

The Arrow of Heaven

By Rob Vaux



The Erebus Cross: Part Three

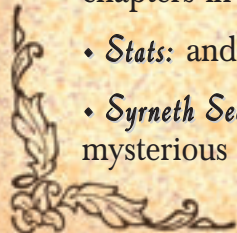
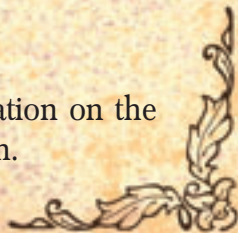


*Beneath the trees, below the earth
Something terrible is stirring...*

In the midst of a dense swamp, in a corner of the most dangerous nation in Théah, lies a machine of unparalleled destruction. Designed by an ancient alien intelligence, it has the power to seize the stars themselves... or snuff out all life forever.

Now, numerous factions – sinister and benevolent, cognizant and ignorant – converge on the site, hoping to seize its power for themselves. Your Heroes must stop them – before they unleash something they cannot control.

The Arrow of Heaven is the dramatic finale to the *Erebus Cross* series of adventures for the *7th Sea* role-playing game. From the war-torn plains of Castille to the rickety heights of Vodacce's greatest city, it spans the length of southern Théah in an effort to stop a disaster. *The Arrow of Heaven* includes:

- *A Complete Adventure*: self-contained yet compatible with other chapters in the *Erebus Cross* series.
 - *Stats*: and descriptions for major NPCs.
 - *Syrneth Secrets*: New, previously undisclosed information on the mysterious Syrneth – and the races who fought them.
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\$11.95 USA
AEG 7103



Alderac Entertainment Group



The Arrow of Heaven

The Erebus Cross: Part Three

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A powerful artifact stands at the threshold of an apocalypse and only your Heroes can prevent it! From the war-torn plains of Castille to the treacherous streets of Vodacce, they must journey across a continent to discover the secrets of an ancient technology. Along the way, they'll confront old nemeses, meet new allies, and risk the fortunes of a costly war. Do you have the courage to succeed?

Welcome to *The Arrow of Heaven*, the finale of the Erebus Cross trilogy for the *7th Sea* role-playing game. The trilogy is intended to give players and Game Masters an overview of Théah: her count, her citizens, and the supernatural creatures which lurk in her shadows. By the time it is completed, the world will have changed the fate of nations, and uncovered a secret as old as time itself.

Like its precursors, *The Lady's Lament* and *Folly*, *The Arrow of Heaven* is divided into three sections. The first (the one that introduces the adventure, gives a basic overview of the drama, and lists instructions for running it. The second contains the adventure itself, the set "hard points" which define the story, and the variable encounters the GM can use as he or she sees fit (see "The Structure," below). The third holds the stats and descriptions for the various NPCs they will encounter, including old friends and enemies. GMs can refer to them during the adventure to properly convey their motives and personality.

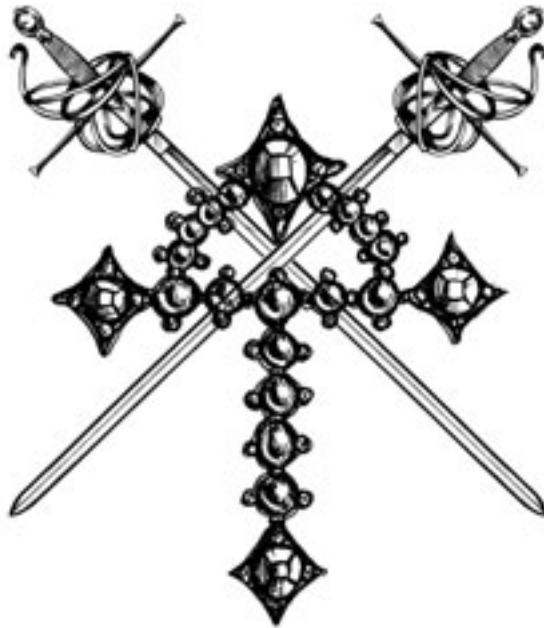
The Structure

The Erebus Cross series doesn't run the way typical adventures do. That is, it doesn't follow a set progression of encounters which lead from the beginning of the story to the end. At the same time, however it isn't so free-form

that the GM will have to organize everything just to have a workable product. In truth, it lies somewhere in the middle. When we first discussed the series, we talked a lot about story rigidity. We didn't want to force the Heroes to follow a set path where one event inexorably follows upon another. On the other hand, we need to make sure it wouldn't be an adventure if it'd be a sourcebook. The story I therefore would need to be able to play without compromising the coherence of the plot.

In addition, we didn't want the game to be limited in terms of the characters' experience level. A group of advanced, highly skilled characters should be able to participate in *Arrow of Heaven* as much as a group of beginning characters and vice versa. That meant that the events and encounters would need to be tailored to fit different experience levels in a campaign as well as late. We've included some exciting adventures for new characters, while older, experienced players should be able to have the same adventures without feeling bored out of their skulls.

That's a tricky balance to maintain. Eventually, we settled on a solution that landed somewhere in the middle of all of these elements. A basic structure of the adventure is provided, listing several "hard point" events that will need to occur if the Heroes are to reach their goals (for example, at some point in their journey, they will need to cross part of mainland Vodacce; it's impossible to reach the climax otherwise). But the exact placement of those hard points, and the way the characters will reach them, depends upon the course they wish to take. In addition, we've offered the GM a large group of optional events and encounters from which to choose. They're not





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necessary to run the adventure, but they enhance the value of the drama and can make the experience more enjoyable. Unlike “random” encounters, most of these are firmly connected to the overall story-line; they’re just not as vital as the hard points are. The GM is free to place them wherever he or she feels is appropriate, or ignore them depending upon his or her whims.

To incorporate characters of different powers and experience, we’ve assigned a point value to each encounter; the higher the value, the more dangerous it is and the better suited it is to powerful Heroes. GMs can leave out the difficult ones if they feel they are too challenging, or ignore the easy ones if they think them a waste of time. As long as the hard points are eventually reached, the GM can use the remainder of the book in any manner that fits his or her campaign.

This sort of format requires a little effort on the part of the GM. You need to read through this book carefully, and determine beforehand which encounters would best suit your Heroes. You need to decide how much they can handle, and what they’ll find most exciting and stimulating. And you need to be prepared to roll with the punches, to take a different direction if the characters do something unexpected. But with a little preparation, that shouldn’t be too difficult. The format is intended to help you gain the most enjoyment out of “The Arrow of Heaven,” and to help tailor the adventure to fit your unique campaign.

What Has Previously Transpired

The first part of *The Erebus Cross*, “The Lady’s Favor,” sent the Heroes on a desperate mission to reach the Montaigne General Montegue campaigning in Ussura. Using a Syrnych compass given to them by Montegue’s wife, they tracked the general across three countries, battling monsters and the relentless pursuit of the Empereur’s Musketeers, who believed they plotted treason. Along the way, they met an Avalon explorer,

Reginald Coleson, who shed some light on their strange compass. He asked if he could examine it — and a companion compass held by Montegue — at the castle of his patron, Stefan Heilgrund.

Arriving in Ussura, the Heroes delivered the message to Montegue. As they spoke with him, however, his Syrnych compass vanished in a burst of Porté magic and one of the Heroes was struck with a vision — the compass had been stolen by a fiendish villain named Malveck somewhere in the western isles, who planned to wreak untold terrors with it.

The second module in the series, “Scoundrel’s Folly,” sent the party off to confront this Villain and stop his evil plan. Enlisting the help of Coleson, they learned that the compasses were actually Syrnych keys of some sort, designed to open or activate an unknown artifact. Together, Coleson and the party traveled to Avalon, where they made a second discovery at the headquarters of the Explorer’s Guild: a sketch of a Syrnych ruin in Vodacce. The mosaic pattern on the ruin floor matched the pattern on the bottom of the compass still in their possession. Clearly, the artifact was more than just a trinket.

Continuing on their quest, the party enlisted the aid of the notorious privateer Berek to reach the Villain’s lair, while Coleson left them to investigate the Vodacce ruins. After a harrowing sea voyage, they arrived at L’Il du Bête a savage island serving as a private hunting ground of Montaigne’s nobility. In the heart of the jungle, they defeated Malveck’s schemes and retrieved the second compass.

They also learned the true purpose of the Vodacce ruin: it hides a gigantic machine capable of harnessing the power of the stars themselves. The compasses serve to open the barriers enclosing the machine, but only on a specific night of the year. That night is now only a few weeks away.

Basic Outline of the Story

The Heroes have a pair of Syrneth compasses which will grant access to the great machine hidden in the swamps of Vodacce. At the moment, they have no other pressing reason to travel there; a vague concern for their friend Coleson, perhaps, but nothing more.

Unbeknownst to the Heroes, malevolent forces have discovered Coleson. Minions of the obsessed Vincenzo Caligari have learned of the ruins and are using Coleson to get to them. They've surreptitiously followed him, learning what he knows. Once they have learned how to tap the ruins' powers, they plan to dispatch him (and anyone else in their way) and seize the machine for themselves. What a man like Caligari could do with such an artifact should give the most hardened Théan cause for concern. If the Heroes don't intervene, Coleson — and perhaps all of Théah — is in big trouble.

Adventure Outline

As the adventure opens, the party has just left L'Îl du Bête, most probably aboard Berek's *de facto* vessel, the *Hurricane* (for details on Berek and the Sea Dogs, see *Scoundrel's Folly*). The Heroes have learned of the Vodacce ruins, and they know that they have only thirty days before the stars are in the correct position to access them. The curious among them should feel inclined to go to the ruins and see; the Explorer's Society contacts those who don't and tells them of Coleson's danger. Either way, the Heroes must now head towards the ruins in hopes of reaching the machine before the deadline.

Point One

The party learns the name of a Castillian astronomer, Miguel Olivares, who can give them the exact coordinates of the ruins. They arrive in Montaigne-occupied Castille in search of him, only to find that he has fled to safer regions. They also learn that the Caligari family is on his trail as well, though they do not know for

what purpose. They must make their way through the Montaigne army, past Castillian guerrillas and across the battle-torn Delia River to safety.

Point Two

The Heroes journey to the Castillian capital of San Cristobal, where Olivares has fled. He agrees to pinpoint the coordinates, but only if they aid him in return. He belongs to the Invisible College, an organization dedicated to preserving the advancement of science and protecting its practitioners from the Inquisition. He has several important papers which must be transported out of Castille to safety. Since the party is on its way to Vodacce, they can take the papers to a contact there. Once the Heroes accept the task, the Inquisition targets them, and they must flee San Cristobal by the quickest means available.

Point Three

The Heroes arrive in Dionna, Vodacce, headquarters of the country's only university. They deposit Olivares' papers at Dionna University only to learn that Caligari's minions are planning to take control of the ruins. Their friend Coleson is in grave danger. Fighting their way free of the city, they push on to the Vodacce mainland, racing time and the Caligaris to reach the ruins in time.

Point Four

Arriving at the ruins, the Heroes discover that Coleson has disappeared into an underground complex, hoping to find an alternate route to the great machine. After seeking him out and returning to the surface, they find Caligari's men waiting for them. They must fight their way to victory, or else turn control of the machine over to them.

The Adventure

Like the other installments of *The Erebus Cross*, the adventure itself is divided into two sections. The first contains the “Hard Points,” describing events in the story which the Heroes must participate in in order to succeed. The second contains variable encounters, which the GM can insert where he or she pleases or simply ignore, depending upon the dictates of the plot.

Hard Points

There are four Hard Points in the adventure: the arrival in occupied Castille, the rendezvous with Olivares at the Universidad de San Cristobal, the encounter with the Caligaris at Dionna, and the final confrontation at the ruins. These four events must take place for the story to remain coherent and for the Heroes to succeed at their task (although it may be possible in some circumstances to skip the first). How they deal with each will determine the course of the entire adventure.

Point One: The Dogs of War

Assuming you have run *Scoundrel's Folly*, play begins on board Berek's ship, the *Hurricane* (if you haven't, consult the nearby sidebar for information; also, keep in mind that Heroes with their own ships won't be with Berek). The party has defeated Malveck, escaped L'Il du Bête,

and now has the twin Syrneth compasses in their possession. They also know that a great Syrneth machine lies beneath the swamps of Vodacce, and that on the night of the next new moon the compasses can be used to access it. The moon is just past new now, meaning the party has almost a month to get to Vodacce.

They now face a choice of where to go next. Their friend, Reginald Coleson, asked them to meet him in Carleon, at the Headquarters of the Explorer's Society. But because he was exploring the same Vodacce ruins that the Heroes now have so much new information about, they may feel inclined to join him in his quest, rather than traipse back to Avalon and cool their heels. They way they learned of the ruins suggests that there may be more to them than Coleson suggests, and considering that he set out after them in violation of Explorer Society edict, he may be walking into trouble.

If the party decides to go back to Avalon, Berek has no problems taking them there (it's his home, after all). The journey back should be

reasonably uneventful, although if you wish, you can spice it up with an encounter or two (several are listed in *Scoundrel's Folly*).

When they arrive in Carleon, however, they find a member of the Society waiting for them at the docks – a lanky Avalon boy of seventeen. Removing his hat, he informs them that Reginald Coleson has disappeared,

“What if I haven't played *Scoundrel's Folly*?”

If you haven't played the previous modules in the *Erebus Cross* series, you can still use this adventure. Simply have the Explorer's Society contact the party in whatever city they are in, and offer them job. A prominent Society member, Reginald Coleson, has disappeared while searching for a ruined site in Vodacce. They fear that sinister forces have harmed him, and want to hire the Heroes to find him safely. Coleson has the compasses, which may cause great harm, and will need to be retrieved as well. The Society will provide basic information on the site, including the gigantic machine lurking beneath its surface and the power they believe it can unleash. They will also provide free transport to Castille from wherever the party happens to be. Begin the adventure in Point One, as they depart the Explorer ship on the shores of Castille.

and that the Society suspects something terrible. Several members of the Caligari family, it seems, have become aware of the ruin, and have been pursuing leads to find it. Coleson disappeared soon after arriving in Dionna, and two Society members who went after him ended up dead in a canal. The Explorers do *not* want the Caligaris to find the ruins. They ask the Heroes to help them save their friend and keep the great machine safe.

If the Heroes agree to help find Coleson, the Society can provide them with whatever they need: supplies, letters of transit, even reward money if that's what they want. A Society ship can take them wherever they wish, and a cartographer can give them the exact coordinates of the ruins for them (or so they believe). The party must depart from Carleon fairly quickly (the clock's ticking), but can be otherwise on their way to Vodacce with very little fuss.

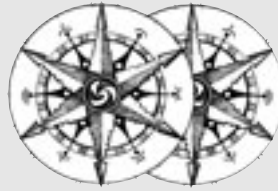
Getting Directions

Regardless of how the Heroes end up chasing Coleson — whether by their own choice or being persuaded by the Society — they make an important discovery en route. Whoever is attempting to locate the ruins (be it a Hero, the Society cartographer,

or a member of Berek's crew) can't seem to find the exact placement on any kind of map. According to the message on L'Il du Bête, the constellation of the Erebus Cross

points to the location of the ruins on the night of the new moon. If you chart the position the stars will be in on that date, and properly compare them to the geographical position of Théah at the time, you can determine the location of the ruins to within thirty miles or so.

The problem is the area indicated by the readings. The Vodacce mainland contains numerous swamps and bogs, most of which have never been fully explored. Syrneth ruins, the remnants of the Old Empire, and abandoned villas of the Vodacce princes dot hundreds of miles of unclaimed wilderness. No road exists in the area and no precise maps have been drawn. The party could wander for weeks without finding anything. Unless they get an exact reading — almost down to the square yard — they might as well be blind.



The Compasses

The twin compasses play an important part in the adventure, for they are old and fairly powerful artifacts. They originally appeared on L'Il du Bête, where they served as keys for the ancient Syrneth creatures which dwelt there. Used together, the compasses can open and close any lock or door on the island, and control the various wards and barriers that the original owners left. They also served as the keys to the great engine in the Vodacce ruins, which was designed on the Isle. See *Scoundrel's Folly* for more information.

Bound in brass and in the shape of an æther compass, the artifacts must work in tandem to work most of the Syrneth devices on the island. Strange inscriptions are carved into their bases: symbols in an unknown language. In addition to their turn-key functions, each compass points unerringly to its mate, the needles turning to direct the holder in the right direction. Most Théans who have come across them in the past have used them specifically for tracking or other locating purposes, unaware that they served any other function. In *The Lady's Favor*, Dominique Montaigne gave them to the Heroes (and to her husband Montegue) with just such a purpose in mind.

The Society, unfortunately, can't solve the problem. Most maps of the place were destroyed, and those who know its location are difficult if not impossible to contact. In



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their desire to protect the ruins, the Society has inadvertently cut itself off from them, eliminating all knowledge they need to get back to it. Heroes who make inquiries of Society members will be greeted by sheepish apologies and acute embarrassment.

There might be a man who can help them, however. Anyone with a Cartography or Astronomy skill can make a Wits check at TN 15 to recall the name Miguel Olivares, a professor at the University of San Augustin. Olivares has studied maps and mapmaking all his life, and has compiled some of the most accurate cartography readings in Théah. He once claimed to have drawn a map of Castille accurate to every stone on every road. He also has some experience with the Syrneth, and has been known to translate their writing in the past. If anyone can help the party find the ruins, he can.

(GMs may wish to make Olivares a contact of one of the Heroes, particularly a Castillian Hero. That would provide an easy impetus to connect Olivares to their

quest. If not, someone on board their boat – a first mate or a navigator – knows where to find him.)

The good news is that San Augustin lies along the way to Vodacce. The bad news is that it also lies along the front. Montaigne has tried to take the city for over six months, in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. Getting in there and finding Olivares is going to take some doing. But unless they want to spend months tramping about the swamp, they need to speak with him.

The voyage to San Augustin is pleasant and uneventful. The waters off western Castille are well-traveled and pirate attacks have declined there of late. Berek (if he's there) flies merchant flags to deter the Castillian navy, and the entire trip takes only a few days.

Approaching the town itself, however, things begin to change. Smoke

rises from the shoreline at several points nearby, and marks of the war begin appearing in the nearby sea. Scarcely an hour goes by without a coffin floating near the party's ship, or chunks of burnt timber clogging the shipping lanes. Every now and then, a sunken Castillian galleon or Montaigne cutter can be seen, broken masts

Explorer's Society Policy on the Vodacce Ruins

The Society has known of the Vodacce ruins for some time, and has even seen the great machine buried beneath it. While they don't know what it's for, it scares them to death – which takes some doing from a group that risks life and limb on such a regular basis. For this reason, they have forbidden anyone to come near it. The engine holds secrets which could destroy the world, and even the Explorers realized the inherent dangers in tampering with it. They sealed the ruins off, destroyed the maps of its location, and forbade its members to approach it. The ruins lay in the midst of a dangerous swamp, so they felt that it would be safe from outsiders. Even Syrneth-obsessed Vincenzo Caligari has not learned of its existence.

Because they did not have access to L'Il du Bête (and because they weren't aware of the compasses until the Heroes produced them), they did not know that a means to control the engine existed. They still don't entirely understand the connection between the compasses and the engine, which is the only reason they haven't forced the Heroes to turn them over. (They do know, however, that the party is the best group to go after Coleson, and that they can be trusted not to tamper with the ruins should they ever find them. Heroes don't tend towards mad grabs for power.)



poking above the waterline. Smells of war waft out from shore at all times — ash, gunpowder, burnt flesh.

Berek isn't willing to risk getting too close to San Augustin — the Castillians have a high price on his head. But he can come within a few miles of shore (under cover of night) and provide the Heroes with a rowboat to paddle the rest of the way (he recommends that they land on the Castillian side, and that they avoid contact with any soldiers). The Society can drop the Heroes directly in port, after a hurried discussion with the Castillian admiral guarding the harbor. (As a stipulation for entrance, the Explorer's ship cannot leave unless accompanied by a Castillian escort. Heroes in their own boat can use their best judgment; Montaignes or wanted pirates should probably drop anchor offshore and paddle in on something smaller.)

