at the burg or investigating at one of the farms.

Before their eyes, regardless of witnesses, it rises on its hind legs and start to scream. Its digits expand, its snout recedes, leaving the characters facing a monstrous biped. Snot and tears roll uncontrollable down its half-human face. "Talk?!" it asks, "Peace?!" it demands, "War?!" it wonders.

If the characters agree to follow the creature into the woods, they will eventually reach on old oak tree on the summit of a small hill. On it, there are faded markings scratched away from the bark. The creature lashes out against it, renewing the mark of three claws. "Ours. Ours forever," it claims, spreading its arms to take in the hill and forests all around them. "Yours," it points to the characters' burg in the distance, "yours forever."

Unless the characters object, the creature then takes them on another long journey to the place where the savaged stranger was found. "Enemy," the creature growls, "ours, yours."

Once the creature is satisfied with either the characters' refusal or their acceptance, it will shudder before reverting to its wolf form. It nods briefly, then pads its way back through the forest. The characters can't help but notice its starving frame and the fresh wounds marking its fur.

Focal Roots

The characters cannot help but wonder and sense something about the tree they visited with the lycanthrope. Their curiosity may lead them to conclude it is a powerful, if hidden, Cray. The very next night, they may sense a disruption at this Cray. The very wolf the characters spoke to earlier is impaled on one of its branches. At dawn, a dozen wolves gather to mourn its death. The mark of three claws has been torn from the tree. A new mark of five fangs looms above it.

Falcon's Roost

The next day, the characters may notice a falcon circling above their burg for most of the morning. At midday, it screeches and dives into the woods, where another visitor is making its way up the trail to the characters' burg. The emissary is well-dressed, if travel-worn. He stands tall, a mane of long golden hair reaching down to his shoulders. Everything about him suggests a regal upbringing in castles greater than the characters have seen, except for a savage set of scars running down the length of his face and down his chest. He introduces himself as Karl Three-Eye (because of his

one-eyed falcon companion) of the House of Wittelsbach. He addresses the owner of the burg as Vogt of Eggenstedt. He claims he is here on behalf of the Elector of Saxony and asks for an audience.

Once the characters are settled to the degree they wished to offer courtesy to the emissary, he asks: "Do you want to live to hear the songs sung in your name?" He claims: "You have been beset by savages. My family will deal with them." "The prince-archbishop makes deals with the dead. My family will deal with them too." "First, we need the land, all the land, and all its power."

He then produces another hand-written copy of the scroll with the same promise as the one the characters found on the savaged stranger. What the characters may uncover is that Karl intends for his people to settle in the area as dukes to rule over the characters' domain, claiming right to any Crays it may hold, though he calls them by a different name. If the characters refuse, Karl cannot promise the characters' lands will be spared in the coming battle, nor still belong to them after his victory. Before leaving, he asks for the return of any of the belongings of his dead kinsman that the characters may have kept.

Blood Red Moon

It is a full moon when the two warring tribes face off against each other. The characters may have chosen a side, or they may have chosen to barricade themselves in their burg. The Red Talons may have asked the characters to take in their young until the battle is over. The Silver Fangs will demand that the characters use their strength against their mutual enemy. Whether the characters join the fray or the Silver Fangs end up at their doorstep to claim the lives of the young, Karl speech against the Red Talons is the same: "Cowards! You dare return to these lands after you fled in the face of the enemy?!" "The Get of Fenris called for your whole tribe to be cast out for not fighting when the All-Father himself came through your lands!" "You are lucky it us who are here. Quick deaths in disgrace is the fate that has been prepared for you."

Future Fates

Are the lands around Magdeburg in the hands of the Red Talons or the Silver Fangs?

Have the characters made more friends than enemies?

XVI

Brief Acquaintances



Discovery

Regardless of how the borders of their land may have changed in the previous episode, the characters' current overlords come collecting on long overdue taxes. There is little patience for excuses. The lands owe a sum of one thousand golden ducats in back payments. The characters have one year to present it to their overlord, or their lands will be repossessed. The desperate search for this vast sum leads the characters all the way back to England.

Culture

It is 1483 in England, where news reaches everyone's ear of the death of Yorkist King Edward IV of England, victor in the decades-long Wars of the Roses. Edward is survived by two sons, Edward and Richard, both underage, and his brother Richard who is named Lord Protector until Edward, the eldest, comes of age. While the council urges for an immediate coronation, Richard repeatedly postpones it. Both boys reside in the Tower of London and are seen less and less in public.

Miscellany

Slip of Time

Some of the characters have resided for over a decade in a small portion of Saxony, deep in the Holy Roman Empire. When these venture out into the world after so long, they may find they are catching up on the world's terrifying speed of developments as whole nations they once visited are dissolved.



Deathbed

Aside from the prospect of the gold they require, Felice receives another reason to return to England. It's a letter from home, from her family. It says her mother is on her deathbed.

"Your half-sister's firstborn has sired a daughter, did you hear? I leave this world a great-grandmother and you've become a great-aunt." "Your father never mentioned you again after you left, did you know? But your sisters always asked after you." "Family isn't all we get in life, and you've proven it. It isn't even the only thing we leave behind. But family is the thing that will last the longest, even after our faces are forgotten." "You can look after them, Felice. You can make the world

remember the name of Tudor."

Perhaps on a visit at the family estates, Felice runs into a nephew, not seen since he was a child. His name is Henry. His uncle Jasper is there, too. Perhaps Felice glimpses a drawing on the table of two roses next to a book on heraldry. The roses are laid on top of each other, one red, one white.

Bosworth

Two years after the events of this episode, Richard III will die during the Battle of Bosworth Field and his crown taken by the invader Henry Tudor. Before that time, Felice will have needed to decide how much distance she wants to keep from her family.



Lapis Philosophorum

At the beguineage in Magdeburg, where one of the characters still studies, a newcomer passes through who may draw their attention. She is here to research something highly specific which she tries to keep a secret from all who don't strictly need to know. Scribbled formulae may be glimpsed among her notes and when asking around, the topic of her research appears to be some advanced alchemy. It promises wondrous abilities, including everlasting life, and perhaps more relevant to the characters' situation, the ability to turn any base metal into gold.

The character has an ideal opportunity to study the stranger's work when another visitor is announced by the beguines as Eva. The alchemist drops a quill at the sight of her, runs over and embraces her. She keeps whispering her thanks in Eva's ear. Strangely, Eva does not seem to know her and introduces herself. The stranger wipes away a tear and introduces herself as Perenelle. "I can only hope I was of help to you," Eva says. "Farewell," Perenelle says.

Felice may devote herself to trying to recreate the experiment of transmutation. To do so, however, she requires equipment she has kept safe back home in England.

The End

Before the characters have made all the arrangements for a trip to England, Eva travels purposefully in the direction of their burg. There, she appears to know all of the characters' names. Stranger still is what she has to say to them, with a sad smile on her face.

"This is where I leave you, my friends, at the beginning. I truly do hope that you remember me fondly. Thank you for everything."

At the end of what the characters may believe was

their first meeting, Eva sheds a tear. The life she has chosen leaves her relationships nothing but fleeting windows of farewells. The characters will meet Eva again before they can guess at the nature of her strange life.

Eva is a powerful Time mage who has cast herself back through history after finding herself disgusted with her present. She has faith in the idea that her actions in the past make a difference for the future, but she will never know. The pace at which she is crawling back through time is constant and irreversible. She has learned to walk backwards and to speak backwards, but seemingly simple things like conversations remain impossible for her. She cannot act causally as others do.

Second Chance

In England, the characters may learn of the king's death. The most recent rumors repeat a portion of a sermon given in London, where a clergyman spoke openly about Edward IV having already been betrothed to Eleanor Butler at the time he married Elizabeth Woodville in secret. Preachers on the streets repeat this and it is near one of these stands that the characters look across a crowd to see Eva staring back at them, wide-eyed.

She approaches them and says: "Could it be that you are here to intercede where I failed?" "Listen! Promise me you will try to save the children! The princes in the tower! I have seen the destruction left behind by every kingmaker. Promise me you will simply try to save their lives, not their crowns. Hide them far away from their murderous family."

Not long after, the marriage between Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville is declared invalid and the heirs illegitimate. Richard III is crowned.

Lives and Crowns

After their encounter with Eva, an attempt to break

into the Tower of London and rescue the princes is foiled. The characters may hear about it through rumors, but are unlikely to become aware that Eva was behind it. When she looked for the children, they were nowhere to be found. Wherever Eva went after their meeting in the streets, she is now counting on them to free Edward and Richard. There are as many ways they may achieve this as there are paradigms among the characters. After the deed is done, however, the characters must decide where they will send the boys, aged 12 and 9. Both are terrified of their uncle Richard.

Fate will ensure the characters meet Eva once again. "You again?" she asks. "Did my fate become entwined in yours so quickly?" She appears to be in a hurry, a little distracted. In fact, she is heading toward the Tower of London, though she will never admit it. "Tell me now only this, whatever purpose bound us together, did we succeed?"

The Beginning

Perhaps on their return to the mainland, the characters will see Eva yet again, stepping off the very

ship they intend to board. This time, however, she does not know who they are. It's possible she approaches them after watching them stare, or perhaps the characters approach her. She will introduce herself and ask the characters all of their names. Then, she will leave them with the words: "One wonders at the fragments we inherit to compose our history. They seem insignificant only to a fool. Which was truth and which was lie, these are the questions of my sleepless nights."

Solificatus

Stepping onto the very same dock in search of Eva is Perenelle, the alchemist visiting Magdeburg some time ago. Seeing the characters may be the very thing that prevents Eva from meeting her for the first time at another point than back in the beguineage. Perenelle has many questions for the character she recognizes from Magdeburg and may have noticed some of her notes were disturbed. If the character has succeeded in what Perenelle calls the Great Work, she may prove to be a valuable mentor in future. She makes a strong point of opposing what she calls the Order of Reason, however,



The First Advocate

In the context of looking in history's direction, somewhere in those depths, we find the story of the very first soul snagged by Helion. There were no witnesses to it at the time, excepting those who look through and beyond it.

These are vaguely human shapes, hunched and barbaric, with snout-like faces. They wage war among the ferns, the hills, and the waters. Of two clashing tribes, only one creature survives. It builds a tower of the bones of its enemies and it starts to climb. When it reaches the top, it reaches out as if to touch the heavens, but instead it burns its hand. Then comes the fall.

on the basis that they seek to convince the world that the only discoveries of any value are the ones they make. They censor the voice of the past and quell any developments they do not control.

Future Fates

Have the Princes in the Tower been saved?

Has Felice returned to her family, or further distanced herself from it?

Will she have a hand in the Battle of Bosworth Field?

Have the characters made a friend of Perenelle?

XVII

Join or Die



Discovery

here are no leads for the characters to chase after in this episodes. Instead, this time something comes after them. It comes for them right at their door.

Culture

The world is on fire. In 1485, the sweating sickness the characters first witnessed in Versonnex breaks out across England. In 1487, the *Malleus Malificarum* is published, adding fuel to the condemnations which spread across Europe. The disease which will later become known as syphilis breaks out among soldiers. The characters themselves need to be careful with commonplace foci they used to carry openly. Alypius' return could not have come at a worse time.

It is 1492 in a terror-swept Europe, focused mostly in the newly unified Spain. Granada has been besieged by the Castilian conquest for the past year. In January, the last Muslim leader Muhammad XII gave up complete control of the lands to the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. In the wake of their success, Isabella has urged all Christians to continue their conquest into Africa. Furthermore, she has decreed that there is "great harm suffered by Christians from the contact, intercourse, and communication which they have with the Jews, who always attempt in various ways to seduce faithful Christians from our Holy Catholic Fath." In March, after aggressive persecution and conversions for the past century, all practicing Jews are banished from Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. The three-month



period before summary executions are promised has just passed.

Miscellany

Iris' Retreat

Iris has become slowly more reclusive in her pocket of the Underworld with Leif. She used to travel to other

domains within the Dark Umbra from time to time. Now, she has even stopped doing that. She lingers near crumbled statues of forgotten gods for hours at a time, joyless. She detests every moment that Leif decides to spent on the world above.



Taunts

One by one, Alypius travels across the lands to visit his terror on the characters where they live. He hunts down and murders someone close to them and leaves the head on their doorstep. For Felice, it may be a young family member. For Noella, it may be a student she has taught for the last year. For Smit, it may be a curious fox seen in the woods. For Fredi, it may be a cherished local from her lands—or, if they haven't taken the strictest precautions, one of the princes they have decided to shelter. Carlos might not recognize Alypius' victim, though are ways of discovering that it is Quinn's firstborn daughter.

Each time, there are scorch marks in the shape of hooves nearby, with Alypius' cackle still carried on the wind. Only Leif is spared these taunts.

Chase

The characters can track Alypius progress through the lands by the order he visited them and the mayhem his passing left in towns and castles along the way. After visiting the last of them, the trail continues southward through France and into Spain.

The horrors of Alypius' passing through include him turning neighbors against each other or poisoning all the cattle in sight. In one town where a local priest had grown a reputation for standing up against the hunting of witches, Alypius hangs him upside down on the church's doors, revealing pustules all over his genitalia. "Who gave that to you," he asks, "and who have you given it to?" "Abaddon has been busy." "Look, here they come, the ones who brought Abaddon into this world."

Each time, Alypius may hang around long enough for the characters to catch up with him, baring his chest to show a heartless cavity, and begging them to kill him. "Murder is good for the soul," he claims. Each time, his bond with Helion sends him back to continue his journey.

Inquisition

The last time the characters catch up with Alypius is in Quintanar de la Orden, named for the fifth of their crops that was due as tax to the Order of Santiago. Here,

met by his laughter, pyres have been raised in the market square. The inquisition is burning those they consider unconverted at the stake. At a distance, admiring the spectacle, Alypius tells the characters: "You want to kill me?" "There is a way." "There is a place." After the screams die out, he steps into the ashes piled in the center of the square, and there he sinks into hellfire.

Kur

If the characters follow after Alypius, they will enter the Dark Umbra, an ancient pocket realm called Kur. Leif will recognize the Underworld immediately. All around them are dark cave lit only by the flames bursting from Alypius' skin. He stands at the end of a great cavern, turning around and marching down one of many smaller passages. All over the cave floor, thin husks of people move on hands and knees, grabbing handfuls of ash from the floor at a time to eat. There is no way to move through them except treading over them.

To the characters' horror, there may be familiar faces among the dead in their afterlife. One is Jacob, who regrets not seizing power to raise himself above mortal men who are fated for this. Others include those Alypius has killed to taunt the characters.

Alypius' voice continues: "This place is older than the gods the world remembers." "Are you ready to kill me, now?" As they reach the end of his route, still treading on the souls of the dead, they can make out two more voices. Both are familiar to the characters. Just before they turn the corner Alypius hints: "After all, the world is on fire."

In a larger hall with a partially collapsed ceiling, Alypius seats himself in one of nine thrones made of carved rock. The characters will be surprised to find Iris occupies another, and Markus of Prague occupies a third. They have gathered here to make simple single offer to the characters: Join or die. They are all three infernalists, some turning more recently than others.

Alypius wants to tear the world above down. He delights in the notion that precisely now, when humanity thinks it can glory in its past, its present, and its future, just when they begin to build something their



kind has never achieved before, it is all taken from them. "I will die. But the world will die first."

Markus wants to punish the world's creator. He considers God is not innocent in the nature of an existence on this world. From the moment he formulated this goal, the ties to any former life he may have had were severed. His wife has left him, but he knows where to find his children. He still believes in leaving them a legacy of some sort. "We should take our powers seriously. It is time to challenge the creator and seek justice."

