





## Lords of Men

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*Ars Magica* players participate in a thriving fan community by subscribing to email discussion lists (like the Berkeley list), compiling archives of game material (such as Project Redcap), maintaining fan-created web sites, and running demos through Atlas Games' Special Ops program. To learn more, visit [www.atlas-games.com/ArM5](http://www.atlas-games.com/ArM5). You can also participate in discussions of *Ars Magica* at the official Atlas Games forums located at [forum.atlas-games.com](http://forum.atlas-games.com).

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## Chapter One

# Rule by the Sword

Mythic Europe is governed by a warrior caste. To be noble is to expect the call to arms; to gain the esteem of other nobles, a lord must draw forces together and massacre his enemies. Nobles are wealthy, so they may live sumptuously and patronize the Church and the arts, but the thirteenth century is a time of strife. Those who kill, rule.

Realms still need their armies, for virtually all have recently been burned by war, but many nobles feel their state is in decline. Kings and the Church chip away at the status of the warrior caste. Its great mission — the liberation of the Holy Land — seems in disarray. The merchants of the cities are increasingly demanding, as well, and have the money to field armies of mercenaries. The nobility cannot conceive of a world in which it does not rule, but rule is harder to maintain than in earlier days.

And at the edges of society, the nobles know, a mysterious Order of magicians lurks. The wizards are forbidden to meddle, it's said, but rumor states that little stops them. Are the wizards potential allies, or already-active enemies? Is magic a threat, or an op-

portunity? The 13th century is a difficult time to be a nobleman, as challenges, as well as chances for glory, abound.

### NOBLE CHARACTERS FOR MANY STYLES OF SAGA

This book provides resources for sagas of varying styles, whether realistic, high fantasy, political, or otherwise in orientation.

It includes material for a realistic mundane world, to allow sharper contrast with the four Realms. Troupes playing this style of saga should consider the new options for massed combat. Characters may now lead armies into battle, or lay siege to the castles of their enemies.

It also supports sagas with a high fantasy tone, aiding the design of stories that contain the elements of medieval ballads. For sagas with characters suited to Arthurian fantasy, the sections on leisure, love, and single combat are particularly appropriate. Mass combat is supported with a narrative resolution variant, which puts a stronger focus on the

actions of the player characters.

Political sagas are also catered to. A skilled diplomat can lead his alliance to war, or prevent bloodshed through a fearsome Reputation and the armed support of powerful friends. The use of Reputation allows diplomatic nobles to judge the goals of their enemies, and threaten them with regional factions of supporters. Earning noble titles is described, with each title's military and economic resources quantified to allow for the rapid design of political and military antagonists.

Sagas in which a nobleman acts as a servant and spokesman for a covenant are also supported. Nobles who reside primarily at covenants may be fleshed out using material on how members of the military class think and act. Land ownership and vassal maintenance are also detailed. A chapter describes the crude and unpleasant life of serfs, and contains many story seeds that can hook player characters from peasant backgrounds into sagas. The relationship between the Order and nobles is also described, with a comprehensive explanation of what most nobles know about the Order.



## Chapter Two

# Politics

Advancement in a political career depends on the whims of a powerful patron. Many lords wish to hire competent people, but it is difficult for a skilled character lacking social connections to demonstrate merit to potential patrons. A career normally begins with a fortunate birth, either as a noble or in the personal retinue of a great lord.

A character who performs well in a lord's retinue may, if the lord is interested in merit, be granted money, offices, or land. Additional land may be gained by marriage, through war, or by purchase. In time, sufficient land is gathered for the nobles of an area to accept the character, or his descendants, as a regional power. This makes a character a great noble.

In most sagas, each stage of career advancement occurs because of a story event. A character performs beyond the usual expectations of his station, then the lord promotes the character. This is a reward, but also retains the character to provide similar services in the future. The character's example encourages other retainers to strive in the lord's service.

## The Gratitude System

For players preferring structured advancement, this chapter suggests the following system. Characters earn Gratitude points when they perform a service to their lord that is beyond that required by their station. These points are then redeemed with higher office, land, or payment in goods.

Gratitude may be earned by exceptional actions that go beyond the usual requirements of the role, like saving the lord from capture in battle or paying the lord's entire ransom. It may also be earned by story events

in which the lord sees how useful the character could be if raised to a higher station. A squire who fights bravely on when wounded might make a fine knight. A nobleman who negotiates a lucrative marriage may make a fine chancellor.

Player characters do not usually select how their lords will express Gratitude. Characters with close relationships to friendly lords may do so, and this relationship may be purchased at character creation with the Patron Virtue. Many of the resources lords use to reward followers, like escheated land and heiresses, are only intermittently available. Players may prefer to store Gratitude for larger rewards, but noblemen often prefer smaller, more regular, rewards.

Note that some lords do not give the rewards they should: poverty, covetousness, or political pressure may force them to give a desired reward to a character's rival. The character's Reputation is not affected by minor acts of rebellion against such an ignoble lord.

Many political stories do not provide Gratitude points, and so do not directly lead to the character's advancement. They do, however, provide improved resources by increasing the character's wealth, enlarging the character's retinue, solidifying the character's position in the political hierarchy of his region, or improving the character's Reputation.

A character who is given a higher office gains the Virtues suited to that office, such as Landed Noble, Greater Noble, or Temporal Influence for officers.

A story provides:

**0 GRATITUDE:** If the lord attempts to appear just and the nature of the character's service is secret. The nobles of each area keep careful track of who is in favor, and to what degree, and they notice if a reward is not commensurate with known service. If the nobility does not know why public favor was shown, cre-

ative gossips will come up with several alternative stories that suit the prevailing mood of the court. Characters who serve secretly can be repaid with money, with minor titles, with heiresses, and by setting up stories that justify the repayment, or the lord and his liege can just brazen out any social opprobrium and accept damaged Reputations.

- 1 GRATITUDE:** In cases where the story has an outcome that favors the lord, but this was not the character's main focus. Characters accompanying magi can often pick up a point of Gratitude as part of their reward for a story that affects the covenant.
- 2 GRATITUDE:** If the story has an outcome that strongly favors the lord, and was the character's main focus. Characters accompanying magi can occasionally earn 2 points of Gratitude by cleverly tying what the magi are doing into the needs of their lord.
- 5 GRATITUDE:** If the story requires the character to complete a feat that will be widely renowned for its difficulty, primarily to serve the needs of the lord. Turning away a great army with a minor host, scaring off a dragon with a clever ruse, or rescuing the lord from the depths of his rival's dungeon would each earn 5 points.

## The Projection of Power

Great Nobles have a sphere of influence that can be divided into levels of proximity. The closest bond, which affects the fewest people, is between the lord and his retinue. These are the people he directly employs as part of his household for an extended period of time. This includes his officers, who are



## Advancement Requirements Table

See Chapter Three: A Comparison of Titles for more on those positions mentioned here.

CHANGE	REQUIRES	COST TO GRANTER
serf to freeman	5 Gratitude	Cost of serf
warrior to knight	5 Gratitude	Cost of gear (5 pounds minimum)
knight to bachelor	Must have the basic Abilities of a Knight, and the Abilities and Personality traits suited to this particular mesnie. Gratitude 5.	Ongoing support
bachelor to carissimus	Must be a bachelor, Gratitude 5, story event.	No cost
bachelor to lord of the manor	Gratitude 10, marriage to suitable heiress, or claiming land during war, or being offered land that has returned to the lord.	The revenues of the manor
Added manors	Gratitude 10, Reputation for loyalty to the lord, land must be available due to the extinction of a line, or war, or assart, or appanage.	The revenues of the additional manor or manors
lord of the manor to banneret	Sufficient money to hire knights – usually from 5 manors.	Nothing
banneret to baron of a minor lord	Gaining by any means at least 15 more manors. Reputation of loyalty toward the lord, 10 Gratitude	Nothing, except if the manors are the lord's.
minor baron to a lord to baron of the king	Must be noticed by the king or his advisors, must be in the service of a lord the king doesn't mind offending, like a rebel or an heir that owes the king. Gratitude 20 and, usually, successful treason against the lord.	Nothing.
admiral	Access to ships, Leadership 2	
butler	Profession: Steward 2	
chancellor	Must be highly literate in the local languages of business and diplomacy, usually has Church Lore.	
marshal	Leadership 5, Reputation for skill at warfare.	
steward	Profession: Steward 2	
treasurer	Profession: Steward 2	
appointment as baron	Gratitude 10, a suitable marriage, any officer role	
appointment as justiciar	Story event, substantial baronial role, or church equivalent, plus Loyalty to the dead person and a Reputation of 5 or more.	

Appointment as an officer to Greater Baron or higher requires Gratitude 10, Landed Noble (at minimum), Reputation for loyalty to the lord, vacancy in the office, and office-specific traits. Abilities below 2 assume the noble has an oversight role and is aided by a skilled deputy in the practical functions of the office. A noble wishing to skillfully administer the daily business of the office should develop an appropriate Ability score of 5. Making a vassal an officer costs the granter nothing. It does, however, cost the previous holder of the office his status and income, which may lead to a story.

In brief, to move from serf to freeman, or warrior to knight, or knight to bachelor, requires a single story in which the character provides heroic service to his lord, or the gradual accumulation of merit equivalent to this. To move through the middle ranks of knighthood requires two heroic services, five exceptional services, or ten stories with the magi that can be tied to the interest of the lord. These payments, again, require that the lord wishes to reward merit, that he has the desired reward available, and that there is no better claimant in his affinity.



servants trusted with a portion of the lord's power in exchange for their loyal service. The next most significant bond is between the magnate and his tenants. These are the lords and knights who hold land from the magnate. They are more autonomous than his household, but cannot risk his displeasure save in times of crisis, when he lacks the power to punish their insolence.

The magnate also has influence over people who are not dependent on him for their livelihood. Powerful magnates usually create coalitions of allies around their demesne lands. This area of influence is called his country, and the people who participate in the alliance are called the magnate's affinity. Significant political figures are carefully watched by other members of the noble class, who do their best to avoid the anger of a magnate. A magnate's reputation can influence the actions of his neighbors without any effort on his part.

## Retinue

The retinue of most magnates can be split into four parts: family, military, clerical, and menial. These sections of the household are usually on good terms as a whole, although it is common for individuals in the clerical and military sections of the household to despise each other. The households of lords vary in size based on their wealth, desire for ostentation, and number of children. Speaking loosely, the household of a lord of the manor averages 10, that of a landed knight 16, that of a banneret 24, that of a baron 40, and that of an earl 140. This includes the knightly followers of the lord mentioned in the Military section later, but not their peasant levies.

## Family

Nobles are expected to favor their extended families when seeking vassals and household retainers. This is supposed to make a body of retainers more loyal than one composed of strangers. Male relatives are useful for a range of offices, and female relatives may be used to cement alliances through marriage.

Bastards are particularly useful to medieval magnates, because they do not automatically inherit land in most areas. They have

## A Random Method of Death

To simulate the randomness of age at death in Mythic Europe, which allows paths of inheritance to take unexpected turns, Storyguides may wish to secretly calculate the death age of non-player characters. Assume that any child has a 25% chance of dying of natural causes before adulthood is reached. For characters who are already adults, or children who survive, assume a death age of 6 simple dice + 20 years. In times of widespread war, flip a coin so that half of all adult men die by violence 10 years before the six dice indicate they should. For less-intense wars, instead use a die and grade the odds to suit

the lethality of the conflict. Storyguides should note that these rules are harsher than the standard aging rules.

## A RANDOM METHOD OF LIFE

If a character is waiting to inherit, check for the birth of new heirs. For each person between the character and inheritance, assess if they are likely to have a legitimate child in this year. Then roll a die for each, assuming that on average half of them do have a child. Check each child for random age of death.

## Story Seed: Finding an Heir

An elderly lord keeps falling ill. His sickness is not lethal, but it takes him longer to recover from each bout. He fears that he will die in the next few years as he weakens, so he dispatches the player characters to find his heir. The boy took the cross, but has not been heard from since he left.

The lord has four daughters, and the lands will be divided among them if the heir is not produced. The husband of one of these daughters sends assassins and saboteurs to shadow the player characters. They strike at the group if they sense weakness, but prefer to let them find the heir, so that they can kill him without

forewarning. Even if the heir is bought home, he still needs the protection of the player characters. After all, his brothers-in-law can also claim his land if he dies in accident, or in war. And some may claim that he is not the son at all, but rather an impostor.

The player characters also have a second lead to the identity of the heir's enemy. The illnesses suffered by his father are not natural: they are poisonings, given in a slow series so as not to arouse suspicion. If the characters can catch the servant who administers the poison, they may be able to trap her handler, who can provide the name of the lord responsible.

no incentive to overthrow their legitimate brother, and are dependent on his goodwill for advancement. Bastard sons, if trained as knights, are sometimes not fostered away, which allows them to grow more familiar with the estate than legitimate children. Bastard daughters are useful for making strong alliances with minor vassals or merchants, as marriage to a lesser noble or commoner does not dishonor them.

## DESIGNING A FAMILY

Players wishing to generate a family for their characters may freely select any reasonable number of living siblings that they wish, and may select which are bastards. For a random number of legitimate siblings, roll two

dice of different colors and halve each result. One die represents the number of male children surviving to adulthood, the other the number of female. Zeros represent no surviving children of that gender. For birth order, assign each child a number and roll randomly until all have a place. Distribute the births of all characters so that they lie within a 12-year span. Male characters older than 21 and female characters older than 18 are almost certainly married or committed to the religious life.

For a random number of bastards, roll a die, halve it, and then add or subtract appropriate Personality traits of the father and mother. Roll birth order for each, comparing to the above siblings, and roll odd or even to determine gender. Bastards created by a straying husband and a woman of lower sta-

## Story Seed: Not A Bastard

A monk at a nearby abbey has made a final confession at uncton that has alarming consequences. Before he entered the monastery, the monk was a village priest, and he performed a secret marriage for a young, smitten nobleman and his common lover. The young nobleman was later offered a rich marriage, and bigamously married the daughter of a neighboring landholder, acknowledging his children by his first marriage only as bastards. They have been the loyal servants of the "legitimate" line of the family for a generation, and fill many lesser positions in the court of the lord.

Legally, the effect of this confession, which the dying man asked his confessor to make public after a little encouragement, is that the head of the "bastard" line should become the lord, dispossessing his younger half brother. Characters may earn gratitude by negotiating the continuing loyalty of the "bastard" line, by negotiating a smooth transition between the two

lineages, or by taking the winning side if the parties seek justice in the courts or on the field of battle. Characters who hush up the confession cannot earn Gratitude points, but may be given other favors.