As long as the party approaches the city from the south or east, they should have no problems entering. Fleeing refugees, Castillian reinforcements and human flotsam of all varieties cover the countryside, making organization futile. The Montaigne army has camped approximately one mile north of the city walls, lobbing cannon shells and sending skirmish units to determine any weaknesses in the defense. Thus far, the Castillians have fought off every advance, but the strain is beginning to show. Rubble chokes the streets of San Augustin, growing more impassable the further north one moves. Many buildings have collapsed or have been abandoned by their owners, now occupied by those unwilling or unable to flee. The army controls all shops and stores, and rations out supplies as it deems necessary. Non-military personnel are not allowed within ten blocks of the northern defenses.

Within these conditions, people come and go like the flow of the tide. Eisen mercenaries, Avalon diplomats, Montaigne spies and deserters all move with equal ease through the streets, going about their own business as quickly and expeditiously as possible. The party can



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blend in easily in these conditions; unless a Montaigne Hero actively displays his affiliation, no one gives them any trouble.

La Universidad de San Augustin stands on the southeastern side of the city, amid a series of orange and lemon groves. Several companies of soldiers are stationed nearby to guard the Castillian flank, but the university itself is rarely bothered. It is a strangely open affair, with wide lawns (now pocked with craters) and open-aired classrooms that must have been quite relaxing before the war. Now, however, it stands nearly abandoned. Most of the students and faculty have fled, and the school has very little tactical use. The local commander holds his staff meetings in one of the classrooms; other than that, only a few souls remain.

Beneath the haze of war, the university presents a pastoral atmosphere. The party should feel like guests at a long-abandoned garden party: walking through beautiful dust-laden hallways, classrooms strewn with broken window glass, and libraries littered with slightly-charred books. The Heroes can find Olivares' quarters easily – a large suite of rooms in the faculty dorm – but he himself is nowhere to be found. His rooms have not been lived in for some time.

Finding others to help in their search is nearly impossible. The few denizens remaining at the University are too frazzled to show themselves; they hide rather than let the party see them. Heroes looking for information or

directions find only a few fading footsteps or a hastily closed book. They can search entire grounds and not turn up a single soul. Only when they are exhausted and ready to give up does anyone dare to show themselves.

José Marquez, the college groundskeeper, has watched the party since they arrived. He initially wanted to speak with them, but the more paranoid tenants convinced him

otherwise. Now, after watching them run this way and that for hours, he's sick of the games. He waits for them on the lawn as they emerge from a building, a lithe man with a straw hat and a scraggly black beard.

"He's gone," the gardener grins. "Gone to San Cristobal to hide; I saw him go myself."

Marquez speaks three languages fluently: Castillian, Montaigne, and Avalon. He explains who he is, and that the university faculty "doesn't care" for foreigners on the property these days. He asks them to blame it on war paranoia.

Olivares, he says, left for San Cristobal shortly before the Montaigne arrived. He won't say why or how, only that "people were after the man." The tone of his voice suggests that Olivares wasn't frightened of the invaders, but of someone else. Who exactly, he can't say. "Even in a war, voices carry," he explains cryptically.

If asked, he's fairly certain that the cartographer remains at San Cristobal. The Castillian capital is far away from the war, and the university there has opened its arms to displaced academics. Unfortunately, they can find no

War-torn Wasteland?

Some players may be uneasy about the prospect of traveling across an active war zone like occupied Castille. The thought of being caught in some horrific battlefield may tempt them to abandon the quest rather than cross the front lines. As prudent as such thinking may be, it comes from a twentieth-century mindset, hardened by the wholesale carnage of two world wars. People thought differently about war in the 17th century in Théah as well as on Earth. Indeed, the very nature of war was much different, occupied more with tactics and maneuvers than with wholesale destruction. Civilians used to gather with picnic lunches to watch battles, convinced that the conflict wouldn't harm them. Certainly, battles are horrific, especially in a place like occupied Castille. But as products of their time, the Heroes would likely see it as a much safer option than their modern-day players would.

direct help here; no one left has any knowledge of cartography, astronomy or the Syrath. If they like, he can draft a letter to Olivares for them, explaining their purpose and vouching for their integrity (he won't make the offer if the Heroes have looted or destroyed any part of the grounds, or if they obviously appear untrustworthy). For a gardener, he seems extremely well-educated.

It's up to the Heroes to decide how to get to San Cristobal from the university. Passage by sea is unlikely; Berek and the Sea Dogs vanished the minute they dropped the party off, and the Explorer ship can't leave the harbor. Few captains in port wish to risk the Montaigne blockade without good cause (or at least a thousand guilders), and the Castilian navy must approve all transit anyway. If the party has their own ship, they may do what they like, of course, but otherwise they must trek across occupied Castille in order to reach the capital. If they choose to go overland, consult random encounter 2 (p. 33) for details. If they travel by sea, consult random encounter 3 (p. 35).

A Tale of Two Fronts

Traveling overland to San Cristobal involves crossing the front lines at some point, and should probably not be attempted in San Augustin. There's too many guns and tense trigger fingers in the area. Away from the fighting, however, the front dwindles to a series of picket lines and advance scouts, who look more for large bodies of troops than ragtag bands of refugees.

Any Hero with military experience should be able to judge (Wits + Tactics, TN 15) a good place to cross. Success indicates they have entered Montaigne territory without being noticed. Failure means that the party has stumbled across an army patrol of one side or the other (GM's choice) and must now explain themselves. Role-play out the scenario using the "soldier" description in the Character section. There is one soldier in the patrol for each Hero, plus a sergeant in charge. Reasonable

explanations or fast-talking efforts should succeed (after all, they're obviously not with the enemy army), but Montaigne soldiers want to confiscate all firearms before allowing them to proceed. Again, it's up to the Heroes to decide if they permit that or not.

A much larger front exists at the other end of the overland journey, along El Rio de Delia. The Castilians hold a series of near-impenetrable fortresses on the eastern bank, cannons and mortars constantly at the ready to bombard the Montaigne. Troops are concentrated in huge numbers within these fortresses, and Castilian shipping weaves a delicate course under the watchful eye of the guns. Good King Sandoval has drawn a line at Rio de Delia, and vowed that no Montaigne will ever see the far side.

The Montaigne, on the other hand, stand at a disadvantage; they haven't moved in months. General Montegue led them this far, using some of the most complex and innovative strategies anyone had ever seen. When L'Empereur called him away to invade Ussura, his lieutenants were left to continue what he had started. They weren't up to the task. With little understanding of Montegue's grand plan and no idea how to advance his strategies, they have settled for holding the line. They camp on the west bank, watching for signs of weakness.

This is the line that the Heroes have to cross.

Getting to the river shouldn't be a problem; the Montaignes are so disorganized enough they won't question Heroes who don't act suspiciously. The problem is crossing without the Castilians taking notice; they shell into oblivion anything approaching from the west bank. All the bridges have been burnt, and the scouts can spot any boat that enters the water.

If the Heroes have a Montaigne in the party, they may ask the local soldiers if there is any way across. The soldiers think them mad, but can provide a few suggestions. Swimming is possible, as is floating across on



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a log or board. They could raise a flag of truce and sail across under the pretense of discussing terms; they would need to explain themselves to the Castellians when they got there, however. The players may think of other solutions to the problem as well. Allow them to proceed however they see fit.

Crossing surreptitiously at night requires a Strength + Swimming roll at TN 15 for each Hero. Raise the TN by 10 if attempted in the daylight. Heroes who cannot swim may be pulled across on boards or air-filled wineskins by their friends; they need to make a Wits + Stealth roll at TN 15. The TNs can be lowered to 10 if the party crosses at a spot between fortifications, and you may wish to lower it even further if the Heroes take steps to further conceal themselves. Failure means that the Castellians have seen them and send a sortie out to take them prisoner. They may either fight their way free (in which case, the entire Castellian army now wants them), or submit and be clapped in irons. It takes three days of rotting in a dungeon before they can finally wheedle their way free (although a Castellian Hero or one with diplomatic credentials may convince the commander to let them go sooner; use your best discretion depending on the Reputation or political disposition of the Hero in question). Under no circumstances will the Montaignes provide any assistance, although they may sell them equipment at a drastically inflated price. Launching an attack as a diversion or other foolishness is out of the question.

The party may be able to cross one or both of the front lines unobserved with the help of Jarmir Gutmunsson and his band of Vesten. See Encounter 1 in the “Changing Elements” section for more information.

Once on the other side, they will need to make their way through the Castille picket lines (as above), and find a road away from the front. From there, however, they should have little trouble making their way to San Cristobal.

Point Two: Truth and Consequences

San Cristobal stands in marked contrast to the war-torn landscape of Western Castille. Here, far away from the blood and bombshells, the nation’s leaders go about their business as if the Montaignes were a minor problem. The narrow streets reflect the city’s Crescent-based architecture, criss-crossing at odd angles beneath the domed towers and minarets. Beautiful plazas provide a sense of space to break the regularity. Smells of the ocean waft in from the shore, and the city’s fishing roots can still be seen along its sunny docks. The most spectacular buildings house the national government, which employs countless bureaucrats in its constant operations. The growing conflicts between King Sandoval and the Council of Cardinals threaten to tear Castille’s leadership apart. But away from Vaticine City, the day-to-day operations continue much as they have for the last twenty years.

Hordes of people move through the streets, mostly bureaucrats and diplomats. Fishermen can be found near the harbor, as well as soldiers on their way to and from the front. As they travel through the city, the Heroes slowly become aware of Castille’s infamous disdain for foreigners; passersby go out of their way not to touch them, and answer questions as brusquely as possible. It’s as if the entire city is giving them the cold shoulder. Castellian Heroes receive a warmer welcome, but it’s clear that the war has not endeared outsiders to the locals.

The University of San Cristobal, one of the most prestigious in all of Théah, stands just to the west of the city’s center. The buildings which house it originally served as a garrison for the Crescents, who conceived the city’s layout within its wall. When they left, they knocked down the walls to keep the Castellians from using it against them. The Vaticines simply moved their books in and began studying. Centuries later, it still reflects its military roots. The buildings are uniform and built of solid granite, with few windows or other means of

ventilation. Its halls conceal murder holes and underground passages, while former armories now hold shelves of scrolls. Here and there, changes have been made: former bulwarks now sport stained-glass windows, while grass and trees have been planted over the old parade ground.

In contrast to the school in San Augustin, the university here seems full to bursting. Displaced academics from all over occupied Castille have come to wait out the war and continue their research as best they can. Scholars can be found sitting on the floors of drafty hallways or spilling out onto lawns, surrounded by their work. Lab space is at a premium and no one has the time to experiment properly experiment. Most classes are held outdoors since the university cannot afford to devote an entire room to the students. Despite the conditions, however, scholars here continue to make progress in their respective fields. Some amazing discoveries have been made in the past few months, which has not gone unnoticed in the corridors of power. Though they dare not show themselves publicly, the Inquisition keeps a close eye on things here – and waits for the time to strike.

The Heroes should arrive about an hour or so before sunset, just after the afternoon siesta. Inquiries about

Olivares provoke a referral to “Dominick” in the Hall of Records, who can answer their question. Unfortunately, no one seems to know where the Hall of Records is or how to get to it. After several wildly varying directions, they finally find the Hall ensconced in the university’s main building (the old commander’s quarters, appropriately enough). Here, harried Vaticine priests fight vainly against the chaos, attempting to impose some sort of organization upon the campus. It’s an uphill battle.

“Dominick” resides in a cramped corner of the main chamber, having eked out enough space for a chair and a small deck. He’s a small, sharp-eyed priest in red robes, surrounded by mountains of paperwork which threaten to overwhelm him. He’s been placed in charge of housing the displaced academics, a losing battle which he’s undertaken with boundless energy. He speaks clearly and rapidly to those who approach his desk, trying to get them on their way as quickly as possible. He fills out countless forms and reports as he talks,

and seems to be able to speak and write about two completely unrelated topics simultaneously. He’s attending to a housing order during his conversation with the Heroes.

The Erebus Cross

The Erebus Cross is a constellation in Théah’s sky. Like Orion on Earth, it remains visible year-round, always pointing towards the horizon no matter what time of year. Because of that, it serves as an invaluable navigational tool. Every sailor can find the Erebus Cross in the sky, and can determine their rough position by comparing its position in the sky with the current time of year.

The constellation is shaped like the staff carried by Erebus, the Lord of the Underworld in the Old Empire’s mythology. He stood at the crossroads between the living and the dead, awaiting each new soul as it passed from this world. When they met him, he would ask them a riddle, which they must answer correctly in order to advance to paradise. Those who didn’t were consigned to eternal torment in the underworld, forced to relive the sins they committed in life. The riddle varies with each soul, depending upon how righteous or wicked they were in life (a beatific soul, for example, would get a very easy riddle, while a convicted mass murderer would get a brain-burner). The riddle gave hope to everyone, for even the vilest wretch could still get into paradise with enough brains and intuition.

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At first, he won't tell them where Olivares is ("The *profesores* here value their privacy, *señores*."), but if they produce the letter from Marquez, he becomes considerably more helpful.

"*Si, si*, I know where Olivares is. No problem, no problem. I just need to check a ledger for a moment —" here he pauses to dot an 'i' — "don't touch that, *por favor*. *Si*, Olivares is here. Mapmaker, *si*? *Excelente!*" Here he drops his pen and

produces a large green book from under a pile of paperwork. "He resides in the basement of the main library. Third level down, halfway up the northwestern corridor. Okay? All good? *Si, excelente*. Step away from the desk, *por favor*. You are now bothering me."

With that, he begins jabbering at the two men behind the Heroes, and ignores any further questions.

The sun is going down by the time the party finds the library, a squat, stone building just off the main quad. Most of the building lies below the ground, where it housed supplies for a siege. The rooms are tall and spacious, supported by numerous pillars and buttresses. Unlike the people outside, the books here are fastidiously organized, place in alphabetical order on shelves clearly labeled by subject and heading.

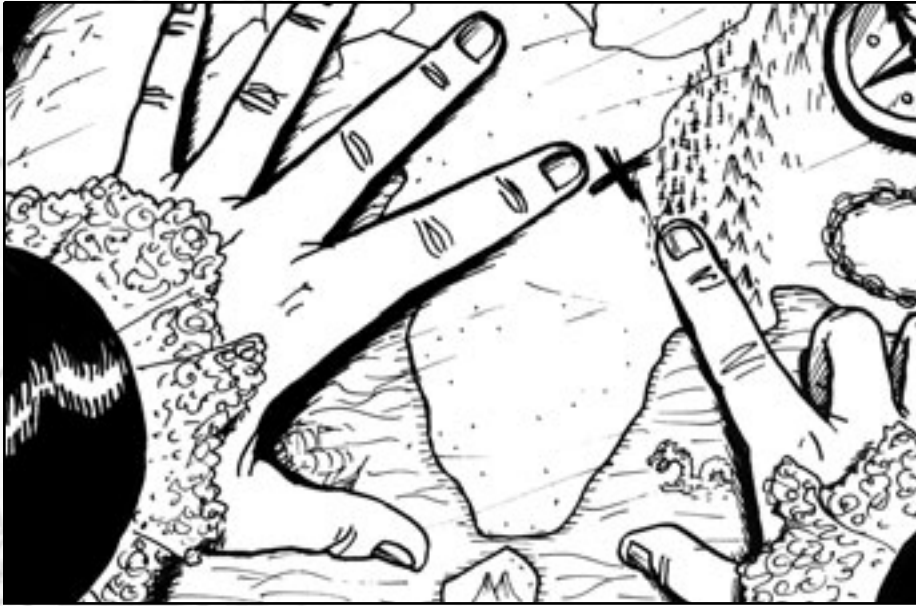
Olivares lives three levels down, tucked up against a wall surrounded by two towering bookshelves. His sleeping



and mess kits lie underneath the table where he works, a table spread wide with maps and star charts. He hasn't been outside in nearly ten days; dark circles have formed around his eyes, and his skin is the shade of dead herring. He works by a pair of lamps hanging from the wall, and is careful not to spill anything on his charts. As the Heroes approach, his head snaps up in a flash. He raises a sextant point-first and seems ready to plunge it into the first Hero's chest until his eyes register them in the dim light.

"You're not them," he mutters. "What do you want?"

Use the description in the Character section to role-play Olivares. He's willing to talk to the Heroes if they show him Marquez's letter, and his eyes light up at mention of their dilemma, but he won't help them pinpoint the ruins. Not without something in return.



He has a book, bound in leather and locked with clasps, that he needs to get out of Castille. (The Inquisition, he explains, will destroy it if they find it.) If the Heroes are going to Vodacce as they claim, they can take the book to Dionna University and leave it with the Headmaster. They won't have to go out of their way, and they will have performed him a great service.

Olivares is not simply a scientist and he did not flee San Augustin because of the Montaigne. He belongs to the secret society known as the Invisible College, dedicating to protecting scientific knowledge from the fires of the Inquisition. A few days before he left San Augustin, Olivares received a package from a fellow member of the College — a small book full of cramped writing in an obscure code. He won't say what the book contains, but its author had died by the time it reached his hands: the Inquisition had hanged her for heresy.

Olivares fled with the book well before the Montaigne arrived, using the fog of war to cover his tracks. Only Marquez the gardener knew where he was going. When he arrived in San Cristobal, he requested the deepest darkest corner they could find for him: an odd request for an astronomer. He's been afraid to show his face because

the Inquisition might find him, and only emerges from the library when absolutely necessary. He knows he needs to get the book out of Castille, but lacks the courage to leave the university. The Heroes offer a fortuitous solution to his problem.

Olivares doesn't reveal any of this directly; he simply tells them that the Inquisition wants the book and that he needs to get it out of Castille. In the course of the conversation, however, he drops the secret greeting of the Invisible College, hoping that perhaps one of the Heroes belongs. (This is a violation of the College's secrecy rules, but he won't tell if they don't.) If one of them recognizes the signal, he tells them

everything and calls upon their *esprit de corps* to help him complete his mission.

Assuming they agree to take the book to Dionna (Coleson was last spotted there, after all), Olivares cheerfully examines any data they have on the ruins. They need to fill him in on the general situation and give him the coordinates of the stars on the night of the full moon. After producing a map of mainland Vodacce, he pores over the area in question, measuring the distance carefully and scribbling notes on a piece of paper. He then produces another map of the Villanova provinces. If they have the compasses with them, he asks to see them. He studies the runes on the bottom very carefully, then produces yet *another* map, this one a star chart. Finally, after several long minutes of contemplation, he draws a small dot in Villanova territory.

"37° 34' 48.8" north of the Equator; 37' 2.2" east of Numa's Forum. That's it, to within the square rod."

The marked area has never been mapped, so he has no idea what the surrounding terrain is like. They may need to take detours or traverse near-impossible landscape to



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get there. But the coordinates he gave are precise. One way or another, the ruins are there.

Full night has fallen by the time the party emerges from the library. Its clear and warm, and the stars shin brilliantly in the sky: the Erebus Cross points unerringly east, towards Vodacce and the swamps. Scholars and student lie asleep on the front lawn, while others continue their research by lantern light. The school is quieter now than it was, but no less crowded.

As Olivares feared, the Inquisition has learned of his location and is waiting to pounce. They can't take him out of the library – not without risking a riot by the University's denizens – but if the party has spoken to him, they may know where the book is. (Heroes who encountered the Inquisition in *Scoundrel's Folly* may be on their 'undesirables' list as well.) A pair of them detach themselves from the shadows surrounding the library and follow the party until they clear the university. It takes a Wits check vs. the Inquisitors' Stealth (TN 20) to notice them. They flee if confronted, but otherwise follow the party back to wherever they choose to lodge for the night. San Cristobal has many fine inns and hostels, and the Heroes can locate one nearby (*El Niño Gordo*) with a minimum of fuss.