Iris wants to replace God. She refuses to spend much longer simply hiding away. She believes all of creation is in the hands of fools. She wants to give the world above a mercy-killing and create one of her own that will endure the test of time. "There is no room for something different, something better, while the joke that is existence is still told above."

Resistance

There are a few strange caveats to the ultimatum before the characters. The infernalists believe that here in the Dark Umbra, Helion cannot reach them and they will not be resurrected if killed. Alypius has no interest in recreating the world in Iris' image after they have destroyed its predecessor. He asks the characters to join

and be the ones who destroy him after they succeed. They will get what they followed him into Kur for.

This is not the first time Iris has made this offer to her soulmate. So far, all have rejected her. She does not want Leif killed, however, as it could mean an end to the reincarnations. Instead, she will try to return him to the world above so Helion can claim him once more.

It's possible the ultimatum comes down to a refusal and violence. Iris has an Arete of 5, Alypius has 4, and Markus has 3. They may conjure demons from another realm, control the souls of the dead in the room, and lay curses on the characters themselves. Also, to the characters' terror, they may consume the souls of the dead for Jhor.

It's possible that everyone is wrong about Helion's reach, that neither Markus, nor Alypius can be destroyed here, and neither can the characters. While it may save the characters' lives here, it has terrible implications. They will not be able to use distant worlds to escape their fate when Helion returns. Worse, Alypius is free to continue his reign of terror on the world above.

Allegiance

In case there are characters who do choose to accept Iris' ultimatum, they will be made aware of some of her plans. Abaddon is already loose upon the world above.

Iris' Truth

"What value do you place on what you have left around you? What value do you place on what you have managed to carve away from this world?"

"The Creator is the usurper. I searched high and low all through my prolonged existence until I found Him. I wish I could show Him to you now. He is pathetic, unworthy. He is a child glorying in the toy he has made, not unaware of its flaws, in fact fascinated by them, in first unwilling to define our fates, and in second unwilling to change the course they have taken."

"So, what value do you place on what you have left around you? What value do you place on what you have managed to carve away from this world?"

"To foresake something precious for a beautiful reason is the only pure, unfettered act left in this existence."

She further intends to resurrect someone named Nergal and destroy Helion, releasing a thousand souls from bondage.

Future Fates

Have any of the characters joined the infernalists?

Have any of Helion's Advocates found a permanent death?

Have the characters realized what is responsible for the religious persecution burning through Europe?

XVIII

Walpūrgia



Discovery

There are numerous mages in the world who will feel the coming of the next Wild Hunt, perhaps some of the characters among them, but most notably Wiosna. Her pupil still visits Brocken regularly enough to hear her severe warning: “They come again. They have chased through the darkest places since last they touched our realm. We must be ready.”

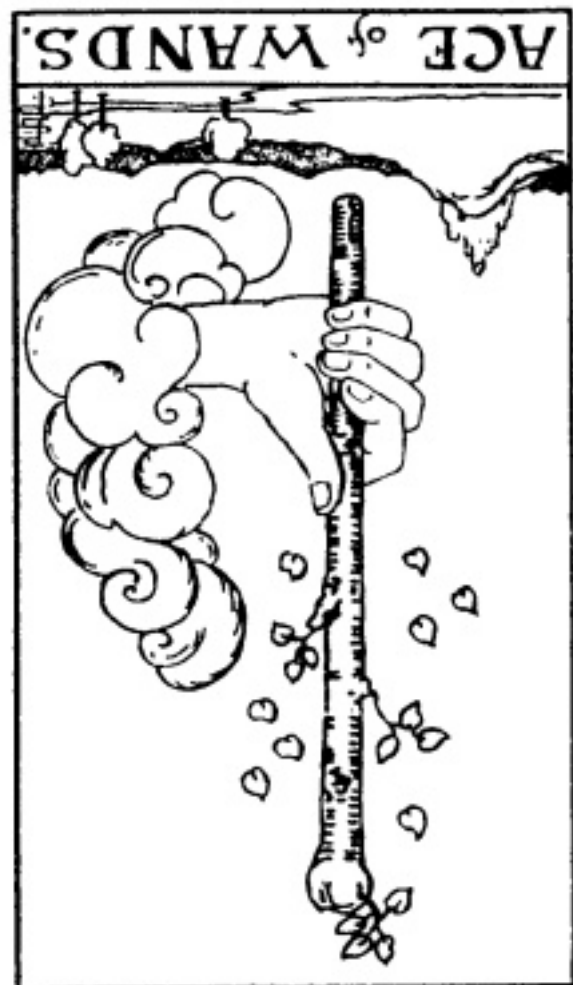
Culture

It is the end of April 1493 in the Holy Roman Empire. The effects of inquisitions are only growing stronger. It seems like decades ago that any good news reached the ears of the characters. The world’s progress, once so hopeful, seems to be accelerating toward something none of its bright minds intended. Satire is the only challenge to what the world is becoming, but no one is laughing.

Miscellany

Allegiances and Consequences

There are characters who decided to join the infernalists (or agreed in deceitful fear). These will have gone back to the world above marked by their purpose. Iris will have drawn a brand on the top of each of their hands, an inversion of the scar left behind by Helion, a tattoo made with the ashes of Kur. She instructs them that if they are ever in trouble, they need only clench their fist and utter the name of the domain’s owner:



Nergal. They will be transported back to Kur, either to confer in secret with their allies, or to be restored to their strength by Iris. Once the mark has been made, the soul of anyone who was ever killed by one of its bearers will appear in Kur and share the fate of its other starved inhabitants.

The characters have received instructions. At the earliest opportunity, when next they see the tower, they must leap from it. In their descent, they must not allow the tower to hurl them to ground. They must not accept judgment. They must hold only to defiance. In their fall, a friend (their Daemon) will come to them to lighten their burden. They must not let it. They must confront it, defy it, lash out against it and tear it apart, inverting it.

Iris pronounces them all Barabbi and gives them their first task. The ultimatum to join or die must reach

every mage they know. They have one year. No mercy need be rushed, those deaths that prove necessary must be good deaths. Concerning the other characters, Iris has felt the winds of the worlds stirring again. She believes the Wild Hunt will emerge again soon, offering a distinct opportunity. She makes preparations for Markus to join the characters when it does.

Cycles Broken

In their preparations for the Wild Hunt, Wiosna will make it clear to her pupil that she believes there is less left to teach her with every passing year. It is up to the character to find a way to overcome such threats as these. Wiosna has a way, she says, but she hopes her pupil has surpassed her and knows of a way without such a high price.



Sankt Walpurgisnacht

All throughout the month, preparations are made all across the empire to honor St. Walpurga. She died in the year 777 and was canonized a century later, when her bones were moved from her place of burial. There is a fervor in her worship as never before. Specifically in Saxony, a sample of her myroblyte, holy oil secreted from her relics, circulates among services and all are told she faced and defeated witchcraft in her time.

The towns around Brocken prepare for her veneration on the last day of the month. It's plain for all to see that symbolic witch burnings are to take place all across the land.

On Walpurgis Night, thick smoke rises from the fires all around Brocken. The smoke slowly blankets the sky. Then, the skies descend. By dawn, the land is shrouded in thick mists and no one can see further than a few feet.

Disappearances

The characters may become aware of several disappearances the next morning. First, a young maid who has not slept since the feast staggers through the mists, shouting her lover's name, Hergrim. Her name is Trechjana. Later, wives note husbands have not returned home. When all the whispers are put together, most seem to agree that a group of revelers had discussed the old woman who came through at the first snows. Zima had tried to sell herbs and charms to their women. Deep in the previous night, these men had boasted of finding her cabin and doing Walpurga justice. One of the eldest claimed to have a drop of her holy oil on him. One of the younger men recalled an irresistible young midwife from a few weeks ago. He followed her back at a distance to see where she lived. It seemed to be the same cabin as



the old woman's. Perhaps it was her granddaughter. Grinning, the men climbed up the mountain and were not seen again.

Justice

On their way up the mountains, the characters notice the mists grow consistently thicker, which does not match their expectations of mist. Long before they can see him, they hear the panicked screams of a young man. Stumbling blind through trees and around boulders, they eventually face a young man drenched in sweat, tears, and condensation. His name is Hergrim, and he describes a dark shape reaching out to him through the veil, trying to claim his soul.

Before long, the characters see something approach which does not so much penetrate the mists, but sooner seems to clear them, but only in the shape of a man about Hergrim's height. The spectre seems to whisper, almost unheard. It accuses Hergrim. Guilt-wracked, he turns to the characters, begging them to make it go away. The spectre first offers, then demands justice. If it gets its hands on Hergrim, both will dissolve into the mists.

Injustice

From this point on, as the characters try to find the source of the mists, as they climb the mountain toward its peak, they will be confronted by more spectres. They will realize that Hergrim's judge and executioner was more intimately familiar with him than an otherworldly spirit could have been. In fact, anyone entering the mists opens themselves to that border of the Dark Umbra where their own dark reflections await them.

Trechjana has also started to climb up the mountain. The characters may still hear her shouting Hergrim's name. Blind and alone, she furthermore shouts that she is sure the child is his, no matter what the other men are saying. Her Shadow takes the form of her late mother, snarling that she is worthless, that she made her father leave, that no one will ever love her. She can be saved, but the characters will have to convince her to stand up, not listen, and walk away from a life's worth of fears.

Shadows

Markus will be the first among the characters to face his Shadow. In his case, a woman's voice from beyond the shrouding mists will ask him why he thinks his wife left him. "She is a very vindictive woman," Markus

answers in his unwavering dry tone with the same smile that never reaches his eyes. The resulting confrontation may reveal that Markus' wife never wanted children. Cold and determined, Markus will dive into the mists to confront the apparition. He is never seen again.

One by one, the characters will be confronted just as Markus was. It is up to each other player to achieve the effect Markus' Shadow had. The spectres grow stronger as the characters get higher up the mountain.

Psychopomp

Those characters who still reach Brocken's summit find Wiosna there, faced with a terrible figure beyond the shroud. Through the mists, the characters first hear and then see her wailing in tears. She wards them off, insisting that true evil rests here at the summit. A terrifying male voice speaks a language at her that the characters do not understand. Only its name may be distinguished: Nergal.

Wiosna will sink to her knees in despair. Unless the characters have a way of banishing Nergal, she will resolve to sacrifice herself. The characters will witness this adolescent girl scream her lungs out in incoherent fury at her own Shadow. She will confront it and she will never be seen again.

Shadow of a Forgotten God

After their deeds at the mountain, Iris will call back her sworn allies. Their tattoos burn. Unless the characters managed to prevent Wiosna from facing her Shadow alone, Iris will be pleased to announce that Nergal has found his way back to reality again. The characters may wonder at Wiosna's nature and age after the events they have witnessed. One whose Shadow was a resentful forgotten god can only consider herself an adapted survivor of ancient times.

Future Fates

Has Wiosna sacrificed herself or has she made Nergal real again?

Have the characters let Markus confront his own oblivion?

How many more?

XIX

Mūndūs Nouūs



Discovery

The characters have contacts among seafarers and explorers. These seem increasingly relevant after the proclaimed discovery of new routes west across the sea. Those characters who are curious to set sail themselves may find themselves invited to join a crew setting sail after Columbus' own route. The invitation comes from none other than Amerigo Vespucci, who is financing the expedition. The characters may be put in contact with him through either Italian (Medici) and Spanish (those close to the crown) influence. They sail under fleet commander Alonso de Ojeda and chief navigator Juan de la Cosa. The characters are placed on a single ship. Depending on their expertise, they may be put in command.

Culture

It is the May 1499. Never before has Europe teetered so close to imbalance. The inquisitions have not relented, only spread, the Book of Revelations is interpreted to herald the end of the world—with the first ever hurricane observed in Europe strikes Spain and new diseases like Typhus closely following the extermination and exile of non-Christians—at the turn of this century, and news of Christopher Columbus' discoveries earlier this decade has spread far and wide. New possibilities once again captivate the dreams of thousands as nightmares of persecution haunt thousands more.

The papal bull Inter Caetera has declared all the lands further west than 100 leagues of the new discoveries to



belong to the Catholic Majesties of Ferdinand and Isabella. The greatest revelation is yet to come, however. Christopher Columbus believes he has found a new route to Asia. Now, by the initiative of those like Amerigo Vespucci, these discoveries are being questioned.

match two independent preceding sources of Asia.

Miscellany

Europa, Asia, and their Sister

Each ship is outfitted with the charts and tools to navigate the Atlantic Ocean. By Alonso de Ojeda's order, each ship has also been outfitted with the writings of Marco Polo and Ptolemy, freshly reprinted. Inquisitive characters may realize that Columbus' reports do not

New Stars

By the time their ship has crossed several horizons, another alluring discovery awaits those characters who keep an eye on the stars. There, new constellations are revealed. The wisest characters may realize that in fact, these aren't new at all. The ancient Greeks discovered and described them long ago, but due to the axial precession of Earth, they have slipped below Europe's horizon, now visible only from the latitudes of this continent. Over on his ship, Amerigo is mapping them this very moment. They represent the hooves and knees of Centaurus, as the characters can find back in Ptolemy's works.



Storm

here comes a moment when the characters feel something coming that the others don't.

To them, it feels like thick, charged air they sail towards under an ever darkening sky. None of their crewmates experience this, nor do the other ships. However, once they sail past this barrier, it affects their ship because of the characters' presence. They sail across a threshold between the known worlds, a separator of realities, of paradigms that have never sought consolidation before. They enter a world where the distance to the spirit realm is only a fraction of the world they leave behind. Crossing over instantly diverts their course, tears their sails, and shatters their mast. All the while, the characters believe they can see a distant shore which the others cannot. It appears to be an island at the mouth of a river. They think they can see two figures, a man and a woman, clad in nothing but golden jewelry seated on a single throne at the summit of a temple. Then, they begin to sink.

they can swim to the nearest shore, they are attacked by a monstrous creature from the depths. Over four yards in length, the creature looks like a giant pike but for its colorful tailfins flowing like ribbons. The locals call it a pirarucu.

Once they reach the shores, the characters only have a moment to marvel at the lush green growth all around them and the noise of a thousands signs of life beyond. Another survivor of the crew is wailing in agony not far away, his leg shattered. Before the characters can reach him, they will see indigenous people stalk out of the forest holding spears. They take him away.

Upriver

Once they crossed the barrier out at sea, it became impossible for there characters to have any Effect reach back to Europe, even with the highest sphere rating in Connection.

The characters open their eyes and find themselves in sweet waters. Parts of their ship are scattered all around them. It takes them a moment to orientate themselves. Nothing makes sense. They are at the mouth of the Amazon river, whose banks are so vast and far apart that to the characters it seems like they are still in the open sea.