This story seed may have several different twists, as well. The current lord may be murderously dedicated to keeping the land in his branch of the family for his sons, and try to eliminate the characters who have hushed the matter up, so that the secret remains buried. He might, alternatively, be almost too good, and be glad to give up his land to his wronged brother. The brother, however has a hatred for a neighboring community, and his ascension would pitch the land into war. His player-character vassals must choose between loyalty to their somewhat naive lord and loyalty to their community, which would be ravaged if the war was lost. Finally, the confession itself may be a lie, fostered by a demon or faeries to cause strife.

tus are usually known; those from a noble woman who finds a lover are usually hidden among her legitimate children, which may be a source of the Dark Secret Flaw.

To see how loyal to the head of the family each sibling is, the player rolls a stress die and then, if the child is a legitimate son, subtracts the number of older sons of military inclination. The result is used to generate a number as per the Arts table on ArM5, page 31. The maximum score is 3 and negative scores are permitted. This score is the son's Loyal Personality Trait. A roll of zero indicates that the child is implacably disloyal to the head of the family.

The subtraction of the birth number of the legitimate sons models the way that families in cultures that practice primogeniture ration economic support to favor the elder sons. It does not apply in those families that are so wealthy that they support all of their sons. Sons of "military inclination" do not include those who are dead, bastards, have joined the Church, have become magi, or are seriously disabled, as these sons do not inherit land. In powerful, wealthy families, the support required to prevent loss of loyalty may include land.

Disloyal sons may remain in the service of their fathers for a long time, waiting for an opportunity to assert their indepen-

dence. Sons who are not implacably disloyal may become loyal over time as their older brothers die, tying their interests closer to the head of the family's. On the other hand, many nobles feel that heirs are more likely to be disloyal than younger sons, since they have so much to gain by the deaths of their fathers; if this is the case in your campaign, troupes should shuffle these scores between sons to create interesting supporting characters for their stories. A family may be as detailed as the player and troupe prefer. Many troupes liketo keep extended families vague, so that new characters can be added as stories require.

### INHERITANCE

In many areas of Mythic Europe, the lands of a father are divided between his sons at death. In those that are influenced by Norman culture, this is seen only as a way of dividing the family's estate into a patch of squabbling petty knights, and so all land goes to the nominated heir. If no heir is nominated, this is the eldest, or the strongest as selected by the dead father's liege. This method keeps the family estate together, but gives younger sons motive to oppose the head of their family in war.

Four measures are taken to limit fratricide. First, younger brothers and nephews are given choice offices in the retinue of the family's head. Second, the lands that a father inherited from his father are kept together as demesne, but land gained by conquest or marriage may be split away to endow younger sons. Third, if the lord gains wardship of an heiress, she will be married to a landless son to provide for him. And fourth, sections of the estate called appanages may be given to younger sons for the length of their lifetime only.

These non-heritable appanage lands are frowned upon by many. They assert that appanages are not usually resumed by the primary line of a family without warfare, and so they are a way of dividing the estate in slow stages. This does occur in some families, but in the majority, war and infant mortality prevent this from occurring. The French royal family has divided its lands somewhat through appanage. In contrast, the English crown has not, since the Conquest, been able to create a cadet branch that has held its land separate for more than two generations.

If there is no male heir, the lands of families in many areas are divided between the daughters of the last lord. This prevents his sons-in-law from going to war, and provides lands to the Church through daughters who have taken the veil. This is one factor that prevents nobles having contiguous territories. The average noble family fails to provide a male heir every fourth generation, so this churning of lands is common.

### MARRIAGE AND DOWRIES

A player may select the degree of affection in the character's marriage in consultation with the troupe. Arranged matrimony is common for nobles, but many of these become loving marriages. Adultery is considered immoral, but is relatively common among noblemen of high status. The Church has recently ruled that a marriage requires, at minimum, only a spoken intent to marry and a dowry, although it prefers the addition of a priest and two witnesses.

In many areas, the father of the bride must consent to her marriage. This allows him to threaten his daughter, by saying he will approve no man other than his choice. A father does not, however, formally choose the husband of his daughters in any Christian part of Europe. The sacrament of marriage requires voluntary participation.

Marriage may occur at very young ages



for the heirs of greater nobles. The average groom of the lower noble class is, however, in his late twenties. This is lower if he has an opportunity to marry well and establish himself financially. Women marry slightly younger than men.

Dowries are an important part of the marriage contract. A dowry is a sum of money or goods paid by the bride's family to the bride upon marriage. Dowries are the usual way for parents to pass wealth intergenerationally to daughters.

In most of Italy and much of France, a husband has the right to invest and manage his wife's dowry, but not spend it. He may be sued for mismanagement, and must be able to give it back to the wife's family if the couple separates. In Italy, if the wife dies before the husband, her dowry must be given to her children or be returned to her parents. In parts of France, the husband may keep much of the dowry. In England, the husband owns all of the goods of the wife, including her body. In all three places, a free woman has the right to use a portion of her husband's property for support, if he predeceases her. For game purposes, assume this is one third of his estate, and that she likely loses this property if she remarries.

## Military

The military accompaniment of a nobleman varies with his wealth. Simple knights are accompanied only by one or two servants. Wealthy lords have tails of between eight and ten knights during peacetime, sometimes accompanied by other mounted warriors and infantrymen. These household knights are called the lord's mesnie.

Membership in a lord's mesnie has many advantages. The knights of a nobleman's household are fed, clothed, billeted, and their gear is replaced if it wears out or is lost occasionally in tournaments. As the personal guards of a lord, the mesnie knights profit from their lord's wars. If the lord is powerful, or becomes powerful, his mesnie is often rewarded with offices or lands. Many are rewarded with the lord's *grasse*.

It is usual for lords to stuff their mesnie with young men from their extended family, or those of their neighbors. Younger sons raised as squires in a lord's court, for example, may lack the resources required to maintain their status. Placement in a mesnie is an excellent station for them. A mesnie filled with younger sons, who lack the prospect

### Size of Dowries

The size of a dowry varies by culture. In some areas it is equivalent to an equal portion of the land that the girl's parents own, when split between their children. In the French sphere, the oldest son and his patrimony are removed from this division, as they receive the inalienable section of land passed down through the family's primary line. This is adjusted downward if the daughter:

- Is marrying a groom from a less-wealthy family. This is not unusual, because women outnumber men in Mythic Europe.
- Is one of few acceptable brides in her economic range.
- Is a virgin.
- Is more than ten years younger than the groom.
- Will receive other goods after marriage. It is illegal in some areas — like

Catalonia, southern France, and much of Italy — to leave bequests to daughters, so dowries in those regions are larger.

- Has more siblings than average, since her share of her parents' wealth is smaller.
- Has mostly female siblings, since this means her parents need to find more dowries.
- Is unlikely to have difficulty obtaining money from the male heir after her father dies.
- Will receive the dowry in land or money, rather than other rights.

Conversely, dowries are more generous if any of these statements are untrue. If the bride is exceptional, for example she is an heiress, her husband's family may pay her father or guardian a dower.

### A Tale Stolen From the Birth of Robert the Bruce

There are two powerful territories in part of the lord's lands. He is on poor terms with the ruler of one, who feels he has some right to the lordship himself, due to a claim that one of current lord's ancestors couldn't inherit legally. The other territory currently has no lord, being administered by the widow of the previous holder. The greater lord has the right to select a husband for this woman, and is reserving her as a reward for service.

News reaches the court that the son of the rival ruler was traveling through the country and was seduced by the widow. It

has caused a great scandal. The bishop, who is a stern man of God and not given to laxity with regard to matters of fornication, is demanding that the two marry regardless of the objections of their overlord. A character who manages to prevent the lord's rival from consolidating this territory gains 5 Gratitude, and character who at least gets a fine out of the widow for not choosing who her lord wished earns 2. A character who pushes the marriage forward may gain Gratitude from the rival and the couple, however, and they have become a significant force in their territory.

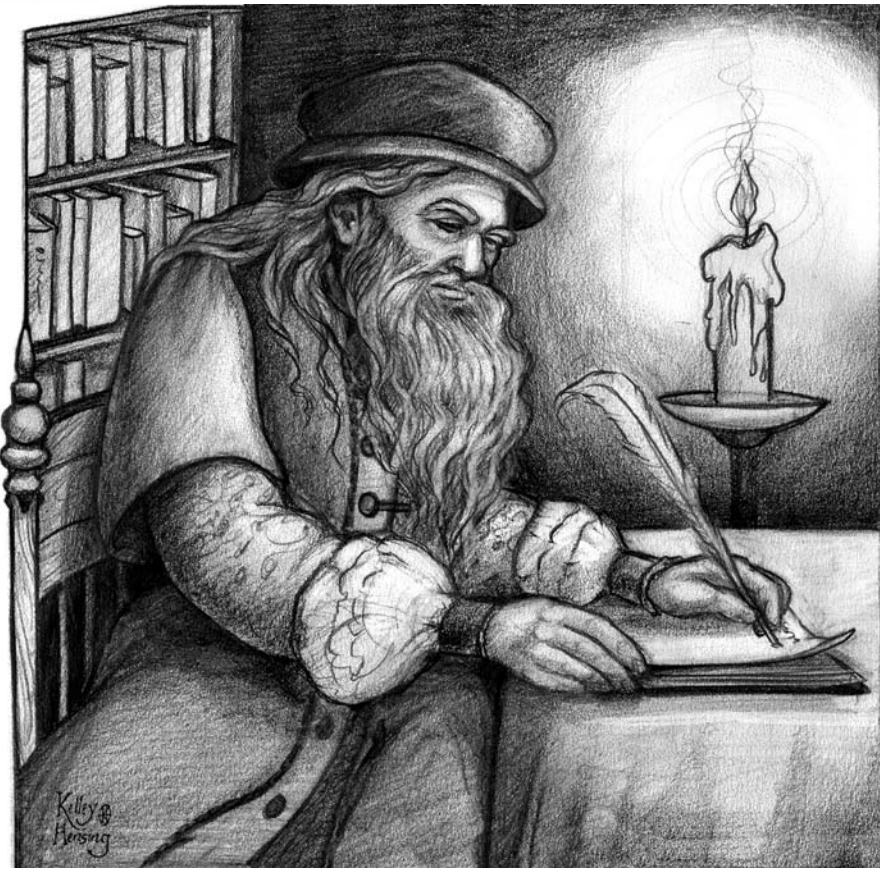
of independent inheritance, is preferred by some lords, while others prefer to befriend young heirs.

Mesnie knights are expected to be loyal to their lord above all else, but in practice noblemen understand that knights have common sense. During the recent civil wars in England, the mesnie of the chief marshal showed extreme loyalty by being willing to lose all of their lands and be reduced to penury to follow their lord. This behavior is considered ideal. In practice, a mesnie is expected to desert a lord whose cause is failing. When Thomas Becket, the archbishop

of Canterbury, was provoking the king, his mesnie knights deserted him and this was not considered a shameful thing for them to do, given that their lord was ensuring their annihilation.

A member of the mesnie of a lord is sometimes called a bachelor, or "bachelor." This title is used to demonstrate that the knight has a patron. This means that if the knight is abused, the dishonor can be answered with more than the force of his arm. A knight becomes a bachelor by being offered a place in a mesnie.

The mesnie knights of a lord tend to have



common enough for a character to be able to seek one that suits his strengths. Mesnies filled with poets or knights interested in theology are common, particularly in the households of landholding women and priests. A character may make an Intelligence + Intrigue roll against an Ease Factor of 6 to recall if the mesnie members of a lord with whom he is interacting have a common feature. A character may make an Intelligence + Intrigue roll against an Ease Factor of 12 to recall or discover the name of a lord who favors a particular skill. Characters with high Intrigue scores will, for a small fee or owed favor, arrange introductions between player characters and either lords whose tastes they suit, or knights who suit their taste.

A carissimus is the captain of a mesnie. A character becomes a carissimus by being the best friend of the lord, or by being so skilled that he is made leader of the mesnie regardless of personality. The carissimus of a powerful lord has great social cachet, and is treated as superior to the other members of the mesnie. Its common for the carissimus of a powerful nobleman to be landed, but to either still live within the household of his lord, or to live close by so that his advice can be easily sought.

## Story Seed: Choosing the Lord or Heir

The heirs to many major holdings are permitted to select their own mesnies, but are required to accept the priests foisted on them by their lord or the bishop. In some cases, this makes for a fiercely divided and partisan court. Each participant is required to either favor the current lord, or the heir to the lord. Generally, older characters favor the current lord, who can punish and reward them immediately. Younger courtiers tend to favor the heir, since they know that all they need to do is wait for their lord to die before reprisals against his supporters can begin.

Characters serving a covenant need to play a difficult game of supporting both sides sufficiently that they do not suffer reprisal now or later. One popular strategy, if the ill will between the lord and his

son degenerates to war, is to send the head of the family to support the lord, and a younger son to support the heir. The hope is that if the heir wins and the lands of the lord are forfeit, they will be awarded to the younger son for his service. If the lord wins, then the family can just disclaim the younger son, and he can live in exile until the lord dies.

Covenants with tame nobles may need to employ similar stratagems. Covenants may also be asked to shelter younger sons who were sacrificed to lost causes. These characters may have a Dark Secret Flaw, because they are wanted by the current authorities, but they also have a variant of the Heir Virtue, because if they wait sufficiently long they will have a powerful Patron.

the personality traits that the lord admires. In the estates of powerful nobles, there is a select group of friends of the lord, called the mesnie privée, who strongly reflect his tastes. The average mesnie is much like a street

gang. It is made up of violent and wealthy young men whose behavior is not effectively restricted by the law, and whose main business is the defense of their territory.

Other flavors of mesnie are unusual, but

## Clerical and Menial

The ability to read and write is common in the upper class of Mythic Europe. The work of writing letters is, however, dull and time consuming, so clerks are employed to fulfill this menial task. Most of these clerks are, as their name suggests, priests, but in some parts of Mythic Europe a professional class of estate managers has developed. These men are not clerks in the traditional sense, but they have an education and skill in improving the profit of land. In large estates this section of the household is called the chancery.

The clerical and militant sections of a household have different values, but usually co-operate with some degree of tension. In smaller households, the priests are often the younger brothers of the knights. In larger households, the priests generally have a degree of financial and legal autonomy from the lord. This can create tension with his militant servants who see this as compromising the loyalty of the priests.