There, the Inquisitors are joined by approximately twenty of their Henchman compatriots, who wait until the dead of night (one or two in the morning) to confront the Heroes. Once the lights are out and they believe everyone is asleep, they light torches and surround the building. (Generous GMs may want to make another Wits vs. Stealth roll or two to see if the Heroes notice them lurking.) Throwing stones at the windows, they demand that those within turn over the Heroes and all their possessions, or else be burned alive. Six other people reside at the inn, including the innkeeper and his wife. None of them can match the Heroes (treat them as Brutes), and the innkeeper would rather burn than turn his guests over to the mob.

If the Heroes do not turn themselves in within five minutes, the Inquisition begins hurling torches through the window. As the other guests busy themselves with putting out the fires, the mob begins pounding down the front door.

Use the "Tavern Brawl" map on pp. 250-51 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide* to run the fight. The bottom corner of the map, around the fireplaces, is occupied by fire and the guests trying to put it out. Every five rounds, another three Inquisitors arrive on the map, until there are twenty-four in all. All regular exits are covered, but a skylight opening up to the roof is unguarded. The Heroes could make an exit there if they wish, using San Cristobal's rooftops to escape. The Inquisitors pursue, both on the ground and the roofs, leading to a merry chase. Use the Inquisitor stats in the Character section and your best judgment on how best to finish the encounter. If the mob gets the book, they put it to the torch immediately; any captured Heroes are hanged from the nearest lamppost (which could lead to a thrilling rescue by the other party members). The Inquisitors vanish with the dawn, unwilling to show themselves by the light of day. The Heroes must keep them occupied until then.

Two methods exist to get to Vodacce: over land and over sea. The sea journey is easier and faster; ships of all varieties crowd the harbor, and several leave for both Dionna and the Vodacce mainland every day. Overland is a little trickier, as it involves passage across La Sierra de Hierro. Parties interested in heading straight for the ruins may prefer to travel by land, however. A coach and supplies can be rented to take them to the Castillian border if they wish; from there, they can walk.

Point Three: Nest of Vipers

This point covers Dionna and some of the intrigues involving Coleson's disappearance. It assumes that the Heroes drop off Olivares's book at the university before heading into the mainland swamps. If they wish to go directly to the ruins from Castille, skip this section and

move straight to the climax. They'll still need to drop the book off, however, unless they plan to betray Olivares. In this case, Point Three can serve as a coda to the adventure, a sort of epilogue to tie up all the loose plot thread. For dramatic purposes, you may wish to use this as the springboard of a new adventure rather than the end of an old. If you wish to use this option, adjust the circumstances accordingly.

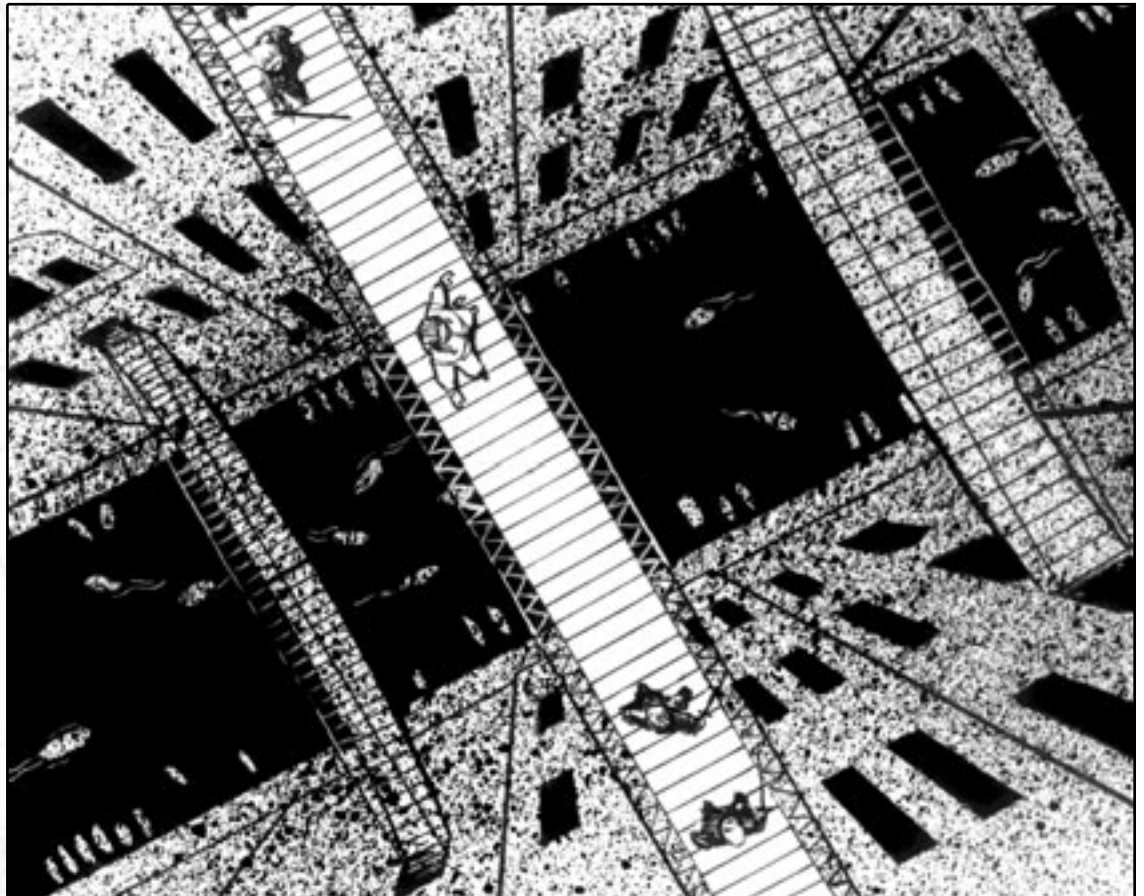
Coleson came to Dionna to prepare for his expedition into the swamps, and in fact left without thinking anything was wrong. He managed to attract Vincenzo Caligari's attention, however, and the old Prince sent his minions to determine where Coleson is going. They've learned a great deal — the location of the ruins, the existence of the great machine, even the date on which it can be unlocked. As the party arrives, they stand ready to intercept Coleson at the ruins and seize the engine for themselves. They're not alone in their curiosity, however: Dionna's ruler has noticed the Caligaris' presence in his city, and wants to know more.

Coleson's left quite a mess behind him. And the Heroes are about to step right into the middle of it.

Dionna stands on the largest island in Vodacce's chain, the headquarters of the sinister Villanova family. The city and surrounding territories

completely encompass the land mass, and actually join several islands together into a single intricate unit. It towers impossibly high above the ground, supported by latticework, support beams and in some cases even magic. Rope bridges and walkways connect the buildings above the picturesque canals which serve as streets. In many ways, it resembles a seventeenth century approximation of a twentieth century cityscape, complete with skyscrapers and urban sprawl.

It also houses the only university in Vodacce, making it the natural choice for Coleson to begin his expedition. Dionna University contains an unusual number of Explorer's Society members, and the local chapter-house has opened its library to the school in exchange for vital equipment. If the party wishes to learn what sort of





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trouble their friend Coleson is in, the University is a good place to start.

The school occupies a single building, towering almost thirteen stories tall. The students and servants stay in the lower stories, while the middle levels hold classrooms, libraries and laboratories.

Teachers and administrators live on the highest floors: the same heights claimed by Vodacce's best and brightest. A latticework bridge connects the university to the Explorer's Society safehouse, which occupies the top story of a nearby building. The safehouse is an open secret in Dionna; no one's supposed to know about it, but almost everyone does.

After dropping the book off (the Dionna Headmaster is easy to reach and seems very excited at the Heroes' gift; he sets underlings to translating and copying it as quickly as possible), the Heroes are free to ask about Coleson. Apparently, he had spoken to several geographers at the university, who filled him in on the location as best he could. They recall that Coleson did not want the Society to know about him, and asked them to refer any questions to his rooms at a nearby inn. They

thought it odd that he wasn't staying at the Society safehouse, practically next door.

The innkeeper who leased Coleson his rooms (the establishment is named the *Carp*) doesn't remember him, but says that's not unusual. He gets almost a hundred lodgers a week; he can't keep track of faces. He does, however, remember a pair of Society members who arrived and asked about the same man. He "heard somewhere" that they met a bad end soon thereafter; face down in a canal, if the story's true. He refuses to say more than that and can't be coerced into speaking further.

The Society itself proves somewhat more helpful. In fact, a familiar face greets them when they cross the rope bridge to the safehouse. Madeline du Bisset, the Montaigne head of the Freiburg charter, sits waiting for them in the main foyer. Heroes who ran *Scoundrel's Folly* remember her and her

tart demeanor; she's been dispatched to help them find Coleson and lets them know in no uncertain terms that she's not happy with the assignment.

"I don't know why *I* have to serve as errand girl. I tell them I have duties in Freiburg. I tell them I have things to do. But oh, no, they *need* me to come talk to you! 'You

"Let's Ditch the Compasses!"

Prudent Heroes may get the idea that gaining access to the great machine is a bad idea (they'd be right). If this is the case, they may want to hide or even abandon the compasses which open them; after all, without the keys, the artifact can't be operated, and the world will be safe.

Unfortunately, such a plan doesn't take the Caligaris into account. Fredo (q.v.) knows about the compasses, and dispatches men to find them once he learns that the party no longer carries them. If left in Carleon with the Explorers, they will break into the charterhouse and steal the artifacts. If entrusted to a friend along the way, they torture him or her into revealing the compasses' location. If buried along the road, they find them and dig them back up. Unless the Heroes drop them to the bottom of the sea or bury them under a mountain (in which case Olivares cannot examine them), the Caligaris take them from wherever they are hidden. They probably kill – or at least savagely beat – any NPC in the way (Bisset survives with a few bruised ribs), although the GM has the final decision. In any case, Fredo produces the compasses at Point Four, gloating over his victory and the Heroes' futile efforts to stop him. See Point Four for more information.

have Porté, Madeline. You know the fine mesdames and messieurs who were with Reg. We cannot *spare* anyone in Vodacce.' So I come here to baby-sit you while the mobs tear down my chapter-house for firewood! Silly goose-chase for a silly Avalon twit who shouldn't have gotten lost in the first place! Are you doing anything useful? Get me a drink."

Once the pleasantries are out of the way, Madeline can fill them in on what the Society knows. At the moment, she's the only Explorer in Dionna. The others have gone into hiding until the heat dies down. If they weren't aware already, Coleson's missing. They believe he may have gone off towards the ruins, but they can't be sure. It's possible he's been kidnapped or even worse.

Coleson arrived in Dionna against specific orders and began preparing for an expedition to the ruins. He didn't inform the Society that he was here; they learned of his presence through a contact at the university and immediately sent two of their own to track him down. What they learned may have spelled their doom.

"They said the Caligari family caught wind of him. They said he left town just ahead of them and that 'elements' of Vincenzo Caligari were still nosing around. That was the last we heard of them. The next morning, they were found drowned in the canal. Feet tied together, eyes sewn closed. It's a Vodacce warning — they saw something they shouldn't have."

If the party doesn't know, Madeline explains that Vincenzo Caligari, head of the family, wishes to attain immortality. To that end, he has hunted Syrneth artifacts obsessively, convinced that they hold the key to his desire. His efforts have brought him into conflict with the Society on numerous occasions, resulting in unfortunate accidents on both sides. One of the reasons that Society has kept the great machine a secret is so that Vincenzo never hears about it. The bodies in the canal and rumors of the Caligaris in the area bode ill for their hopes.

"The question," Bisset explains matter-of-factly, "is whether the Caligaris have learned about the ruins or not. If they have, you need to get there as quickly as possible. If they haven't, we need to keep them from learning of it for as long as possible."

The Distinguished Opposition

The Heroes must now decide what to do next. They can pack up and head for the ruins, scour Dionna for signs of the Caligaris, or do whatever else they believe best. Madeline intends to hold the fort at the safehouse; she's stocked up a pile of weapons in case the Caligaris come looking for blood. She supports whatever the Heroes want to do as long as it involves finding out where Coleson went.

The Caligaris have indeed learned of the ruins, and have prepared an expedition of their own, led by Vincenzo's great-nephew Fredo Caligari. Coleson has a considerable head-start on them, but Fredo believes that the Avalon will waste his time with trivialities rather than focus on the engine. While he completes his preparations, he dispatches his cousin Antonio to deal with the Heroes.

Regardless of what the party does, the Caligaris make contact with them before they leave Dionna. If they ask questions (at taverns, at the university, or in the halls of power), they are eventually directed to a backroom gambling hall where a member of the family meets with them. If they leave, a burly man approaches them on the outskirts of town, saying that "Signore Caligari" wishes to have a word with them. Either way, Antonio arranges to meet the Heroes in a public and (presumably) safe location: an open-air restaurant overlooking one of Dionna's most picturesque canals.

The plaza is crowded with diners, and the smell of cooked meat wafts appetizingly across the tables. Antonio waits for them in the corner, a lanky Vodacce with a sharp chin and darting eyes. A plate of food sits in front

him, while menus for each hero lie spread around the table.

Antonio has no intention of letting the party leave alive. He's planted bodyguards at all of the exits and plans to humor them while the chef poisons their meals. In the meantime, he chats amiably with them, trying to learn as much as he can. He claims that the Caligaris have no wish to harm Coleson or the Heroes. Vincenzo simply wishes to know what lies in the jungle. "My uncle's interests are not so different from the Explorers'. We wish only to contribute, and if possible, share in the knowledge." His eyes are cold as he speaks, though, and a hint of insincerity contaminates his voice.

The Heroes needn't worry for too long. In the midst of the conversation, Antonio suddenly stiffens. His eyes widen, blood trickles from his mouth, and he slumps forward with a knife blade between his shoulders. His bodyguards have vanished from their spots at the door, while the other patrons gaze pointedly at their menus. A smiling figure clad in black leather saunters slowly towards them.

"My apologies, ladies and gentlemen, for your dining companion's tragic accident. I prefer privacy when speaking with my guests. Giovanni Villanova, at your service."

At mention of his name, the restaurant empties of other customers. Within moments the party is alone with Giovanni. Sliding Caligari's corpse to the floor, he takes a seat and begins eating the dead man's meal.

"It's a terrible thing to let good veal parmigiana go to waste. By the way, the chef was slipping arsenic into your

"What Exactly is the Syrnych Machine?"

Those who haven't run *Scoundrel's Folly* (and even a few who have) might be unclear on what exactly the great Syrnych machine does. In simple terms, it's a capable of harnessing huge amounts of energy from the skies. It absorbs power from the stars themselves, collects it, and transfers it into a usable form. The trouble is, "usable form" is still a staggeringly huge amount. The energy could be focused into a beam capable of destroying a city, or focused downward to create devastating earthquakes. The Syrnych apparently had some "peaceful" purpose in mind for it, but no one as yet can tell what that is. The Heroes learned about it through the silver pool at L'Il du Bête; the Explorer's Society pieced it together from clues at the ruins itself. Either way, it spells trouble. No one understands the principles involved beyond a very rudimentary level, and even so, it appears that only the Syrnych could use it properly. A human being tampering with it could wreak untold destruction across the face of Théah.

In order to ensure that the machine was never misused, the builders sealed it beneath an elaborate security system, which could only be opened twice a year. The stars must be in the proper position, and the moon must be new, with no light to conceal the heavens. Then, using the compasses, the great locks could be opened, granting access to the machine's controls. As a final note, the stars themselves provide a map to the site of the machine. The constellation of the Erebus Cross – a grouping that, like Orion in our own sky, remains visible year-round – points out the location.

food. My men are force-feeding him the bottle if you'd care to watch."

The head of the Villanova family speaks clearly and openly to them, in contrast to Antonio's barely-concealed deception. "My cousins in the Caligari family have displayed a shocking lack of manners by arriving in my city unannounced. I would like you to help me correct the error."

Villanova knows that the Caligaris are after Coleson, but he doesn't know why. He's been trying to locate them to

ask (in his own unique way), but they're quite good at remaining unseen. Antonio's appearance at the restaurant was the first opportunity he's had. He wants the party to hunt down the remaining Caligaris for him; he also wants to know what all the fuss is about. He basically takes over where Antonio left off, asking the Heroes' business in his city and offering to compensate them if they could hunt the Caligaris down for him. If they ask, he informs them that Coleson has left the city, and was last seen venturing into an unexplored swamp on the mainland. "I've lost too many men in there to go after him myself, but you're his friends. Perhaps you'd like to give it a go."

Ideally, he'd like to know just what Coleson's after. The party must tread carefully here. As bad as the Caligaris are, they're nothing compared to Villanova. If he knew of the power that lay in the ruins, he could possibly bring all of Théah to its knees; he'd stop at nothing to acquire it. Any diplomat or courtier Heroes in the party should do the talking; they're probably right at home with Villanova's verbal spars. If they let the purpose of the ruin slip, he won't let on. Instead, he'll wait until they have disposed of Caligari, acquire the compasses for himself, and examine the ruins at leisure. He won't act until after the end of the adventure, however. Whether he succeeds and whether the Heroes can stop him are up to the GM (and can make for an epic adventure if you're so inclined).

If he can't learn anything from the party, he settles for the next best thing — sending them out to kill the Caligaris. "If Alfredo is after your friend, I wouldn't let him live for a moment. I'm prepared to grant you full access to my mainland territory — and allow you to leave it peacefully — for a small price: ensure that Fredo doesn't leave the swamp alive."

If the Heroes balk, Villanova grows more threatening, suggesting that they are alive right now only at his discretion. They really have little to lose by agreeing to his bargain. He can make life quite miserable for them on

the journey to the ruins, and they probably must confront Alfredo regardless. If they agree, he thanks them courteously and allows them to depart.

Attacking Villanova is a good way to get killed. The man knows dozens of lethal combat techniques and can duel a dozen swordsmen into the ground without breaking a sweat. A dozen loyal bodyguards stand just outside the restaurant, ready to act on a moment's notice. He has survived multiple assassination attempts, and earned his position by murdering two members of his direct family. He didn't get where he is by lowering his guard.

By the time the party extricates itself from the restaurant, they've probably had their fill of Dionna. If they have any other leads they wish to pursue, allow them to do so, but time grows short and they cannot dally too much longer. They need seven days to reach the spot indicated on the map, and must procure supplies at some point. When you feel they have exhausted all of the role-playing potential in the city, remind them that the moon grows thinner and make it clear that the remaining Caligaris cannot be found. They might even be on their way already.

If they need an extra incentive, have the Caligaris raid their possessions one night in search of the compasses. The theft of the two keys to the great engine should be enough to spur them on their way. If the party left the compasses with Bisset, she awakens them one morning to tell them they are gone. A large group of men came in the night, overpowered her and took them. (She killed two of them and was left for dead, "but I don't die easy," she grins.) In any case, now they *need* to get to the ruins, lest the Caligaris access the dreaded machine.

Getting to the mainland shouldn't be a problem. With Olivares' map and Giovanni's blessing, they should be on the trail within a day or so. The ruins lie before them — at long last.

The Arrow of Heaven

Point Four: Endgame

The bogs of Vodacce are as treacherous as they are imposing. Surrounded by rural farmland and the crumbling ruins of the Old Empire, the area the party journeys into has never been named. The locals simply refer to it as “the Swamp,” and while a few trappers ply their trade within its murky depths, no one goes so far that they cannot return after dark. In daylight, they tell you there’s nothing in the Swamp worth going there; at night, they whisper about the terrible fates which befall anyone who crosses its barrier. Somewhere inside, Reginald Coleson searches for the great Synchron engine – as do the Caligaris hoping to take it from him.