Some of the characters are in sight of each other, some are in shouting distance. Some cling to fragments of wood, others are exhausted and half-drowned. Before

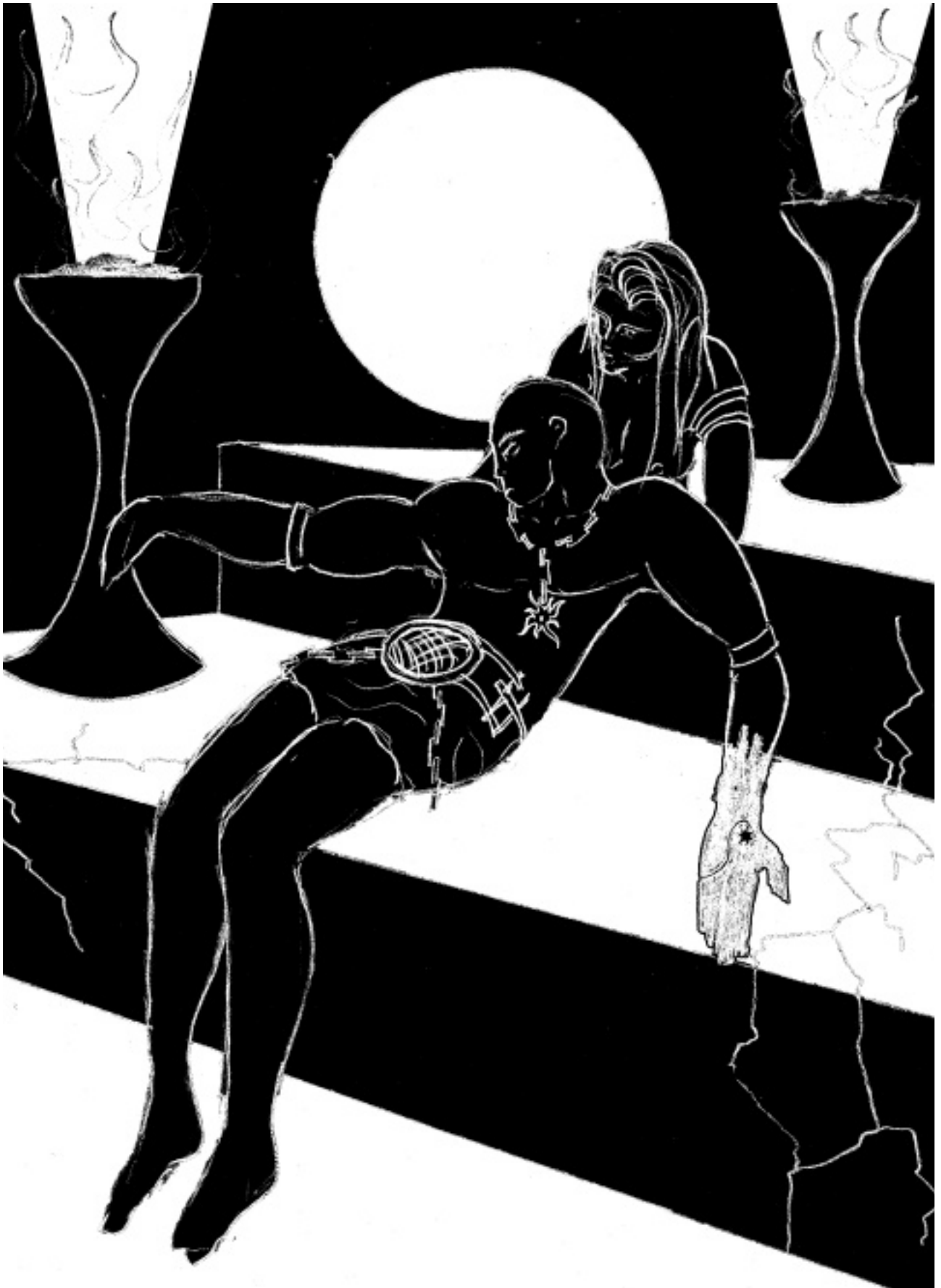
Flesh Eaters

The tribesmen take all the prisoner they can find, both living and dead, to a circle of wooden buildings deep in the wood. Their chief is clearly Awakened. He carries the shrunken heads of his ancestors on robes woven of human hair. They whisper to him. He orders fires lit and cages made. In an attempt to communicate with these newcomers, he decapitates the most talkative of his prisoners and skins the head. To the characters' horror, it uses the new addition to his collection to speak the foreign language on his behalf. Through the dead face, he asks who they are and where they came from.

The chief intends to treat his captives as any prisoners of war. Their flesh will feed his people.

Twin Gods

When the characters find a place to sleep, the noise of the jungle around them will be intrusive. It contains screams and howls of countless unseen creatures. The noise flows through into their dreams, where eventually they have a vision once again of two figures clad in gold. They walk down a vast temple's staircase, staring at them across a distance of leagues. Their temple rests on an



island at the mouth of the vast river they entered, where it meets the ocean they have crossed. The two figures are so alike in appearance that they must be twins. "They come from another world," the sisters say to the brother. "Yes, yet the way they are marked is unmistakable." Then, both look to the stars in the night's sky and the characters wake up with a start.

Marajo

Tracing their way back downriver, the characters eventually see the river's mouth again and the ocean they have crossed. Only a few scattered remnants remain of their ship, which is washing out to sea again. The storm must have carried them into the river's mouth before it hit the banks. What remains of it washed-up hull has stranded on an island in the very middle of the river. A thick wood hides whatever civilization has settled there, though a gleam of something golden high at its center is unmistakable.

Once they reach the island, the characters will be greeted by peaceful fishermen at its shores. More and more locals come to greet them, all by their appearance alone distinct from the tribesmen they found in the forest. The characters are led uphill to a city of stone. At its center stands a vast temple with a central staircase leading to its summit. The characters are brought to the foot of the staircase, but the locals will not venture further.

Hubris

The characters stand before twin gods Xōchiquetzal and Xōchipilli, the maiden and the prince. Like in their dream, the characters seem to be able to understand what the other two are saying, even though the words are not their own.

The twins are originally from the north, where there are more god kings and city states. They settled here and brought their rituals with them. They both recognize the marks on the characters' palms. In the north, they call people marked like they are Soul Stealers.

They want to know where the characters came from

on their strange vessel and what brought them here. Xōchiquetzal wants the characters to return whence they came and forget what they saw here. Xōchipilli has seen the others in their fleet make it to this continent's shores. He believes it is too late to preserve the isolation of their worlds. Xōchiquetzal asks the characters to give her a reason not to scuttle these ships and let the barbaric tribes have their crews.

Xōchipilli says that he too was once curious about the existence of other worlds. He probed and cast his mind across the seas and saw that it ended with nothing behind it. In truth, his efforts were prevented by the same barrier that sank the characters' ship. Once they all realize this, a look of terrible ambition comes over Xōchipilli.

Sundering

Xōchipilli will try to break through the barrier between the worlds against Xōchiquetzal's fears. His work would allow the characters to simply teleport back home. However, it will come at a terrible cost. Unless the characters intervene on Xōchiquetzal's behalf, Xōchipilli will reach out with all his might and perform an act of hubris worthy of Helion's attention. Before their eyes, the characters will see Xōchipilli outstretched hand begin to burn and smolder. When finally, he reaches the hand back, he sinks to his knees, an empty, hollow expression on his face. Xōchiquetzal will scream: "Brother! Where is your light?" Helion's mark is visible in the burns on his hand. Xōchipilli no longer has a Daemon. Europe is closer than it was and can be reached with Connection. The distance from the New World to the realm of spirits has grown.

Future Fates

Is the barrier between worlds old and new broken?

Have the characters understood more of the nature of Helion?

XX

World on Fire



Discovery

There were many who believed that the year 1500 would fulfill end times described in the Book of Revelations. The characters watch as the new century takes off without immediate upheaval, then over the years slowly start to piece together a puzzle. A chain of events was certainly started in 1500 and its conclusion may well spell the end.

Culture

This episode spans the years 1500-1520, across Europe. The characters return to the continent of their birth to find it is still in turmoil. Slowly, over these years, the people's panic of an apocalypse wears off. New wars break out in the south and royalty everywhere die, are succeeded, and are deposed.

Miscellany

Death of the Demigod

The characters may have shed all ties with the Order of Reason and so be oblivious to the news that Hemitheus has died. The manner of his death may interest them, however, as many witnesses to his funeral can attest: his hand was scorched and marked with the scar of Helion. Hemitheus had tried something far beyond his reach, convinced of his own mastery of a solidifying reality. No one knows what private act it was he tried to perform. It was his latest apprentice who found him on a mountain peak, seemingly struck by lightning. In truth, his act of hubris brought him to



Helion's attention, and his Daemon was claimed, like Xōchipilli's was. In another sense, he has rejoined his

favorite pupil at last. Through Helion, they may never be parted again.



Hope and Despair

In 1500, all the characters are back in Europe again. Iris chooses to appear before one of them. Now that everyone who had joined in her quest to attack creation itself has either died or abandoned her, including her soulmate, she has been forced to change her plan and undo some of what she already set in motion. Iris wants each of the characters to meet their graceless fate when Helion comes again and she wants to have another chance of finding and meeting her soulmate in its next revolution. Perhaps the next one will agree more fully.

Abaddon reigns freely across the lands, tearing at the fabric that keeps the earthly plane insulated. At the current rate, the Last Judgement will come before Helion does. The most recent of a series of corrosive events was the breaking of the barrier between the worlds. All mankind is exposed once again as when the race first left the Garden. With nothing but scorn, Iris suggests the characters do their best to slow Abaddon's efforts. She does not trust them to act in her interests even if they overlap with their own, so she does something terrible. As though an invisible hand has closed around their heart, the character realizes Iris has pronounced a curse. Their soul has been marked for eternal damnation in Kur, a mote of dust enduring for Nergal's sadistic pleasure. When Abaddon leaves the world of the living, she says, so will this fate be lifted. This character feels unwell with proximity to Abaddon and can feel something of its essence moving across the lands from great distances away.

Messiah

In 1502, a Jewish man appears in Istria, near Venice, and proclaims the return of the heir of King David, the Messiah, in the next six months. His name is Asher Lämmlein. A troop of followers grows around him and his message spreads far into the Holy Roman Empire. Isolated Jewish communities speak of a Year of Penance in preparation for the world to come.

Before his prophecies can come to anything, Asher disappears without a trace and his followers lose hope. Especially among his intellectual followers, mass conversions to Christianity occur. In truth, Asher vanished in a cloud of locusts while speaking on the streets to the beggars of Venice and these are the only witnesses.

Liberphagus

In 1504, one of the converts who was in steady contact with Asher is found dead. The last letters they exchanged before Asher's disappearance show that the rabbi at the time was slowly becoming convinced of the upcoming judgement. Letters kept arriving for Asher long after his disappearance, mentioning the rabbi had decided to move to Magdeburg to teach there, and to look for an unnamed lost text.

By the time the characters track down the former rabbi who converted to the Christian faith in Magdeburg's own cathedral, he will have been missing from his lectures for several weeks. He may be found dead in his apartments. Dead locusts lie in the window sill. The cause of his death appears to be the forced eating of an entire book. The last of its pages is lodged halfway down his throat. The book was Albrecht Dürer's Apocalypse, containing fifteen elaborate woodcuts of scenes from the Book of Revelations. The only recoverable page is the one that caused the man to suffocate, the tenth: St. John eating the book. The book is out of print and quite difficult to find until it is reprinted in 1511.

Luther

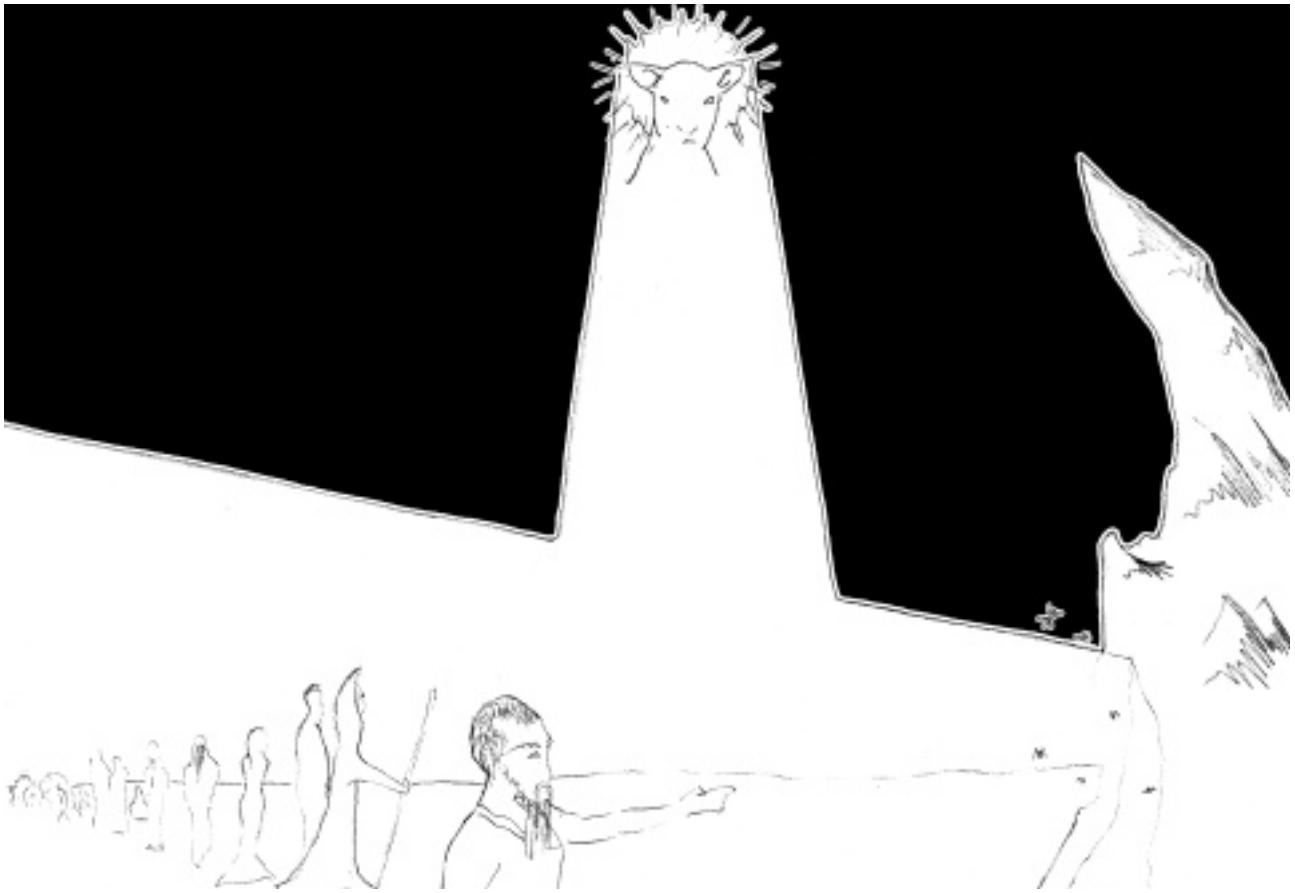
In 1517, Saxony erupts in the next bold step into religious reformation. Martin Luther has written his Ninety-five Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences and posted it on the front doors of the Wittenberg churches. It directly criticizes the church and will result in his excommunication in 1521. In the ensuing war of preachers and pamphlets, Western Christianity becomes divided.

Choreomania

In 1518, an epidemic grips over four hundred people in Strasbourg, called the dancing plague. They mostly consist of adolescent girls, taking to the streets and dancing wildly all day and all night until they collapse of exhaustion. Deaths are being reported among the dancers.

Dead Return

At last, in 1520, each of the characters is visited by a vision of a dead loved one. Examples include Leaf, Jacob, Zima, Hemitheus, parents, and possibly former lovers. There is little doubt that a veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is thinning. Docilely, the dead tell the characters that they could



return, any torment put to an end, to walk among the living and face the Last Judgement of all souls.