Common menial workers will be discussed in greater length in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs and Chapter Seven: The Peasantry.



## Criminals

Many lords have contact with criminals, and use their services to harm the political interests of their rivals. Richer nobles often have criminals in their exclusive employ. Poorer nobles merely hire criminals for individual tasks. Criminals are particularly useful to female characters, who have little authority in Mythic Europe, but often have money. Players may design criminals using the rules for agents given in the Affinity section later. The rules in this section abstract the criminal, allowing the story to focus on the effect of their actions.

Characters use their Intrigue Ability to hire skilled professionals. If these incidents are played in stories, the criminals use their own Ability scores. If the crimes are resolved without a story, the hiring character rolls Communication + Intrigue and uses the result in place of the proxy's roll, to determine the degree of success. Characters with high Intrigue hire the very best people, and get excellent results. Nobles without Intrigue skills hire a servant who has them. Characters whose proxies are defending against crime — sentries or bodyguards, for example — use their own skills during stories. For non-played events, they may use either their own skills or the Communication + Intrigue of whoever hired them.

**ASSASSINATION:** Most assassinations use the combat rules. The corpse usually appears to be the victim of a violent mugging. Assassination disguised as mugging is usually unsuccessful against nobles, because of their mesnies, but works well against their lesser officers. The assassin generally charges two pounds for this service, for a common person. Nobles can have poor people murdered for free, though regular use of this privilege gives the noble a Reputation for ruthlessness. A few assassins favor methods that are more exotic, such as poisoning. They charge five pounds per attempt, in advance, provided the target will be in a city.

**BEATINGS:** Thugs can simply beat a character severely, or humiliate him, to teach him a lesson. This halves the cost of an assassination, if the victim is rich.

**BRIBES:** Bribes vary in size by the wealth of the corrupted official and the magnitude of the favor requested. An easily granted favor costs a week's wages. A favor that would cause serious trouble if discovered costs a month's wages, provided discovery is unlikely. A favor that would cause the character to lose his job, if discovered, costs at least a

year's wages, but may cost more. A series of regular favors involves the corrupted official getting a percentage of whatever advantages the briber accrues.

**KIDNAPPING:** Kidnappings cost twice as much as assassinations.

**SABOTAGE:** Agents can be instructed to perform many varieties of sabotage. They charge a pound, in advance, for each attempt, regardless of success. Sabotage requires a Dexterity + Stealth + stress roll that exceeds the Perception + Awareness + stress roll of the most skilled sentry guarding the facility that the agent seeks to harm. Each added sentry adds 1 to the defender's roll. A discovered saboteur flees using the combat rules to disengage from the sentries, and then hides.

The type of sabotage attempted also adds to the sentry's roll: this reflects the time and difficulty required to inflict damage on the facility.

TYPE OF SABOTAGE	SENTRY'S AWARENESS BONUS	EXAMPLES
Defacement	+0	Throwing a bladder of ink at a monument.
Rendezvous	+3	Meeting a spy inside the enemy's area of control for a brief time. This is also the modifier for seducing an enemy's relatives in his own house.
Arson	+6	Lighting a large fire within a fortress or private residence. Prompt attention by sentries can mitigate damage caused by fires.
Burglary	+9	Removing documents, which the agent must search a room for.

**SPYING:** All nobles have spies, and many of them are effectively free. Players are encouraged to design a few colorful informants. Spies within a rival nobleman's household require very large payments for their assistance, some-

times as much as they earn by their legitimate profession. If asked to sabotage operations with which they are legitimately involved, spies often charge far more: some as much as ten years' worth of income per attack. This is because their risk of discovery is very high, and the betrayed parties may not confine themselves to legal methods of redress.

**TREACHERY:** A powerful weapon for the dueling noble is treachery. Convincing a vassal to change sides usually costs a great deal of money, so treachery is usual only when two sides are already poorly matched. Some traitors act from principle or from passion, and these are the hardest to dissuade.

## Offices

Hereditary vassals are often unreliable, and so sensible magnates invest their powers into officers. An officer is a loyal person to whom the lord lends a portion of his power. That portion of power is usually greater than what is required to fulfill the function of the office, and so offices are sought as prizes. Some noblemen circulate offices through their retainers to limit corruption, and to prevent offices from becoming hereditary. Other nobles, in times of crisis, have allowed their offices to be purchased from them with money or service, and so have lost control of their office bearers.

A character who is ordered to fulfill a mundane task related to his or her employment as an officer will do so. This privilege grants no particular loyalty in the character's underlings, although their loyalty may be selected using Virtues and Flaws at character creation. This means that underlings will not, conventionally, do things that are not in their own self-interest. They will not break the law beyond trivialities, and will not participate in combat, unless that is one of their conventional duties.

Women may be officers. It is traditional for women to be the treasurers or stewards of the husband's holdings in some areas. Senior nobles have female officers more rarely, but there is no bar on women fulfilling those offices that lack military command. In those rare cases where women hold land in their own right, it is even possible for them to lead armies themselves. This is unusual behavior, though, because even kings often leave the command of their forces to marshals schooled in war.

The following offices are described as if they were part of the court of a king, but many great nobles have courts that, in a sim-

## Intrigue and the Art of Indirect Action

For Intrigue rolls to uncover information or allies, they must first exist. A character who has led a blameless life is armored against Intrigue. The following Ease Factors, for an Intelligence + Intrigue roll, demonstrate what a character might learn about potential allies, or the harm they may cause by spreading gossip. The noble to be harmed is referred to as the target.

A character using the Intrigue ability in this way must entertain other gossips, hire spies, bribe servants, and threaten people. For Ease factors higher than 6, this takes (3 x Ease) days and costs at least (Ease / 3) pounds. Elaborate plans may cost far more, at the Troupe's discretion.

### EASE FACTOR 3

- The stated reason for publicly declared enmity between the target and other nobles.
- The target's well-known vices (Reputation 3 or more).

### EASE FACTOR 6

- The reason behind public friction between the target and other nobles.
- The target's lesser vices (Reputation 1 or more).
- The intriguer spreads a rumor, to reduce one of the target's Reputations by 1, but the target knows the intriguer is responsible and can gain the Reputation back with appropriate public actions.

### EASE FACTOR 9

- The reason behind private hostility between the target and other nobles.
- Small, private vices known to the target's servants.

- The lesser vices of a relative or friend of the target (Reputation 1 or more). The intriguer does not choose which relative or friend is vulnerable.
- The intriguer spreads a rumor to create a negative Reputation of 1. The target, or the target's friends, may determine the identity of the perpetrator with an Intelligence + Intrigue roll higher than the intriguer's, and may combat the Reputation with appropriate public actions.
- What is required to push one of the target's rivals from private friction into public enmity.
- A Story Flaw, if known by only a few people but not all of them loyal to the target.
- Information that will cause one of the target's friends or relatives to feel wronged by him.
- The intriguer forges evidence of a crime, which will cause the character severe trouble. The target, or the target's friends, may determine the identity of the perpetrator with an Intelligence + Intrigue roll higher than the intriguer's. If they can find evidence, the intriguer will face legal reprisal. The target may demonstrate innocence through a story event.

### EASE FACTOR 12

- The reason behind minor disagreements between the target and other nobles.
- What is required to push the private hostility of one of the target's enemies into public enmity.
- A Story Flaw, if known by several other people.
- Small, private vices of one of the target's friends. The intriguer does not choose which relative or friend is vulnerable.
- The intriguer forges evidence of a tawdry nature that creates a negative Reputation of 2. The target, or the target's friends, may determine the identity of the perpetrator with an Intelligence + Intrigue roll higher than the intriguer's. The character may shed the Reputation with appropriate public actions and, if the target can find evidence, the intriguer may gain a poor Reputation instead.

### EASE FACTOR 15

- The details of an old grudge, or an old enmity, that has lain forgotten for many years.

### EASE FACTOR 18

- Information about the crimes of the target's ancestors, which rile a descendant of their victim against the target.
- What is required to push a defeated enemy of the target back into action.
- One of the target's Story Flaws, if known only to a small number of people who are loyal to the target.
- Information that will cause one of the target's friends to conspire toward his downfall.
- The intriguer forges convincing evidence that makes the target appear to have a Dark Secret, like the Flaw. The target, or his friends, may determine the identity of the person who reveals the Flaw with an Intelligence + Intrigue roll of equal to the intriguer's and prove the secret false, but it is almost impossible to tie the intriguer to the revealer of the flaw, or the forgery (Intelligence + Intrigue roll of 21 or more).



plified way, have vassals fulfilling parallel roles. The exact title for a role varies widely. Characters designed as officers need the Temporal Influence Virtue.

### ADMIRAL

In many courts, a permanent force of dedicated warships is a novel idea. Traditionally, kings have simply hired or requisitioned the ships required for warfare. When a king does have a personal fleet, it is maintained by an officer. This officer serves as an aide to whichever nobleman is given charge of a particular campaign in which the fleet is engaged. The term “admiral” is an Arabic one, and is not yet widely used.

Lesser noblemen usually have boats, but rarely use them for naval warfare. The main role of ships in war is to transport supplies that are required to keep armies in the field or, in more limited circumstances, to transport the armies themselves. The medieval ship is equipped with certain weapons for defense against boarders, and in exceptional cases — like the Greek fire of the galleys of Byzantium — to destroy other ships. Ships are not weapons platforms capable of bombardment against coastal positions.

A character who holds the office of admiral can find, provision, crew, and command vessels of war. Their number is commensurate with the power of the character’s liege. An admiral is also able to command men who make their livelihood from warships and trading, through a mixture of charm and force.

### BUTLER

Nominally the king’s wine steward, the butler is responsible for the feeding of the court. This requires a tremendous amount of money, and the butler is also the officer charged with overseeing those parts of the royal demesne set aside to produce food for the court. A direct parallel of this role is found in lesser courts. A butler, then, commands vast wealth on behalf of the lord, and has the right to nominate prices for things that the court requires, effectively controlling a taxing power used against towns.

### CHANCELLOR

The chancellor is, technically, the master of the king’s correspondence. Effectively, this makes the chancellor the king’s chief ad-



visor on foreign relations and the state of the Church. It is a lucrative and powerful role, because it controls the vacant Church lands within the gift of the king. This role is almost always held by a priest, and in lesser courts it is sometimes combined with the role of personal confessor to the nobleman. It is an unusual chancellor who does not have private agents and criminals at his disposal.

### CHAMBERLAIN

The chamberlain is responsible for the king’s chamber, which in a fuller sense means that he is responsible for wherever the king is staying, much of the king’s retinue, and the king’s personal possessions. Chamberlains lack the raw power of some of the other officers, but are highly influential, having access to the king far exceeding that of any of the other officers. In many small noble holdings, the lord’s wife acts as his chamberlain.

### CONSTABLE

This term has split in different realms to mean different things. In Britain, it is used in-

discriminately for anyone who holds a royal office, so that the castellan of a royal castle may be called its constable. In France, it has a similar wide variety of meanings, but often refers to the leader of the French army, whom English people would call its marshal. The Constable of France is permitted to countermand the orders of the king in battle.

### COUNSELOR

It is the duty of all vassals to attend their lord when summoned, and give him advice. This duty is described more fully in a later section. It is recognized, however, that certain persons give more-useful advice than others, and so it is convenient to have them on hand for the lord’s select councils. These people assist the lord in governing his territory. If a person is a member of this group, he is called a counselor. This office is often gained with one of the other offices of the royal household, but there are some counselors who are not part of the royal household. Women of political inclination are often members of the councils of their relatives.

## JUSTICIAR

The king's primary officer for the enforcement of the law is his justiciar. The enforcement of the law is a lucrative business for most kings, and in many kingdoms this office has proven too mighty for the king to easily control its holders. This has led to the king resuming the title, and creating lesser posts that serve as his aides in selected parts of the realm. The title of justiciar is usually given to the person acting as regent for a king who is a minor or insane. This is sometimes the mother of a child-king, if she is known for her political acumen and she either has the support of most of the nobility or she is considered a useful compromise between rival groups.

## MARSHAL

The marshal is the leader of the king's bodyguard, and by extension, in time of war the leader of the royal army in the field. Marshals also have the responsibility to raise and provision the army. There are marshals in lesser courts, although their role as leader of the army is weaker. The position of marshal rose to prominence in England during the reigns of King John, who was averse to personal supervision of his army in the field, and his infant heir.

## SHERIFF / BAILIE / SÉNÉCHAL

These offices have similar roles.

In Saxon England, the sheriffs were the king's loyal representatives in each shire, charged with keeping the peace. After the Norman invasion their role was expanded, to become the king's representative in an area. When the Norman kings needed money the role was corrupted. In 1220, a sheriff is a nobleman who has paid the king a sum of money in exchange for the right to collect all those moneys due the king in a particular shire. If the sheriff is tyrannical then the taxes due will far surpass the payment made, and the sheriff is entitled to the difference.

The sheriff has many sources of money. He acts as magistrate for local matters, and keeps the king's fines, although he is required to pay a third of them to the earl of the shire. It is common for earls to purchase this role. The sheriff also commands the king's local forces, for example the garrisons of castles.

In England, the term "bailiff" refers to all of the king's officers, and is used on a mano-

### Amercements: Money From The Law

Bribes, fines, and taxes provide much of the revenue gathered by the law officers of the kingdom, but a fourth, and lucrative, form of judicial remuneration exists. For many infractions, rather than a fine, the law provides a gruesome and disfiguring punishment. The hands of thieves, as a simple example, are cut off. Amercement occurs when, having found a person guilty, his judge allows that person to throw himself on the court's mercy. In exchange for a fine that is negotiated with the judge, the person is permitted to avoid physical punishment.

Some of the punishments are deliberately horrific to encourage amercements. King Richard's forest law stated that any-

one who killed one of his deer was to have his eyes and testicles extracted. Poachers were not, generally, blinded and castrated, since they far preferred to pay amercements.

The most extreme case of amercement occurs when a felon — that is, someone who has performed a capital crime — has found sanctuary in a church and has asked to abjure the realm. In this case, the coroner takes a detailed confession from the felon, makes him take serious oaths on the Bible to not return, and then nominates a port he must walk to, to take ship from the realm. All of the felon's personal goods are forfeit to the crown, and his land falls under royal protection for a year.

rial level to designate officers of the manorial lord. In Northern France, a bailie is much like a pre-corruption sheriff. They act as the keepers of the king's law in the domain royal. In southern France, the same role is fulfilled by *sénéchaux*. In some German speaking areas this role is filled by a *vogt*, although the parallel is inexact.