The unexplored nature of the swamp becomes obvious the instant they enter it. No trails exist, and the Heroes must blaze their way through the lush undergrowth in order to make any headway. Strange trees, moss dangling from their branches, tower hundreds of yards above their heads, stretching roots into the stagnant pools at their base. Bracken and slime congeal along the ground, while patches of quicksand wait for the unwary. Animals abound within the bog, from cranes and herons to poisonous snakes to great crocodiles gliding deceptively beneath the surface. The party should be on their guard the instant they penetrate the wilderness.

If actively searching for signs of their friend, a Wits + Tracking or Trail Signs (whichever is higher) at TN 20 produces signs of Coleson’s passage. His path leads towards the ruins, although it is almost impossible to determine exactly where. His signs are intermittent, as if he were hurried making them. Considering the local wildlife, that isn’t an unreasonable assumption.

The party should reach the site after several days in the swamp – on the morning of the new moon. The ruins rise suddenly out of the swamp, masked by centuries of overgrowth and a preponderance of nearby trees. The Heroes are lucky to have Olivares’s map – they could camp thirty yards from the ruins and still have no idea



that they were there. How Coleson found it is anyone's guess.

The ruins consist mainly of a huge mosaic floor, stretching for hundreds of yards and covered with all manner of strange symbols. Tall towers, also encrusted with the omnipresent moss, stretch above the mosaic at strategic points, forming a pattern that cannot quite be discerned. Here and there, ruined walls poke through the greenery and piles of stones lie haphazardly about the ground. The entire area is rife with undergrowth; only small portions of the floor can be seen, and from a distance, the towers appear to be ordinary mossy tree-trunks.

As the party emerges from the surrounding bog, they spot a small camp set up in the geometric center of the ruins. Tents have been erected in a semi-circle while a small fire blazes merrily in the center. The smells of breakfast mix enticingly with the morning humidity. A small group of men works busily on the edges of the campsite, cutting the undergrowth away from the patterned floor. An earnest-looking woman

sketches the symbols which emerge. All of them start at the party's approach; no one else is supposed to be here, and the Shield Man who would ordinarily be on watch is missing.

Staying Above

Point Four assumes that the Heroes enter the catacombs in search of Coleson. While they do, the Caligaris strike, slaughtering the camp and waiting for the party to emerge with the all-important compasses. If, however, one or more Heroes wish to remain with the camp, you'll have to adjust things somewhat. The Caligaris wait to attack until just before Coleson's group returns. They fire their guns from the woods, cutting down the NPCs and just missing the Heroes. Let them return fire if they wish, although they can't hit anything just yet. Fredo waits until their ammunition is spent, and then steps from the treeline with his men, smiling maniacally.

The heroes with Coleson hear the sound of gunfire and screams of the dying and rush to investigate. They arrive just as Fredo and his men enter the camp. Allow Fredo to give his dastardly monologue, then conduct the climax as normal.

Above-ground Heroes who need something to do can search for the doorway to the control room. It takes a simple Wits roll at TN 25 to find the section: a broad square of tile marked with tiny Syrneth "letters." They may make one attempt per hour. A pair of indentations matching the compasses exactly mark the top corner. Inserting the compasses and turning them clockwise caused the whole slab to recess into the ground, revealing a stairway leading straight down. The stairway heads directly to the control room. The compasses only work on the day of the new moon when the stars permit the opening of the ruin site. The astronomical positioning occurs only twice a year.

The group belongs to Coleson's expedition, hired from Dionna without the consent of the Explorer's Society. After the initial shock, they welcome the Heroes into camp and offer them some breakfast. Coleson, they explain, isn't here. He discovered an entrance to the catacombs beneath the ruins, and took a small party to see what they could find. They've been gone for a few hours. The Heroes are welcome to go after him if they like: the entrance stands nearby, and Coleson always marks his path in case he gets lost. He might be gone all day, so if they need to get in touch with him, they should probably go in after him. Otherwise, they are welcome to remain in camp until he returns.

(The adventure's climax assumes that the party all goes into the catacombs; if one or more do not, consult the nearby box for tips on how to handle it.)

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The entrance stands some fifty yards away, a wide yawning doorway in the corner of a nearby tower. It stands taller than eight feet and appears thinner than normal; wide Heroes need to turn sideways in order to squeeze through. Coleson has marked the stone around it with chalk; further chalk marks can be found at regular intervals along the passages beyond. A strange staircase leads to the upper stories of the tower, but it has partially collapsed and is now choked with rubble. A smoother passageway winds downward in a tight spiral, marked by Coleson's chalk.

Once past the entrance, the light drops to nothing and the passageway becomes steep. The party must light torches or lanterns in order to see (the campsite has both if they failed to bring their own). After a sharp descent, it levels off, widening to the same sort of arching hallways seen at L'Il du Bête and elsewhere. The walls reflect the torchlight back at the party, revealing unearthly carvings and swirling patterns. Other hallways and rooms branch off, some choked with rubble, others wide open. Were Coleson's marks not so clear, it would be impossible to find him in such a maze.

Presumably, the party keeps to Coleson's path and doesn't go exploring on their own. No maps have been provided (the structure is large enough to require a module of its own), but everything centers around the great machine. If they do plow off in their own direction, they probably





find Coleson's path again, but not after a few harrowing scrapes. The GM should rub their nose in it a bit. Feel free to create a ruin monster using the rules on pp. 159-161 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide* or spring a few traps on them using the rules on pp. 195-201. Keep in mind, however, that Caligari and his henchmen wait outside, and an extensive combat might blunt the impact of their appearance.

If they follow Coleson's path, they find more signs of his passage, including a pair of traps which have been bypassed. One chamber contains a gigantic stone which drops from above; Coleson discovered the resetting mechanism and jammed a crowbar into the gears. The stone now hangs ominously some six feet off the ground, blocking the top of the exit. Heroes who monkey with the crowbar should be summarily crushed; a forgiving GM might wish to warn inquisitive Heroes with ominous grinding noises.

The second trap involves a series of spears which spring out from the hallway. Apparently, the spears caught one of Coleson's men: he stands pinned like a bug to the far wall. Pressure plates at the front and back of the hall activate the trap; Coleson has marked them clearly (Wits check, TN 10 to notice in the dark) and even if they don't see it, the trap has been sprung. Give them a scare if they step on the plate, but the trap is out of spears and can only hurl ominous noises.

Coleson's team (two men and one woman) can be found after about an hour. They cluster along the side of a corridor wall, examining a large hole caused by a beam which collapsed millennia ago. The beam pokes out of the top part of the hole, preventing the rest of the



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ceiling from falling into on it. A vast darkness lies beyond, lit by a few lanterns hung on the beam. A stout rope has been tied to a nearby outcropping, snaking down into the darkness.

The crew looks quite shocked to see anyone else in the ruins, but calms down when they realize the party means no harm. Coleson has gone down the rope, they explain; a large room lies beyond the hole, and he's determined to get a look. While the faint spark of his torch can be seen from the hole, he can't hear their calls and steadfastly ignores any efforts to get his attention. The Heroes must go down rope to retrieve him.

It takes a simple Strength roll, TN 15 to navigate the rope successfully. Failure indicates they slip and fall. The shaft is sixty feet deep and the Heroes fall when they are halfway down, taking 3k3 damage when they hit the stone floor.

Coleson's intuition was well-founded, for beyond the hole lies the heart of the ruins: the great Syrnych machine.

The hole opens into a huge vault, vaster than any the Heroes have yet seen. At first glance, they may think that they have returned to the surface, where night has inexplicably fallen. High above them, on the ceiling of the vault, are embedded hundreds of softly glowing stones which match the stars in tonight's sky perfectly; the Erebus Cross points down like an arrow from heaven at the machine.

The floor forms a series of catwalks and platforms, creating an elaborate spiderweb across the chamber. Huge gears, brass globes and other strange devices fill the vault both above and below the catwalks; the smallest of these devices is the size of a two-story house. They intermesh in a staggering pattern which tugs disturbingly at the onlookers' minds. The pattern shouldn't exist, yet patently does. Dust covers the entire array, and some of the pieces have clearly fallen into disrepair. Still, the entire vault hums with unseen power. A cluster of

mammoth crystalline shafts point skyward from the center. The Heroes can only imagine what dread purpose they serve.

At the center of the catwalks stands a platform carrying what appear to be the controls for the device. Shafts of crystal and metal widen to broad flat surfaces rife with knobs and levers. A pair of indentations on either side fit the twin compasses, and presumably activate the great device. A trellised stairway of thin but impossibly strong metal rises from the control platform towards the surface above. (Normally, the area can only be accessed through the doorway on the surface, which can only be opened by the compasses on the proper day. Time and falling beams have produced another opening.)

Coleson stands by the controls, marveling at what he sees. He tries desperately to shed light on the surrounding machinery, although his torch cannot possibly penetrate the gloom. So intent is he on his task that he doesn't notice the party until they reach the platform. At the sight of them, however, he visibly brightens and runs over to warmly shake their hands. He's as surprised as he is pleased to see them, and excitedly jabbars away about the things he's found here after only a few days.

"We stands in a treasure trove of secrets and enlightenment," he exclaims. "I can't imagine why the Society would quarantine this place..."

The Heroes may enlighten him at any time. Upon hearing of the deaths in Dionna and the terrible purpose of the engine, he pales visibly. When they tell him that the Caligaris are on their way, he has to sit down. After a few minutes, he quietly speaks.

"I was foolish to doubt the Society's reasons. I thought we had a right to know everything we could, that knowledge could only benefit mankind. Clearly, that isn't the case here. If this power fell into the wrong hands... We should leave. As quickly as possible."

Some Heroes may be tempted to activate the controls using the compasses. This should be strongly discouraged. Coleson goes to any lengths to stop them, including physically barring them from the controls if necessary. If they cannot be dissuaded (and suffer appropriate Reputation losses for whatever they do to Coleson), remind them that sections of the machine appear broken, and that activating it may provoke a disaster. Use the “What if the Bad Guys Win?” box to describe what happens, and give those smart enough to stay away from the panel a chance to run for their lives.

The party can escape by climbing the stairs, but if they don’t have the compasses, or haven’t figured out how to open the door at the top, they’re out of luck. It’s probably better to return the way they came; Coleson’s assistants can use the rope to lift them out without a problem (no check necessary), and they can backtrack quite rapidly to the entrance.

Regardless of how they exit the catacombs, however, they have a nasty surprise waiting for them outside. While they were exploring, Alfredo Caligari and his thugs arrived, intending to seize the engine for themselves. They’ve killed the other members of the expedition (minus any Heroes who stayed topside — see the “Staying Above” sidebar) and now wait for Coleson & Co. to emerge. Fredo stands in the center of the camp, swords drawn, surrounded by a gang of thugs.

“Thank you for keeping our artifact warm,” he sneers. “A pity you couldn’t keep your friends warm as well.”

Allow him to exchange threatening banter with the Heroes. He greets them courteously and complains about the trouble they’ve put them to. As payment for the inconvenience, he demands that they

show him to the engine and turn over the keys if they have it. He promises to let them live if they show him where the engine is (he’s lying, of course, but they don’t have to know that). If the Heroes left the compasses

What if the Bad Guys Win?

In the extremely unlikely event that Fredo Caligari and his men manage to overpower the Heroes, he sneeringly takes possession of the compasses and forces Coleson to show him the control room. The Heroes (most likely unconscious and left for dead at this point) come to with the sounds of Coleson’s dying screams and Fredo’s sadistic chuckle. How they react is up to them, but as injured as they are, it’s doubtful they could take on the Caligaris alone.

They needn’t worry however. With no idea how to operate the machine, and with time and erosion damaging several vital systems, the best Fredo can hope for is to start the contraption up. After several minutes gathering power, the engine’s damaged systems begin to seriously malfunction, sending huge arcs of energy smashing across the vault and into the rest of the machinery. In a panic, Fred tries to shut down the engine, only to find the compasses fused to the control panel. As the bolts from the damaged parts grow larger and larger, they start a chain reaction of malfunctions, cumulating in the destruction of the entire apparatus. The ruins collapsed in on themselves, taking the floor, towers and a large portion of the surrounding swamp with them. The compasses fall with the control panels, lost for all time. Give the Heroes an opportunity to run if they wish, escaping the destruction by the skin of their teeth.

It is possible to fix the machine and harness its power, but it would take years to do so. Simply trudging down and turning it on won’t work; it requires extensive study and a rough understanding of the machine’s true purpose to operate. One would need to return to L’Il du Bête and examine the messages of the silver pool, risking madness in order to glean precious information (see *Scoundrel’s Folly* for details). Only someone rich, patient, and very ruthless could accomplish such a task — someone like Giovanni Villanova, for instance.



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elsewhere, one of his henchmen produces them with an evil grin. “You should have hidden them deeper,” is all Fredo says.

The Heroes are free to use whatever means necessary to defeat the Caligaris. Fredo has ten Henchmen with him whom he won’t hesitate to use as shields if things get dicey. Coleson’s minions are Brutes, and lack any real combat training (the expedition’s shield-man was killed topside). The Caligaris make judicious use of the terrain, and numerous walls, trees and hanging vines to interpose themselves at appropriate moments. Fredo takes steps to avoid direct conflict, but if a one-on-one duel presents itself, he won’t hesitate to act. Play out combat as you wish and be sure to provide plenty of opportunities for outrageous swordplay.

Facing Alfredo, the Heroes are faced with something of a moral dilemma. Villanova has asked that they kill him, and in fact suggested that he would have either Fredo’s head or theirs before they left his territory alive. This raises the question: do they kill Fredo if the opportunity arises? And if so, have they killed him because he was a black-hearted scoundrel, or because Villanova wanted them to? If he dies in the heat of combat while trying to kill a Hero, there is little to be said. But what if they have him at a disadvantage? He can’t be charged with any crime (what Vodacce court would dare?) and leaving him tied up in such a desolate place would be tantamount to murder.

Unless they wish to kill him, they need to take him out of the swamp, which means that Villanova will find out that they ignored his request. Leaving Caligari alive produces no immediate repercussions (and indeed should merit a Reputation increase), but makes a permanent enemy out of Villanova. GMs should make a note of it and ensure that he reappears in the worst possible way at some future point in the campaign.

Once the Caligaris are dispatched, the party may leave the swamp whenever they like. If they choose to wait until

nightfall, the ruins provide a spectacular display of Syrneth power. As the stars come out, the mosaic symbols along the floor begin to glow, growing brighter as the evening continues. From a distance, the lights appear as swamp gas; the surrounding wilderness has hidden them for centuries. But standing amid them, with the undergrowth cleared away, the party watches the excavated symbols shine with a strange and heavenly brilliance. If the Heroes use the compasses on the doors, they almost fly upon, revealing the vast structure below. It hums with ominous power, while unsettling sparks fly from the damaged portions of the machine. It feels like standing at the foot of a god, watching the raw strength of the universe unfold. The effect is unsettling and supremely humbling, and any observers have troubled dreams for weeks thereafter.

The display continues until morning, when it slowly fades to nothing. The doors close at dawn and cannot be reopened for another six months. At no time should anyone actually venture down to the control room during the display. Those foolish enough to do so are never seen again.

Once they escape the swamp, Coleson recommends heading north to the Eisen frontier. No one wants to tangle with either the Villanovas or the Caligaris, and the lands to the north belong to the relatively benign Mondavi family. An uneventful trip deposits them in Eisen, where they can head to Freiburg and safety.

The Explorer’s Society is grateful for all their help and thanks them profusely. They also respectfully request that the Heroes turn over the Syrneth compasses for safe keeping. “If some scoundrel were to steal them from you, he could return to the ruins and wreak terrible havoc. I’m sure you agree that the compasses would be safest locked in our vaults.”

They’re hoping that the party gives them the compasses freely, but if necessary they will pay up to a thousand guilders apiece for them. Under Society protection, they

will be quite safe from those who wish to exploit their potential — or so they say. If the Caligaris ripped them from the Society's bosom, the Heroes might be less than willing to give them up. Let them decide if a pile of money is worth their peace of mind.

Coleson himself suffers a demotion for disobeying Society orders, and retreats to Carleon for a few months of demeaning clerical work. His friendship with the party remains intact however, and after serving his penance returns to the field with his usual exuberance. He can become a permanent contact for the Heroes, helping them out in times of need and occasionally approaching them for aid.

Giovanni Villanova also takes note of the Heroes' progress. If they disposed of Fredo Caligari, he realizes how useful they can be, and resolves to use them again in the future. If not, he resolves to make them pay for their defiance. Either way it spells bad news (and potentially great adventures) in the future.

Experience

For successfully finding Miguel Olivares, each Hero gains two experience points. For finding the Syrneth ruins, gain another two. Defeating Alfredo and his gang earns a single experience point. They may receive tangible benefits as well, such as the guilders paid by the Explorer's Society. Other rewards, including experience gained along the way, increased or decreased Reputation and so on, are up to the GM.

Changing Elements

The following encounters are designed to be placed in among the four hard points of the adventure. They aren't necessary to the overall plot, but provide plenty of excitement and intrigue as the party makes its way across Théah. All of them are at least peripherally connected to the main plot, either directly through the Heroes' movements or indirectly as distractions from their

mission. We've provided suggestions as to where they may be inserted, but their ultimate placement is up to the GM. You may use as many or few of them as you desire, and center them anywhere deemed appropriate. If you don't like one, or don't think it's right for your party, discard it and move on to another one. Certain encounters may require some adjusting, depending on where you finally put them.

In addition, we've assigned a difficulty level to each encounter, based on how difficult the encounter is. A particularly deadly threat will have a high point value, indicating that inexperienced Heroes might have a tough time with it. A less threatening encounter will have a lower point value, suggesting that powerful Heroes may want to skip it. Again, which ones you use is entirely up to you.

The first two encounters (with the Vesten raiders and Captain Chevalier, respectively) rely heavily on episodes which took place during earlier parts of *The Erebus Cross*. If the Heroes have not been through the previous modules — or if they have and simply didn't run into the characters in question — you may want to skip the encounter in favor of something else. This is especially true in the case of Chevalier, who won't have a reason to hound the party unless they crossed swords with him in *The Lady's Favor*.

1. Vesten Vision Quest

Ideally, this encounter should take place in San Augustin, as the Montaigne guns continue to rock the city. Otherwise, it takes place somewhere in occupied Castille — a bombed-out village or ruined fortress, whatever the GM wishes.

In *Scoundrel's Folly* the Heroes may have run into a band of Vesten raiders performing a strange ceremony on a hidden island. The Vesten allowed the Heroes to view the ceremony, despite having no idea if they could trust them or not. Now, as the party moves through the rubble-filled



streets, they spot a familiar white-bearded face staring at them from a nearby alley.

“Secrets are to be kept!” he calls out. “And the dead remember!”

The face belongs to Jarimir Gutmunsson, the *Vesten skjæren* who led the ceremony the Heroes witnessed. His wild barbarian features, horned helmet and leather jerkin seem out of place amid the temperate Castillian climate, but he smiles and beckons to them with a natural ease. If they approach, they find the remaining members of his warband – the dozen men and women seen at the ceremony – clustered behind him. After introducing himself (and his chief lieutenant Wulf – the man they saw branded with runes during the ceremony in *Scoundrel’s Folly*), he gets down to business.

“We have waited here for you,” the *skjæren* speaks calmly. “We knew you would come. My ancestors told us that our paths would cross twice. The first time, we allowed to witness our most sacred rites. Now, with the bond of trust we have formed, you will help us in our quest. You will help us, and then we will help you.”

The *Vesten* have been searching for an ancient set of runes, stolen from their homeland by the *Vendel* and sold to some Montaigne *noblesse* for a trifle. The runes contain the sacred spirits of their ancestors and the *Vesten* have tracked them to Castille in hopes of returning them to their native land. They believe the runes are being held in the house of a Castillian officer – one of the men leading the defense of the city – and hope to collect them before the Montaigne cannons pound them to rubble. (If outside San Augustin, this should be changed to a Montaigne officer.)