Any souls brought back in this fashion appears as they did in life, though docile, and unbreathing. They speak of new life awaiting them, awaiting all of them. In complete contradiction to Iris' beliefs, there is this cycle of rebirth in the creator's plan. Inexplicably, they all have a strong urge to travel. Each sets out inevitably for Jerusalem.

Holy Land

In an empty valley outside the City of David, some hundred unbreathing souls have already gathered. They stand, waiting, saying little. Passersby have started comment on the strange behavior of these foreigners. These are only the first, and every day more arrive at the valley. The location could easily hold hundreds of thousands. A sheer rock casts long dawn shadows over the assembly. The characters may be the first to notice the mouth of a cave in its base and the swarm of locusts writhing within.

Abaddon in his most concentrated form yet waits in that cave. The swarm appears to be guarding a text placed on a rock in its depths. It's an oversize scroll, bound with seven ribbons of cloth. Seals of wax and clay lock each ribbon in place. Three of the seals have already been broken.

The characters may recognize a terrifying implication with what they witness and what is written in the Book of Revelations. The Last Judgement follows the breaking of seven seals. Then, there is one, the Lamb, who is worthy to read God's secrets before the end comes.

If the characters can get past Abaddon, they can reach the scroll. If they can reach the scroll, then they have the opportunity to hide it and postpone the end times that have begun. For a moment, they are forced to wonder how the changes in this age have been churning the wheel of the apocalypse, or indeed whether the reverse is true. For a moment, they wonder what it could mean for the future, to stand balanced in a protracted apocalypse. How much more rapidly will the world change and what will it come to resemble?

If Abaddon is overcome, the dead in the valley will fall as corpses once more. If the scroll is hidden, Abaddon's power will wane and the locusts will disperse.

Future Fates

Has the Last Judgement been postponed?

Is one of the characters spared from a fate in Kur?

XXI

Wed in Blood



Discovery

he characters' actions in the previous episode have harmed faith in a Creator. Prayers have become things people say to themselves with only hope to guide them to an answer. Priests are scrutinized and criticized. The reformation firmly roots itself in cities.

From the far north of Europe, rumors are heard of old ways resurfacing at almost the same time. The more the new god's representative in the far south in the form of a scheming pope is questioned, the more the people look into the cold nights and await the return of the gods of their ancestors.

According to these rumors, priests make sacrificial pyres of their own churches. Harvests are once more blessed after blood was spilled on the land. Valkyries swoop down from the skies and the gates of Valhalla are open once again.

Culture

It is January 1523 in Scandinavia. Under King Christian II, the Kalmar Union of a single monarchy over Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, is under threat. For the past decade, Sweden has led rebellions against the king they call Kristian Tyrann, Christian the Tyrant. Christian's reconquest culminated in the Stockholm Bloodbath in 1520. At his own coronation banquet, Christian seized and imprisoned native Swedish nobility who opposed him and had them tried and executed over the next three days. Now, Swedish forces lay siege to Stockholm to liberate it from its Danish occupants and



Christian II is deposed from within Denmark itself.

Miscellany

Old Ways

The characters walk ever further north and pass an abandoned church, its roof burned away, its altarpieces stolen with signs of them hacked to pieces. The next cabin they pass looks abandoned too, but for the sounds of a struggle nearby. If the characters investigate, they

may catch a glimpse of two men fighting for their lives. One embeds an axe deep into his foe's shoulder. The other stabs for the heart as he falls. With both men dying on the ground, a fluttering can be heard in the trees above. A slender woman clad all in feathers leaps down from the branches and seems to kiss both men, muttering something under her breath. Characters with sharper eyes may have seen her feed them her blood. They rise and walk with her. If the characters approach, the woman will repeat the words: "Nidr ok nordr."



Ravens Calling

The characters may find they have been followed by two large, black birds. One thinks they are suitable for their master's purpose. The other knows the way they should take. They can be heard whispering to each other in an ancient dialect. If the characters try to get their attention, all they will say before flying away is: "Nidr ok nordr," "liggr Helvegr." If the characters then stray from the ways through the thick forests heading directly north, they will reappear to guide them in the right direction. All the while, the nights grow steadily longer.

Wolf-Mother

When the characters have traveled to the arctic circle, and daylight is only a distant memory, they will start to feel the constant presence of wolves. They seem to be traveling south in the opposite direction in some haste. One night, their leader steps forward from the very last of the packs.

First, the characters hear the struggle of great beasts, howling deep in the forest. Then, as they get closer, and the crunching of bone and the tearing of flesh cease, one of the beasts approaches them. From behind the trees, the characters are sure they heard the padding of paws on the snow, but what emerges is a tall, scarred woman. She is dressed in only a bear skin still steaming in the cold night and dripping fresh blood. Sharp talons extend from each of her fingers and her eyes are those of the beasts she walks amongst. Her mouth is red with blood as though she had been tearing flesh from her quarry like a wolf.

"You walk in the lands of my sire, yet you show no fear. What are you?"

"You are Galdramen! Have you come to answer the All-High's call? He has need of one like you."

"You do not know your own courage. The gods are divided, at war with each other. You would walk among them?"

"Know then that the Lord of the Hanged (Hangadrottin) dwells in the east. The Lord of the Land



(Foldardrottin) has sought the coast to the west. The Lord of the Undead (Draugadrottin) awaits you in the north. Choose your course wisely.”

“Die well.”

War

Here, in the furthest north, the characters occasionally encounter signs of a struggle like the wolf-mother described. Sites of a battle are covered in ashes and blood. Wolves fight ravens. Wolves fight wolves. Ravens fight ravens.

Brethren

Hangadrottin and Foldardrottin have separated from the entity the characters once called Triglav. Draugadrottin has a plan to return his beloved from death and his brothers refuse to be a part of it. The three cannot be consolidated into one being any longer.

If the characters visit Hangadrottin, they will find him in a small town surrounded by human sacrifices. The alderman of the town slits the last of his sons’ throats and hangs the corpse in a tree before kneeling in the disturbing circle of gallows before the god. The characters recognize Dazhbog from many years ago, with his blind right eye. Hangadrottin would have the characters venture north and seize Draugadrottin. He gives them a spear made all of oaken heartwood and tells them to impale the god through the heart and then bring the corpse before him. If they do this, they may ask anything they want of Hangadrottin.

If the characters visit Foldardrottin, they will find him at the peak of a fjord watching as a storm rages below, crashing blocks of ice free from the rocks. The characters recognize Perun from many years ago, with both eyes intact. He demands that the characters destroy both Hangadrottin and Draugadrottin and bring back their ashes so that he may scatter them into the seas. If they do this, they may ask anything they want of Foldardrottin.

Kenning

When the characters visit Draugadrottin in the north, they will find him seated at the top of a mountain on a throne carved from the ice. The two ravens sit on either side. They recognize Svarog, also called Radegast, from so many years ago, with his blind left eye. “I remember these,” one of the ravens says. “I think they will serve,” the other says.

Draugadrottin rises and takes a pouch from his neck. It appears to contain ashes. He then raises his head to the skies and shouts, and his shout turns into a thunderclap. Lightning strikes his outstretched hand, and in it, there characters now see a shard of ice like an enormous hailstone. Draugadrottin places it in the pouch, then tears the cord from his neck and places the

pouch on the seat of his throne.

When Draugadrottin speaks, he explains to the characters that he recognizes them to be Galdramen but that he is not without his own kennings. He introduces himself as All-High, All-Father, Fair-Haired One of the Skillful Hand, Wanderer, Lord of the Undead. He claims to be responsible for sheltering Galdramen like them (tapping his palm) from their doom. He claims he can save the characters from Helion’s return here in the north, where his power is strongest. He can do this by making them immortal. He can do this by keeping them close when Helion comes, whenever it comes.

What he wants in return is stranger and more difficult by far than what Hangadrottin and Foldardrottin have asked. He needs the characters to look into the outer realms and find someone, his beloved, called Hagala. He could not find her in Valhalla. Then, to complete his ritual, he needs two sacrifices, one willing, one unwilling. One of them must be a beautiful young woman. If the characters can do this, he believes he can recall his beloved from the grave.

There might be character willing to risk his own life as a sacrifice. Draugadrottin will agree that their life is forfeit in the span of a decade anyway and this is a better death by far. The characters may further believe that the nature of Helion will return them to their bodies as it had before. Here, they would make a dire mistake, however, as they are in the north with Draugadrottin. Their sacrifice will prove what Draugadrottin claimed to be able to do, and the character will die a permanent death.

“Ah, Galdraman. Long have I sought your service.”

“Long have I lost my Hagal. Long have I sought her. We cannot never be separated. We were wed in blood.”

“You have already befouled the gift the stars bestowed upon you. Let me save you from your fate.”

“Sacrifice is true, absolute. Sacrifice is endless, powerful. It will always be necessary.”

“The Christian flames that took my beloved hold no more power here. You will call her back to me.”

Salvation

If the characters choose a side, they may have earned a way to avoid Helion. Only Draugadrottin can offer the protection through his land, without making the character undead like his followers. This is how Smit survived Helion’s returns while trapped under the ice.

Draugadrottin’s ritual will succeed by finding Hagala’s soul deep in a hall full of hungry souls that reminds anyone who’s been there of Kur. She sits beside starved men that could have been her family by their resemblance. She is by far more beautiful, however. The ritual will tear her from this bleak afterlife and revive the sacrificed young woman’s body. The whole mountainside will briefly smell of meadowsweet.

On the nature of Draugadrottin's protection from Helion, his powers are tied to his own might and understanding of the world's workings, or at least, how it once worked. The old ways are not simply antiquated.

They are ancient, ancient beyond memory. This can only be because they are eternal. Here in the frozen, unreachable north, Draugadrottin essentially offers not death, not necessarily undeath, but fundamentally: stasis. In his own words, Draugadrottin's power was stolen from the giants when he conquered their land, to make this frigid place a world all of his own.

Timing

The number of episodes was originally intended to bridge the whole of one winter so that the first session could be held in the last days of good weather and the last session could be held in the first new days of good weather. However, it was at this point in the story, with just two episodes left to go, that the COVID-19 pandemic left us in lockdown. Instead of finishing the story through webcams, we decided to wait. The suspense was endured for months, until finally, two last sessions saw us through to the end of Helion's Advocates.

Future Fates

Does Valfreyja walk the Earth again as Hagala?

Has the All-High been sundered? Will three ever be able to walk as one?

Has a character become immortal, but lost their chance of Ascension?

Has a character postponed Helion?

XXII

Last Roman Emperor



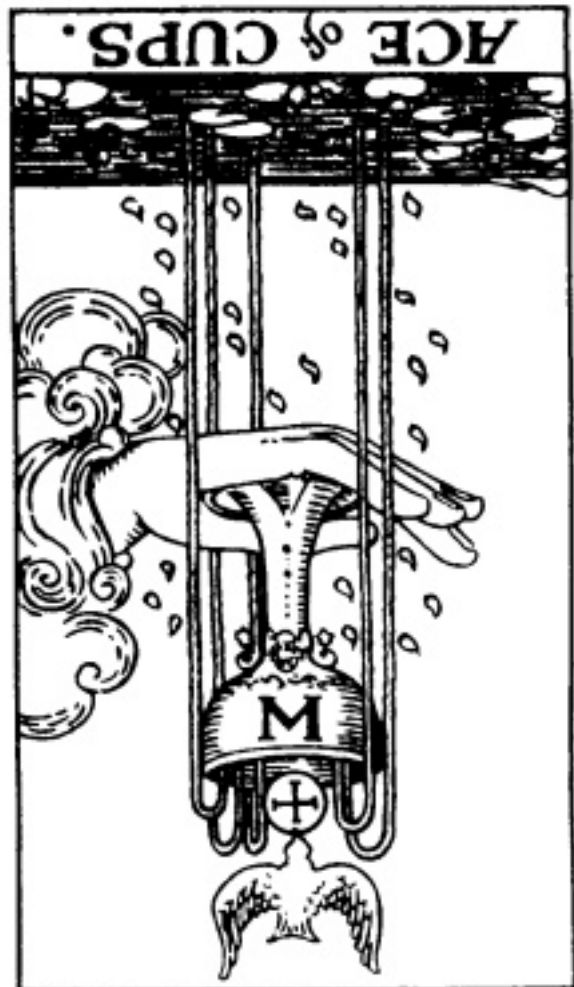
Discovery

he characters are visited by a great mage. His name is Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and he is a polymath, physician, scholar, theologian, occult writer, and prominent member of the Order of Hermes. He was even once a soldier. His works on a unified magical treatise consolidating kabbalah mysticism with Christian theology has earned him scorn from many inquisitions, a long road which has led him into the service of Louise of Savoy, nominally as her appointed physician.

He comes to the characters to extend an urgent invitation on behalf of his mistress. Despite his high position among the Traditions, the characters may be surprised to discover the degree to which he defers to them, glancing subtly at their palms. If the characters inquire, he will indeed admit his mistress is one of Helion's Advocates, and it may surprise the characters more to hear him use this precise term.

Culture

It is May 1527 in the contested lands that have yet to unite as Italy. When the characters first visited Venice, the Italic League had been founded and the Peace of Lodi agreed. The prosperous but politically divided states were strengthened by this alliance, but only so long as it was maintained. Forty years of peace followed until the foreign ambitions of Charles VIII of France led to the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. The Republic of Venice formed an alliance with Maximilian I of Austria and Ferdinand V of Spain to repel the French.



Years of war result in Spanish defense of the southern states and French rule of the north, and the ascension of Maximillian I to the seat of Holy Roman Emperor.

This ‘status quo ante bellum’ was signed into treaties jointly by Pope Leo X and Maximillian I, Holy Roman Emperor and lasted for five years until in 1521, Charles V, the new Holy Roman Emperor, now simultaneous ruler of Austria, the Spanish Kingdoms, and the Low Countries, expelled French forces from Milan. The new King Francis I of France reacted by descending into southern Italy to fight imperial forces in 1525, when he was captured and imprisoned in Madrid. The day of King Francis I’s capture coincided with the Holy Roman Emperor’s birthday.

Francis I was released one year ago after a signing of the Treaty of Madrid. It was the king’s mother, none other than Louise of Savoy, regent on the French throne, who, surrounded by English and Habsburg enemies on every border, managed to create the first Franco-Ottoman alliance by secret envoys in Constantinople. Sultan Suleiman wrote a personal ultimatum to Charles V, demanding the immediate release of Francis and demanding a yearly tax from his empire. When Charles V did not yield to these requests, Suleiman invaded

Hungary. Finally, by agreeing to renounce foreign claims (including Artois, Flanders, and all Burgundian lands remaining in French hands), Francis I was freed. Once back on the throne, he announced that he had no intention of holding to the agreement, as he was forced to sign it under duress, intending instead to reconquer all lost lands.

Since, Pope Clement VII has formed the League of Cognac, siding with Francis I against the rising power of the very force that drove the French from their invasion of Lombardy, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

Miscellany

Scenes of a Sacking

While in Rome during its sacking, there are numerous sights that might confront the characters. The soldiers invading are first and foremost nearly starving. Fruits and raw meats are piled in the streets where soldiers debauch themselves. Amidst the killing and looting, bottles of wines are passed around. Secondly, the soldiers have gone unpaid for far beyond their loyalty to the empire. Nobles are captured first, their children ransomed, and their lavish houses turned over.



Audience

“The world hangs by a thread,” are the first words the characters hear as they are led through the doors of a small nearby town chapel and emerge on the top floor of a vast windy tower of a castle in another land. Louise has arms raised up the skies, books scattered in a circle around her in foreign languages beyond counting. She wears a long, black dress and shows signs of age only in the creases of her weathered face. The characters emerge from an archway, a decoration part of the crenelations of the tower’s Gothic architecture. They notice six other archways, some opening in tropical palace gardens, others in what appears to be the middle of the sea.