By whatever name, these roles are attractive to covenantants. A proxy nobleman acting as sheriff provides an income for the covenantant with effective legal impunity in temporal affairs. The Quaesitores consider it likely a breach of the Code to outbid other nobles for this role. However, through skilled diplomacy, overt bribery, and occasional threats, it has been possible for covenantants to have a great deal of influence over the selection and activities of sheriffs.

## STEWARD

The king's steward is responsible for all of the parts of the court that are not explicitly the responsibility of others. Such a nebulous and useful role is found in every lesser court, although it tends to combine with the roles of butler, chancellor, and chamberlain. The steward, as controller of the king's household, is the leader of the king's household army, but his subordinate the marshal actually leads it in battle. Stewardship is often vested in women, such as the mothers of infant lords, or the wives of lords.

## TREASURER

The treasurer of a king is the guardian of the lord's wealth. The exact role the treasurer plays varies by location. He may have a strong legal role, overseeing the collection of rights, or may have a far more limited role, as the master of the castle where the king keeps much of his minted money. The treasury of a kingdom tends to be highly defensible, because loss of the treasury makes it difficult for a king to raise mercenary armies, or keep his feudal retainers in the field longer than their obligated days. Many kings have several treasuries; they may assign separate treasurers to each, or have them supervised by a single officer.

## Offices Found Only Near England

The following offices are found only in England, Scotland, and the parts of Ireland and Wales dominated by the English. Britain is such a focus of play for *Ars Magica* groups, and the play potential of these offices so obvious, that they have been described here. Troupes with sagas in alternative countries can still use the ideas suggested below, because the kings of their own countries reserve the right to appoint vassals to perform any task.



## Story Seed: Avoiding the Murdrum

In towns where a body has been found, it is often considered best to circumvent the law of murdrum. If player characters find a body, he has the following choices:

Investigate the murder, and see if the person is a Norman. This is difficult, because many Norman families are effectively English in the 13th century.

Smuggle the body to a desolate place and bury it in secret. This is a crime, and characters must plan carefully to not be seen, or at least to only be seen by characters who also believe it best for the community to avoid the tax. A murder victim in an unhallowed grave may return to

haunt his killer, though, and the characters if they were complicit in hiding the crime.

Smuggle the body to another community, and make sure the coroner finds it before the people in the rival village can smuggle it back over the border. This strange sport is undignified, however, and is unlikely to end in a church burial. The ghosts of bodies that have been carted backward and forward over the countryside tend to range widely and be deeply distressed, particularly if pieces of the corpse have been lost in various places.

### CORONER

Much as the sheriffs are a curb on the power of the earls, so the coroners are a curb on the power of the sheriffs. The coroner acts as an inspector who binds people for trial and deals with petty cases summarily, depriving the sheriff of some of his revenue. Each shire elects four knights for a period to serve as its coroners. Towns also have coroners, sufficient in number to deal with the royal business of the town. In areas like the Marches, where the judicial rights of the crown have been delegated, coroners are often appointed by the nobleman directly.

Each coroner must be a knight with an income sufficient to support himself. The role of coroner is unpaid, and coroners who take gifts in exchange for their services are punished harshly. Those who offer bribes to the coroners are similarly punished.

The coroner also acts as the king's representative, collecting rights that would otherwise go to the sheriff. These rights include the personal goods of people who have committed suicide, the proceeds of shipwrecks, the flesh or money to the value of any whale or sturgeon caught by fishers, certain articles from buildings that burn down, objects that have killed people (deodands), and valuable objects that have been buried (treasure troves). The coroner is also the person to arrange the process by which a felon in sanctuary quits the realm, in the process confiscating all his land and goods for the king.

The coroners are also the collectors of murdrum. This is the fine levied on a community where a person has been secretly killed, if the members of the community cannot prove the body to be English (or Welsh

or Irish, for coroners in the invaded parts of those countries), as opposed to Norman. The fine is high, up to 30 pounds per body, so many towns buy exemption from the law of murdrum through royal charter. They have too many merchants, pilgrims, and sailors visiting them and dying anonymously to leave this to chance.

### FOREST WARDEN

The forests of England are all of the areas that have been declared sole hunting preserves of the king. "Forest," in this sense, is a specialized legal term. There are forests that are not wooded, and most woods are not forest. The forest is administered by the forest warden, who has a deputy for each major forest, also called a warden. These roles are noble, but their servants — the rangers and surveyors — are not.

All of the great royal forests contain hunting lodges. Some lodges are small castles, and these are held by a castellan who also acts as the deputy forest warden for the vicinity. A corrupt warden therefore has accommodation, land associated with his office, the fines he collects for breaches of the forest law, as much meat as he can poach, and as much wood as he can sell.

The lands of the office are supposed to provide wages for the warden's retainers, but in many cases those persons pay him for their positions. Rangers extort money from peasants who make use of the wood, or accept bribes to look the other way when poaching and illegal wood collection occur. They also poach game and have all the wood they can use or surreptitiously sell.

Much as the office of coroner was created in response to the corruption of the sheriffs, so a series of offices has been created to deal with the corruption of the wardens. The verderers are unpaid landowners appointed to keep track of the fines taken by the wardens. Every third year, a separate group of four knights called regards is appointed in each county containing forest to make a census of everything that might harm forest animals. Four more knights of each county, the agistors, guard the king's rights with regard to animals permitted to pasture in the forest.

## Vassals

A lord's vassals are theoretically his chief lieutenants. Flaws in the feudal system, however, force many lords to operate through officers, some of whom are traditional vassals, but many of whom are drawn from their mesnies. Lieges are in a state of constant negotiation with their senior vassals, able to utilize their resources fully only through a combination of friendship, charisma, and menace. The fundamental function of vassals is to provide resources to their liege during crises.

### Why Bother With Vassals?

Some kings try to minimize the role of their vassals in the politics of the kingdom. A land governed by royal officers, without a hereditary caste of landowners, would be more stable and provide greater revenue to its ruler, they assert. These attempts usually end badly. Regardless of its efficiency, the noble class exists, and when the king is weak, it has the financial and military power to crush the commoners raised as opponents by earlier, stronger kings.

### VASSALAGE ALLOWS NOBLES TO EXPRESS A COMMON INTEREST

Initially, in most kingdoms vassalage was voluntary. The great landholders of the kingdom came together and elected their kings. They did this so that a central figure of authority could lead them in war and settle their disputes. This method of select-

ing kings is failing, though. The current king of England was still a baby when loyalists defeated the army of the barons, who had offered the throne of England to the crown prince of France, forcing them to accept primogeniture on the English throne. Philip Augustus, the current king of France, has not forced the nobles of his kingdom to appoint his son co-king, as Phillip's father did just before dying. Again, primogeniture has been accepted as the proper way for the crown to pass to the next generation.

### VASSALAGE ALLOWS FOR HUGE TRANSACTIONS

Vassalage allows a noble to pay a supporter with land, while not losing some of the rights associated with that land. When the Normans invaded England and William divided its lands between his retainers, he was paying them the fee expected for their service. Mustering an army and conquering territory is best rewarded with land. This encourages the supporters of a noble to excel themselves in future conflicts.

### VASSALAGE IS A FORM OF TRUCE

A feudal bond places two powerful men in a relationship to each other. It is considered heinous for either to threaten the other, at least in theory. Either could still cause the other harm, but it would do such damage to the Reputation of the aggressor as to make future political activity difficult. The lord and his vassal, although they have conflicting interests, agree not to directly assail each other.

### VASSALAGE LIMITS GENOCIDAL WARFARE

If a noble invades a neighboring lord, it is rarely possible to carry the war to the extinction of the neighbor's family. The nobility of Europe are too tightly connected by marriage. If an invader kills a sufficient number of heirs to most pieces of land, eventually one or more senior nobles will claim to be the closest relation still alive. This noble will then challenge for the land, particularly if this series of wars has weakened the aggressor. A way around this is to kill the neighbor and then select a claimant from his extended family from whom to accept vassalage. Most significant families have some disaffected cousins suitable for this purpose.

## Money

Vassals owe a series of taxes to their lieges. Minor taxes taken as traditional gifts of produce have been commuted to cash in most areas. The largest tax is on inherited land, and is called relief. It varies by kingdom, and in some is not levied. In England, a lord owes approximately one year's income to his liege on the assumption of his title.

Four graces make relief affordable. First, the tax is, in many cases, only levied on manors that existed when the land was originally granted. Estates that have been improved over the generations are, therefore, comparatively affordable. Second, the king and tenants in chief no longer wish to engage in court cases to determine exactly what one year's income is for each property, and so it is capped at five pounds per manor, or 100 pounds for greater barons, regardless of actual income. Third, the liege usually grants five years to pay the debt, and commutes parts of it in exchange for military service, loyalty during rebellion, diplomatic service, or other tasks as suits his whim. Fourth, if a nobleman dies and his lord raises his heir, that heir is not required to pay relief.

A lord is due a series of other taxes, called aids, which are to be used sparingly. Each aid can be any amount because, theoretically, aids are given voluntarily as gifts. A liege who uses aids too often or sets them too high loses the support of his nobles and is unable to collect their money.

Popular aids include payments when the lord is knighting his eldest son, or marrying his eldest daughter the first time, or ransoming his life. Ecclesiastical lords may make a similar demand when first ascending to office. A lord who knights his son before the boy is 15 years old or marries his daughter off before the age of seven is likely to anger his vassals. A payment of one pound per manor is likely, but may be as high as the lord feels he can get away with. Ransom aid may be demanded by a lord who has lost in tourney and owes money from it, but a lord who seeks to collect such money is certain to anger his vassals. Aid is also common when an heir owes relief to a lord.

## Warriors

When called to muster for war, vassals are required to provide their lord with the service of one knight for per manor that

their fief contained at the time it was originally granted. In some families, which have retained properties for generations, this represents only a fraction of the wealth that the family has available. A character who is rich and well-disposed to his lord may provide additional forces. This is, in turn, rewarded with a greater share of the booty that becomes available if the war is successful.

Assume that a powerful landowner must provide, at minimum, 20 knights when called to war. This may include the landowner himself, but need not unless he is personally instructed to attend. Even if the lord is instructed to come, it is possible for him to avoid this obligation through a series of ruses. Many of the nobles in Europe are subinfeudated to multiple lieges. When these lieges go to war with each other, it is useful to be able to avoid attending battle, while still fulfilling feudal obligations.

Knights are the commonest warriors detailed in feudal obligations, but many vassals are also able to muster large numbers of peasant warriors, called a levy. In England, they are required to have light armor and carry a spear. The levy is most often called when a battle is expected within the same shire, since removing men from farming for an extended period by marching them across the country damages their lord's finances. These men lack the mobility, equipment, and lust for battle of knights, but they have several uses.

Infantry provide an advantage in terms of sheer numbers that is useful in pitched battle. Their formations provide a solid block that archers can shelter behind and cavalry can use when reforming after attacks. At the Battle of Grissors, the spears of the English even turned aside the cavalry charges of the French. Infantry serve as guards for stores and baggage on campaign. They are able to defend territory against those attempting to smuggle food to besieged castles. Infantry are able to hold captured castles, a role in which the mobility of the knight, and the expense of his maintenance, are wasted.

A vassal is required to provide warriors for a number of days per year that varies by kingdom. In England this is 40 days, in Sicily 60. This is rarely long enough to complete a siege, so kings often need to pay their army additional money to extend this service. As an added incentive, once a castle falls after a lengthy siege, the besieging army is allowed to sack it with legal impunity. The same often holds true for towns.



## SCUTAGE

Some nobles send money when war is declared, instead of knights. This fine for non-attendance, called scutage, serves the interest of the landholder if he lacks military inclination, and serves the interest of the liege, who can then hire mercenaries or pay his army to remain in the field after its annual service is complete. Many greater nobles are instructed to muster a portion of their forces and give scutage for the rest if a war is likely to be protracted by sieges. They may also be offered a bulk discount on their scutage.

The scutage in England is usually two pounds per knight in 1220. Under King John it was levied every year, regardless of whether there was a war for it to be spent on. Under the current king, the scutage is only levied with the permission of the nobles, and may be lower if only a small force is required. Similarly, if a lesser lord goes to war, he may demand a scutage from his vassals, but it might be a portion of the fee nominally due him.

## Advice

The right to ask advice is more significant than it initially appears. It allows a lord to control the movements of his vassals. It also allows the lord to force vassals to make public statements regarding their views on contentious matters.

A vassal asked to attend his liege's court has a duty to attend. Failure to attend — failure to render advice — is a breach of the character's feudal obligations and can be punished by a fine or even seizure of the recalcitrant's lands. A vassal who attends his lord is not permitted to leave without the lord's agreement. Nobles considered potentially rebellious can be forced to show their hand, by refusing summons or by flight from court.

The receipt of advice is a useful tool for building and demonstrating consensus among vassals. As an example, if the liege wishes to annex a neighboring territory, it is useful for him to gather together his vassals and ask their advice. This allows him to gauge the strength of their favor and see who opposes the plan. It also allows potentially tardy or rebellious vassals to see the level of support that the liege has, and measure the likelihood that they will suffer successful reprisal at the hands of more-enthusiastic vassals.

## Story Seed: Scutage Raid

The lord that a character is allied to lacks sufficient money to pay his scutage, but he has a plan to make good the shortage. He hates another, more-powerful lord. His plan is to place a group of bandits on the road that his enemy's troops will follow when they are carrying their scutage to the king. His men will then take a little silver for themselves, give the rest to him, and he will use his enemy's money to pay the scutage. This will leave the enemy embarrassed before the king, and will grant the king an excuse to chip a piece off the rival's land. The land won't come to the lord planning all of this, but he doesn't mind. A light blow against his

enemy is still a blow. For this to work, the lord needs some men he can trust, like his mesnie, and somewhere for them to work.

The player characters may become aware of this plot at any stage. They may hear rumors of it leaking out of the mesnie. They may find a group of bandits camped near a road who seem to have no intention of attacking passing merchants and wonder what is at the root of their strange behavior. They may intervene in the fight, or find the group switching clothes and carts on covenant land. Or they may be asked by the lord whose money was stolen to seek the thieves.