The problem is that... well... they’re *Vesten* raiders. No Castillian is going to let a gang of smelly,

unwashed barbarians into his house, even if invaders weren't pounding down the doors. The house stands behind army lines; taking it would involve tackling the entire Castillian command. Nor can they simply approach the officer and ask him to return their property. They've tried, and he won't even hear them. The house no doubt contains important military documents and the Vesten could be mercenaries working for anyone. He wouldn't allow them through the door. So they find themselves at an impasse with time running out; the longer they wait, the greater the chance a stray cannon shot will destroy the runes.

The Heroes, however, are in a position to help them. With a civilized bearing (and presumably better manners), they might convince the officer to sell or relinquish the runes without bloodshed. Even if they can't, they can get closer to the house than the Vesten could, and might be able to steal it for them. Either way, Jarmir reasons, they stand a far better chance of success than his band does. If they agree to help him, he promises to get them across the front lines without trouble — no mean feat in a conflict as heated as this one.

If they balk for some reason, he appeals to their sense of honor. "These runestones hold sacred ancestors within them: vital to the spiritual well-being of my people. By refusing to help us, you condemn my ancestors to an eternity in limbo. I beg of you, on your honor as 'gentlemen', aid us in our time of need." If they still refuse, the light goes out of his eyes and he shrugs. "One must not break the path the Fates have laid out for us. But you have your reasons, and I will respect them. Farewell." He and his band then quietly take their leave.

Jarmir isn't kidding; defying the will of the Fates carries dire repercussions. If the Heroes refuse to help him, they automatically fail any surreptitious attempt to cross the front lines (both in San Augustin and at the Delia) and must deal with the consequences. See Point One, "The Dogs of War," for more details.

Captan Jorge Mercado (or Paul Racine if he's Montaigne) has possession of the runes, which he purchased from a destitute nobleman some time ago. He carried them with him when the war began, and believes them to be good luck. They rest with the rest of his possessions in a townhouse near the north wall: headquarters for his division. Thus far, the building has avoided any heavy damage.

The Heroes may approach the problem however they wish; they can get through the army checkpoints by dropping his name and saying they have urgent business with him (they'll be divested of their weapons while they speak to him, of course). Mercado is very busy but will entertain any offers they have. Under normal circumstances, he won't part with his "good luck charms," but these aren't normal circumstances. If they can provide him with something to help the Castillian position, he'll hand them over. His price is high, but not insurmountable: 250 guilders in gold, payable to himself or the local quartermaster. Alternately, the party could produce food, ammunition, or other supplies needed by his men. If that is the case, he'll part with the runes for substantially less (say, twenty rifles with ammunition, or a pair of cannons from their ship). Superstition must eventually give way to pragmatism, after all.

Such a solution assumes the Heroes are strong bargainers and like to conduct their affairs up front. Other may wish to try a different approach. Daring scoundrels may wish to break in and steal the runes, while the more bull-headed may prefer just fighting their way through (this isn't recommended). Approximately ten soldiers occupy the house during the day (serving as guards or performing clerical duties). The number drops to five at night, but they are more alert, watching for any interlopers. Mercado keeps the runes beside his bedroll while he sleeps, and on his desk as a paperweight in the day. Allow the Heroes to concoct and execute any plan they wish; Castillian uniforms can be stolen from the

nearby supply center, and distractions can be produced in numerous ways. Jarmir and his band would even be willing to participate in a hit and run attack to draw attention away from them. Use the stats in the Character section and your best judgment to determine the final outcome.

The Vesten are ecstatic to see the return of their artifacts and make their enthusiasm known. True to his word, Jarmir provides the party with a means to cross the front lines without difficulty: a runestone inscribed with the sigil Nød (“Intensity”). When held and concentrated upon, the weather turns, and a thick fog, spreading for ten square miles, hides the Heroes. If the party uses it while crossing the lines, neither the Castillians nor the Montaignes see them. The rune can only be used once. See p. 205 of the *Players’ Guide* for more details on invoking an Inscribed rune.

Point Value: Low

2. Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot

While occupied Castille lacks the immediate dangers of the front, it still seethes with intrigue. The native Castillians resent Montaigne presence on their soil, and do whatever they can to disrupt the occupation. More Montaigne soldiers arrive all the time, and not all of them go to the front; some remain behind to guard supply lines, “pacify” the locals, or hunt down wanted criminals. Unfortunately, one of them has a past with the party... and as fate would have it, lies directly in their path.

During *The Lady’s Favor*, the Heroes met Captain Charles du Chevalier of the King’s Musketeers. Convinced that the party plotted treachery against the Montaigne crown, he pursued them halfway across Théah, stopping only when Mother Ussura herself turned against him. Returning to Charouse, he continued to pursue Montaigne’s enemies wherever they could be found. He recently uncovered a band of Castilian guerrillas operating out of the Charouse slums, and pursued them

back to their native land. Now he scours occupied Castille for signs of them, relying on Montaigne army units for support. He hasn’t found them yet, but as the Heroes can attest, he doesn’t give up easily. He’s in the midst of consulting some of his fellow countrymen when the party wanders into his line of sight.

Crossing occupied Castille is a surreal experience, reminiscent of their recent trip to Ussura (assuming they’ve played *the Lady’s Favor*, of course). With the countryside firmly in Montaigne’s grip, things have begun to return to a semblance of normality: crops grow in the fields, landlords collect their rent, and the populace goes about their business as they have for centuries. But just beneath the surface, signs of trouble can be seen. Cannon craters in the midst of the roads haven’t been repaired yet. Buildings torn down by fighting are only shoddily repaired. And Montaigne soldiers patrol every village square and crossroads. Normally, they don’t trouble the Heroes — who are clearly nobility — but they keep their guard up and watch them carefully as they pass.

The encounter takes place sometime in the afternoon, on the tail end of a long day’s travel. The Heroes stop at a small town to water their horses (if they have any) and take a rest. The village is in the midst of its afternoon siesta when they arrive; the neatly-kept houses are all quiet and the shops stand closed behind latched shuttered windows. They can water their mounts and wash the dust off their faces at the public fountain in the village square. As they approach, they can see a small group of Montaigne soldiers on the other side of the square at what appears to be an impromptu command post. The soldiers talk excitedly amongst themselves and take no notice of the party.

As they relax from the rigors of the journey, however, a familiar voice shouts their names. A tall blonde man wearing the tabard of the King’s Musketeers stands in the midst of the soldiers: Charles du Chevalier.



"I never thought Theus would be kind enough to bring us together again, *messieurs*," he grins as he draws his sword. "We are a long way from Ussura, no?" The other soldiers slowly tense as he moves forward. "Are you plotting some new evil against the crown? Or following me, hoping to come to terms? I suppose it doesn't matter. We have unfinished business to conclude. That is, if one of you has the spine to cross swords with me again."

Ideally, Chevalier would like to throw the party in prison for what they've done. Unfortunately, his code of honor forbids it; General Montegue sanctioned their actions and they are no longer considered enemies of the Empereur. But while the crown may not want them, Chevalier certainly does; his pride has smarted ever since his defeat in Ussura and he itches for satisfaction. A duel with the party's best swordsman would scratch that itch nicely.

The Heroes can handle this however they like. Chevalier doesn't want a duel to the death; merely the first cut. If the Heroes acquiesce, they have no problems. If not, however, Chevalier's friends try to bully them into attacking: questioning their honor, mocking their cowardice and insulting them as only Montaigne can. If they strike one of the soldiers, they'll be arrested (although they can probably overpower the small squad if they need to). There are ten soldiers (Brutes; see p. 53) in the square, in addition to Chevalier himself.

The duel itself can take place anywhere, using whatever rules the respective heroes wishes. If Chevalier wins, he smiles grimly and slices the Hero across the ear. "Something to remember me by." If the Hero wins, he curse to himself and glares at them until the ride out of town. Victory sates his honor, and he henceforth leaves



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the Heroes alone. Defeat only fuels his need for honorable satisfaction. Whoever wins the duel gains one Reputation point; this point is forfeit if the Hero cheats or uses dishonorable means to win (Chevalier won't). Killing Chevalier — even by accident — costs the party one Reputation point each and engenders their immediate arrest by the soldiers. Even if they escape, they are now wanted for murder and every Montaigne in Castille will be on the lookout for them. Be careful with those sharp swords, kids.

If the duel goes on for more than a few rounds, the village populace slowly wakes up and begins to cluster around the square. They begin cheering the Hero's efforts, urging him on with praise and applauding every time Chevalier slips up. If they defeat the Musketeer, the townsfolk let out a wild cheer and carry the victorious Hero off on their shoulders. GMs interested in keeping the mood light can leave it at that. Otherwise, one of the soldiers takes offense at the perceived slight and fires into the crowd. It's up to the Heroes to stop a bloodbath, either by incapacitating the Montaignes, or by helping the townsfolk defend themselves. If you choose this option, be prepared to adjust the remainder of their journey to San Cristobal accordingly (they'll probably end up wanted by the Montaigne, but word of their heroism will spread, and the local Castillians help them however they can). Chevalier refuses to fire on civilians, but defends his fellow Montaigne as necessary.

Point Value: Medium

3. *Ghost on the Water*

If the Heroes travel by sea from San Augustin to San Cristobal, they face several obstacles. The Montaigne navy holds the southeastern corner of La Boca de Cielo, where they spar with the remains of the Castillian armada (those that weren't sunk off of Avalon). In between the occasional battles, merchant ships and other transport try to go about their business. Several times during the trip, the Heroes' ship is stopped and searched by captains on

either side. They seize any military supplies (rifles, cannon not used to defend the ship, etc.), and search the ship for smuggled goods, but as long as the party doesn't fly either side's flag (or carry wanted political prisoners in their hold), they are allowed to go on their way. Diplomatic papers, obvious signs of noble birth and other mitigating factors might make these encounters easier.

The further north the ship goes, the more the military traffic drops off. They're in Castillian waters now, where the Montaigne have been unable to remain for very long. The party begins to feel as if they've left the war behind.

Several days out from San Cristobal, a heavy fog drops over the ship. The captain drops anchor (seaworthy Heroes understand why) as the white mist envelops them, reducing visibility to almost nothing. It remains that way for an hour or so; the sea becomes eerily calm, the cries of the gulls diminish and the only sound the crew can hear is that of their own breathing. Then, from off in the distance, comes the noise of oars. A shadowy form appears in the fog — a small sailboat, now being rowed by an earnest-looking Castillian in wet clothes.

"Hallo!" he cries at sight of the ship. "Permission requested to come aboard!"

Assuming the party lowers a rope and lets him on board, he bows stiffly and explains himself. His name is Viego Garcia, a wayward Don who had gone out pleasure sailing when the fog dropped. He had tried to row back to shore, but soon became hopelessly lost. He was ready to give up hope when he saw the mast of the party's ship, and rowed to it. He entreats them to permit him to remain on board until the fog lifts, when he can use their maps and cartography equipment to return to shore. If they agree he thanks them for their courtesy and takes a seat somewhere unobtrusive.

As you may have guessed, Garcia is not what he appears to be. He died five years ago when his pleasure craft was struck by another ship in a heavy fog. Since then, his

ghost has wandered La Boca de Cielo in search of respite. The party's ship represents the first contact he's had with living human beings, and he latches on to them with the desperation of the damned.

None of this becomes apparent right away. At first, he chats amiably with the crewmembers, answering questions about his life. As time goes on, however, small discrepancies begin to emerge. For one thing, his clothes haven't dried at all since coming aboard. They remain soaked, despite the presence of a nearby lantern. Dark circles have begun to form under his eyes. As the evening goes on, he grows slowly paler and his skin becomes clammy and fish-like. His eyes stare with mute agony and the friendly demeanor he began with has faded to a mournful horror. His stories gradually move from the warm slopes of Castille to the cold depths of the ocean and the terrifying circumstances of his death. At this point a small crab crawls from the tangle of his hair and drops onto the deck.

Once the party realizes his true nature, Garcia drops the pretense. He has found a new home and will continue to haunt the ship until his spirit is laid to rest. As with most ghosts, he is intangible and cannot be harmed by normal weapons. He cannot cause any physical damage, but his presence has a chilling effect on everyone on board. At night, he moans his woes while the party tries to sleep. By day, he appears and disappears seemingly at random, showing up whenever the party least suspects it. His continued presence on board eventually causes unfortunate "accidents" to occur. In rules terms, the GM can force any character on board to reroll any Skill check of TN 20 or higher while Garcia remains. Only one reroll per character per voyage is allowed.

If there are any Avalon Heroes in the party, things get even worse. Garcia lost two brothers with the Castillian armada, and never forgave Avalon. He therefore latches onto the Hero instead of the ship, haunting him or her as revenge for his lost brothers. He vanishes when they land

on San Cristobal and remains out of sight until the adventure is over, but thereafter plagues the Hero on a regular basis. No one save the Hero and his friends (those on the ship when Garcia arrived) can see or hear him. His presence has an effect equivalent to the Hubris "Misfortunate" on the Hero for as long as he remains. This doesn't apply to Inish or Highland Heroes, whom Garcia has no interest in.

In order to end the haunting, the party must lay Garcia's spirit to rest: no easy task. His body lies beneath the waves and all evidence of his former life has been destroyed in the war. With no trace of his life remaining, the party must endeavor to create one: a monument in his native village or province. If he's haunting an Avalon Hero, the monument must be dedicated to his two dead brothers. Such a monument can be in any format the Heroes like, but it must be permanent (made of stone or similar material) and cost no less than 250 guilders. The Heroes must construct the monument themselves, although they can retain the services of an architect or an engineer if they need to.

The Montaigne represent another obstacle, however. They currently hold Garcia's native province, and have no wish to erect statues to "wanted Castillian criminals." The Heroes need to convince the authorities to let them build, which requires some high level schmoozing and/or a number of well-placed bribes in order to work. Exact details are up to the GM and should wait until the current adventure is completed. Once the monument has been built, Garcia's spirit can rest and he fades away, never to trouble them again.

Point Value: Medium

4. Children's Games

This encounter is intended to take place in San Cristobal, although it can also occur in Dionna if the GM wishes. The Heroes are passing through a wide plaza surrounded by some of the oldest buildings in the city — a beautiful

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area teeming with pedestrian traffic and countless pigeons weaving between their feet. Suddenly, a cry goes up from the far end of the square; an old lady has been knocked over by a group of urchin children who dance about her tauntingly. Two other children run past the Heroes as they watch, sending huge clouds of pigeons into the air. They carry a bulging sack between them, and as they run by, the gleam of jewels can be seen. The woman's cries become more coherent: "Thieves! Thieves!"

The children around the old lady scatter the instant any heroes approach, leaving the old woman rattled but unharmed. The two carrying the bag prove tougher catches, however. They lead any pursuing Heroes on a merry chase through the city, using their small size and nimble dexterity to make up for their short legs. They

scamper through drain pipes, up and across rooftops, and anything else they can do to lose their pursuers.

There are three Raises between the Heroes and the children at the start of the chase. Use the rules on pp. 169-172 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide* to run the chase. If they catch the urchins, they can return the bag to the old lady without a problem (unfortunately, it has little of value; a few paste jewels and some brass kitchen utensils she was on her way to pawn). If the chase lasts longer than twelve rounds, the children disappear into a culvert beneath an abandoned tenement. The Heroes are too large to fit through such a narrow opening, but a quick exploration of the tenement above produces a stairway leading down.

Another small urchin guards the stairs, fleeing to warn his master the instant the party appears. By the time they descend, the entire populace has assembled. Beneath the



building lies a huge basement, holding what appears to be a burgeoning pickpocket industry. A variety of stolen items lies across one portion of the floor, piled neatly by category. Cramped sleeping quarters for dozens of children cram the other side of the floor: hammocks and bedmats stacked on top of each other in appalling squalor. The children have gathered in the center of the room, surrounding a trio of men who gaze at the Heroes with hate in their eyes.

“You’re upsetting our family. Leave. Now.”

The men run a pickpocketing ring, using the homeless children of the city as their bagmen. In exchange for the money they produce, the children receive safety from other criminals and enough food to stay alive. While it may seem inhumanly cruel, the children know nothing better, and have become grateful to their “bosses” for the small comforts and safety they provide. If the party attacks or makes threatening moves, the children surge forward in a wave while the thugs make good their escape through a trap door to the building above.

It takes three rounds to clear the children without harming any of them (treat them as brutes; using non-lethal force against them goes without question, of course). The three men are easy to spot on the street if the Heroes get clear, and won’t put up much of a fight if caught. The authorities can haul them off to jail with a minimum of fuss, and most of the children can be rounded up and sent to Vaticine orphanages. Those who don’t will remember the Heroes, however, and in five or ten years may be old enough to plot revenge. Exploitative or not, those three men were the closest they had to family, and family doesn’t forget its kin...

The old woman has little of value (she was pawning her possessions to keep from being evicted), but thanks the Heroes for their help. Her dress is ragged and worn, and she carries herself with an air of quiet desperation. While she never speaks of her troubles, kind-hearted Heroes may notice that she is out of sorts and offer to help. She

gratefully pockets any funds they offer her, and tells them that “Theus remembers the kindness of strangers.”

Point Value: Low

5. *Vodacce Manners*

The complex framework of Vodacce honor can be inscrutable to outsiders. A seemingly harmless gesture can set them off, while backstabbing and betrayal elicit nothing more than a shrug. Knowing where to step is vital to surviving in Vodacce – with Fate Witches and expert swordsmen in every town, an inadvertent insult can cost you more than just face. The party is about to receive an object lesson in Vodacce manners; as with the previous encounter, it starts with a woman in trouble.

At some point in their stay in Dionna, the party is walking along one of the countless canals that form the city’s streets. The area is sparsely traveled and only a few other pedestrians can be seen. Suddenly, a cry from above splits the air; three stories up, one of the latticework bridges has buckled. A woman dressed in a Fate Witch’s veil hangs precariously by the frayed ropes, trying desperately to find a handhold. As they watch, she loses her grip and plunges straight into the canal with a loud splash. Stunned by the blow, she sinks beneath the water without a sound.

Heroes who dive in can rescue the witch without a problem; she is very small and weighs less than 100 lbs. She revives upon being pulled from the water, and thanks the Heroes profusely for their help. “The threads hid my fate from me, but I thank them for placing you here in my path.” She introduces herself as Lucretta Biancastro, and offers her services should they ever require it. She keeps her head down while she speaks, for her veil flew off during the fall, leaving her face bare before the Heroes. Although she carries herself with great maturity, her youth is stamped upon her features; she’s barely seventeen years old.

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Their discussion is interrupted by a large red-faced man who storms out of a nearby building. He gestures angrily at the party, shouting at the top of his lungs.

“You there! Get away from my wife! How dare you presume to speak to Lucretta in that manner?!”

As he steps up, he belts the nearest Hero in the jaw, simultaneously interposing himself between Lucretta and the party. If the Heroes try to explain what happen, it only makes the situation worse.

“Are you saying I can’t take care of my wife?! That I need some *foreigner* to defend her for me?! Stand up and draw your sword so you can die like a man!”

While he shouts, six other burly men exit the house and move menacingly upon the party.

The man is Fausto Biancastro (Fausto the Pale), Lucretta’s husband. He’s terrified for his wife’s safety, and ashamed that he couldn’t save her from the fall. He’s projected his fears onto the Heroes and feels – quite legitimately according to Vodacce honor – that they’ve questioned his manhood by rescuing her when he couldn’t. The other burly men are his cousins, here to defend the family honor. Despite his rhetoric about sword-drawing, he carries no blade. The men have clubs and axe handles with which they intend to beat the party senseless.