Agrippa motions for the characters to follow specific lines carved into the floor and cast with what appears to be solid gold. He assures them that placing a toe outside the protective circles can mean death in the face of the forces summoned and bound here. Louise continues an incantation which contains the gods of various different ancient pantheons. By the time the characters reach the center, Louise bids them observe the clouds overhead. These shape themselves into people slowly becoming clearer. Louise is showing them a vision of advisors gathered around the gestatorial chair of the pope.

“Behold these fools in their desperate plight. They call upon any foreign force to defend their own lands

with such a fickle mind that now they have no hope of ever repaying their debts. Countless treaties signed, countless treaties broken. These architects have undone a lifetime’s work toward peace and have made each neighbor an enemy to all.”

“Ignorance is no excuse for arrogance. Would you not condemn them?”

“Would you not hold them accountable for their actions, even as they claim innocence in ignorance of forethought?”

Louise explains that she has felt a threat from beyond the Gauntlet. In this magical place, it’s possible the characters feel it too. The Wild Hunt ever gathers under the banner of one leader to ride at their head. Legends speak of old gods, psychopomps, folk heroes, and indeed also archangels to fill that role. The cardinals in the vision beyond the clouds bow their heads in prayer and ask for Michael to bear his sword in defense of God’s realm.

Louise then places her ultimatum upon the characters. If they condemn the speculated actions of these cardinals despite their ignorance, then they too have much to answer for. “Not once, not twice, have you allowed the Chasse Sauvage into this world.” By this time, Louise rolls up her sleeves far enough to expose her hands and spreads her palm to the characters. There is no mistaking Helion’s mark. “I have done my duty. I

can face my fate without fear. I will see the fallen angel on my shoulder redeemed." "Will you rise above your own ignorance and arrogance?"

Agrippa motions for the way back through the archway the characters came through and he motions for a different archway which seems to leads into a bright countryside for those who accept their charge.

Conscription

The characters may recognize the architecture and the country around them to be Lombardy. The nearest farmhouse they see appears to be empty. There are signs of the owners leaving in a hurry. There are still bottles of wine and preserve in the cellar.

The first faces the characters see are those of soldiers. If the characters say nothing, they may assume the characters are mercenaries foraging for their division. If the characters say they are not, they may be offered conscription. In exchange for the small provisions found in the cellar of the farmhouse, the characters may soon discover they are treated like royalty. These troops are the Holy Roman Emperor's own, led by Charles III, Duke of Bourbon, last feudal lord of France who opposes the rule of its king, Francis.

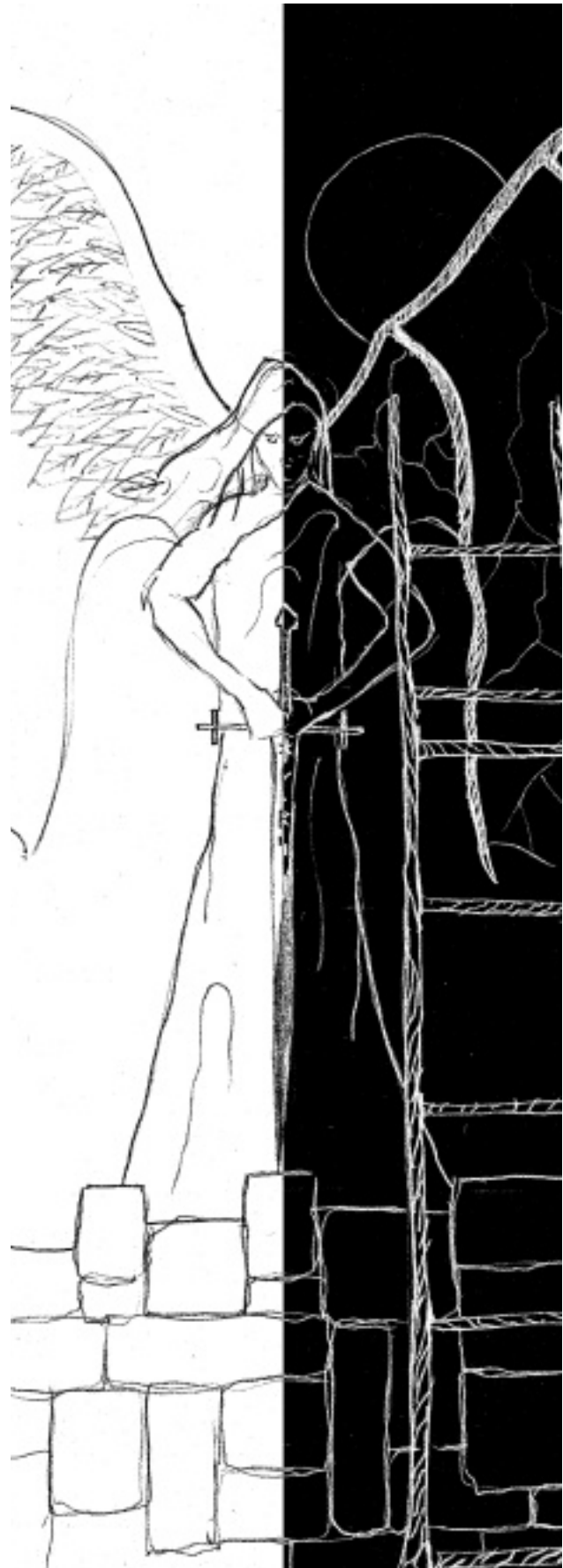
It may not take long for characters to notice a pattern they remember from other visitations of the Hunt. There is desperation among these ranks. Tens of thousands of soldiers have gone unpaid during their long campaign and most are starving. The characters may decide for this very reason to remain among the troops, closer to what they fear is about to occur. It is also possible they try to go to Rome to head off the cardinals instead. What becomes clear to those attuned to the Gauntlet, is that its thinning in this world coincides not with Rome, but with these troops.

Whether they hear it from without or within, mutiny soon follows. Charles V had ordered his troops to remain stationed in Italy as a show of defiance against the pope's League of Cognac. Now, they have forced their commander Charles III to march them into Rome to claim their promised payment.

Sack of Rome

The imperial troops consist of 14,000 Germans and 6,000 Spanish, and those local infantry who were conscripted. Rome has for its defense 5,000 militiamen and less than 200 Swiss Guard. Duke Charles dies in the assault, and the last vestiges of command over the sacking army are lost. The walls are breached the very same day.

As they scale the walls, the imperial soldiers take on a savage look. The unshaven and unkempt faces of the soldiers, the way their armor is torn, the way they already display the jewels and riches stolen from the first nobles they could get their hands on, they all take



on a distinctly different appearance. They look more like ancient Vandals and Visigoths than the soldiers of the Holy Roman Empire.

As they spill into Rome's streets, a new figure takes the place of their fallen commander. His appearance is different to anyone who looks upon him. Everyone sees the incarnation of their most famous wartime leader. Some see King Arthur, others Charlemagne, or even Joan of Arc. There stands the Last Roman Emperor, Emperor of the Last Days, called back from the pages of history, to lead the people. The troops seem possessed.

Last Stand of the Swiss

The Swiss Guard makes a last stand in the Teutonic Cemetery within the Vatican to protect the pope. Vastly outnumbered, they fight fiercely and bravely, but are inevitably annihilated. Their captain flees and seeks refuge in his own home in the city, where he is slaughtered by Spanish forces in front of his wife. When only 42 of the Swiss Guard survive and fall back to the Basilica steps, they hold off the invaders long enough for Pope Clement and his entourage to flee on the Passetto di Borgo to Castel Sant'Angelo.

Confrontation

The city is taken. The Last Roman Emperor presides over the surviving thousand defenders of the city as they are lined up and ordered to be executed. If the characters have not stopped the Wild Hunt by this point, its mission will be complete. The Gauntlet closes once

more and the frenzy that overcame the invaders vanishes. Their own nature was never so kind, however, that they do not immediately and continuing over the next days pillage every church and home they can find.

If the characters gather the courage to face the leader of the Hunt once and for all, they will find him smiling at them from his mighty steed in the full knowledge of who they are. This mighty spirit has once again found a weak and pitiless part of the world of living flesh. He has answered desperate prayers in the dark. The robbed occupants of this city are not the ones who built it. Who would miss them? Who would miss these priests in their gaudy lording over the souls of mankind? Better that these souls belong to Hunt.

Future Fates

Has Rome been sacked to any greater or lesser degree by the characters' actions?

Has the Wild Hunt finally been weakened after decades of strengthening?

Have the characters found a more permanent way of banishing the Wild Hunt?

Do the characters realize that Louise was wrong about the Hunt?

XXIII

Epilogue



As the summer of 1531 reaches its end, it's time for Helion to reappear. After all this time since their Awakening, it is time for the characters to be confronted by the truths behind their celestial benefactor. Once immersed in these truths, Helion is the judge. Humanity is the accused. The characters are the advocates.

It is also a witness, however. Far apart from hells, heavens, cultures, birth, fate, and all manifestations of faith, here stands an impartial observer. It is otherworldly. It was cast past the Earth and saw its potential overshadowed by vain glory. Helion acted in an attempt to suppress hubris from this, one of many worlds in its paths.

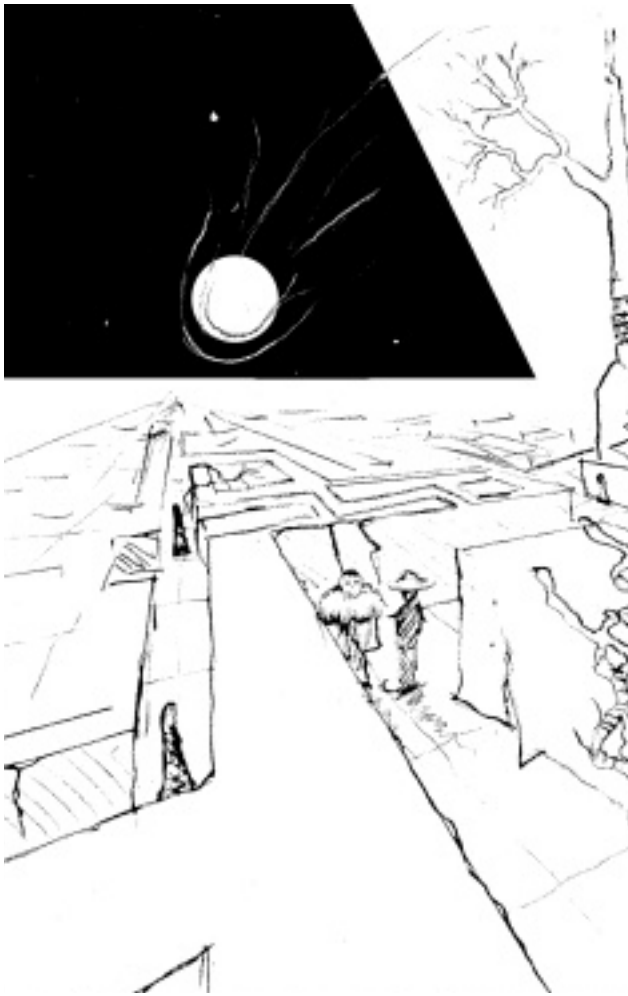
Helion watched the life on Earth with great interest, then with horror and disgust it saw hubris, something it had never seen before, in humanity, the very beings for which it had so much hope. The characters' lives have been fueled by that hope, blessed by Helion. Was it naive? What did they do with the gift bestowed?

Their Awakening was a gift, Helion's gift.



Flight
Here are those who will try to avoid Helion. There are several ways to accomplish this. Some have been encountered in the footprints of other Advocates. Others still might be theorized by the characters themselves.





Isolation

Throughout the story, the characters have seen evidence of Helion's grasp reaching only the Earth. Across the Gauntlet, they could not be brought back to life by its power for instance. Similarly, their Daemons cannot be reclaimed if they are on the other side during its return. This requires significant prowess, however, or knowledge of other ways to get across. None of the places beyond the Gauntlet that the characters have seen have been safe.

Submission

As a variant of the above means of escape, it is possible for the characters to seek refuge in a realm beyond Earth under someone else's protection. Iris in her corner of the Underworld is one example. The All-High with his mythical North is another. Servitude comes at its own price, of course, and the characters should question whether these are truly better masters to have than Helion.

Obfuscation

A master of Spirit can gain some control over the

Daemon they have inherited by Helion's might. Through a creative and epic Effect, it is possible to manipulate and hide the Daemon without leaving the confines of Earth.

Ascension

The characters have seen evidence of one of Helion's Advocates who Ascended before the revolution came again. By Ascending, Mithras placed himself not merely beyond Helion, but above him. However, the underlying truth to remember is that in doing so, Mithras Ascended while tainted by the hubris Helion was trying to cleanse.

Descension

The grueling process of choosing the unmaking of reality involves mutilating the Daemon. Any character who has become so depraved as to want this and go through with this inverts the Daemon and makes it unusable and unrecognizable by Helion.

Destruction

The ultimate insult to cosmic forces involves denying judgement. Through horrendous acts, Helion itself can

be destroyed. Iris sees this as a necessary step in unmaking the rest of reality. There are others still, however, who recognize no inhuman arbiter of right and wrong. The day that they succeed, Scourge will no

longer exist in the world. Instead, there is only Paradox. This mighty blow in the Ascension War will only make it a more desperate one. Humanity will be released from all boundaries of hubris.



Confrontation

Some part of each of Helion's Advocates on Earth is torn from their flesh. The moment Helion entered the skies above, they were transported, facing the heights of the all-too familiar tower. They turn around to orient themselves on the climb, when suddenly it becomes an out-of-body experience. They float, torn from themselves, and they see a dual image. One of the dual entity sees the Daemon pulled into Helion's orbit, sees for the first time its nature, its taint of hubris, something that needed to be redeemed. The other sees the diminutive figure, weak-kneed on the immense structure, and the structure is crumbling, has always been.

Divided, the characters are all close to death. Their only mouthpiece is that part of them which is rejoining Helion. It is not their whole soul, only their Daemon carrying their memories, an incarnation of their Essence

and Paradigm, bearing the burden of the character's actions. Weak Daemons are barely present at all.

Approaching Helion, its nature too is revealed. Where a bright glowing rock may pass through the skies above Earth, this aspect of the celestial entity is a swirling mass made of only swirling Daemons themselves. Xōchipilli is represented here, as is Hemitheus, as are countless others.

"WE ARE HELION," it says. "WE ARE THE WANDERER IN THE LIMITLESS DARK. WE ARE THE OBSERVER AND THE ACCUSER. WE ARE WITNESS AND WE ARE JUDGE."

What follows is an interrogation. Those characters with the most Scourge must go first, giving others a chance to better prepare themselves. Any who are judged to have redeemed the hubris that tainted their Daemon survive. They are returned whole to the tower, and then to Earth, free to live out the rest of their days without Helion's blessings, and without its curse. All the rest perish, their Daemons returned to Helion, to be given another chance at redemption with new Awakenings.

"WE HAVE TAKEN YOU, BLESSED YOU, AND SENT YOU BACK AMONG THE PEOPLES OF YOUR EARTH. YOU WERE PRIVILEGED TO BE BORN IN A TIME WHERE GREATEST REBIRTH YET WAS POSSIBLE. TELL US HOW FAR YOU HAVE JOURNEYED. TELL US HOW WIDE YOUR UNDERSTANDING HAS BEEN." This refers to the characters' orientation among Faith, Mystic, and Reason and how this has changed over the course of the story. Those who have drifted the most, experienced the most, and allowed what they experienced to change them are rewarded.