Advice also allows a liege to weigh the interests of his lords against each other, and balance them according to the usefulness of the individual vassal. As an example, a lord who has an empty benefice may ask which churchman it should be awarded to. The bishop will certainly have an opinion, but so will many noble houses whose younger sons have interests in the Church. Asking advice allows the liege to measure these interests, and reward each noble in turn. It also allows the lord to play favorites.

## Wardship of Heirs

An idealized version of the raising of a noble child has him separated from his mother at five, when he joins the service of the ladies of the family's lord's court as a page. This teaches him manners and morals. When he reaches puberty, he is taken as the servant of a particular knight, to act as his squire. The knight mentors him in the arts of war. In some areas, this knight makes him a knight in turn, but in most lands the right to make knights has been withdrawn to the barons, or even the king himself. It is believed that boys who are not fostered are coddled, so they are less-able knights.

An heir is a hostage for the good conduct of his father. It is considered entirely just, by many, to kill such a child if his father rebels. However, it is considered even better to defeat the rebel, put him to death, and then claim wardship of his lands on behalf of his child. The revenues of wardship are not, generally, reserved for the child, going

straight into the treasury of the liege until the child turns 21 if male, or marries if female.

If the ward's father dies, the liege has the right to determine who the child will marry. This allows the liege to enmesh the vassal's interests with those of other vassals he knows to be loyal, or to ensure that a problematic estate gets no larger through marriage. The betrothal of a young, landed man is a valuable commodity, for which nobles are willing to offer useful concessions in other areas of dispute.

The landed sons of lesser vassals are prized husbands for the daughters of rich merchants, and the boy's marriage may be sold through a less-than-genteel process that resembles an auction. This is technically illegal in many areas: it's called disparagement. Disparagement also includes marriage to deformed people, or women past childbearing age. The lord's actions are, however, only limited by the array of forces who oppose him, and in this case the heir's immediate family are dead.

Heiresses are even more valuable than heirs. Marriage to an heiress is the fastest way to progress to a higher social status. Heiresses are given to supporters as rewards for their service. They are also the usual way for a lord to grant land to his younger sons, without splitting his patrimony or taking new territory through war. The right to select husbands or brides for the children of enemies is one of the concessions usually demanded after victory in war.

Even a grown heir, returned to his parents, is still valuable to his father's lord. His friends and romantic interests are established

### Story Seed: A Matter of Hermetic Honor

A lord has betrothed an heiress to the son of a Tytalus magus in exchange for undisclosed services. The Quaestores are considering that matter, but seem satisfied that his support did not breach the Code. The matter of graver concern is that the heiress' family has made an appeal to the royal court, claiming that the marriage cannot proceed because this would be a disparagement.

House Tytalus wishes to run a case in a mortal court. If successful, this would mean that all children taken as apprentices, in the court's area, were automatically free, although a fine would be due their lords. It would also mean that no magus or apprentice could ever be treated as a villein, and that Hermetic courts would have complete legitimacy as an alternative to mundane or ecclesiastical courts. Magi are divided on whether this constitutes interference, or if it's a simple acknowledgement of the actual way that magi live.

### Story Seed: Did You Keep The Receipt?

A lord is attempting to claim back the lands of an heiress, because her husband has not paid the fee that was agreed upon for her hand. The local bishop really hates this kind of behavior, although the lord has a case in the royal court and may well succeed. The characters may earn Gratitude from the bishop and couple if they can get the lord to drop his suit, or from the lord by having the couple pay the money they owe. The story can be twisted in several ways: the lord might be lying about the fee, or the couple might have already paid by doing some shameful service to which they cannot admit. For example, the wife may not be the original widow, but instead a maidservant substituted before the wedding. The husband is unwilling to admit this, because he would then lose the widow's lands, but is unwilling to pay for a false widow.

But this tradition is abused regularly.

The Church takes a dim view of this chaffering about marriage: from its perspective, marriage is a divine mystery freely entered into by consenting individuals. The Church prefers people be married by priests, for the protection of women from exploitation, but it acknowledges that some people are married by custom, which the Church later sanctifies.

in the court of the lord, to whom he may look with greater loyalty than to his own parents. If a vassal rebels, an adult heir loyal to the liege is a formidable weapon, as he is able to divide the loyalty of the vassal's supporters.

## Wardship of Widows

Women, in most cases, are not permitted to rule by themselves in Mythic Europe. A woman not under the protection of her father is under the protection of her husband. A woman who loses the protection of her husband, through his death, often becomes the ward of his lord.

The lord manages the finances of the widow. A widow is entitled to a portion of her husband's estate, fixed at the time of marriage, to maintain herself until her death. This portion, usually a third of his land plus whatever was her dowry, provides useful income for the liege who acts as its administrator. By tradition, it is wrong for a lord to sell the right of wardship over a child or woman.

## Affinity

Powerful magnates prefer to have a bloc of territory that is friendly to their cause. The center of an affinity — the core lands of a nobleman — is called his caput in England and France. The lands of an affinity are called his country. A noble does not own all of the land in his country, but, in a perfect model of affinity, is allied to and is considered the de facto leader of all of the landholders in this area. In court, an affinity serves as a political faction. New landholders are often expected to join the affinity that surrounds their lands.

Outside the perfect model, it is common for two rival affinities to vie for dominance in an area. This is dangerous, because it is these points, where affinities scrape against each other, that form the fault lines of the realm in times of national crisis. Areas whose affinities are firmly for one or the other side may be raided, but deep raiding, pitched battles, and sieges occur in those lands where affinities mingle.

Players may model the power their character has through affinity in two ways. First, the affinity may be treated as a bonus to the character's Leadership score. This is described in the Affinity Leadership section, later, and in the Raising an Army section of Chapter Eight: Massed Combat. Alternatively, key members of the affinity may be designed as agents, using the section on Control Through Emotional Bonds, also later. Characters within an affinity are usually either great nobles or ecclesiastical landholders. Some lords manage to have towns within their affinities, but this is unusual as most towns value their independence from local interference.

## SECULAR ALLIES

An ally often has similar resources to the magnate. Alliances remain lucrative because the resources of allies cost little, and making neighbors allies allows characters focus their attention, money, and time elsewhere.

Public alliances prevent unnecessary wars by making it clear that, should a particular nobleman be attacked, wider conflict is inevitable. In many lands it is illegal for senior nobles to enter into treaties with foreign powers. It is seen as threatening treason. Informal public alliances are, however, common. In many places, alliances between senior noblemen in a realm and the kings of neighboring realms are inevitable, given the entanglement of marriages that bind the upper class of Europe together.

Alliances may be secret. This is common in those cases where a nobleman is being bribed by his liege's neighbor to rebel, or to simply not send his full support in wartime. Detailed charters are still written in these cases and carried between the conspirators by messengers.

## CHURCH ALLIES

A powerful churchman has all of the resources of a secular ally, coupled with his



powers as a lord of the Church's land and a representative of the power of the vicar of Christ. Church allies are sought in a variety of ways. The land the Church uses may be held from a lord, or may have been granted by the lord's family. The churchman who uses that land is expected, socially, to demonstrate gratitude for it. Noblemen also seek positions in the Church for their younger sons, and maneuver to have them appointed to vacant offices within their country.

The Church is a major landholder throughout Mythic Europe. Its lands are usually carved from the wild and improved over time, so they do not owe onerous duties to higher lords. The wealth of the Church is of great aid to a lord involved in war, and it is not unusual in major wars for both sides to field knights supported by Church manors, or mercenaries paid with Church aid. Some senior officers of the Church try to force their subordinates to only provide military aid to the side that is "right," but their prohibitions are often ineffective.

The most powerful weapon in the hands of the Church is excommunication. Christians are forbidden any dealing with an excommunicant. He may not receive the services of the Church, which effectively damns him to Hell. In countries where the faith is strong and the nobleman weak, excommunication can serve as a useful excuse allowing vassals to refuse to pay their rents, and even to rebel. In lands where the king is either strong or willing to buy subservience, excommunication has little effect on the daily operation of governance.

Interdiction forbids the services of the Church in all of a nobleman's lands. In some cases this is relaxed in monasteries and nunneries, where services continue, although they are no longer heralded with bells. Interdiction is less effective than it initially appears, because saints ignore it and many of the services of the Church, like baptism and marriage, can be performed without a priest. It does prevent the forgiveness of sins and the proper burial of the dead. Churchmen who use interdiction trivially are held accountable by the representatives of the pope.

A powerful churchman can lend his Reputation to a character's cause, so that disinterested or uninformed parties follow his guidance. Note that the support of the Church does not automatically sway even pious believers if the churchman in question is unexceptional. Many nobles are cynical about the Church's operation, if not its teaching. King John of England, for example, expressed the opinion that he was better off an excommu-

## Story Seeds: Faulty Vassals

The feudal system works on the assumption that if a vassal breaks his oath, he will be punished by God, his lord, or the lord's other vassals. This assumption rarely holds in times of crisis: precisely those times when a liege needs fidelity the most. The feudal system, of itself, contains no mechanism to prevent a vassal from defecting to an enemy of his liege.

In many cases, vassalage is part of a negotiated settlement between two rivals. It allows the new vassal to take time to procure fresh forces before striking at his new liege again. During the build-up of forces, the vassal can pretend to adhere to the will of his lord, particularly if he is summoning mercenaries from outside the area. But the vassal can, with little difficulty, choose not to strike if it seems his lord has realized what may occur. Betraying an overlord after negotiated vassalage is a tactic that can only effectively be used once. It's consid-

ered dishonorable, but if it is effective, the survivors of the war will not dare question their new lord's honor.

Most senior nobles have at least one vassal who could be convinced to rebel if circumstances seemed favorable for victory. These include younger brothers, the leaders of cadet branches of the lord's family, vassals forced to bend the knee in war, and opportunists who need no particular justification. These men cannot always be coaxed into taking the field against their lord, but can be used as spies and agents of influence.

A servant of the player characters notices the build up of forces by a vassal. The vassal's lord can then muster his personal forces and look for suitable provocation to make attacking the man honorable, or he can arrange for saboteurs to obstruct the vassal's plans so that he can seek aid from other vassals.

nicant, because it allowed him to retain the funds of seven bishoprics and countless abbeys whose holders died and could not be replaced. Similarly, the Church's idea that work, including warfare as the work of the knightly class, should stop for about a third of the year to celebrate the feasts of obscure saints is considered a sign of the laziness of the holders of clerical office by some.

The bonus above is halved (round down) if the area is divided between two warring affinities.

A character who neglects to support his affinity has his bonus reduced. A character supports an affinity by providing its members with offices and largesse. He must also exercise his power within that affinity, so that he is seen doing the things a regional

## Affinity Leadership

A character may use his Affinity score as a bonus to social Ability rolls that are directly related to his role as a powerful and respected person within a specific region. These rolls affect only nobles, land-holding ecclesiastics, and the senior councilors of towns that do not hold charters from the king.

A character has an Affinity bonus of:

- +1 For being a landholding noble of at least banneret stature.
- +2 For being the officer or baron of a minor lord.
- +3 For being an officer or minor baron of the king.
- +4 For being a greater baron.
- +5 For being the senior noble beneath the king in the region (count, earl, duke).

## Using Intrigue to Aggregate Class Opinion

A character may roll a stress die + Intelligence + Intrigue to feel the political mood of an organization, or the nobles of a region. This roll can only be made in a place where the character is familiar with the ruling class. It represents the character taking time to learn the superficial details of the concerns of the members of the surveyed group, sufficiently well to predict their attitude to an event. For example, a character who has a vacant benefice and wishes to give it to a certain priest can judge how other nobles will feel about it using this roll.

leader must do, like resolving disputes and putting down brigands.

A typical lord spends about 20% of his income on minor offices that favor the members of his affinity. This expense is already calculated into the surplus figures found in Chapter Three: A Comparison of Titles. A character who diverts most of his usual spending to another cause, like a crusade or a covenant, may lose standing in his affinity.

Affinity leadership may be used, for example, in rolls that:

- Muster an army from the local minor nobility.
- Resolve disputes between local nobles over boundaries, customs, marriages, inheritance, and slights of honor.
- Force the local minor nobility to follow a particular line when the lord calls his vassals together for advice.
- Encourage lesser lords to take a particular attitude to the Church, such as paying their tithes in full, or in part, or to demand the removal of a corrupt priest.
- Referee a local tournament.

## Control Through Emotional Bonds

Ars Magica provides a structure of rules in which characters can develop networks of personal influence. These rules have been used in other supplements to model merchant houses and the private agents of magi. Here they are adapted to model the bonds of loyalty between noble allies. In the rules given earlier, characters are assumed to do what is in their interest given the relative power of the two characters and the situation in which they are interacting. The rules in this section are used to model the unexpected interactions between people whose tight emotional bonds make them do things which, superficially, are not in their own interests.

Not all troupes find these rules convenient for the stories they wish to tell. Each troupe should discuss this element of the rules and determine the degree to which they will be guided by the suggestions given here.

### AGENTS

Directly controlled subordinates are referred to as agents in these rules (though not



by characters). A person may only control a limited number of subordinates through personal charisma. A character who attempts to control more subordinates than this gradually loses control of his network.

A character may have a number of agents equal to:

$$2 \times (\text{Presence} + \text{Intrigue or Leadership} - \text{social penalty for the Gift}) \text{ or } 1, \text{ whichever is larger.}$$

This total excludes many other characters over whom the principal has influence. It does not include:

- Hermetic magi.
- Characters with no political role — these are free, providing color to the stories but rarely providing resources.
- Indirect subordinates. The people who serve an agent are not, themselves, agents.
- Characters who act not out of any personal ties to a character, but because of the economic demands of their lives and offices. A mercenary captain who is a hireling, for example, will change sides, flee, or surrender when faced with poor

odds of victory. An agent may not, depending on a player's dice rolls. People granted fiefs are hirelings, but they are often designed as agents because they are most needed at the time when a hireling would choose self-preservation at the principal's expense.

- The characters of other players, regardless of their social status.

A character with poor Presence or Leadership may control his entire network through a single agent who excels in these attributes. Hermetic magi call these primary agents factors.

### DESIGN OF AGENTS

Each agent must have the following handful of statistics defined:

- A name.
- A Social Status Virtue or Flaw. A character may have an agent who feels the principal is his social inferior, but this is possible only through coercion. For the purpose of dealing with this agent, the character gains the Difficult Underlings



Flaw. The agent has a Story Flaw, like Blackmail or Dark Secret, that represents his attempts to shed the control of the principal.