(If for some reason the Heroes neglected to rescue the Fate Witch, he blames them for the drowning and instigates the fight anyway.)

Assuming the party meets force with force (*i.e* bumps and bruises instead of lethal damage), Fausto & Co. do not escalate things. The Heroes have to knock them unconscious, but there’s plenty of props around if they need help. Several gondolas float along the canal, with oars and easily-detached tillers for bashing. Numerous flower pots stand on nearby windowsills while a stone bridge on the corner holds several unlit lanterns. The Heroes can commit whatever swashbuckling mayhem

they wish in the course of defending themselves — as long as it stays non-lethal.

If Fausto somehow manages to pummel the party unconscious, he scoffs and leaves them there bleeding in the streets. They wake up with splitting headaches and their money missing (criminals know an easy mark when they see one). They can return to the building where he emerged and demand restitution in the form of a duel, but if he beat them up with just a few wooden clubs, crossing swords with him might not be the best idea.

If they succeed in knocking them out, however, Lucretta (who watched the entire proceeding with a mixture of amusement and horror) asks them to be on their way. “Fausto’s a little hot-headed, but he means well. Please, as a further favor to me, leave before he awakens.” Replacing her veil, she kneels before her husband’s prostrate form and tries to rouse him.

Strangely enough, when Fausto comes to, he considers the whole matter dropped. By defeating him, the Heroes proved their worth; any man capable of pounding him senseless can defend his wife any time. Just before they leave Dionna, the heroes receive a sealed letter from him containing a gold Old Empire coin (worth approximately 2 guilders) and a note reading “For services rendered.” It is signed by Fausto Biancastro. The payment assuages his ego, but more importantly acts as a gesture of respect from him to them. Vodacce Heroes realize the gift’s significance.

If they kill Fausto, or any of his cousins, things go much worse. Lucretta dismisses them with a cold-eyed stare and ignores any further entreaties. Several days later, while passing along a crowded street, the party narrowly avoids a runaway cart which comes out of nowhere. Later that evening, a stone breaks loose from a corner building and falls directly in front of them. Clearly, Fausto’s wife is taking matters into her own hands. Trying to find her proves fruitless; their house stands abandoned and no one knows where they went. Once they leave Dionna (and they should be begging to get out of the place once

Villanova’s done with them), the incidents stop, and Lucretta leaves them alone thereafter. The point’s been made.

Pow Value: Low-Medium

6. *Bait and Switch*

This encounter takes place on mainland Vodacce, before the party reaches the swamp. If they’re traveling overland from San Cristobal, it can occur before they reach Dionna. Otherwise, it takes place on the road between landfall and the great bog hiding the ruins.

Not all Secret Societies in Théah are as well off as the Explorers. Some survive under desperate circumstances, hiding members in basements for fear of discovery. They live their lives day to day, and trust no one outside their order. Members vanish into the night, leaving successors to wonder what became of them, and enemies lurk behind every smiling face. Yet still they continue, convinced of the justice of their actions and the burning cause which will see them through.

Such a conspiracy is Sophia’s Daughters, a secretive sisterhood of Vodacce women dedicated to equality between the sexes. They believe women should be able to hold power, own property, and lead nations just as their male counterparts do. In 1668 Théah (and particularly in Vodacce, which strictly defines the roles each sex plays), these ideas are grounds for burning. Sophia’s Daughters have formed to fight that discrimination, protect women in danger and give their political agenda the legitimacy it deserves. Theirs is a dangerous life, marked by betrayal, fear, and intense secrecy. But as the party will soon learn, they don’t give up easily.

The encounter takes place at a crossroads in Villanova lands, in the middle of an otherwise uneventful day. One road leads north towards Eisen and Castille. The other leads northeast towards open farmland and the swamps. As the Heroes draw near the crossroads, they see an

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shape of a peacock and her lips smile enticingly as she offers her hand to the nearest Hero.

The woman is Juliette, courtesan consort to Villanova. She's escorting two Fate Witches to the Vodacce frontier in hopes of reaching safety. The first defied Vodacce law by learning to read and write... and forge her husband's signature. The second was married on her twelfth birthday to a man six times her age. The marriage contract stipulated that she could never marry again, even after her husband died. Even though he's been in the ground for nearly a decade, her pregnancy violates the contract. (Her lover has petitioned the surviving family several times to wed her and been summarily turned down.) They've made good time from the islands, but she fears she's being followed, and doesn't wish to divulge the location of the safe house they are journeying to. A few tweaks of the fate threads brought the Heroes across her path, and she intends to make good use of them.

After introductions have been made (she calls herself "Bernadette Sophia"), she explains her plight. Her traveling companions are on the run from vile and abusive men who would kill them

elaborate coach traveling parallel along the other road. It bears the standard of the Seven Princes along its scarlet side and a team of six chestnut horses at its front. The horses puff and blow with great exertion, suggesting that they have been driven for some time. The carriage pulls to the crossroads just as the party arrives, and slows to a halt in midst of their path. The coachman steps down from his post and opens the door, revealing a sumptuous interior. Two women in Fate Witches' robes sit hunched in a corner; one of them is noticeably pregnant. The view becomes quickly blocked, however, by the gaudily-dressed brunette who steps from the carriage and bows politely before the party. She wears a brilliant mask in the

if they ever caught up to them. They are trying to reach the border, but she fears they are being followed. As the Heroes seem like honest men, she asks them if they will help "three helpless ladies" in their plight.

Simply put, she wishes to trade places with them. She'll give them the coach and horses, along with her coachman's uniforms and a small fee. In exchange, they'll give her their horses (if they have any) and the clothes on their backs. Thus disguised, they can avoid their pursuers and reach the border safely. The Heroes, on the other hand, can serve as a decoy. They can take her coach wherever they wish to go, and her pursuers will follow. If they balk at the potential danger, she assures them that,

while the men behind her may be observant, they possess few combat skills.

“They have no designs on you, nor do they present any tangible threat. They simply want to find out who we are and where we’re going. If it really concerns you, you can simply wait here and slay them when they arrive; they’ll give you no trouble. I would have thought that such brave men (and women) wouldn’t be concerned with such matters.”

The coach is quite valuable and worth many hundreds of guilders if returned to civilization. Juliette can offer up to 100 Vodacce Republics in addition to the coach and horses. They can store any equipment they have in the back of the carriage, and of course she’d allow them to keep whatever weapons they have. If they truly balk, she has an ace up her sleeve: unmarked traveling papers granting full access to Villanova lands. Heroes on Giovanni’s bad side could use them to escape his grasp without a hitch, he had planned to use them herself, but since one of her passengers is a forger, she can create another set if she needs to. All the Heroes have to do is give her a disguise.

Assuming they agree, she’ll ask the three smallest men in the party to hand over their clothes, while a fourth Hero changes outfits with her coachmen. The women change in the carriage, and while the clothes are a little baggy, they fit well enough to fool a distant observer. Any female Heroes are welcome to take the women’s outfits, but Juliette’s smart enough not to ask any men to wear a dress. As long as they stay in the coach, the deception remains intact. She’ll ask to take all of the Heroes’ horses as well, even though there are only four people in her party; otherwise, the disguise won’t work. If a Hero absolutely can’t part with an animal, she’ll promise to put it up at the next stable she comes to. The horses pulling the carriage are of the finest quality, so there’s little chance of some kind of a swindle. Any Heroes going after the horses she’s agreed to put up (presumably after the

adventure) find them in a town some five miles up the road, healthy and well maintained.

The two fate witches do not talk during the exchange, but Juliette goes out of her way to thank the Heroes; a little flattery goes a long way. In addition to any other rewards she’s given, she promises to remember the kindness they’ve done here. “If you ever have need of Sophia’s aid, she and her children will return this favor,” she tells them.

The Heroes may assume she’s speaking about herself, “Bernadette Sophia.” She’s happy to let them go on thinking that, but that doesn’t mean that her promise is invalid. The Daughters always repay their debts.

Once the exchange is complete, she and her companions mount up and ride off on the northern road. The pregnant woman rides side-saddle in traditional “woman’s” fashion, but the other two ride like men – as befits their new disguise. When they reach the bend in the road, they turn and salute the party before riding out of sight.

It’s not that simple, of course. The men following her (and now following the Heroes) have every intention of killing her once they learn who her contacts are. Juliette’s ruse works perfectly, however, so now they’re following the party with the same intention. They gradually grow closer as the day goes on, taking care not to reveal themselves. They use the terrain to good advantage, keeping just behind the last hill or using a nearby copse of trees to shield themselves. It takes a Wits + Ambush TN 25 check to notice them and those inside the coach may not make a check. By late afternoon, they stand ready to spring.

The trigger comes in the form of a farmer, a simple man traveling along the same road as the party. He has sold a pig in a nearby town and is walking back home when the Heroes’ coach passes him. Eager for some company on his long trip, he flags them down. He wants nothing more than a few minutes conversation and an idea of the road



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ahead. The pursuers, believing him to be Juliette's contact and the link to Sophia's Daughters, decide to capture him along with their "prey." When the party stops and have a chance to talk with him a bit, they strike.

They first try to set fire to the coach. A lit torch comes flying from a nearby field, landing squarely on the roof of the carriage. Heroes with guns at the ready (GM's discretion) may shoot the torch out of the air with a Finesse + Firearms check at TN 30. Otherwise, it ignites the cloth on top of the carriage; the party must spend a combined total of four rounds putting it out (two Heroes working together may put it out in two rounds; four may put it out in a single round). If it isn't addressed within three rounds, it spreads to the entire coach and cannot be put out. The panicked horses need to be cut free, or else they flee with the carriage (and any passengers along with it).

With the coach alight (or the sound of a gunshot), the miscreants emerge from the field in a snarling mass, brandishing pistols and sharp knives. They're expecting three helpless women and an overweight coachman; the sight of well-armed Heroes draws them up short. They stand at the edge of the field, for a moment, trying to summon the nerve to move. If the Heroes take any menacing action, they flee. If cornered, they fight blindly, but otherwise do their utmost to escape. Use the Vodacce thug stats for them if combat ensues. The party need not worry about them if they get away; Juliette's ruse has already worked, and her charges are now safely out of their reach. They must go back to their masters and report failure, a fate even the vilest dog doesn't deserve. They won't trouble the Heroes again. The farmer has nothing to do with the attack, and cowers by the side of the road if fighting occurs. He's never seen the thugs before in his life, and in fact depends on the Heroes to defend him from them.

No stats have been provided for Juliette; a brief description of her can be found in the Character section

and on pp. 114 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide*. The coach cannot pass through the swamp and will have to be temporarily abandoned during the final phase of the adventure. No one steals it while they're gone, however (for all they know, it might belong to Villanova).

Point Value: Medium

7. Attack of the Bog Beast

Few human beings penetrate the vast swamp around the Vodacce ruins, but that doesn't mean that they are empty. Wildlife of every variety can be found there, both harmless and not so harmless. If the GM wishes to spice up to the trek through the swamp, throw an animal attack or two at them. Stats for crocodiles and poisonous snakes can be found at the end of the Character section. More exotic beasts such as aspreys are located on pp. 153-163 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide*.

Beyond these mundane threats, however, lie even more terrifying creatures. Monsters and supernatural predators stalk the swamp, obeying nothing save their unnatural appetites. While most subsist quite happily on the local fauna, the occasional trapper or explorer makes a delicious between-meals snack.

The beast in question lurks between the Heroes and the ruins, waiting for unwary passersby. Its huge size is matched only by its highly developed camouflage. The creature fills an entire clearing, hiding most of its bulk beneath a bracken-filled pool of water. Its great limbs resemble small trees, while its slime-encrusted skin matches the color of the nearby mud. Numerous tentacles dangle from the nearby branches, looking as innocuous as the vines and moss. Its gaping fanged gullet lies beneath the water, invisible to anyone passing by. Someone could walk directly on top of the creature and never know it was there.

When they arrive, the Heroes presumably skirt the pond, sticking to the driest land available. The creature waits until they have crossed halfway, then launches its assault.

Using its tentacles, it attempts to drag the Heroes into the water, where it will drown and/or dismember them, then devour their corpses at leisure. It has a total of fourteen tentacles, spaced evenly around the clearing; two can attack each Hero at once. They're long enough, however, to attack any Hero within the clearing, regardless of where he or she is positioned. The Heroes must move at least fifty yards from the clearing to avoid every attacks; the area is covered with trees and muddy ponds, so doing so is very difficult. Each tentacle attacks with the equivalent of Grapple 3 or Bear Hug 3, and tries to push its target into the water.

While the tentacles move to ensnare the party, the tree-limbs shift to block any escape. It takes a Finesse + Side-step check at TN 20 to get past them. There are six tree-limbs total.

Surprisingly, the only way the creature has to cause direct damage is through its mouth. Anyone in the water suffers a 4k3 attack from its razored teeth. The maw causes 3k3 damage to anyone it bites.

Each tree-limb takes 20 points of damage before being destroyed (providing an opening for the Heroes to escape if necessary). The tentacles take 15 points of damage each before severing, while the body itself can suffer up to 50 points of damage before expiring. Inflicting 75 total points of damage to it kills the creature regardless. Complete stats for the bog beast can be found in the Character section below.

Once slain, its stomach vomits up the remains of past victims as its vital systems shut down. The water churns into a loathsome pool of slime, ejecting pieces of crocodiles, herons and the occasional human being. The monster's great mouth becomes visible for the first time, exposing a ring of shark-like teeth and a tongue the color of rotten meat. Its limbs and tentacles come crashing to the group, relieving the clearing of some of its foliage. The teeth are worth one guilder each to a zoologist, although prying them off takes a great deal of time.

Meanwhile, the smell from the thing becomes unbearable; wise Heroes will keep the party moving rather than waiting to see what creatures are attracted to the stench. The first crocodile arrives within ten minutes.

Point Value: High

Characters

The Arrow of Heaven contains more character interaction than earlier installments of *The Erebus Cross*. At the same time, however, many of the NPC only appear in one or two scenes (as opposed to earlier adventures, where they would accompany the Heroes for the length of the campaign). We've defined "major characters" as those who play a pivotal role in the central plot, not necessarily those who appear the most often. Minor characters may be "onscreen" longer than their major counterparts; they simply don't have as important a part to play. Some characters (such as Dominick the clerk in "Truth and Consequences") have no entries at all. They serve mainly as flavor or information conduits, and don't engage in any activities requiring a full description.

Alfredo Caligari

Villain

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

Reputation: -39

Arcana: Cruel Advantages: Vodacce (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne, Noble, Swordsman's Guild

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 2, Scheming 3

Hunter: Stealth 3, Tracking 4, Trail Signs 2, Ambush 3

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



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Ambrogia (Journeyman): Feint (Fencing) 4, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Ambrogia): 5

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye-gouge 3, Throat strike 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3

The Caligari family runs at the behest of its patriarch, Vincenzo. Half-mad with his desire for immortality, Vincenzo has sent his clan out to every corner of the globe in search of Syrneth artifacts to grant him his desire. Some, like his son Lucas, follow his dictates reluctantly. Others, like his grand-nephew Alfredo, embrace it with all their heart.

Fredo realized from an early age that true power in his family did not lie with the merchants. They sold the Syrneth artifacts for great profit, generating the income which solidified Caligari power. But they never looked beyond their product, never saw the need which drove their sales and investments. For all the money they accrued, they were merely puppets. Great-uncle Vincenzo on the other hand, he saw things clearly. The Syrneth held the key to godhood; money was just useful side-effect. Fredo knew what side of the equation he wanted to be on when the chips came down.

Since then, he has served Vincenzo faithfully as an assassin, duelist and hunter. He finds artifacts which his uncle desires and convinces their owners to turn them over. The recalcitrant end up in a pool of their own blood. He's learned that his great-uncle doesn't tolerate failure. The only time he neglected to return with his prize, he received a verbal assault so fierce he couldn't sleep for a week. Vincenzo turned on him like a man possessed, showing strength and vigor positively frightening for a man his age. The incident so scarred him that he works harder than ever to achieve Vincenzo's end. In that sense, he's truly fearless, for any danger is preferable to facing the patriarch's wrath again.

Today, the old man sees him as one of his most useful tools, and uses him to perform less savory missions. Fredo has killed over twenty people at his uncle's command, and seen things more horrifying than any man should bear. He never speaks a word of it, and Vincenzo has learned to trust the boy's discretion. The combination of doting encouragement and mind-freezing terror has made him a psychotic child. His goals remain the same, but all the warmth and compassion that might have tempered them were drained out long ago.

Secretly, he revels in the frustration the rest of his family feels towards their long-lived paterfamilias, and wants to see Vincenzo attain immortality just to watch them squirm. He believes that if he is loyal enough, his great-uncle will share the secret to eternal life when he finds it. The belief makes him ruthless, cruel and utterly heartless. Fredo is a young man, but he won't stay young forever; the harder he pushes, the greater his chance for eternal reward. (Vincenzo has no intention of giving the secret to anybody else, but he realizes that the hope of it makes Fredo more useful to him. Should the young man learn otherwise, his uncle will have a new enemy).

Image: Fredo is a tall man, well-built with a cocky swagger. He wears his black hair loose about his shoulders and his dark eyes smolder with constant anger. (That's Fredo on the cover of this book.) He's too frightened of his great-uncle to ever disobey him, and obeys any edict from Vincenzo to the letter. While he has the moral of a shark, he maintains his noble upbringing, and exhibits proper manners at all times. He carries two rapiers thrust into his belt, and is equally skilled with either hand. He finds the sight of blood soothing and prefers to kill his victims up close, rather than shooting them from a distance. Like most Vodacce nobles, he's very good at concealing the evidence.

Miguel Olivares

Hero

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

Reputation: 89

Arcana: Creative

Background: Fear 1 (Inquisition)

Advantages: Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Faith, Membership (Invisible College), University

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Sincerity 3

Merchant: Scribe 3, Calligrapher 4

Sailor: Balance 1, Climbing 1, Knotwork 1, Rigging 1, Cartography 5

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 4, Research 5, Astronomy 5, Occult 4, Theology 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

An orphan from the age of eight, Miguel grew up as a ward of the Vaticine Church. His father had been a minor Don, and while he died with no money, his name was enough to ensure the boy's future. Miguel spent most of his formative years ensconced in a monastery, devouring every book he could find.

He learned the value of science early on and, coupled with the faith instilled in him by his Vaticine teachers, it taught him how extraordinary Theus's creation could be. He resolved not to let his vision go unshared, and began teaching almost immediately upon receiving his letters. He had a knack for cartography and an instinctive grasp of the stars, traits that the university at San Augustin had dire need of.

Over the next several decades, he advanced his reputation beyond everyone's expectations. His students loved him dearly, and his classes were the most popular

on campus. When he wasn't teaching, he drew maps, and soon became known as the best cartographer in Castille. Countless explorers depended upon his expertise to render their findings, and the mighty armada used him almost exclusively to plot courses for them. Nobles paid extravagant amounts just to have him chart their estates, and his fame soon spread to the furthest corners of Théah.

During this time, however, something changed in the Castillian universities. A new political force had entered the equation; sinister, ruthless and without mercy. The Inquisition declared a holy war on learning, threatening centuries of knowledge with their blind zeal. Miguel, who believed that science was Theus's most beautiful gift, resolved to stop them. He joined the Invisible College, helping them to fight the Inquisition's fires in any way he could.

The war with Montaigne brought some respite from the Inquisition, but also a new threat in the form of cannon and mortar. Miguel worked through the war as best he could, using the chaos to smuggle countless pieces of knowledge past Verdugo's men. As the years have gone by and friends have begun falling to the torch, he's grown more paranoid, seeing Inquisitors behind every friendly face. The friendly man he used to be is slowly fading, replaced by a muttering crackpot. Still, his belief in the cause remains clear, which has kept his mind on an even keel. He knows where his priorities lie, and if necessary will die to protect them.