"WE HAVE WATCHED YOU AND SEEN YOUR VIRTUES AS ONE OF OUR DISCIPLES. YOUR TIME HAS SEEN TERRIBLE ATROCITIES. INNOCENTS DIED IN GRANADA. INNOCENTS WERE BURNED AS WITCHES. TELL US OF YOUR GREATEST SELF-SACRIFICE."

"WE HAVE WATCHED YOU AND SEEN YOUR VICES AS ONE OF OUR DISCIPLES. CONFESS YOUR GREATEST SIN."

"YOUR FATE IS MET. IF YOU WERE TO BE REDEEMED, YOU WOULD REQUIRE ANOTHER. WHAT WOULD THIS BE?"

"FOR MILLENNIA, WE HAVE PROTECTED HUMANITY BY PRUNING HUBRIS IN ITS MIDST. HOW HAVE YOU REDEEMED YOURS?"

In the end, only those characters who count their blessings above their trials are worthy.

Example Confrontation

"I was highly educated in the Catholic faith from an early age. I stand before you now versed in the teachings of the Protestant Reformation, as well as esoteric teachings beyond count. I have seen the potential of genius and science, and I have implemented these arts where they belong, in war."

"I have protected the ancient borders, I have maintained the peace. These were my greatest trials, sleepless and exhausted, for I could not weigh any pain of mine against the lives I was responsible for."

"I have watched my daughter die. I have taken her name and her place in life. I have filled my son-in-law's bed and I bore all his children in my Louise's stead."

"I would disarm those who come to conquer and find unity in peace."

"You have placed terrible might within my reach, yet I healed the world with the means available to all. My words were my deeds and they shed no blood."

Margaret of Bourbon, later known as Louise of Savoy, is deemed unworthy and perishes.

THE END

Appendix: Birth of Paradox



Anno M. D. LXI. An dem XIII. tag Aprillis zu morgens zwischen Aim gehn tag und dem darauf das ist zu morgens zwischen 4 und 5 auff der kleinen uhr ist ein sehr erschrocklich gesicht an der Soñ wie sie im auffgang gewesen erschinnen und zu Nürnberg in der Stat und vor dem thor und auff dem Land von vielen mañs und weybs personen gesehen worden. Erstlich ist die Sonn mit zweyen Blut farben halbrunden strichẽ gleichförmig wañ der Monn im abnemen mitten durch die Sonne erschinnen und gesehen worden und inn der Sonne oben unten Und auff beden seyten Blut farbe und eines theyls Blößliche oder Eysen farbe auch schwartz farb runde Kugel gestanden Desselben gleichen auff bayden seyten und ringscheyben umb die Sonne herumb sein solche blut rote und der andern Kugel in anzal viel etwo drey inn die lenge unter weylen vier inn einem Quatangel auch etliche aintzig gestanden Und zwischen solchen Kugeln sein auch etliche Blutfarbe Creutz gesehen und zwischen solchen Creutzen und Kugeln sein Blutfarbe streyme hinden dick Und vorn hinauß etwas geschmeydiger als hocken rhor Allenthalben mit ein vermischt gewesen sampt unter andern zweyen grossen rorn eines zur rechten und das ander zur lincken handt stehend in welchen kleinen und grossen Rorn zu dreyen auch vier und mehr kugel gewesen. Dieses alles hat mit einander anfahren zu streyten sein die kugel so erstlicht in der Sonn gewesen herauß auff die so zu beyden seyten gestanden gefarn so sein die so herausen gewesen sampt den kugeln auß den klein und grossen



In the morning of April 14, 1561, at daybreak, between 4 and 5 a.m., a dreadful apparition occurred on the sun, and then this was seen in Nuremberg in the city, before the gates and in the country – by many men and women. At first there appeared in the middle of the sun two blood-red semi-circular arcs, just like the moon in its last quarter. And in the sun, above and below and on both sides, the color was blood, there stood a round ball of partly dull, partly black ferrous color. Likewise there stood on both sides and as a torus about the sun such blood-red ones and other balls in large number, about three in a line and four in a square, also some alone. In between these globes there were visible a few blood-red crosses, between which there were blood-red strips, becoming thicker to the rear and in the front malleable like the rods of reed-grass, which were intermingled, among them two big rods, one on the right, the other to the left, and within the small and big rods there were three, also four and more globes. These all started to fight among themselves, so that the globes, which were first in the sun, flew out to the ones standing on both sides, thereafter, the globes standing outside the sun, in the small and large rods, flew into the sun. Besides the globes flew back and forth among themselves and fought vehemently with each other for over an hour. And when the conflict in and again out of the sun was most intense, they became fatigued to such an extent that they all, as said above, fell from the sun down upon the earth ‘as if they all burned’ and they then wasted



Rorn inn die Sonne hinein gefarn zu dem haben die Ror eben so sehr alle die kugel unter einander gefarn und hefftig alles mit einander gestritten und gefochten Bey einer guten stundt Und wie der Streyt das ein weyl inn die Sonne hinein und widerumb herauß am hefftigsten hin und her gefaren sich dermassen miteinander abgematt Ist es alles wie obverzeychnet von der Sonnen vom Hymel herab auff die erden gleich alls ob es alles Brennet gefallen und mit einem grossen dampff herunter auff der Erden allgemach vergangen. Nach solchem allen ist auch gleichförmig einem schwarzen Speer der schafft vom auffgang Und die spitzen zum Nidergang inn grosser dick und leng gesehen worden. Was aber solche zeychen bedeuten ist Gott allein wissent dieweyl wir aber kurtz auffeinander soviel und mancherley zeychen am Hymel haben die uns der Allmechtige Gott von unsers sündlichen lebens damit er uns gern zur buß reitzen und locken wolt erscheinen lest so sein wir leyder so undanckbar das wir solche hohe zeychen und Wunderwerck Gottes verachten Auch spötlich davon reden und inn windt schlagen Zubesorgen es werde uns Gott umb unserer undanckbarkeyt willen ein schröckliche straff senden Jedoch werden solchs die Gotsfürchtigen in keinen weg verachten sonder alle diese trewe warnung ires gnedigen Vatters im Hymel behertzigen ir Leben bessern Gott trewlich bitten Das er seinen billigen zorn sampt der wol verdienten straff von uns wöll abwenden Damit wir alls seine kinder hie zeytlich und dort ewig leben mögen darzu uns Gott allen wölle helffen Amen.

away on the earth with immense smoke. After all this there was something like a black spear, very long and thick, sighted; the shaft pointed to the east, the point pointed west. Whatever such signs mean, God alone knows. Although we have seen, shortly one after another, many kinds of signs on the heaven, which are sent to us by the almighty God, to bring us to repentance, we still are, unfortunately, so ungrateful that we despise such high signs and miracles of God. Or we speak of them with ridicule and discard them to the wind, in order that God may send us a frightening punishment on account of our ungratefulness. After all, the God-fearing will by no means discard these signs, but will take it to heart as a warning of their merciful Father in heaven, will mend their lives and faithfully beg God, that He may avert His wrath, including the well-deserved punishment, on us, so that we may temporarily here and perpetually there, live as his children. For it, may God grant us his help, Amen.

By Hanns Glaser, letter-painter of Nurnberg

Bey Hanns Glaser Brieffmaler zu Nürnberg

Appendix: Interims



oteworthy historical developments which are not addressed directly in one of the episodes are captured here. They proved worth mentioning for the intervening time between episodes. The Wars of the Roses and other rising tensions in the known world receive the most focus.

July 1456

Joan of Arc is acquitted of her heresy and declared a martyr.

August 1456

Vladislav II, Voivode of Wallachia, is killed in hand-to-hand combat by a man returned from years of exile: Vlad III Dracula.

August 1458

Pope Pius II succeeds Pope Callixtus III.

October 1460

Act of Accord recognizes Richard Duke of York as legitimate ruler of England, but does not depose Henry VI, only disinherits his line and making York the heir and the Lord Protector of England.

December 1460

Richard Duke of York is defeated in the Battle of Wakefield, a crown of brambles placed on his head in mockery, and brutally dismembered by the peasants to whom he had been a harsh overlord.

August 1464

Pope Paul II succeeds Pope Pius II

July 1465

King Henry VI is captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

October 1466

The Second Peace of Thorn is sealed under Pope Paul II, breaking the power of the Teutonic Knights in the north, ending the Thirteen Years' War.

June 1467

Philip the Good dies and is succeeded as Duke of Burgundy by his son Charles the Bold.

September-October 1470

The Earl of Warwick orchestrates a rebellion, forcing the Yorkist King Edward IV to flee to Burgundy, to his brother-in-law, Charles the Bold. King Henry VI is released from the Tower of London and restored to the throne.

April-May 1471

Edward IV returns to England with the support of Burgundy and reclaims the throne. Henry VI dies in the Tower of London after his only son and heir is killed in battle.

November 1476

Vlad the Impaler declares himself Prince of Wallachia

for the third and last time. He is killed on the march to Bucharest. His head is sent to his old enemy, Sultan Mehmed II.

January 1477

Charles the Bold is defeated and killed in a last effort to take the city of Nancy. He arrives in the dead of winter, having lost many of his troops due to exposure, leaving only a few thousand men to stand against the Lorrainers and the Swiss mercenaries. His naked and disfigured body is recovered from a frozen river days after the battle. His head had been split by a halberd. He was pierced in the stomach and his loins with lances. His face was so badly mutilated by animals that only his physician could recognize him by his battle scars. Burgundy will remain contested ground for the next five centuries.

August 1477

Mary of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold, marries Maximilian I, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III after being forced by her own people to give the Low Countries the rights towards centralized government.

April 1478

The Pazzi Family attack Lorenzo de' Medici during High Mass in Florence Cathedral and end up murdering Lorenzo's brother, Giuliano.

January 1479

Ferdinand II ascends to the throne of Aragon and Spain is united with his wife Isabella I, Queen of Castile.

January 1479

The Republic of Venice surrenders, signs the Treaty of Constantinople, and cedes many of its territories to the Ottoman Empire to keep its namesake city.

March 1480

Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain sanction the Spanish

Inquisition, active since 1478.

February 1482

Spain rises in war against Granada.

March 1482

Mary of Burgundy dies, triggering Flemish revolt against Maximilian, leaving her father's lands bitterly contested between France and the House of Habsburg. Burgundy is no more.

January 1486

King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York are married, uniting the white rose with the red.

March 1489

Arthur Prince of Wales betrothed to Catherine of Aragon.

August 1493

Maximilian I succeeds his father Frederick III as Holy Roman Emperor.

August 1501

John, King of Denmark, is deposed from the Swedish throne.

November 1501

Arthur, Prince of Wales, marries the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon.

April 1502

Arthur, Prince of Wales, dies.

November 1504

Isabella I of Castile dies.

April 1509

Henry VIII becomes King of England on the death of his father. Will marry Catherine of Aragon.

Appendix: Beehings

Rise (Ascension)

Suit (Arete ●●)

The player must pick the right tarot card corresponding to the character's Essence. Picking one of the Major Arcana earns Scourge by hubris. The choice represent the many winding ways the base of the tower presents to them. Some lead to dead ends, others to perils. Only the road which resonates with the character is right for them.

Judgment (Arete ●●●)

The character passes through a boneyard below a cliff. Careful inspection shows they are all the bones of young children. At the very top of the cliff, they see an old, wise version of themselves though they may not realize it. As they get closer, the figure at the top of the cliff grows younger, eventually resembling the character perfectly, before becoming an adolescent and then a child. Along they way the figure exclaims: "I am everything you will never be." "I am everything you are not." "I am better than you." "I will replace you." At the top of the cliff, they then see a bare infant, bawling, and the character must choose what to do with it. Vile characters may cast the child from the tower, as the boneyard shows predecessors did. Others may leave the child to its fate. Others still may take the child in their arms and take it with them.

Further up the tower, the characters come before a scales. Their daemon rests behind it and will not let them pass until they have placed on object in the scales.

A feather represents the merciful, guiltless path. A black heart represents damnation. Middle roads the characters may have chosen are represented by a bloodied dagger, an empty basket, and many others. If the characters have chosen according to their actions, their daemon lets them pass. If they have come this far bearing the child, the daemon takes it into its care.

First Pillar, Past (Arete ●●●●)

The characters eventually reach high enough in the tower that they can no longer see the ground. Strong winds pull at them as they reach the last ceiling, leaving only pillars and walls to connect them to the tower's foundations. Before long, they can go no further by walking or climbing. They must leap onto the first of three pillars. To do this requires strong, unwavering belief. Each leap requires an answer to a question regarding the characters' paradigms which fix an aspect of it that may never be changed again, or the character is thrown from the tower. The first question asks: What did it mean, to Awaken? Was the character chosen by external powers? Is it something from within themselves that anyone with sufficient will can access? Are they destined for something?

Second Pillar, Present (Arete ●●●●●)

The characters are now supported on the tower only by the power of their own belief. As they reach beyond the first pillar, the air becomes thin and cold. They start to notice a strange light in the skies above them, a comet growing ever larger and brighter. To reach the second

pillar, the characters must devote themselves to the second unwavering aspect of their growing belief. Having reached this high, the characters begin to feel a sense of responsibility. What started as a journey of self-knowledge is starting to encompass an understanding of the whole of humanity, the whole world. The second question asserts that this world is unbalanced and asks: Which is there not enough of in the world, order and stability, revolution and purification, or inspiration and creation? The character's answer confirms a relationship with one aspect of the Metaphysic Trinity. It need not correspond to their Essence, but if it does the character may be rewarded. It means that as they see it, they are themselves precisely what the world needs.

Third Pillar, Future (Arete ●●●●● ●)

By making the last leap, the characters reach a place where they start to feel weightless. The comet begins to take the shape of an enormous glowing sun. The characters must answer and fix the third aspect of their paradigms: What will Ascension mean for them? What are they striving towards? Does a character strive to become a god? Does one wish to illuminate humanity and change their fate on Earth? What will they find at the very peak of the tower?

Beyond (Arete ●●●●● ●●)

There is no tower.

Fall (Descension)

It's possible that in spite of the consequences, a character chooses Descension. By whatever means they discovered the Path of Screams, they will receive the instruction to cease their climb and abandon their goal. They must leap from the tower, forsake it, and seek its destruction.

Torn

To regain the Arete level the character previously possessed while climbing the tower, the Daemon must be mutilated. This can take visceral forms, or colder calculated ones. In the end, that which sheltered the mage from the fabric of reality is turned around and upon themselves. They no longer experience existence in terms of the aspects of its creation (the Spheres). Instead, they see the remnants of previous creations which were overthrown to support the current one. They see the genocide of previous worlds and the means to avenge them (the Qlippoth). To ever contribute to this creation again would be hypocrisy. Life is the prison of the Spirit. Matter is Prime tamed and disgraced. Time is a leash to Entropy. The character sees the dead shells of what once was, discarded. They see the dragons beyond the edge of the map.

Appendix: Character Development

Alypius

Stereotypes

Carlos: Talk, talk, and talk. I'm sick of his words.

Felice: Her academics are impressive.

Fredi: She must love the outdoors. I hope she stays outside.

Leif: Tough son of a bitch. Talks almost as often as that fragile twig.

Noella: Artist. Witch. Blasphemous orphan of wizards.