- A Bond, which is a Personality Trait that expresses the reason for the agent's attachment to the principal, and its strength.
- A list of the resources available to the principal through the agent. These may include Abilities, wealth, social influence, armed forces, or any other thing that makes the agent worth having.

**EXAMPLE:** *Duke Simon has many vassals. One of them is a young knight called Matthew. Matthew has a manor, so he's a landed knight and has some wealth. He is able to muster for war, and bring a small band of free men armed with spears as his retinue. Matthew is not very loyal to Simon (Loyalty +1), but is married to Simon's cousin and is infatuated with her. (Loves wife +3). Simon and his cousin are on good terms, so it's actually Simon's familial link that provides his control over Matthew.*

Duke Simon owns the benefice for the cathedral in his main town. That means he can exclude the bishop from its use. The bishop, Benedict, feels grateful to Simon that his ascension went smoothly (Thankful +1) and is willing to aid Simon using his political influence, but he is a faithful man and will not do things he finds abhorrent.

## ACQUIRING AGENTS

Some characters have agents at character creation due to Virtues they have selected. These include Social Contacts, Mercenary Captain, Close Family Ties, or Landed Noble. Each of these virtues grants 12 points to spend on the accompanying Agent Recruitment Table for thematically appropriate agents. Each agent must cost at least 1 point, and have a Bond of +1 or more.

Most agents are gained as a result of interaction during stories. Some agents are offered freely by the Storyguide as a reward for players who complete a story. Others must be recruited. Recruitment is a process of wearing down the resistance of the potential agent. The scores on the Agent Recruitment Table represent how difficult it is to draw people under the principal's influence.

The principal must first impress the potential agent, so that the potential agent knows that the offers and threats that the principal makes should be considered seriously. The principal does this by making a forceful and obvious intrusion into the po-

## Agent Recruitment Table

*A potential agent always has a minimum resistance score of 1.*

SOCIAL STATUS	RESISTANCE	EXAMPLES
Major Social Virtue	3	Landed Noble*, Magister in Artibus, Redcap
Minor Social Virtue	1	Clerk, Custos, Failed Apprentice, Gentleman/woman, Knight, Mendicant Friar, Mercenary Captain*, Priest, Wise One
Free Social Virtue (except Hermetic Magus)	0	Covenfolk, Craftsman, Merchant, Peasant, Wanderer
Minor Social Flaw	-1	Branded Criminal, Outcast, Outlaw Leader*
Major Social Flaw	-3	Outlaw, Outsider

\* Must take underlings, see below.

## MODIFIERS

CIRCUMSTANCE	MODIFIER	EXAMPLES
Major Flaws likely to inconvenience principal	-3	Enemies, Feud, Lycanthrope, Plagued By Supernatural Entity
Minor Flaws likely to inconvenience principal	-1	Black Sheep, Dark Secret, Dependant, Diabolic Past, Favors, Infamous
Minor Flaw used by player character to dominate agent	-6	Hostage (Dependent or True Love), is Blackmailing using Dark Secret, Diabolic Past, or other leverage (Blackmail)*

\* Agent hates principal, which inflicts the Difficult Underlings Flaw for this agent only.

## RESOURCES

RESOURCE	MODIFIER	EXAMPLES
Extraordinary Skill: Main Ability 6 or more	+1	n/a
Exceptional Ability: Main Ability 8 or more	+3	n/a
Minor General or Supernatural Virtue	+1	Gossip, Magic Sensitivity, Protection, Sk-inchanger, Social Contacts, Temporal Influence
Major General or Supernatural Virtue	+3	Entrancement, True Faith, Wealthy
Serves Rival	+9	Covenant, nobleman of equal social standing
Underlings	+1	Up to half a dozen people, including agents and hirelings
Many underlings	+3	Up to two dozen people, including agents and hirelings
Useful Minor Flaw	+1	Busybody, Faerie Friend, Magical Animal Companion, Mentor
Has more than three selections from this list	+6	
Has more than six selections from this list	+9	

## Tasks For Agents Table

TASK	PERSUASION ROLL EASE FACTOR	EXAMPLE
Provide common information that is easily obtained.	3	Relay the theories of gossips concerning the unusual events in the town square.
Provide sensitive information that is difficult to obtain.	6	Discover the address of the bishop's mistress.
Provide secret information known to a select few.	9	Uncover which nobles are members of the Duke's diabolic cabal.
Perform an Easy task (Ease Factor 6 or less).	3	Persuade a merchant to give passage to a magus with the Blatant Gift.
Perform a Hard task (Ease Factor 12 or less).	6	Steal a ring from a lady's finger, unnoticed.
Perform an Impressive Task (Ease Factor 18 or less).	9	Arrange a fatal accident for the prince.

### PERSUASION ROLL MODIFIERS

TIMEFRAME	MODIFIER
Within a few weeks	0
Within a few days	+1
Within one day	+3

PERSONAL RISK	MODIFIER	EXAMPLE
None at all (simple die).	+0	Deliver a package to a merchant.
Risk of embarrassment or reputation (stress die, 1 botch die).	+1	Deliver a prostitute to a merchant.
Risk of injury or imprisonment (stress die, 3 botch dice).	+3	Deliver a threat to a rich merchant.
Risk of death (stress die, 5 botch dice).	+6	Deliver a threat to a count in his own palace.

tential agent's life. This can be done by assisting the potential agent, for example by aiding him in a story. It can also be completed through less-pleasant methods, for example a criminal may be beaten and left in an alley or hung by the ankles from a tower for an hour.

A character seeking to impress a potential agent must roll:

a stress die + Presence + Leadership – social penalty for the Gift against an Ease Factor of 6.

Failure indicates this character cannot be impressed until encountered in a different story, when a new roll may be made. A character using a recruiting agent may send him to impress the potential agent, and use the recruiter's scores for the dice roll.

An impressed agent-to-be must then be drawn into the principal's sphere of influence through story events that create a Bond. This is abstracted using experience points. Every time a character gains Adventure Experience, he gains an equal number of Agency Experience points. Agency Experience points are spent to weaken the resistance of potential

agents, and to maintain the Bonds of active agents.

The initial resistance of an agent is determined using the Agent Recruitment Table. When assessing the cost of an agent, select only those resources that the agent will use in play in the service of the principal. The Virtues and Flaws of agents do not need to balance each other. A character's resistance is reduced by 1 in exchange for a number of Agency experience points equal to their current resistance. The agent comes into the service of the principal when his or her resistance reaches 0. A new agent has a Bond score of 0.

### USING AGENTS

Characters use their agents by setting tasks. An agent must have the resources and Abilities to complete the task, and a Bond score of at least +1. The player then makes the following roll, to see if the agent attempts to perform the task:

stress die + Communication + (Charm, Intrigue, or Leadership as situationally appropriate) + Bond Strength – social penalty of the Gift vs. an Ease factor on the Tasks for Agents table

If the agent attempts the task, the player makes a roll using the Characteristics and Abilities of the agent against the Ease Factor of the task. Storyguides may prefer to run a brief scene in which the agent fulfills the task.

The most common use for agents is as sources of information. Passive information gathering, which allows the principal to know, after a delay for communication, any specific fact, piece of gossip, or news that the agent knows or can casually ask people about, is not considered a task in these rules. It occurs at the discretion of the principal's player and requires no roll. Actively gathering private information counts as a form of assistance, as described later, and if required more than once per season may cause the agent to lose Bond strength. Troupes may decide that certain agents, such as the professional spies employed by the Church and some merchant houses, don't consider finding information in this way so onerous as to strain their Bond strength.

Agents may also be asked for assistance: that is, they may be asked to expend their time and resources on behalf of the principal. Again, the agent must have Abilities suited



to the task and have sufficient free time. A character with a Minor Flaw that consumes his time, or requires him to drop out of public sight, is unable to assist his principal in one quarter of those cases where his services are desirable. A character with a Major Flaw is unavailable half the time.

## MAINTAINING AGENTS

Valuable agents are often the source of stories. Characters may seek to aid agents who are in legal or financial trouble. If an agent dies, the principal may seek to recover any resources loaned to the agent, and may wish to ensure that the agent has left no written record of their dealings. The strength of the bond that agents have to the principal may wane due to life events, and need reinforcement.

A principal can grant favors to an agent to reinforce their bond. This requires the principal to participate in a story that substantially aids the agent. When the principal earns Adventure experience, he simultaneously earns an equal number of Agency experience points, which are spent to increase the agent's Bond score using the same progression as Abilities (see the Advancement Table, ArM5, page 31).

Money may be used to support an agent, although this is not a very effective mechanism. A character may buy 5 Agency experience points per pound, and spend them as above to increase the bond of characters. This method only works with agents who are not already prosperous, and also fails for those agents who feel that accepting money for service is a crime or sin.

Some agents are maintained through selections made during the covenant creation process. These agents are outside the scope of these rules, although they may still be used to model the principal's relationship to the agents.

# Reputation

The ruling class of a kingdom generally contains no more than two dozen families and their dependents. Sharing news of the activities of other members of this small, powerful group is a basic civility. The players of nobles can estimate the overt personality traits, publicly declared interests, and obvi-

ous resources of members of their class using Reputation rolls. These rolls are easier if the noble is particularly powerful, famous, or has his demesne nearby.

A Reputation for depravity and ruthlessness can be very useful to a nobleman who wishes to dissuade his neighbors from attacking him. Henry II of England, for example, claimed to be the blood descendant of Satan himself, and encouraged his enemies to believe there was little he would not do to have his will. Alternatively, a reputation as a prudhomme, described later, makes a character more likely to be offered offices by his lord, brides by families seeking talented sons-in-law, and alliances by neighbors.

A Reputation is also of benefit in the early stages of a knight's career. It allows him to stand out from other potential members of a patron's mesnie. A knight who seeks this style of work but lacks the Reputation to secure it may seek fame by entering the tourneying circuit, working as a mercenary, or crusading.

## Noble Reputation

This section extends the Reputation Table on page 19 of ArM5, providing a fourth style of Reputation to accompany Local, Hermetic, and Ecclesiastic. Noble Reputation allows members of the landed class to know about each other. For the purpose of these Reputations, the landed class contains every man or woman who holds land, who holds a significant office from a major nobleman, who acts as a major landholder on behalf of the Church, or who may inherit any of these states. There are some obvious overlaps between these types of Reputation, and troupes using these rules should allow characters' players to alter their scores to suit their history in play.

## PRUDHOMME

The prize reputation for a male noble in Mythic Europe is that of prudhomme. A prudhomme is a man considered to have been tested and found sound by other members of his class. A man is a prudhomme if he is noble of blood, handsome, demonstrates prowess, and is of suitable character. The prowess required and the character desired are those considered correct for the work of mounted medieval warriors. In some courts Christian ethics may appeal, but to be a

## Story Seed: Genetic Memory

For the true knight, battle is more than a vocation: the need to fight is built into the knight before he is born. In folklore, this love of battle is said to pass in the blood. The sons of knights, raised away from court, are instinctively drawn to weapons or to make their own. In Mythic Europe, supernatural forces answer human desires. Demons and faeries place the tools of violence into the infant hands of knights kept from their birthright. Such children need no instruction in arms: it passes to them in the blood.

Many covenants receive unwanted children, and raise them as custodes. One of the children in the covenant seems to have a mental illness. He is driven to kill small animals, and feels no shock at dreadful injuries suffered by other people. Instead, he is fascinated by the mechanics of their damaged bodies. Characters who interview the boy note that he seems utterly unable to feel sympathy for anyone else. His only strong desire is to kill people and animals. When he is alone and out of the covenant he keeps finding weapons. These are faerie-wrought and left for him by a dark faerie that knows his secret. The boy is a knight, and the lost heir of a noble house.

prudhomme to other knights, a man must be willing to do what is necessary to win war. A prudhomme makes war using means that the Church abhors as foul, and he does it well, and with delight.

## IMPROVING NOBLE REPUTATION

A character first develops a reputation by entering feudal life. The character does this by being born into a noble family, or by becoming the vassal of a landed person. This gives the character a Noble Reputation of 1, with boring content like "son of Lord Corvinius" or "vassal of the Count of Champagne." A character may gain a higher Reputation for doing anything so interesting that it is discussed widely by his or her peers. Being a Crusader touched by a miracle before an army of witnesses, or being caught lead-

ing a Black Mass, both add to the character's Reputation. The flavor of the events alter the content of the Reputation.

Every time a noble spends a season performing great deeds notable to other members of his class, he adds 1 Experience to his reputation. These points are spent using the Abilities table on page 31 of ArM5. Examples include:

- Hosting a tournament.
- Masterminding a coronation.
- Leading a pilgrim group.
- Making war.
- Going on adventures that lead to personal renown.

Significant events may lead to greater Reputation:

- Crusading, or otherwise traveling to a distant country to make war grants 1 experience point per season in addition to the point for being at war.
- Knighting a successful squire trained personally grants 1 experience point.
- Gaining a noble liege grants 3 experience points.
- Gaining a royal liege grants 6 experience points.
- Study with a supernatural creature grants experience equal to (the creature's Might score / 5).

There is very little a knight can do to decrease his Reputation. A knight who runs like a child during battle, or who is unable to rescue his paramour from danger, is still interesting enough to be gossiped about; it is merely the content of the Reputation that changes. Characters may use the techniques described on page 167 of the ArM5 core rulebook to modify noble Reputations.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF REPUTATION

A character's Reputation allows the other members of the noble class to judge his interests and intentions. This lets them accommodate him in their plans. A character of strong Reputation need do nothing, but still affects the calculations of personal interest of his neighbors. A fierce Reputation is a potent envoy. Changes in the Reputation of significant characters can sway the fate of thrones, by making key nobles appear unwilling to fight, ill-prepared for war, or arrogant about their skill as a commander of troops.

## Reputation Roll Adjustments

EASE FACTOR	DISTANCE
3	Same shire, county, or equivalent
6	Adjoining counties
9	Same kingdom
12	Rival kingdom

**STATUS MODIFIERS – SELECT ONLY ONE**

MODIFIER	CIRCUMSTANCE
+6	A commoner in the service of a noble.
+3	A landholder of status lower than the character making the roll.
0	A landholder of status equivalent to the character making the roll.
-3	A landholder of status superior to the character making the roll.
-6	A vassal of the character making the roll.

**MISCELLANEOUS MODIFIERS – SELECT ALL APPROPRIATE**

MODIFIER	CIRCUMSTANCE
+3	A widow who does not hold in her own right, or an heir of a noble.
+6	An acknowledged lover or bastard.