Image: Miguel is approaching fifty, with wispy hair and a piercing gaze. He's taken to wearing Vaticine robes, even though he was never ordained and his connection to the Church is unofficial. He speaks rapidly, and his eyes tend to dart during conversations: watching the corners for enemies. Since leaving San Augustin (detailed above), he's grown more sallow and his skin has lost its natural ruddiness. His hands move with effortless



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precision, and he remembers everything he sees; for all of his suffering, he's still the best mapmaker in Théah.

Reginald Coleson

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

Reputation: 23

Advantages: Keen Senses, Explorer's Society, University, Linguist: Montaigne (R/W), Castille (R/W), Théan (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Vendel (R/W)

Arcana: Focused

Sailor: Balance 2, Climbing 3, Knotwork 1, Rigging 1, Navigation 2, Cartography 3

Scholar: History 5, Math 2, Philosophy 3, Research 5, Law 2, Natural Philosophy 2, Occult 3

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 2, Mooch 4, Sincerity 2

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1, Break Fall 2, Leaping 3, Swimming 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 2

Coleson was always more at home in the woods than the cities, always felt more comfortable with stones than people. When he was young, he eagerly searched out faerie circles, abandoned houses, and the crumbling ruins of the Old Empire near his Avalon home. Ruins were a mystery to him, one he couldn't wait to solve. Who lived in these places? What use did their lives serve? Why did they leave these things behind? His gentry parents quietly encouraged his curiosity in the hopes that it would bloom into something more practical. It never did, but it succeeded in attracting the attention of the Explorer's Society, who knew recruitment material when they saw it. By the time Reggie graduated from school, he was already a high-ranking member of the Society.

When he parents died, he spent most of his inheritance funding expeditions to the western isles. The ruins there enthralled him as none on Avalon ever could, and he led countless expeditions into their terrible jungles. The dangers never slowed him for an instant, and he proved daring and courageous with each expedition. When his personal fortunes ran out, he came to depend entirely on the Society for support; he had no home anymore, just the ruins he visited and the occasional Explorer's safehouse for the few times he returned to civilization. To the Society, he was worth every penny. He had a nose for sniffing out artifacts and an insightful way of examining them that opened unheard-of vistas of thought. He had become one of the society's most prized assets.

Today, he continues his work as best he can, leading ships full of Explorers to the farthest edges of the world. His efforts continue to produce fruitful results, and he continues to deliver all manner of strange and unusual artifacts into the Society's hands. He's intrigued by the Heroes' compasses, and by their apparent connection to the ruins in Vodacce. As usual, his curiosity overcame his discretion and he set out to explore the ruins against the express wishes of the Society. It's up to the Heroes to rescue him from his folly.

Reggie serves more as a McGuffin in this module than an actual character. Heroes who have played the previous two adventures have probably formed quite a friendship with him, and don't want to see him harmed. His stats are provided here mainly as a reference.

Image: Reggie is the epitome of the rumpled scientist: friendly, enthusiastic, and a little bewildered. His long brown hair is tied in a pigtail, and a thick mustache shadows his smiling mouth. He has a pair of glasses which he wears for close examinations. His clothes are exceedingly practical, used more for tramping across far-away islands than socializing in drawing rooms. He never thinks to change them when he returns to the continent. The secretive nature of the Society has taught him a few

things about the world, and he keeps his guard up when dealing with those outside of the Explorer's Society. But those who earn his trust find him friendly, affable, and willing to talk about almost anything. He has a knowledge of seamanship and most "gentlemanly" pursuits, although he rarely uses them. His favorite topics, of course, are the mysteries of the past — and potential ways to unravel them.

Giovanni Villanova

Villain

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

Reputation: -130

Arcana: Willful

Advantages: Vodacce (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty, Left Handed, Noble, Servants, Swordsman's Guild

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 5, Diplomacy 4, Politics 4, Scheming 5, Seduction 5, Sincerity 5

Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 4, Research 1

Spy: Shadowing 4, Stealth 5, Bribery 3, Conceal 4, Interrogation 3, Poison 4

Ambrogia (Master): Feint (Fencing) 5, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ambrogia): 5

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 3, Throwing 4, Leaping 4, Swinging 4, Side-step 5

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

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

Giovanni is one of the most evil men in Théah — but also charming, seductive and quite reasonable about certain things. He rules his territory with an iron fist, but treats most visitors like guests. He's found that putting people at ease makes it much simpler to kill them when the time is right.

He's principally concerned with his own power, and with ways to prise the rest of Vodacce from his cousins. He knows nothing about the ruins in his territory and cares little for the Syrneth in general, but he recognizes power when he sees it. Worse still, he has the patience to look before he leaps. Anything that may increase his power is carefully studied before being implemented. Once he moves, however, he moves with blinding speed.

At the moment, he's simply irritated that his Caligari cousins have arrived in Dionna uninvited. His primary goal is to teach them a lesson in manners: something the Heroes are well-equipped for. Beyond that, however, he had a lurking curiosity; why would Vincenzo so brazenly insult him like this? For now, he suspects some political feint, a misconception the party would do well to encourage. Should he learn the truth about the ruins, he may step up his plans for Vodacce... and expand them. Either way, he's onto Caligari, and won't let go until his fears are assuaged. The party may defuse the threat he presents — or send it out of control. It all depends on how they play their cards.

Image: Giovanni is almost infernally handsome with a thin hook nose and sharp black goatee. He wears his hair short, against popular fashion, and his smoldering eyes burn through anything he sees. His slender body hides wiry muscles and he's fast as a whip. He speaks in elegant witticisms and almost instinctively makes others feel inferior to him. He never gets angry... not visibly. The condescending smile remains on his face at all times and his voice never rises above a conversational tone. But the thought of being defied makes his blood boil, and everyone who has crossed him has lived to regret it. No



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one looks better in black leather than Giovanni Villanova; he's smart enough to wear it at all times.

More information on Giovanni can be found on p. 113 of the *7th Sea GM's Guide*.

Minor Characters

José Marquez

The gardener at the university of San Augustin has lived in southern Castille all his life. Originally a professor of botany, he retired when the Inquisition began his crusade, but turned down a position in the priesthood to act as the university's groundskeeper. There, he could maintain the plants he loved so much while keeping an eye on the University. With the coming of the war, most of the original denizens have fled, but he remains, caring for the lawns as best he can and waiting to see what happens.

Marquez is not a member of the Invisible College, but he knows that Miguel is, and guards the secret with his life. Very little on the campus escapes his attention; he's become the unofficial leader of the few teachers and students remaining. His botanical skills come in handy when foraging for food.

José is a lithe man in his early thirties with a straw hat and a scraggly black beard. Little fazes him any more. When he first stepped down, he was terrified that the Inquisition would burn him, but he's gotten over it. Now, he accepts both the Inquisitors and the invading Montaignes with an eerie calm. If it is Theus's will that he die, then he will meet his maker with all the dignity he can. The rest takes care of itself.

Madeline du Bisset

Hero

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

Reputation: 34

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Castille, Noble, Membership (Explorers Society)

Merchant: Scribe 4, Accounting 5, Appraising 4

Scholar: History 2, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 2, Research 3, Occult 3

Servant: Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 2, Seneschal 5

Porté: (Adept) Attunement 4, Bring 4, Blooding 5, Pocket 4, Walk 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 1

One of the most prolific and eccentric members of the Explorer's Society, Madeline du Bisset is the last thing anyone expects in a Montaigne noblewoman. She's pragmatic, no-nonsense and utterly lacking in manners, traits which make her the perfect head of the Freiburg chapterhouse. The Heroes had a chance to meet her in *Scoundrel's Folly*, and with Coleson's disappearance, their paths have crossed again.

Bisset's father held a country estate, where he and his family lived in opulent luxury. The false comforts of title and riches became clear to her at an early age, however, when her mother was crushed under a carriage in front of her eyes. All the fine clothes and nice houses in the world couldn't save her, Bisset reasoned. So what good were they? She searched elsewhere to find meaning in her life... and found it in the riddle of the Synneth.

When her father died, she inherited the entire estate, but rather than wait for the inevitable line of suitors, she did something totally unexpected. She sold the entire estate

to Vendel investors and sailed to Avalon to join the Explorer's Society.

Since then, she has proven an exemplary member of the Society. While lacking the skills necessary for field work, she has extraordinary organizational abilities, and can administer the most chaotic situation with unwavering aplomb. She has catalogued countless Syrnych artifacts and facilitated the transfer of numerous priceless pieces that might otherwise have been lost. For this reason, the Society recently placed her in charge of the Freiburg chapterhouse, where her organizational skills are taxed to the limit. So far, she's skirted every crisis with remarkable success.

Madeline is a harried-looking Montaigne woman in her late twenties, with dark hair pinned up in a bun. She eschews any sense of fashion, and often wears men's pants under her simple skirt. The idea of formalwear makes her skin crawl, and although she is quite wealthy, she disdains frivolous trappings. Her frenetic demeanor matches well with the city she calls home, and she can be surprisingly effective in the right circumstances. Her social skills, however, leave much to be desired; she has no time for pleasantries and doesn't suffer fools lightly. While things get done around her, she always leaves others with the impression that she disapproves of them. Her few friends say that it's her most endearing quality.

Secretly, she has begun to fear for her native country. She believes that the long-suffering Montaigne peasantry's patience will soon run out, and that their revenge when it comes will be bloody indeed. She never lets such concerns show, however; the Society must come first.

Antonio Caligari

Antonio, or "Weasel Boy" as his cousins call him behind his back, has been bullied by his cousin Fredo since he was old enough to walk. He was bullied into stealing Uncle Vincenzo's walking stick (which earned him a week in the basement), and he was bullied into killing a man

when he was sixteen (which earned him five years in prison). Now he's being bullied into helping Fredo find the Syrnych ruins. He's been bullied for so long that he can't remember things being any different.

Like most toadies, Antonio relishes browbeating those weaker than him — compensation for the abuse he receives from Fredo. The knack makes him adept at keeping in line the thugs Fredo uses during his operations, and in acting as a go-between for the higher-up members of the family. He's as terrified of Fredo as Fredo is of Vincenzo, and won't do anything to cross him. As compensation, he takes great joy in intimidating those under him, and can elicit fear in his underlings the way few others can.

Unfortunately, for all his nasty tendencies, Antonio can't hold a candle to real villainy. Villanova kills him without a second thought and leaves his body on the floor of the restaurant.

Antonio is a lanky, edgy-looking Vodacce with a sharp chin and darting eyes. He's worked hard at being deceptive, but lacks the knack. Those who speak to him come away with an impression of a cruel and frightened man trying hard to be charming. Fortunately, the Heroes are made of sterner stuff than most. A pity that Antonio isn't the Caligari they need to worry about.

Captain Charles du Chevalier

Hero

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

Reputation: 79

Advantages: Swordsman's Guild, Musketeers, Noble, Citation, Commission (Captain), Patron (Jean Marie Reines), Montaigne, Théan

Arcana: Arrogant

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



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Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Politics 3

Commander: Strategy 2, Tactics 2, Leadership 3, Ambush 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 2

Knife: Attack (Fencing) 1, Parry (Knife) 4

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 3, Jab 2, Uppercut 1

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4 Reload (Firearms) 2

Chevalier is the epitome of a King's Musketeer: honorable, noble, devoted to king and country. He's also arrogant and more than a little condescending, but his heart is good and he faithfully adheres to the Musketeers' code. The third son of a wealthy nobleman, he joined the army for the excitement it offered, and rose quickly through the ranks. He was selected to the Musketeers by Jean-Marie himself (see *GM's Guide*, p. 76), and has struggled to justify the man's confidence in him. He proudly tells anyone who will listen exactly who gave him his job; he's found it impresses people.

Charles is a valiant swordsman, and fights to uphold the honor of the kingdom. He is also an aristocrat, however, and affects the elitist snobbery typical of Montaigne's nobility. He has a hard time believing that gentlemen of any stripe could commit a crime, and rarely persecutes anyone of breeding. If he believes they are a threat, however, he will hound them to the ends of the earth: a noble foe is ten times as dangerous as an ignoble one. Unlike many of his peers, he knows that the peasantry of his homeland suffer and realizes that their complaints are genuine. While he sympathizes, he also genuinely believes that they were meant to suffer as they do. "If Theus wanted them happy," he is fond of saying, "he wouldn't have dirtied their blood."

Heroes who have played *The Lady's Favor* recognize Chevalier by sight. They can attest to his traits, both good

and bad, and know that he is a foe to be respected (he chased them halfway across Théah, after all).

Image

Chevalier is tall and muscular, with the grace of an athlete and the bearing of a king. He is clean-shaven, which makes him look younger than his twenty-nine years. His nose turns upward slightly at the sight of commoners, and he always condescends to those beneath him. He is always polite, however, and rigidly adheres to the code of chivalry at all times. Arrogance and honor can go hand in hand.

Jarmir Gutmunsson

Jarmir has been a master *skjæren* longer than anyone can remember, and has fought the Vendel just as long. While his small warband lacks the notoriety of Yngvild Olafssdotter, they make up for it with sheer gutsiness. Jarmir always believed he should fight the Vendel on his own terms, without catering to the opinions of others. As such, he's a bit of a black sheep amid the Vesten; he wouldn't have it any other way.

When they aren't sinking Vendel merchant ships, Jarmir's band seeks to recover the runes and other artifacts lost by his people. Certain Vendel have made a tidy profit by selling their ancestor's relics, and Jarmir has dedicated himself to getting them all back. His quest has taken him to every corner of Théah, where he's seen things few mortal men could conceive. Faith in his ancestors and the power of his rune magic have seen him through it all. He learned of the party through those spirits, who told him that they would one day restore a priceless gift to its rightful place (see "Vesten Vision Quest", p. 30, for details). Because of that, he allowed them to witness the ceremony in *Scoundrel's Folly*.

Jarmir is old, but still hale, with iron-gray hair and corded muscles. Scars criss-cross his wild barbarian features, and his horned helmet and leather jerkin match the intense light in his blue eyes. He has picked up numerous skills

in his travels, including a smattering of almost every language in Théah. He's grown accustomed to leadership and likes to have things his way. New acquaintances often find him stubborn and argumentative. His crew believes in him, however, and his many decades of adventuring speak to his success. At the end of his life, he knows that he can face Valhalla with pride.

Stats for Jarmir's Vesten crew can be found below.

Jarmir's Raiders

Henchmen

TN to be hit: 25

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

Attack Roll: 6k3

Damage: 6k2 (Heavy Weapons)

Skills: Balance 2, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Attack (Heavy Weapon) 2

Juliette

Juliette is Giovanni Villanova's courtesan, which alone makes her one of the wildest women in Théah. In addition to that, she's a vital member of Sophia's Daughters, a fact which Giovanni knows nothing about. She is deception personified.

Beneath that, however, her heart is good and she truly believes that she can change the world. She uses her sharp wit and considerable intellect to play a dangerous game, hoping that her political maneuvering will gain her what she desires. She has become Villanova's closest advisor, and he has prospered through listening to her. In exchange, his guard has lowered around her, and she has been able to continue her work with the Daughters unmolested. It's tricky balance, but she has become adept at maintaining it.

Normally, she would never personally accompany the women she helps smuggle out, but for once she has made an exception. A fate witch skilled in forgery can be of great use to the Daughters, and she wanted to ensure the

woman escaped safely (she didn't trust anyone else with the job). Her meeting with the Heroes is fortuitous circumstance, but demonstrates how clever and resourceful she can be.

Image: Slender and gaudily-dressed, Juliette sports curly black hair and a winning smile. She speaks clearly and decisively, exhibiting stunning wit with every phrase. She's pretty, but not stunningly so, and has learned to downplay her looks in favor of other skills. Her face is a perfect mask, hiding all emotions behind a winning smile. She's kept Villanova in the dark with it; it's safe to say she can do the same with anyone else.

Captain Jorge Mercado

Hero

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

Reputation: 24

Advantages: Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Commission (Captain), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Diplomacy 3

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

Aldana (Apprentice): Feint (Fencing) 3, Riposte (Fencing 4), Tagging (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 2

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

Honorable but quiet, Mercado is the third son of a displaced Don who saw his beloved home buried beneath the Montaigne advance. He escaped and fled south, only to find himself cut off from further retreat. With anger in his heart, he volunteered to the first regiment he found, and has since distinguished himself in battle after battle. By the time San Augustin came under siege, he has risen to the rank of captain.

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Mercado has since been charged with the defense of the city, a task he undertakes with fatalistic zeal. Like many soldiers, he's exhibited a superstitious streak amid the war, but he doesn't let it interfere with the practical necessities before him. His tactical expertise has slowed the Montaigne advance, and kept San Augustin out of their hands for some time. He doesn't know how much longer he can keep it up though. He has silently sworn never to see San Augustin fall; he plans to die amid the ruins if it comes to that.

Image: Mercado is a gentleman soldier in his mid-twenties, quiet, honorable and dedicated to duty. He misses courtly pleasures at his current duties and relished the opportunity to trade words with fellow nobility. He keeps his uniform as clean as he can, but knows it's a losing battle. His concern for his men is palpable, but he knows that he must sacrifice some of them if San Augustin is to stand. Like many officers in such tight positions, he's engendered fierce loyalty in those beneath him.

Inquisitors

Henchmen

TN: 20

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

Attack Roll: 5k3

Damage: 4k2

Skills: Stealth 4, Footwork 4, Attack (Fencing) 2

These are the fearsome minions of Ésteban Verdugo, charged with ferreting out the enemies of the true faith. They confront the Heroes during their stay in San Cristobal, and can be used anywhere else if the GM feels it fits. They wear the scarlet robes of the Vaticine church and always have an array of weapons (not to mention torches and ropes) at hand.

Montaigne/Castillian soldiers

Brutes

Threat Rating 2

Usual Weapons: Medium

TN: 15

Skills: Attack (Firearms) +1 These are standard soldiers of the type encountered almost anywhere in Théah. They can be either Montaigne or Castillian, but the same stats can be used for any nationality. Use them for any regular army forces the Heroes come across.

Fausto Biancastro and other Vodacce thugs

Henchmen

TN: 15

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

Attack Roll: 5k2

Damage: 3k1

Skills: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Footwork 2

These represent the tough Vodacce street thugs who show up during the Dionna segment of the adventure. The stats can be used for Fausto, his cousins, and any Caligari henchmen that show up. You can also use them for the Fagin-esque thugs in Encounter 4, Juliette's pursuers in Encounter 6 and any other "street brutes" who may show up.

Street Urchins

Brutes

Threat Rating 1

Usual Weapons: None

TN: 15

Skills: Footwork 2, Sprinting 2

Poisonous snakes

Henchmen

TN: 20

Brawn 1, Finesse 3, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Panache 1

Attack Roll: 4k3

Damage: 1k1, Poison (Use Arsenic or Knock-Out Drops, as appropriate.)

Crocodiles

Villain

TN: 25

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

Attack Roll: 4k3 Bite

Damage: 4k3

Skills: Sprinting 3, Swimming 4

The Bog Beast

TN: 20

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 3

Wits: 2

Panache: 2

Attack Roll: 4k3

Damage: 3k3

Skills: Footwork 3, Grapple 3, Bear Hug 3

The Explorer's Society

In the first part of *Erebus Cross*, you read some correspondences from within the Explorer's Society, discussing their finds and their theories regarding the older races. Some of their theories are very near the mark. In a few other cases, their assumptions are somewhat skewed. Listed below is a brief explanation of the varying races that formerly (and in some cases, currently) occupied Théah.

The Explorer's Society is unaware of almost all of this information; this is GM-only. The names are taken from Old Empire texts. Old Théan scholars did a great deal of research on the Syrneth, but almost all that information is lost; only fragments remain. The legend of a translation of one of the languages persists in scholarly circles, but so far, it remains undiscovered.