Select Effect

Flute in the chest of a missing girl, to talk with her, through the music.

Felice

Stereotypes

Alypius: Seriously.

Fredi: She's on to something with the herbs. Fascinating.

Smet: He keeps quiet, and then he talks to birds and the birds talk back.

Leif: It's not just the accent, this guy speaks in riddles and odd, religious concepts. We get along nonetheless.

Carlos: We rarely agree, but when we do it counts.

Noella: Her notions on time seem incorrect by all accounts, but she makes it work. Interesting.

Iris: Had she ever smiled? Does she know what a smile is?

Perenelle: Finally someone I can talk to.

Helion: A mysterious collection of ancient minds, I think.

Wild Hunt: There is no such thing.

Inquisition: Bunch of lunatics.

Select Effect

Ice sled-carriage. Keeping us warm while travelling.

Leif

Stereotypes

Alypius: Betrayer, rabid cur, nīðing.

Carlos: Like the sea and wind. Both the most and least loyal friend you could have. He would die for you or leave you to die on a whim. He is not true to anything, not even himself.

Felice: A genius, always seeking to know more, but she does not know herself. How could she know the world?

Fredi: For all her devotion to nature, she is kinder than which she worships. She sees the flowers and leaves but denies the teeth and claws.

Noella: A master artist, she brings wonder into the world, but like any artist she gets lost in her own creations.

Smet: A simple man, but an admirable one. His desire for the wild world mirrors my own.

Jacob: I met him but once, after he shook off his shackles, but he seemed free, unburdened, content, enviable perhaps.

Lucio: He would see more wonders if he looked beyond his own craftsmanship.

Iris: Iris... She evokes many things in me. Love, respect, pity, fear, anger, regret, shame, but mostly sorrow. In the end... what could she be but a source of sorrow, for myself, herself and all others?

Hemitheus: He would destroy the works of others to make a monument to his own vision, or lack thereof.

Markus: Too much power and too little wisdom. Like the shenanigans of Loki with the simplicity of Thor.

Eva: What could she evoke but pity and admiration? She suffers under a curse of her own making but chose to not just adapt but also to use her curse to help those two children in need.

Louise: She would deafen your ears with her loud claims of her own humility.

Infernalists: They would be a fire burning down a forest. Certainly wild but what remains is not wondrous.

Leaf: A bright spark, snuffed out before it could be a flame.

Wind: A boy, who I would have liked to see become a man.

Nergal: An ominous mystery, with unsettling implications.

Wild Hunt: It brought wonder and wilderness to those bereft of everything. Like a storm ending a draught.

Triglav: If he truly is the Allfather, how could I not devote myself fully?

Helion: A mystery that took my friends. A mystery that I cannot solve or take vengeance upon anymore. Unfortunately.

Craftsmasons: These blasphemers would cut down Yggdrasil to make their trinkets and drain the colors of Bifrost to paint them in garish colors. They have no respect for anything not of their own making.

Select Effect

Wrestled a cannibal mage to death of old age.

We communally made the connection amulet.

Covertly detected lies of other Advocates during the possession of Iris at the court.

Used the spirit-venom of the god-killing serpent Nidhoggr to hurt the incorporeal Odin.

Destiny

He will hold the old faith's fate in his hands, with no middle road between preserving it and destroying it.

Noella

Stereotypes

Leif: A storyteller to tell your friends about. I hope his legacy is lasting.

Fredi: She is a creator, just like me. I always felt like we got along pretty well.

Alypius: Early in life we believed in the same thing. It made us both do horrible things.

Smet: Never spoke much, but his actions spoke for themselves.

Felice: Creative in her thinking. I can admire that.

Carlos: He kept surprising me. I never felt like I really knew him. Fascinating.

Markus: This was a mistake. I've seen many mistakes, made many mistakes. He was a mistake.

Select Effect

Peeking beyond the tapestry.

Carlos

Stereotypes

Leif: Brother! Behind the violent, quiet, savage, barbaric, piss-poor dressed, and violently violent exterior hides a pitiable slave to his dead (violent) traditions, (violent) god(s)... Probably the most dangerously violent one I know; having him around is a great way to solve problems... violently.

Fredi: Sister! Aggressively pacifist, and kind, and modest, and would not hurt a fly... therefore so likeable! Also, the only one absolutely trustworthy because of this pacifism.

Felice: Confused bother. Likeable. Snooty. Poor dresser for her status. WHY DOESN'T SHE USE HER POWERS MORE?! Easily cowed. Aloof. WHY THOUGH?! Distant. Good with money. AGAIN, WHY? Likeable.

Zima/Wiosna/Lato/Jesien: She refused to talk to me, took one disdainful, rude look at me and called me 'poison'... How did she know?

Noella: This one is all the right kind of trouble! Leaps and unlike me doesn't think of all the potential mayhem! This one is always true to her instincts always. Acts with no thought to the consequences... ahhh, if only there were more like her...

Alypius: This one is all the wrong kind of trouble! A rebel without a plan! Some men only want to watch the world burn.

Smet: This guy... the minute you take your eyes off him, he'll pull off some amazing, AMAZING shit. Hates authority. I like this one.

Leaf & Wind: Aptly named for ones whose fates are so easily scattered about.

Felice's dead cousin: I only associate with this one to make Felice feel better... but she doesn't even believe me.

Lucio: Oh... oh... oh... we're having such a great time drinking brother! Here's another one for you! So... so I said... so... I SAID... hahahahaha! WHEN HIS WINGS MELTED, HE CRASHED INTO THE SEA!

Renunciation

What did I do to deserve this?

HAHAHAHA! No? Not funny? Hello? Hey, write me! No? Aw, come on!

Iris: This one is full-on, fully-fledged, hands off the reins, insane. I respect her raw power as much as I hate her.

Order of Hermes: ... who again?

Verbena: ... errmmmm?

Order of Reason: Order?! Reason? Reason?! Bahahaahhahahaha! Navel-gazing, self-absorbed, halfway-competent, sanctimonious...

Helion: Tantalizing and infuriatingly distant, exciting and mysterious, inspiring and beautiful... until it isn't.

Triglav: What. A. Dick. Whatever he's selling, I ain't buyin! He's full of trades and deals, and all of 'em bad!

Inquisition: I've seen these assholes do things that make your hair turn white. Makes the devil himself look like a tempting alternative.

God: Soooo... An all mighty being allows all this to happen? Also... which one is this? Hold my drink and let me try!

Fray Herardo: Sanctimonious, quiet, almost friendly, until the pliers come out, that is. Keeps his cards close to the chest and his thoughts in his head.

Hemitheus: Snore. Big man – big deal? Hilariously wrong about everything.

The little Lamb that Probably Got Fornicated, or Probably Was The Result of Sheep Fornication by Bies: A shame the Inquisition hasn't gotten round to burning it. The knuckles on my right hand still ache on cold and rainy days...

Wild Hunt: The horror, the bloodshed... the tragedy... how can I stop it? Or should I be joining?

Nergal: STOMP... STOMP... STOMP... ROAR! STOMP! STOMP! ROAR! I like him.

Blind Quinn: This one has attitude problems. Makes to discipline her to correct these problems.

Xōchipilli & Xōchiquetzal: Hahahahahahahahaha!

The Jacoba: Named after my best friend! The pinnacle of beauty, craftsmanship, exploration and freedom!

The former crew of the Jacoba: ... who again?

Louise of Savoy: 'HEY, EVERYBODY, LOOK AT ME! I'M BETTER THAN YOU! YOU SHOULD DO AS I SAY AND IF NOT, I WILL POUT AND STAMP MY FOOT AND SAY NASTY THINGS ABOUT YOU TO ALL MY BULLSHIT FRIENDS, WHO WILL ALSO STAMP THEIR FOOT AND ALSO BE CROSS, AND-'... toothless, hypocrite, foul, cretinous, non-entity, waste of time and energy and...

Bies: This one followed its instincts. Instructive.

Jacob of Aachen: The only bestest-friend you CAN TRUST absolutely is the one you can keep an eye on and in doubt.

Markus of Prague: The only worstest-friend you CANNOT TRUST is the one who is pretty sure of himself and shits on everyone else.

Testimony to Helion

"Helion!

I finally stand before you.

You watch over mankind. You judge us. You do not instruct. You do not engage, save to punish.

Coward! Idiot! Dreamer! Beast!

You, whose entire purpose is to keep mankind from hubris, are guilty of the biggest hubris of all - to silently judge, without fear of reprisal, ALL OF US.

I see you for what you truly are.

A flawed and failing judge. Your judgement is nothing but an imposition of will on those of us who aspire to true greatness. You are guilty of the very same act you judge us by.

Mr chocii, mr Hemitheus... they had no quarrel with you and yet, you stepped in and took them and crippled them! And yet, you cannot truly take power away completely, merely shift it from those who are able to those who are not. Those of us who can truly ascend and truly make a difference for mankind you cut down. You bring them under your wing. Under your watchful gaze, to keep small. To ensure no one rises above.

And I did the same. I love you.for.it

And yet! I stand before you. The greatest of your advocates, and executors of your will. Proof and testament of your piss-poor execution.

I alone embraced the callous waste and disillusionment that mankind continuously exhibits. I alone embraced the ebb and flow of my own fate so completely. I alone let my ambitions be my own downfall WITHOUT EVER NEEDING YOU TO DO IT FOR ME! And I have been instrumental and continuous in flaunting and undercutting all great pretender powers through equal, blind, instinct!

Look at her, Louise of whatever ... great mover of men, equally arrogant and judgemental of all of us. And yet... she herself, guiltier of her own, biggest crime than all of us... I would not be surprised if she were the next eventual target of your idiot ire and narrow vision.

My actions, if they be crimes, I accept them, I revel in the chaos and the inevitable decay of reality, and its inevitable return to its primal state, its raw state of flow where everything ends up after its great cycles.

I have been a great balancer. I chose to act. Those of us who can influence reality must. We cannot, will not sit idly by the sidelines! I chose to goad those with great ambitions to ruin, to frustrate their ambitions at every

Renunciation

Oh my gods, there's more.

turn, through sheer incompetence, callous disregard for their needs all to accellarate their great plans to their own detriment and to openly oppose their brazen impositions of will.

I cut and broke that brazen, arrogant crusader's faith on the beaches of France and kept him hidden and doubtful and weak. Like you do us!

I cut short many an ambition to seize the new world and helped inspire mr chocci's downfall.

I served as a focal point to turn and plot against Iris' aspirations to godhood.

I let Marcus of Prague cut himself down on the Bokkeberg.

I spoke wkth silver tongue omto or against all powers I encountered, and acted against them.

I ended so many by smashing that monks head in and starting a cycle that ended even more.

I stand and flow in opposition of GOD and DEMON and every known instituion of MAN and YOU.

I refuse to bend my knee to you. I refuse to let you carry on this pretend charade, like some idiot, masked council of thirteen member, some distant pope...

I refuse to have you be the sole arbiter of greatness. I resent your callous disregard of the actions of those you deem beneath you in every sense of the word!

And in opposing and tearing down those who stand to rise to greatness, all for my own petty desires and base needs and foolish reasons, including myself, I am more like you than any other. Your greatest advocate. The accidental embodiment of your imposition of your will thrust upon mankind. You do not solely judge on the basis of success, but intent...

And yet... it is only the great cosmic irony that I am before you and I realize... I AM YOU. Just as all other advocates are you. As all of us who undercut and step on and rip each other to shreds through pleasure, malice, lust and greed, and cowardice and good intentions. ALL OF US would have do the same you do and continue to do what you do.

We do not need you. We can do this ourselves. As I am the purest execution of your will, I must inevitably stand against you and I will always be another seed towards your inevitable decay.

Embrace me, or cast me aside as you will, either way, you will only embrace that which destroys you.

Embrace me, and embrace the rebel voice that wishes to drag you to the deep along with it.

Cast me aside, and sunder that most essential part of yourself, your own most highly prized ideals.

Let the others speak. Let the others remain silent. But I see you for what you are.

I am not impressed."

Fredi

Stereotypes

Leif: When this whole thing started, Leif was the one I felt most aligned with. Our values were very similar and although he looked terrifying at first sight, he's a decent guy when you get to know him. I actually thought his no-nonsense, back to nature approach was pretty inspiring. Later his ideas shifted to be more extreme. And though he would still go through fire for any of us, and I did not dislike him, I could not agree with his views anymore. I don't know if I can blame Iris for that, but I'd like to.

Carlos: His brazen, brawling bawdiness has brought us both great troubles and great laughs. What a character! It is too easy to write Carlos of as the lout of the group though. Always ready for action, and his big mouth could be a benefit at times as well. His energy is motivating for the group. What is with the codpiece though?

Felice: Silent, but still waters run deep. And Felice's might be the deepest of all. I admire her perseverance and that massive brain of hers. I wish I took more time to learn from her and get to know her. She has a vast knowledge of plants and nature, among other things. And although she has different ideas than I did about how the world works sometimes, I really like her.

Noella: Cool lady! You wouldn't think it when you saw her in her fancy city clothes, being from Bruges and all. But don't be fooled by that; she is one tough cookie. Bending time to her will by making the most beautiful sketches and paintings, that is rad.

Alypius: What was wrong with that guy?! I never felt comfortable in his presence to be honest. And later that feeling got confirmed to be totally valid. At first I thought he might be just a bit socially handicapped. No problem, you know, Russian monks do not have a reputation of being all warm and friendly, and that's okay. But he was downright vile.

Smet: Who would have thought that I'd ever get married?! Not me, I tell you. Although I don't know if Smet would have pleased my old mother—the earth rests her soul—as a husband for me. He was not very conventional. Our marriage was not very conventional. But that is all right, I cannot say my life has been very ordinary, so that fits right in. Although he was more radical in his 'wildness' than I was, we had a good time in Eggenstedt. The only thing I regret is that we could not be better parents for Leaf and Wind.

Markus: That boy is not right.

Zima/Wiosna/Lato/Jesien: I do not think I was a

worthy apprentice, and that hurts. She was someone I admired. She also showed me that power was possible without Helion's influence. I wish I could have done more right by her.

Helion: I don't know if I should be thankful or angry. Yes, hubris is a thing that is worth reducing in the world, as it can be a terrible force in people. A dark energy. But I don't agree with the method. I don't like being a pawn in a game I don't know I'm playing.

Select Effect

When the power of the sun, drops of our own blood and some 'ordinary' nettle cured that poor, sick girl that got tainted by vampires. Her own blood was most likely tainted with their foulness.

Destiny

The forces that will lead to Brockenberg's infamy must go through her.

Stereotypes

Carlos: He seems close to religion. Why?

Felice: Quite the silent bird. Birds need to sing.

Fredi: Strong woman. I'm glad to have her in my pack.

Leif: Too out there. Swinging with hammers, and passing on wisdoms of a lost world.

Noella: Fine artist, with wings of passion. Reminds me of the quetzal.

Lucio: Lovely home. Needs more green.

Iris: I don't need her in my life.

Markus: Dead is dead. That's nature. Don't mess too much with it.

Leaf: Lovely lad. Strong as an ox.

Wind: Not so bright. Luckily his brother was there for him, as long as possible, of course.

Select Effect

When jumping from the roof of Eggenstedt, I mentally transformed into a bird.

Destiny

Each of the foremost empires will stand before Smet, their inner circles revealed.

Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"It's colder in the hearts of many surrounding my grounds than it is in whole of Russia."