### REPUTATION IS UTTERLY VITAL

It can be difficult for modern players, who are used to board games and computer games, to understand how significant Reputation is to Mythic European nobles. The Reputation of a rival tells a character what a noble wants, what resources he has, and, crucially, what he is willing to do if provoked. Most significant decisions during the outbreak of war are not made based on detailed consultation with powerful individuals; communication is too poor. They are based on an estimate of what others will do in response to a situation, and to a character's actions.

Mythic Europeans, unlike the characters in most board games and computer games, do not usually engage in total war to the annihilation of the foe. It's considered honorable, skillful even, to avoid pitched battle. It's acceptable to retreat from battle and to wait, perhaps for years, before continuing a military campaign. It is wise, and well-respected, to drive a hard bargain in peace negotiations. It is a frequent feature of medieval war that

combatants change sides as the fortunes of each cause wax or wane. A rival's Reputation allows a character's player to gain some sense of when that rival is willing to retreat, to negotiate an armistice, or even to change to the player character's side.

Comparing the Reputations of the major nobles on each side of a conflict doesn't just tell a character what each group wants. It allows the character to compare the resources of the two sides, and their determination to achieve particular objectives. Knowledge of these objectives often allows the character to have some idea of where battles are likely to be fought. This understanding that war is limited, and continues only until one side can claim some approximation of what it wants, allows a character to guess when each side will want to discuss peace.

Single actions can seriously affect Reputations, and this can dramatically alter the way that characters are perceived. A king who flees a battle before defeat is certain to lose much more than a single army, because other armies will not follow him into battle.



This does not reduce his Reputation score, but does alter its effect. A less decisive, but more instructive, example is found in the life of William Marshal.

William Marshal's father, John, was holding a castle for the Queen Matilda against the forces of her rival, King Stephen. John asked for a brief truce in Stephen's siege, to consult with Matilda about conditions of surrender. Stephen agreed, provided that John gave him a suitable hostage. John offered his son William, who was three or four at the time.

John promptly went back on his word. He used the truce to re-enforce the castle. Stephen had William loaded into a catapult and threatened to have him pitched over the wall unless John surrendered. John replied that he still had the hammer and anvils with which to make more and better sons. Stephen chose not to kill William, and instead played knights with him for the rest of the afternoon.

As a story event, this alters the Reputation of both parties, and alters their coalitions of supporters. A character obedient to the king because of a hostage now knows that Stephen will not kill him or her, so the character is free to act as he wishes. A character considering changing sides to join Stephen now knows that offering hostages is an insignificant gesture rather than a binding pledge. An enemy facing Stephen in war might be more willing to surrender, seeing that his chances of survival are good. An enemy facing John, however, might choose to carry the fight longer, because John is not concerned by conventional morality. Killing him, or delivering him to Stephen, would earn a great deal of Gratitude. If John was a character's prisoner then the usual ties of honor, like promises not to attempt escape or the offer of sureties, would not hold him, and only a fool would accept his promise of ransom. In neither John nor Stephen's case does the Reputation score fall. The information provided by a successful roll against the Reputation changes, and this alters how characters, including non-player characters, act.

## Public Power for Women

Relatively few women hold public power in Mythic Europe. The elaboration of their roles here should not discourage players from selecting exceptional women as their characters. The constraints, and ways to avoid

them, listed here are suggested as material for storytelling, not as proscriptions. Troupes should consider carefully how the fun of a historically accurate setting intersects with the fun of playing a character who uses her wits to challenge social conventions.

Players, who are likely most familiar with the English system, should be aware that women have fewer rights in England than in most other parts of Mythic Europe. This is, in part, an effect of the Conquest. The military character of the Norman nobility has not entirely given way to hereditary aristocracy. In areas where landholding is seen as a method of supporting warriors, women have fewer rights, while in those areas where landholding is seen as method of generating money to sustain an army, women have greater rights.

## Dressing as a Man

This is the simplest way to ignore social conventions concerning women. There are many folkloric examples of women dressing as men and doing almost anything men do. War or pilgrimage, for example, are easier when pretending to be male. This may become a Dark Secret.

Dressing as a man is not usually a successful strategy for the extended term, though: marriage and fathering children are difficult, if surmountable, obstacles. A woman who dresses as a man and engages in warfare is, however, likely to die young as most men do, so this may not be a concern.

## Holding Land

Women can gain control of land in six ways: during absence, through inheritance, via political success, through conquest, in a widow's portion, or as a steward.

### ABSENCE

Landholding is intimately tied, in most of Mythic Europe, to providing military service. The male head of most families must be available to fight in campaigns, some of which last for months, or in civil wars, which can sputter along for years. Many nobles leave their wives as their deputies. The value of an educated wife to the military preparedness of her husband has overcome many of

## Paid Rights: A Free Virtue

Through much of this book, prohibitions against women are discussed. These provisions need to be enforced for them to be effective, and a woman with sufficient wealth can often buy an exclusion from enforcement, or even permission to do something that this book states elsewhere is forbidden. All a woman need do, if she wishes to be a baroness in her own right, is pay the king enough money that he allows it. All a woman need do if she wishes to hold a smaller fief in her own right, and not marry as directed, and not be in wardship, is pay a large enough fine to her guardian.

This is of particular interest to player characters, because their Virtues and Flaws are balanced at the time they start play. This means that if a female character has paid a huge fine for a right before play begins, she does not necessarily have any Flaw representing that fine. She may choose a free Virtue, called Paid Rights, to note that she has paid for the right to do a certain thing that is generally forbidden for women. She may also take a Story Flaw that represents her family's displeasure at this use of her funds, the frustrations of suitors who would take her land by marriage, or other forms of social opprobrium, although this is not required.

There are, however, a few prohibitions that a woman cannot pay a fine to ignore. She cannot pay a fine to do anything that only men are permitted to do in the administrative structure of the Church. It is also difficult for a woman to gain the rank of knight. There are some examples of female knights in folklore, so it is not impossible. But a female knight needs an unusual back story and her player should consider Story Flaws.

the objections concerning the education of women.

Women raised for this task always have Leadership and Profession: Steward scores. They also rapidly develop Ability scores that their husbands have due to the peculiarities of their holdings, allowing them to oversee work, or at least select competent overseers.



In this role of deputy, the woman has the right to spend the income of the husband's territory, and may command his vassals in many matters, including war.

The role that women play in the command of troops varies between the societies of Europe. It is further influenced by the personalities, Reputations, and resources of the lady and her vassals. Women rarely lead troops into battle, but there are many references to noble women holding castles against sieges. During a siege the lady may command troops directly, or may direct their command through a skilled lieutenant.

Many noblewomen maintain networks of agents completely separate from the households of their husbands. A wife may take over her husband's network if he dies or is on campaign. This role, as correspondent and diplomat, is expected of the wives of nobility. A woman who does not socialize is considered a poor supporter of her husband's efforts.

### INHERITANCE

Lands inherited by women are a recognized feature of feudal life. In most kingdoms land goes to sons before daughters, but daughters

are given preference over more-distant male relations, like uncles and cousins. Some areas grant all of the land to the eldest son, and the daughter receives it intact if there are no sons. In others, when a paternal line extinguishes in this way, the land is divided between all of the remaining sisters, or their husbands. In a few areas women are permitted to inherit directly, either because the land of a family is divided between all of the siblings who are not already members of the Church, or because the lord is permitted to nominate his heirs and so may choose his daughters.

A woman who rules a fief by inheritance usually retains legal authority in it during her marriage. With the exception of England, where the wife's rights become the husband's, there are many examples of women who married another noble, yet continued to hold her own court, issue charters, and command vassals. In Castile there is at least one example of an odd midpoint, where the bride continued to rule in her own land, with the exception of her dowry, which was transferred to her husband. At the death of an heiress, her lands may be kept by her eldest son if the area practices primogeniture. In areas where the lands of the parents are divided, the separate character of the wife's

lands from her husband's make them an obvious domain for one of her younger sons.

Land that a girl's father has added to his ancestral territories may be made available as dowry. Dowries are used, in much of Europe, as a sort of inheritance before the death of the father. Rules for the design of dowries are given in the Family section, earlier.

### POLITICAL SUCCESS

It is rare for anyone, male or female, to be granted land for purely political favors, but it occasionally occurs as a result of stories. A common way for a woman to be granted land is to become the mistress of a powerful nobleman and bear his child. If the woman has suitable abilities, she may be made the child's guardian until he is of age to join his father's household.

### CONQUEST

Some women claim land through invasion, allowing their retinue of knights to settle conquered areas as vassals. This requires loyal retainers and either a friendly monarch or a formidable reputation, as a mercenary captain or disloyal male vassal might try to swear fealty for the land himself. Such women rarely enter combat themselves, but since they are the leaders of their armies, it would be insubordinate to gainsay them if they wished it.

### WIDOW'S PORTION AND STEWARDSHIP

In most areas a widow is permitted to retain the use of a portion of her husband's lands for her own use after his death. As a rule of thumb, assume a widow can keep

### A Note on Life Expectancy

A key to female landholding is the comparative longevity of women in wartime. Players in sagas designed for female nobles to play a significant role need to consciously cull male non-player characters. The rules for doing this are in the Random Method of Death insert, in the Family section earlier.



## Women as Warriors

In most areas there are folktales about particular women who, at some past time, acted in the role of knight. How characters react to contemporary women who attempt the same course varies by culture and by the status of the particular woman. In the Order of Hermes, the philosophy of Plato coupled with the scarcity of The Gift has led to a position of equity. Plato advocated the training of women for all the duties of the state including administration and warfare. Very few women seek military success, but sufficient do for the role to be accepted, to some degree, in most areas. The following examples may guide the generation of background for female nobles who seek military roles.

### DRESSING AS A MAN: MARGARET OF BEVERLEY

Margaret of Beverley was born in the Holy Land: her parents were English pilgrims who commenced their journey while her mother was pregnant. After reaching adulthood and seeing to the education of her younger brother, Margaret decided to revisit Jerusalem. Through terrible luck, she was present when Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187.

She pretended to be a man, and took part in the defense of the wall, wearing improvised armor. Margaret was struck by a fragment thrown up by a stone fired from a siege engine, and carried scars for the rest of her life. She was captured, ransomed, and then after a difficult period involving slavery, theft, and rescue, by the grace of the Virgin she was able to arrive in Antioch, in time to participate in the siege there.

After peace was concluded she sailed

for England with the English army, departing from Acre. Her other travels, to Rome and Santiago, were almost as adventurous as this first trip. Historically, after her journeys she sought out her younger brother, who had become a monk, and he led her to the contemplative life. She joined a nunnery at Laon, in France, and may live there still in 1220.

### ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE: INHERITANCE

Eleanor attended the Second Crusade with her husband, and was attended by a guard of female knights dressed as Amazons and mounted on white horses. Eleanor's right to lead her troops, as overlord of Aquitaine, was incontestable. The queens of several of the other leaders followed her example. Her behavior was considered scandalous, and led to the Papal Bull forbidding women from taking the cross in the Third Crusade.

### SIKELGAITA OF SICILY: CONQUEST

A princess of the Lombards, then the wife of the Duke of Apulia and Sicily, Sikelgaita is recorded as having participated in her husband's battles dressed as a knight, and as charging enemies with a spear. In her husband's wars against the Byzantine Empire, she rallied some troops that had fled a battle, sending them back into the fray at the Battle of Dyrrachium. The Norman conquests in Byzantium were lost after the war turned against her family.

### PETRONILLA OF LEICESTER: ABSENCE

Petronilla is recorded as having armed herself as a knight and fought in battles during the reign of Henry II, perhaps due to the absence of her husband. A namesake was active during the wars of John against his barons, and purchased the right to select her own husband. This Petronilla used John's desperation for money to haggle the relatively good price of 4000 marks. The latter Petronilla has only been dead eight years.

### MATILDA OF TUSCANY: POLITICAL SUCCESS

Matilda's parents were allies of the pope, and open rebels against his rival the emperor. Matilda was trained in warfare from an early age. Her tutor was later the commander of her forces and stated he had trained her in lance, pike, axe, and sword. Matilda is widely believed to have ridden into battle from her teenage years.

She was the primary proponent of the pope's cause during the Investiture Controversy, and through a series of marriages, alliances, and wars, she all but destroyed Imperial authority in Northern Italy. Matilda led her armies through a series of wars, crushing Imperial forces so that only a few cities remained under the emperor's banner. She spent her old age dispatching armies to besiege and capture many of these.

the profit, not income, of a third of her husband's land until she remarries. If the woman was already landed at marriage, and has no adult sons, then she is likely to have complete ownership of her lands returned to her. Widows are extremely common in Mythic Europe.

In some areas, like France, Castile, and parts of the Holy Roman Empire, a widow may act as her son's guardian. This allows her to administer land on his behalf until he is an adult. Stewardship of lands may need to be purchased from the dead husband's overlord. In many areas the lord has the right to

select the stewards for the heirs of vassals, and he may even arrange the marriage of the widow.

## Nuns

A third avenue for power, and one much enjoyed by the younger daughters of some lords, is the Church. The role of nunneries is discussed in greater detail in the supplement *Realms of Power: The Divine*. Nuns are considered wards of the bishop, and brides

of Christ. They cannot usually be forced to marry, and are not answerable to their fathers or other local lords. Nuns hold a great deal of land in Mythic Europe, and their estates are not divided by inheritance.

Young women may take temporary vows that allow them to retreat into the life of a nun while events unfold in the secular world. It is possible for a sufficiently influential nobleman to force a woman to leave the nunnery and marry, but this is rare. It is common for the female relatives of a man who has lost a war to retreat into the nunneries, so that they are not at the mercy of the victors.

## Chapter Three

# A Comparison of Titles

The level at which a character is considered noble varies by kingdom. A knight is part of the nobility in much of France, but in England a lord needs to have a great deal more influence than a knight to be considered noble. In parts of Iberia, nobility is more functional and its lower reaches can be grasped by anyone playing the role of knight for this moment, in the employ of the king, regardless of his birth. Churchmen claim to be noble by virtue of their station, a claim taken more or less seriously depending on the power of the Church in the affairs of a kingdom. Although there are a multitude of titles for landed nobility, few have practical meaning to players.

## The French (and English) System

This system is a remnant of the institutions that supported the Carolingian Empire, and is found in most areas once controlled by the Franks. It is also found in surrounding areas that have been invaded, like England, or are now ruled by people educated in a court that uses this system, like Scotland.