The Sidhe

The Sidhe first appeared to men during the age of the Old Republic. They came from the northwest, the direction of present day Avalon, and they've been seen wandering the roads of mankind ever since, although never with great frequency. Although most Théans think of the Sidhe as tall, slender, pale beings with unpredictable and sometimes terrible tempers, the name "Sidhe" actually refers to a confederation of creatures. The bright and shining host of myth and legend are the High Faerie, but also included in their number are a variety of other races, including bogguns, brownies, sprites, and pookha, just to name a few. These other races hold their own courts and customs, but defer to the High Faerie in most matters.

The Sidhe exist in the material world of Terra only part of the time. Their own world stands a little apart, although the two overlap in certain places and times, most notably the Sidhe island of Bryn Bressail. Mortals have been known to 'slip' over the veil between one realm and another, and have returned years later, little older than when they left.

The Drachen

The Drachen were great reptilian beasts that once roamed and ruled the lands that are currently known as Eisen. They stood approximately 500 feet tall and weighed many thousands of tons. They had wing spans of hundreds of feet, although no drachen is ever confirmed to have flown, and the supposition that their wings could have supported their incredible mass is unlikely in the extreme.

The Drachen were sentient and extremely intelligent. They communicated verbally and had an extensive written language consisting primarily of pictographs. They carved vast caverns out of their native mountains, covering the walls with their etched writing. They also used and created tools, fashioned decorative items as well as practical ones, and lived in organized communities.

Most of these things have remained unfound by the Explorers since the Drachen mountains are vast, and the Eisenfürsten are fiercely protective of them since this is also

the area from which they mine the ore for their dracheneisen. Those items that have been found have mostly been misinterpreted, since the Explorers have not yet realized the incredible size of the race they're dealing with. For example, a tail ornament, having survived the ages, might be documented as an elaborate tapestry or carpet.

The Tessera

Very little remains of the Tesseran civilization. They showed up after the demise of the Drachen, but were wiped out by the other Old Races. Stripped clean from the face of the earth, the only thing they left behind was their strange technology.

Tesseran technology, based on magnetism, exploited Terra's iron core itself. The Tessera used magnetic fields to fire huge cannons that could lay waste to entire cities, flew in machines that employed magnetic repulsion and sped along the ground in magnetic skimmers.

Very little of their once-great civilization remains. Gone are the great cannons, flying machines and skimmers. The only testaments to their existence are the tiny trinkets that Théans find and pass on to their children as clever toys. (See examples under "Artifacts," p. 56.)

The Thalusiai

Located on the Thalusian isles, this insect race was wiped out by some great catastrophe. Fortunately, they had the foresight to bury themselves in amber coffins while a few others remained in caves, preparing for the end. Something went wrong, and the entire race was destroyed, leaving only the few left in amber coffins.

Now, Théans break open those coffins and steal the "armor" left inside. Armor that was once the carapace of a great, lost people.

The most common Thalusian artifacts are bits of "armor" and weapons from their lost culture. The caves where artifacts are found are filled with the stuff, almost as if the

Thalusians were awaiting an enemy, but were caught completely off guard.

Perhaps they were awaiting the wrong enemy.

The Domae

This humanoid species built huge underground cities. The Domae lived in peace and harmony for many thousands of years until a bitter civil war destroyed them in a matter of weeks. Millions of Domae drowned in blood, leaving only a single city of their vast empire: the underground ruins below the cities of Montaigne.

The key to Domae technology seems to be gemstones. While Montaigne could be a hotbed of archaeological research, l'Empereur keeps the sites closely guarded while his own diggers seek out these precious stones.

The Setines

Of all the known races, the Setine appear to have ranged the furthest abroad. Their remains have been found scattered throughout Théah and her surrounding islands. These remains vary from large hulking creatures to forms a little smaller than an average human. Some have wings, others have the remains of great horns or tusks. All of them, however, have hollow bones.

The Setines were a single race but with varied forms. This allowed them a specialization and versatility unmatched by any other group. They used a technology based on æther, a gaseous substance known but not yet understood by contemporary Théans, and intricate clockwork-like mechanisms made of crystal and brass.

Artifacts

The Drachen

All Drachen artifacts are huge, much too large to carry out of a site, let alone use. However, their vast halls are filled

with tools, furniture and other implements that make a man standing among them feel very small indeed. Because the Drachen relied on sorcery rather than technology, their “artifacts” are rather primitive compared to other cultures.

1. An enormous rod topped with man-sized pictographs, made of lustrous gray stone and weighing several tons. When a Hero touches the correct pair of pictographs at the same time, he ceases to age for next five years, although the only noticeable effect at the time is that of energy being transmitted through the Hero's body. After it's been used once, the rod cracks and is useless.

The Tessera

1. A small, flattened sphere that fits neatly into the palm. When squeezed, it slowly grows warm and begins to lift. It will lift up to two hundred pounds upward at a rate of 1 foot per second. Unfortunately, it continues to heat up as it lifts and will begin to scald skin (1 die of Wounds) after sixty seconds. It also leaves a distinct coppery taste in the user's mouth for about a day.

2. A curved and pointed device with two gem stones set into the top and side. This device's original intent may never be discovered, but its current use is sufficient enough. When the gem stones are touched, the device begins to hum and vibrate. Then, in the span of five seconds, an intense magnetic field fills the room, causing all metal objects to vibrate and hum at the same frequency. Both the device and the metal objects begin to heat up, until after a minute, they burn any flesh in contact (1 die of Wounds). If contact with the object is not broken by the time seventy seconds have elapsed, it will cease to function until reactivated.

This device was found with small glass lenses. The Society has not yet determined if they have some purpose with the device.

3. A coin-sized metal disk with blank facings. Whenever it's dropped, it always lands on its edge.

4. A small needle. Whenever it's placed inside a lock, it warms up, then pops the lock open.

The Thalusiai

1. A Thalusian gauntlet with a gem inset slightly above the wrist. When placed on a hand, the gauntlet shuts tight around the skin and the wearer can feel a slight “sting.” However, he now has one extra unkept Brawn die for all actions. He’d better like the gauntlet, because it’s never coming off short of amputation.

2. A long, thin, twisted pi a perfect shaft for a pole just a walking stick.

3. A gemstone much like eye. It’s large enough to palm and blood re alchemist or chemist can what material its made of

The Domae

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

Domae Diamond

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



Rainbowstone

Rainbowstone is highly desired by the nobility for its wide range of colors... that seem to change depending on who wears the stones. The colors in a rainbow stone include red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple and “white” (transparent). Many scholars have studied the stones, attempting to make sense of the colors, but no pattern has made itself evident.

Smokestone

Smokestone gains its name from its color. The stone also has veins of black that coalesce in pools of darkness. As nighttime approaches, smokestone grows darker and colder. At midnight, smokestone is so cold it burns human flesh.

Bloodstone

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

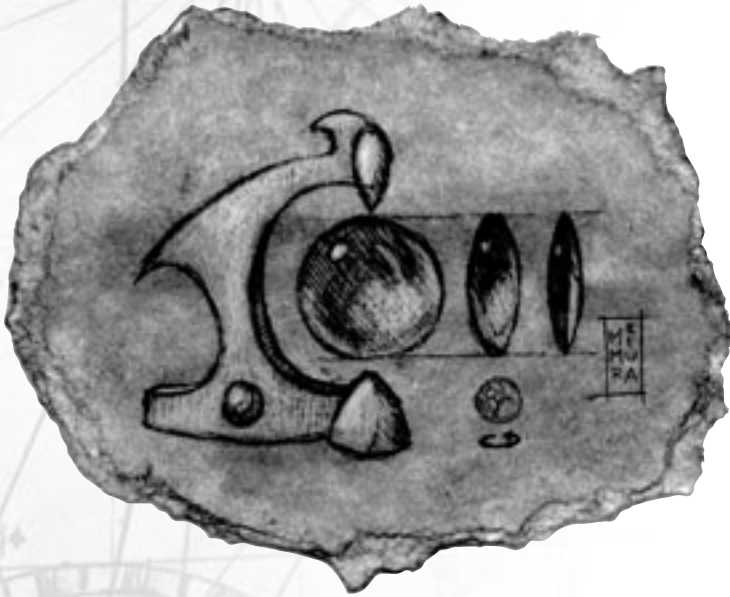
Domae Moonstone

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

Sunstone

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

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



Waterstone

Waterstone is one of the strangest Domae stones. Its color is a mixture of blues that seem to shift as the observer turns the stone to the left and right. The stone grows dark blue as storms approach, a quality that makes it very valuable on ships.

Bonestone

Bonestone earns its name from its color: a pale white/yellow that resembles human bone. When the sun sets, the stone becomes almost pure white. The current fashion in Vodacce is to grind up bonestone into a fine powder and add it to a morning drink of wine.

Blackstone

Blackstone is, without a doubt, the most dangerous Domae stone. When it is placed next to another Domae stone, both begin to vibrate. As they are brought closer, the vibrations become highly violent. Finally, if the two stones touch, they explode (1 die of Wounds).

While blackstone does not change its color as the other stones do, it refracts light in a most peculiar manner. When light passes through a blackstone, it becomes a deep blue.

The light also stains whatever it is shining upon with the same deep blue color. The stain fades within minutes.

The Setines

The theme for the Setines is clockwork. Not the kind found in your grandpa's watch, but a strange system of sliding, clicking and turning mechanisms that have no obvious source of power.

Some scholars speculate that the Setines discovered a method of perpetual motion. They argue that the strange runes carved into the clockwork provides the power necessary to make the machines move. The problem with this argument is that if it were true, the machines would still be moving rather than sitting like mummified corpses.

1. A clockwork hand. Only three of these have been found. This is the third. Fifty years ago, an alchemist found a way to attach the hand to the human body. His life and name

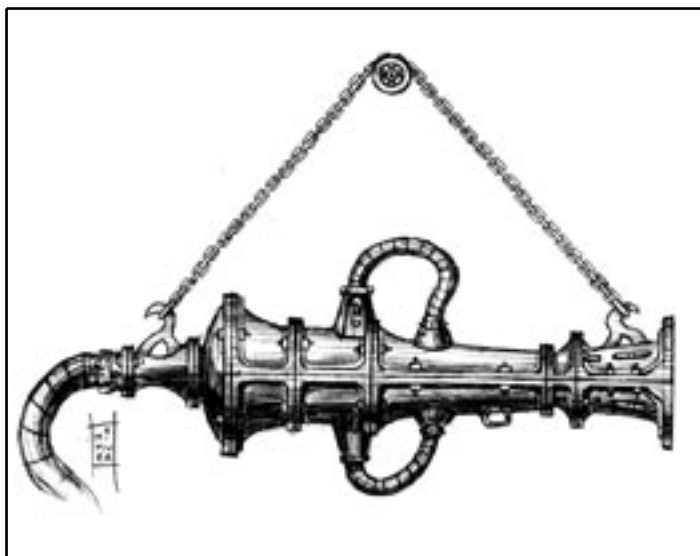


were eradicated by the Inquisition. If your Heroes find a way to do it (Wits + Occult TN 30 and Wits + Surgery TN 30), the recipient has 1 unkept bonus die to all Attack and Wound rolls involving that hand. Unfortunately, as long as the hand is attached, he loses one Rank of Resolve permanently, and the highest Resolve he can ever have is a 3.

2. Clockwork eye. The above rules for attachment apply. If successful, the wearer can see perfectly in the dark but takes 1 die of Wounds for every hour he is exposed to sunlight.

3. Æther Compass. These famous artifacts (like the ones in *Erebus Cross*) vary greatly depending on the site. This particular one always points north, except when the holder is pointed north. Then, it spins and points south.

4. Clockwork Cannon. Clockwork weapons are also very common in Setine sites. They are usually incomplete and require repair from a skilled weaponsmith. Clockwork Cannons (like the one used by the Explorer in the fiction in the *Players' Guide*) usually require Wits + Occult and Wits + Weaponsmith rolls (both at TN 30) to repair. When they are operational (Finesse + Firearms), they deliver a 5k5 blast of energy unlike anything seen on Théah. The weapon usually only has 1–10 charges before it becomes completely useless. Currently, the Society knows no way of recharging Clockwork Cannons.



Designing Your Own Artifacts

There are three important guidelines to designing your own artifacts.

1) Theme

Each old race has its own theme (clockwork, magnetics, insectoid, etc.). We set up these themes to give you plenty of space to improvise. Sure, you don't know everything about the Domae, but you know enough about magnetics to make up some really weird stuff for your Heroes to play around with.

2) Keep It Small

Don't let your artifacts out-do the genre. Too many weird gadgets and your Théah will look more like a science fiction novel than a swashbuckling movie.

3) Clarke's Law

Arthur C. Clarke once said that any technology that is advanced enough will look like magic to a less sophisticated culture. That's what we're going for here. Make your artifacts just as alien to the players as they are to the Heroes. They can study the artifact all night long, but they will never make any sense out of it. As far as the Hero and the player are concerned, it's magic, plain and simple.

4) Be Creative!

Not every artifact has to make sense. A few can just be strange objects that have a single effect, then die. Others have no strange effects at all, but are made of a material that alchemists can't identify.

Remember, every strange thing you throw your Heroes' way makes the next strange thing a little less strange. Be careful, but have fun!

New Rules

Shield Man School

Country of Origin: Explorer's Society

Description: Less of a school and more of a philosophy, the shield man school teaches its students the arts of improvisation and quick thinking. No ruin monster is the same as the last, and shield men must use anything at their disposal — salt, sugar, sulfur and even spring water — to dispatch the threat.

Basic Curriculum: Dirty Fighting, Athlete

Swordsman Knacks: Corps-à-Corps, Riposte (Improvised Weapon), Bind (Improvised Weapon), Exploit Weakness (Shield Man)

Apprentice: Shield Men learn to turn anything into a weapon. You ignore the off-hand penalty when using an improvised weapon. In addition, if the weapon breaks during combat, roll a die. On an even number, you have managed to avoid the breakage.

Journeyman: Protecting the lives of others is the fundamental goal of all Shield Men. You may use your Active Defense in order to protect others at no penalty. In addition, when making Avoid Rolls to dodge the effects of a trap, a Shield Man may push one other person out of the way with only one raise instead of the standard two (see *GM's Guide*, p. 197).

Master: The very best Shield Men develop lightning reflexes. Whatever Trait you are using for Active Defense or Avoid Roll (typically Wits) is considered one higher for the attempt. In addition, you may spend Action dice for Active Defense attempts as if they were 2 phases lower (minimum 1).

New Skills

Archæologist

While other scholars dabble with the knowledge left behind by the Syrneath, Archæologists are scholars specialized in the

study of the old races. This Skill can only be learned in the halls of the Explorer's Society. It is not available to Vaticine scholars.

Basic Knacks

Occult: See *Players' Guide*, p. 142

Research: See *Players' Guide*, p. 141

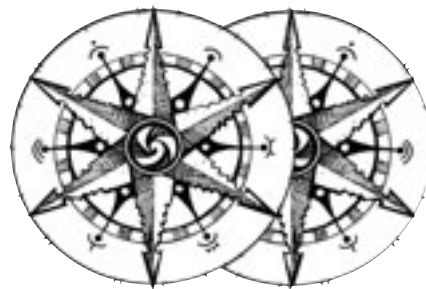
Society Lore: This Knack represents your knowledge of the Society, its members, activities and secrets. The higher the Knack, the more secrets will be made available to you.

Advanced Knacks

Syrneath Lore: While Occult is the study of sorcery, Syrneath Lore represents your knowledge of the old races. With a single Rank of this Knack, you know that there were more than one old race and even know some of their names.

Artifact Evaluation: One of the most important skills an archæologist can have is the ability to determine the function of a Syrneath artifact. Using this Knack, the archæologist plays around with the device in the hopes of getting a response. This is a Wits + Artifact Evaluation roll (TN 20). Failure means that the artifact has backfired on the arch. Success reveals one function of the device — of course, if it was a one-shot function, then it's wasted. Every Raise reveals an additional function. Wits + Artifact Evaluation (TN 15) will reveal the device's area of origin.

Trap Lore: The Syrneath were very careful with their valuables. This Knack is used to spot and avoid traps by adding unkept dice to the Perception Check to spot a trap. Thus, if the Hero's Wits are 2 and his Trap Lore is a 3, his Perception Check is 5k2 to spot traps.





Explorer Templates

Scholar

Two hours in prison is like two years anywhere else.

Two years in prison is like two lifetimes.

You have this knowledge first-hand.

The Inquisition tried you for heresy. You were convicted. You were tortured. You confessed to your crimes to spare your life.

Then, they threw you in the darkest place you've ever been.

For two long years.

That's how long it took you to make your escape.

Now, with your new name and identity, you're a member of the Society, putting your talents to good use. Your years in prison didn't embitter your soul, but taught you not to take anything for granted. Some call you reckless. You prefer "liberated."

You enjoy your work in the Society. You spend most of your time in the libraries, translating Old Empire books, looking for clues on the Old Races.

Every now and then, an Inquisitor comes calling, looking for someone wearing your old name. So far, the Society has protected you from your past. But you can't let it protect you forever.

There's another entanglement. A friendship you built with another scholar has developed into something a bit more... complicated. Your heart urges you to fall in head first, but your head warns you not to drag anyone else into your sordid past. But then again, perhaps you can face your sordid pasts together...



Field Scholar

Being the second son of a powerful noble isn't easy, especially when your older sister doesn't intend for you to stick around after Daddy's death. So, instead of begging for an inheritance, you set off for the life of a scholar.

At first, you hated the training, but after a while, you learned that you had a talent for learning. You maintained your membership in your father's gentlemen's clubs and kept trim in the Swordsman's academy. Lucky for you.

When the heavy hammer of the Inquisition fell on the Church two years ago, you decided it would be best if you took your leave; your physical and mental talents would be put to better use elsewhere. Soon enough, you found yourself in the welcome arms of the Explorer's Society.

You've spent the last two years with the Society, acting as a scout for important excavations. Your reputation in the Society has grown (for professional and personal reasons) and a promising relationship has sprung up between you and a lovely fellow scholar.

Unfortunately, bad news from home arrived at just the wrong time. Your older sister squandered the family fortune on parties for her new "influential" friends, leaving your father's estate in ruins. In other words, the small monthly stipend your father left to you won't be coming anymore. She's written to you, begging for help, begging for forgiveness. But, you can hear that tone in her written words as certainly as you can hear it in her voice. She's going through the motions again, saying the words she's supposed to say.

If you stay, you won't have to clean up the mess your sister made, but there will be nothing left of your family legacy. If you go, you'll once again become wrapped up in your sister's petty intrigues. And who knows what kind of company she's been keeping these days...?



Shield Man

You've faced unspeakable horrors in Eisen forests, slimy nightmares from the Montaigne sewers and the worst kind of Sidhe beasts that crawl around Avalon's midnight moors. You served as a soldier in three nations' armies, as a marine on pirate and navy vessels and you've got the scars to prove it all. Your skills and bravery are unquestioned. Unfortunately, there's one small problem.

You hate heights.

That's why you joined the Explorer's Society. Time and time again, you've proven your worth to the Society, showing that courage and ingenuity do indeed go hand in hand. Besides, there's no such thing as a towering precipice underground, right?

Then came that moment in the caverns when your charge slipped and fell down a deep crevasse. He was able to hold just long enough for you to jump to his rescue, throw out your hand and...

... and look down the spiraling, dizzying, fathomless depths that stretched out below him.

You flinched.

He fell.

You failed.

Weeks later, after you were able to keep yourself from waking at night with the look on your companion's face haunting your every dream, you made yourself a solemn vow:

I will die before I fail my charge again.

You current companions — a stuffy scholar and a “gentleman adventurer” — have good hearts, but they don't understand just how deadly the ruins can be.

It's your job to make sure they don't underestimate the dangers before them or overestimate their own abilities. You did that once.

Once.

Never again.

Nations of Theah: Book Two

AvalonTM

Winter of 1999