Name: *Alypius*
Concept: *Pessimist*

Zodiac: *Leo*
Home: *Pereslavl-Zalessky*

Nature: *Renunciate*
Demeanor: *Martyr*

Attributes

Physical (1)		Social (4)		Mental (4)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●●○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (1)		Skills (4)		Knowledges (4)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Law	●●○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Meditation	●●○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	●○○○○
Instruction	●○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	●●○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	●○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	●●○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies	●○○○○
Daemon	●○○○○
Library	●●○○○
Mentor	●●●○○

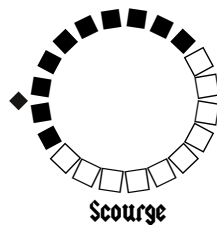
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
■	■	■	■	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

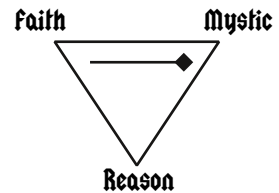
Arete

●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: *Saints*

Paradigm

Essence: *Dynamic*
Culture: *Isolated church*
Belief: *God created mystics*
Practice: *Magick should conquer us all*
Instruments: *Bible, cross*
Flaw: *Blind to people's kindness*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"There is a logical explanation for everything."

Name: Felice ap Tudur
Concept: Scholar

Zodiac: Aquarius
Home: Wales

Nature: Waif
Demeanor: Theorist

Attributes

Physical (u)		Social (m)		Mental (i)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (m)		Skills (u)		Knowledges (i)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	●○○○○	Culture	●●○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Instruction	●●○○○	Research	●●○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Riding	●●○○○	Metaphysics	●●●○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	●○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	●●●○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	●●●○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Resources	●○○○○
Library	●●●○○
Sanctum	●●●○○
Daemon	●○○○○
Mentor	●●○○○

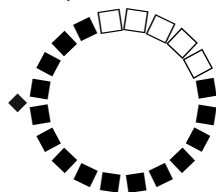
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
■	■	■	■	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

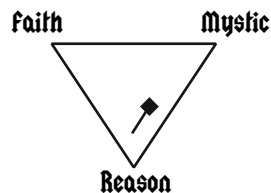
Arete

●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: Inner voice

Paradigm

Essence: *Questing*
 Culture: *Welsh nobility*
 Belief: *Discovery is a goal in itself*
 Practice: *Experimentation*
 Instruments: *Alchemy, geometry, botany*
 Flaw: *Will not acknowledge spirits*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"This is my tale. I have told it to the fullest extent and veracity that I could think of, and you are free to verify that with your own talents."

Name: *Leif Haraldson*

Concept: *Disappointed believer, melancholic and doubting after seeing the wonder of Norse Mythology disappear, fatalist, brave, stoic/introvert, wanderer hermit, yearning for wonder*

Zodiac: *Virgo*

Home: *Nomad in Scandinavia*

Nature: *Supplicant*

Demeanor: *Sage*

Attributes

PHYSICAL (1)		SOCIAL (III)		MENTAL (II)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

TALENTS (III)		SKILLS (I)		KNOWLEDGES (II)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	●○○○○	Culture	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	●●○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Awareness	●●○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	●●●○○	Linguistics	●●●●○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	●●●●○	Lore	●●●○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	●●●●○
Entropy	●●●●○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	●●○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

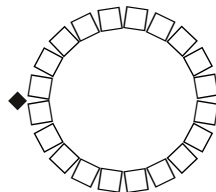
Advantages

Backgrounds	
Arcane	●○○○○
Daemon	●●●○○
Destiny	●●○○○
Resources	●○○○○
Mentor	●●●○○
Cray	●●○○○

Health	
█	█
-1	-2
-5	

Willpower	
●●●●●●●○○○	
■	█

Quintessence



Scourge

Areté	
●●●●●○○○○○	

Daemon: *Corvids*

Paradigm

Essence: *North*

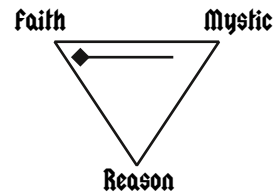
Culture: *Pagan Scandinavia*

Belief: *The old gods and old ways are best*

Practice: *Preserve Norse mythology and wonder*

Instruments: *Runestones, staff, hammer, sword, sacrifice,*

Flaw: *Change is inevitable, embrace it. Wonder can also be found elsewhere.*



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"The observer makes the art work."

Name: Noella
Concept: Corrupting people/illusionist

Zodiac: Leo
Home: Brugge

Nature: Architect
Demeanor: Sage

Attributes

Physical (III)		Social (I)		Mental (II)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents (I)		Skills (II)		Knowledges (III)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●●○○○
Artist	●●●○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	●●●○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●●●○○	Melee	●●○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Instruction	●○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	●●○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	●●○○○	Time	●●●●●

Advantages

Backgrounds

Daemon	●●●●○
Resources	●●○○○
Allies	●○○○○

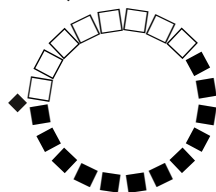
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
■	■	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

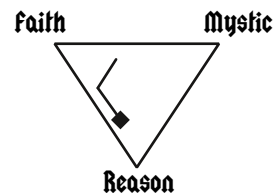
Arete

●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: Shadows

Paradigm

Essence: Mercury
Culture: Northern Renaissance
Belief: Full Devil's appeasement
Practice: Corruption, spread the word
Instruments: Pain, torture, blood, suffering
Flaw: The Devil is an asshole



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"If a tree falls in the forest, and crushes a family of four... was the blindfolded guy with the saw guilty? We do things. Sometimes we know why!"

Name: Carlos della Sorella
Concept: Unrepentant heretic

Zodiac: Pisces
Home: Rome

Nature: Renunciate
Demeanor: Sensualist

Attributes

PHYSICAL (III)		SOCIAL (II)		MENTAL (I)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

TALENTS (III)		SKILLS (II)		KNOWLEDGES (I)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●●○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	●○○○○	Culture	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Awareness	●●○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Lore	●●●○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	●●●○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	●●●○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	●●○○○	Spirit	●●●○○
Forces	●●○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Arcane Resources	●●○○○
Daemon Library	●●○○○
Allies	●●○○○
Cray	●●○○○

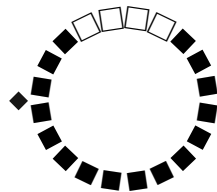
Health

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
-1 -2 -5

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Scourge

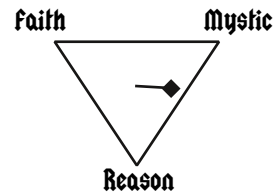
Arete

●●●●○○○○○

Daemon: Flames

Paradigm

Essence: Primordial
Culture: Theologians
Belief: Sea and sky are the essence of reality
Practice: Expand and explore reality with foreign parts
Instruments: Ship parts, tattoos, currents
Flaw: Denies divinity in all forms



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

*"Heal the world, make it a better place,
for you and for me, and the entire human race."*

Name: Fredi Junius
Concept: Impatient learned healer

Zodiac: Virgo
Home: Brocken

Nature: Sensualist
Demeanor: Sage

Attributes

Physical (III)		Social (II)		Mental (I)	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (III)		Skills (I)		Knowledges (II)	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●●○○	Academics	●●○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●●○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	●●○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	●●○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Lore	●●●○○
Instruction	●●○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●●●○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Riding	●○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	●●●○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	●●●○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Cray	●●○○○
Familiar	●●○○○
Mentor	●○○○○
Daemon	●●○○○
Resources	●●○○○

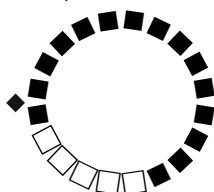
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

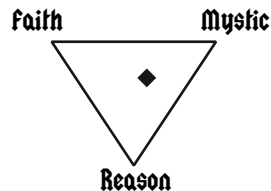
Arete

●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: Treegnome

Paradigm

Essence: Water
Culture: Rural forest, natural beliefs
Belief: Everything has an energy
Practice: Align people and spirits, healing
Instruments: Plants, ritual, elements
Flaw: Blind to progress



Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade Helion's Advocates

"Peace and harmony, together, except for the rich."

Name: *Smet*
Concept: ?

Zodiac: *Pisces*
Home: *None*

Nature: *Benefactor*
Demeanor: *Benefactor*

Attributes

Physical (1)		Social (1)		Mental (1)	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents (1)		Skills (1)		Knowledges (1)	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	●●●●○	Academics	●○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	●●●●○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	●●●○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Law	●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	●○○○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	●●●○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Riding	●○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	●●●○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies	●●●○○
Spies	●●●○○
Destiny	●○○○○

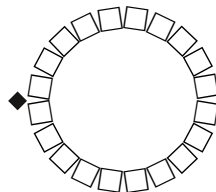
Health

□	□	□	□	□	□
-1	-2	-5			

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Quintessence



Scourge

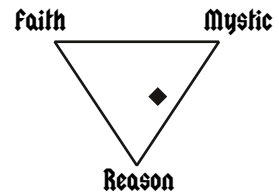
Arete

●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Daemon: *Imperceptible*

Paradigm

Essence: *West*
Culture: *Serbian*
Belief: *Society dies, nature grows*
Practice: *Destroy empires*
Instruments: *Bird whistle, animal skulls*
Flaw: *Empires cannot be good*



Appendix: Revelations



s always with stories in this continuity, players were allowed to submit questions after the last session. All are answered here.

The quality of the answer, it should be said, corresponds to the quality of the question.

What is Helion?

Halley's comet.

Where does Helion come from?

Orbit.

What is Helion's origin?

Its current composition and orbit around the Sun have been dated back 200,000 years.¹ This coincides with the time in which the last common ancestor of homo sapiens and modern humanity lived.²

Why do Helion's Advocates come together at set times and places?

Fate orchestrates it.

When they come together, what are they meant to do according to Helion?

Redeem the taint of hubris within them.

Why are our scars different?

Your Essences differ and so your Daemons came to you by different routes.

By what measure is hubris judged?

Binary decision.

What are the criteria for a soul to end up in Kur?

Its death was caused by an associate of Kur.

What would make a perfect Advocate?

A selfless power who can come into a worse world than she leaves it, with proof that her peers are not a lost cause.

Why do Advocates no longer reincarnate after 1561?

Because Helion is dead.

What happened in 1561 Nuremberg and why?

Reality started to obey consensus, and humanity accepts no judgement.

Where did Markus' soul and Daemon end up?

Beyond the veil that separates life and death, in a horrible afterlife and a very different story of redemption, respectively.

- 1 Olsson-Steel, Duncan I. (1987). "The dynamical lifetime of comet P/Halley". *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. 187 (1–2): 909–912.
- 2 Mounier, Aurélien; Lahr, Marta (2019). "Deciphering African late middle Pleistocene hominin diversity and the origin of our species". *Nature Communications*. 10 (1): 3406.

Did the devil that fucked Alypius start pursuing Carlos?
No, she didn't need to.

Who created the Tower?

You did.

What is the purpose of the Tower?
If you don't know, then it has no purpose.

Why is the Tower crumbling?
It has all the flaws its creator was blind to.

How much did the Order of Reason and Traditions know about us seven specifically? Why did they not mess with us more?
You were 'messed with' in the specific degree anyone knew and cared about you.

The questions and answers as we ascended the Tower seemed be prideful as we went up? How did that serve to reduce hubris?
Your actions are up to you, not your judge. Helion did not set these trials.

How many Crays did we pass up and where were they?
The Mithraeum, the forests of Eggenstedt, and each location where the Wild Hunt could cross into this world are the only explicit Crays in the episodes. However, places like the church in Versonnex, or the pyres of women burned alive like where Alypius makes a gateway to Kur, could have been used as well.

How did each of our Daemons get hubris?
In the same manner that you witnessed in Xōchipilli or heard about in Hemitheus.

What was Nergal?
An abandoned Mesopotamian god.

What is Nergal's connection to Iris?
Iris preserves what is nearly forgotten.

What is Nergal's connection to Wiosna?
Both were worshiped once.

What is Nergal's connection to Leif?
Only Iris' dream and the ashes of Kur.

How close was Xōchipilli to full Ascension?
Closer than Hemitheus but not quite like Mithras. He was still too attached to this world.

Is being a Helion's Advocate a form of punishment?
Only if in your petulance you forgot to count your blessings.

Why did Perenelle continue the pursuit after the philosopher's stone after she attained immortality?

Do you find that when you attain something you lose interest in it? Perenelle didn't.

Who made the thrones in Kur?

Slaves, long ago, when they were erected in the living world.

What was the wall between America and Europe?
An unconsolidated tension of fundamental difference of reality and belief.

Who was Mithras?
A Zoroastrian leader.

Will the Wild Hunt return on Earth after the fourth time?
Yes, you made sure of it.

What happened to the Daemons after they rejoined Helion?
They were expelled back to Earth and became part of a new generation of Awakenings.

What is the origin and nature of the Wild Hunt?
Desperation and a call to action.

Why do Daemons tainted with hubris judge hubris?
Are you opposed to a jury of your peers? Also, they don't. Helion is more than the sum of its parts.

Who was the figure in Noella's vision?
The first mage to be judged by Helion, a non-anatomically modern human, who felt pride in slaughter when he should have been mourning.

Did the bag of Triglav contain his heart? Would destroying it have killed him?

No. No.

Did Wiosna know of the purpose of Helion's Advocates? If so what did she think about it?

No.

How did Louise know about the purpose of Helion?
She saw the pattern behind the same clues the characters had picked up.

How many other Descension mages did we encounter aside from Iris, Markus, Alypius, and Anzillu?
Carlos, I think.

Do all Daemons guilty of hubris become Advocates?
Daemons don't become Advocates and they aren't guilty of anything. They are victims in this story.

Appendix: Revelations

What was Kur?

A nearly forgotten place, dying its own death beyond the shroud.

Where did Noella's soul end up by the modern day?

Behind the tapestry, there is no time for her to end up anywhere.

How many of Helion's cycles ago was Noella's vision?
2666.

What was Iris' exact plan for us in Kur? Was Iris going to betray us if we would have followed her to the letter?

Exactly what she told you the plan was. She had no intention of betraying you.

What was the relationship between Iris' plans to confront Helion and becoming the master of a new reality?

The current reality needed to be usurped. The taint Helion was protecting humanity from needed to be unchained.

Could we have prevented the Wild Hunts we experienced? If so, how could we have done that?

Yes. Among others:

Herne could have been banished by three names of God just as he was summoned by three names of the Huntsman.

The Witte Dame could have been forced to confront Hilda's memory of her parents losing a child.

Wiosna could have been allowed to sacrifice herself on the mountain peak.

Mutiny could have been stopped among the emperor's troops.

Please read the accompanying chapters in this work for more information.

What was the mythical realm?

A winter that never ends in a place where this means everlasting night.

Why did Iris want to destroy Helion?

To harm reality.

Where does the nickname "Rooster" come from?
"Nergal".

What is Descension?

Destroying what you oppose and the willful opposition to existence.

What happened to people and mages touched by their Shadow?

They died.

What did Louise do that made her second to be judged by Helion? How did she obtain Scourge if she did not use her powers?

She did 'use her powers'. You witnessed her performing Magick. You're referring to her answers to Helion's questions. You should give them another read.

That said, how much Scourge would you expect someone to carry around as they maintain permanent portals to all corners of the world from a private otherworldly sanctum that allowed her to observe details like your previous encounters with the Wild Hunt, or indeed a private audience inside the Vatican, all projected through the clouds above?

Appendix: Eva's Destination



esterday is Eva's tomorrow, for not only
player characters make mistakes.

Eva's Destination