In the lists below, a term in English is given first, as it assumed that most players will speak English in their games. This is followed by a Latin term, which magi might use for color. This is then followed by the French term, which is often similar to the English because the ruling class of England is comprised, in large part, of French-speaking Normans.

### Squire (*Armiger, Écuier*)

A squire is, strictly, a young person who attends upon a knight as part of his training, but it has evolved to have a second meaning. In many areas of Mythic Europe there are people who could be landed knights, and who do service like landed knights, but have chosen not to formally accept the higher status. The reason for this varies a little between kingdoms. In England it is because knights must pay a tax in exchange for their ascension. In Mythic Europe it is rare for these people to be called squires: each local version of this class has its own name, but for players this is the most convenient term.

A squire may take the Gentleman, Knight, or Landed Noble Virtues. Players should modify these virtues slightly to suit the style of character they wish to play.

### Knight (*Miles, Chevalier*)

A knight is a professional mounted warrior. This role can theoretically be conveyed by any knight to anyone, but in many areas use of this right has become a crime, so that a knight exercising it must pay a fine to his overlord. This is because many overlords charge a fee in exchange for creating knights, and a knight who, for example, dubs his squire or son, must make good the revenue the lord has lost.

#### BACHELER KNIGHT

Most lords have a personal guard of knights, called a *mesnie* in French, whose members are called bachelers ("bachelors").

Bachelor knights are vassals of their lord, but they are usually held in greater trust than other vassals. They are led by a senior knight called a *carissimus*. These knights are often supported with coin and kind rather than land. In other lands there are house knights with identical roles, although the terminology differs.

A bachelor knight has the Virtues Knight and Protection, and the Oath of Fealty Flaw or Free Choice. Poor bachelers are rare. Failure to provide for a household knight voids his Oath of Fealty, allowing him to seek other employment. An average bachelor has comfortable housing in his lord's hall, and is fed at his expense. The knight's equipment is provided and maintained by the lord. He is generally given coin as *largesse*. A wealthy bachelor lives in opulence unexpected by those of his station, and is ransomed by his lord occasionally.

Some extremely wealthy knights use this title. They are bachelers because they are of the household of their lord, so they fulfill the role of his companions and bodyguards. Their lord, however, is so wealthy he provides manors for his bachelers, which they rent out or leave to the administration of stewards. These rich bachelers are Landed Nobles.

#### KNIGHT BANNERET

Most knights who lead sergeants and infantry into battle use a small flag to indicate their location. Knights who lead other knights into battle often use a larger flag, with a more-pointed shape. If the leader of such a force has no greater title, he is referred to as a banneret. A knight may claim this rank simply by arriving at a battle with a force of ten knights all clad in his livery and willing to kill as instructed.

In some areas, it is felt that the right to lead men in battle under your own banner is a reward that must be bestowed by a liege.



## A Consideration of Virtues and Flaws

### OATH OF FEALTY (MAJOR STORY FLAW)

In many areas, a lord holds his land from a superior, in exchange for a mix of services and payments. This is represented by the Oath of Fealty Flaw (ArM5, page 56). This is a Major Story Flaw. For most non-player characters and many PCs this suffices, but troupes may wish to modify this slightly for several reasons.

Some nobles hold land simply through descent from people who have held it since time immemorial. These lands are called allods. A holder of allodial land need not have an Oath of Fealty. These characters also tend to use titles that are grander than others of similar power and influence, although that is ignored for the purpose of Virtue selection.

Troupes are encouraged to permit knights who have taken oaths to a lord, but whose oaths lack consequences in play. These insignificant oaths are not treated as Flaws, so they cannot be balanced against Virtues. Troupes may choose to allow insignificant oaths because otherwise knights cannot begin with many of the Story Flaws that suit the chivalric genre, like Black Sheep, Dark Secret, Enemies, Higher Purpose, Heir, True Love, or Vow. Player character knights are more interesting if they can have a range of Story Flaws.

### KNIGHTLY DEMANDS (MAJOR STORY FLAW)

As an alternative to all of this tinkering with detail, troupes may simply state that all knights have a Major Story Flaw, called Knightly Demands, that allows the Storyguide to drag them into any plot related to the kind of things knights do in medieval ballads. This flaw works best for high fantasy, highly mobile sagas, because it includes quests, military service, romances, feuds, rescuing damosels, aiding kinfolk,

and chasing monsters. This flaw replaces Oath of Fealty entirely.

### KNIGHT (MINOR VIRTUE)

Some few women serve as knights in Mythic Europe. These women are discussed in greater depth at the end of Chapter Two: Politics.

### LANDED NOBLE (MAJOR VIRTUE)

A lord of the manor is the least senior style of landed noble. In England about half of the male manorial lords are knights. The rest are termed "gentry" or "squires" and could be knighted if they wished, but prefer to avoid it since there is a tax attached to the office. A lord of the manor has the Virtue Landed Noble. Knight and Protection are common Virtues, but are not required.

In the Norman-influenced parts of Mythic Europe, Wealthy Landed Nobles are far more numerically common than either standard or Poor Landed Nobles. The average holding in England has five manors. In areas where the land of a father is divided equally between his sons, Poor Landed Nobles are far more common. The children of Wealthy Landed Nobles, or more-senior landowners, often have the Privileged Upbringing Virtue.

A Poor Landed Noble usually has no surplus income. He has little free time, as he must continually administer his lands. This may be because he has debts, because his land has not recovered from a disaster, or because his manors were never fertile. He has one season of free time per year.

A lord of the manor without Virtue or Flaw has a second manor, for which he owes knight service. This service is performed by a mercenary or waived for scutage (a fine discussed in Chapter Two: Politics). The lord may summon up to ten villeins to fight

as infantry, which is doubled if the war is defensive. Each knight is also served by a squire who acts as a sergeant, a mounted combatant. This Virtue leaves the lord two seasons of free time per year, and ten pounds to spend on largesse, war, or other discretionary matters.

A typical Wealthy Landed Noble holds, on average, five manors and lives at the richest, or the one to which he has the greatest sentimental attachment. These lands provide the lord with the service of four knights, other than himself, 5 serjants, and 50 villeins. If fighting in the same county, the lord may double the number of villeins who are required to assist him. The lord may spend money to swell the ranks of his personal army, and usually pays scutage for himself or sends a knight in his stead. He has three seasons of free time per year, and 20 pounds per year to spend as he wishes. His additional income comes from fertile land, active assarting in previous generations, or perhaps the lack of a knight-service on one of his manors.

### GREAT NOBLE (TWO MAJOR VIRTUES)

This Virtue is used to represent the resources of a character of the rank of greater baron or higher. It should be treated as: Two Major Virtues for characters played in lieu of magi, as major protagonists in the plot.

A Major Virtue for characters who, regardless of their rank, remain essentially supporting characters to the magi.

Players should discuss their characters with their troupes before designing greater nobles. It requires extra effort and careful character design to integrate a player character that is a Great Noble into a saga. The interests of the Great Noble tend to draw the character away from stories focused on the covenant, unless he is the covenant's servant.

After a battle in which a knight acts as a banneret, his lord may award him the office by presenting him a banner. This allows a little largesse.

Lords are sometimes tempted to raise people with smaller followings to this style,

to allow them to have precedence over other knights. To do this, they need to give their vassal sufficient land to maintain additional knights. This usually requires five or more manors, or rights of equivalent value. There is, therefore, little economic difference be-

tween a banneret and a Wealthy Landed Noble, although their status and spending patterns differ. Bannerets are always Knights and are generally Landed Nobles. Most have an Oath of Fealty to a liege and are under his Protection.

### Baron (Baro, Baron)

This term initially referred to anyone holding land directly from the king, but by 1220 has degenerated so that many lesser lords refer to their own vassals as their barons. Although landed people are aware of their status as barons, they do not use this term as a title. Minor landholders have a variety of titles that are traditionally translated as "lord" in English. A character might be lord of the barony of Blackhill, but would not be called Baron of Blackhill. Technically, baron is not a title, so it is not inherited: the land of the barony is inherited and possession of the land makes its holders barons, even if they divide the territory up.

The barons of England informally differentiate themselves into greater and lesser barons. The greater barons are those who, in the opinion of other great landholders, matter in affairs of state. Lesser barons are designed as Landed Nobles, and are generally Wealthy.

A man is considered greater baron if he has at least some land held directly from the king and expenses of at least 400 pounds per year. This is roughly equivalent to holding 20 manors. He owes service for at least 20 knights, 20 serjants, and 200 infantry, but this is a bare minimum often exceeded. All barons have the Great Noble Virtue. Baronesses who hold land in their own right take the Great Noble Virtue, while those who hold the title by marriage take Gentlewoman. Most barons have the Protection Virtue and the Oath of Fealty Flaw, but this is dependent on the political climate of their realm.

Barons vary in wealth. A poor baron has no surplus money at all: he is likely in deep debt. An average baron has a surplus of 40 pounds per year that may be spent as he wishes. A Wealthy baron has 100 surplus pounds a year.

### Earl or Count (Comes, Comte)

In England, earl the basic title for a major landholder. The term "earl" comes from a Saxon word and is used instead of the title of count in England and Scotland. The term "earl" is also used in English for the lesser kings of the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, and for noblemen in Ireland and Wales, although they have legal powers far different from those of the earls of England.

A count or earl has the Great Noble Virtue, while a countess (which is the correct term for the wife of an earl, or a female earl) has Gentlewoman if she does not hold the land in her own right. A count has a yearly expenditure of at least 1000 pounds. The average count might be required to bring 50 knights to battle, along with their sergeants and 500 infantry. Large vassal armies are, however, worthless for sieges, because sieges usually last longer than the period of service required of vassals each year. Their muster is often commuted to cash payment, to allow the king or count to hire mercenaries. An average count has 100 pounds to spend on trivialities per year, and a wealthy one 250 pounds.

### VISCOUNT (VICE-COMES, VISCOMTE)

A viscount was, initially, a deputy to a count. In 1220, the term viscomte is used in France for lesser counts. Its Latin form is used in England for sheriffs, who are officers of the king.

### COUNT PALATINE AND MARCHER LORD

A count palatine is a count who has been given extra powers to deal with a difficult border. In England there are several counties palatine: Durham, which is near the Scots border, and Chester, on the Welsh border, are both still points of strength. Ely and Kent were points of resistance after the Conquest, where local churchmen were given additional powers to subdue the population. This role is intertwined with the role of marcher lord.

The original marcher lords were placed as a buffer between England and Wales after the Conquest. They had greater authority: the right to do anything a king might do, such as build castles, levy taxes, make war, and found towns. Powerful marcher lordships were eventually elevated into earldoms, and some of their rights curbed, but the legal inheritors of Marcher lordships still have unusual rights compared with other counts. This title appears in France only in the title of the Count of Marche, whose ancestor had a similar role before the pacification of southern France.

Some marcher lords are effectively Wealthy counts. Their role is usually de-





fensive so they have fewer knights in their retinue than other counts, but proportionally more infantry. This allows them to garrison impressive royal or private castles.

## Duke (Dux, Duc)

This title initially meant war leader. It is used in France for the highest class of vassal, particularly in those areas that are culturally distinct. It is not used in Britain. Dukes control vast estates and, in some cases, are more powerful than the kings to whom they are nominally subservient.

All dukes have the Greater Noble Virtue, while duchesses are Greater Nobles if they have a right to rule their lands, or Gentlewomen if they have their rank by marriage. As a rough estimate, a duke has, at minimum, personal forces that include 75 knights, their sergeants, and 750 infantry. The duke is also likely to have vassals able to extend his forces. The most powerful earl in England (which has no dukes) spends 6,000 pounds a year and can muster armies of hundreds of mercenary and vassal knights.

## King (Rex, Roi)

A king is defined in his role by the fact that he pays allegiance to no living man, except perhaps the pope or emperor. Kings were initially the war leaders elected to lead powerful tribal groups in wars against their neighbors. This process of electing the king led, in earlier times, to civil wars, as the group of possible claimants to the throne thinned each other out before the decision could be made. In the current generation, elective kingship will die out in most of Western Europe. The principle of hereditary kingship was forced on the English nobility in 1215, when William Marshal defeated the forces of Prince Louis of France, who had been offered the crown by the barons of England.

In France it has been traditional, for several generations, to force the electors to vote and acclaim the heir while the incumbent still lives. The electors, in theory, freely choose that the eldest son of the king will be the next king. The current king, Phillip Augustus, is the first in the current dynasty not to bother with this. He is able to do this in part because he has crushed so many of his vassals and taken their land into demesne that his heir will be the most significant land-

## How Powerful is a King?

Strong kings are often the most significant secular landowners in their kingdoms. The King of England, for example, holds between 15 and 20% of the arable land in his realm as royal demesne. The king's officers do not, generally, hold their positions through hereditary right. The king's lands are, therefore, often better administered than those of his vassals. The king's average income from all sources, for the last five years, was 60,000 pounds a year, but the baronial rebellion caused a collapse of royal revenues for a brief period that affects this average. A king is technically a Great Noble and need not be a Knight, although virtually all are.

The household army of the King of England contains over 60 knights in a practical sense, and in a legal sense con-

tains another 60 or so, plus their retainers. These additional knights serve the king's interest in areas remote from the court, by holding significant castles, commanding armies, and arranging the logistics of campaigns. The king's household army also contains sergeants, squires, crossbowmen, and infantry. This personal force is highly responsive to the king's whim, mustering when and where he commands, and not dispersing after 40 days of campaigning as his vassals do.

The king has 45 vassals who are greater barons. Each owes him at least 20 knights in service each year, most many more. For generations the kings of England have preferred to take a large portion of this service as scutage and hire mercenaries with it instead.

## How Small is the Ruling Class of a Kingdom?

At the time of the signing of the Magna Carta, five years ago, there were only 197 lay baronies and 32 ecclesiastical baronies in England. Many barons hold more than one barony. Only 45 people were considered "greater barons," landholders significant enough that the king sent them personal invitations to attend court. This includes the earls, of whom there were no more than a dozen. These 45 men are all closely related to each other by blood and marriage.

The chivalric class is somewhat larger. There are between 5,000 and 6,000 knight's fees in England, although only about 1,500 of these are actually held by warrior knights, and another 1,500 are held by men who could become landed knights but have chosen not to for tax purposes. These squires have the Gentleman Social Status and Wealthy Virtues. Many other knights are found in the retinues of the king and nobles, but these are outside the landed class.

holder in his kingdom.

It is possible for a lesser noble to claim the title of king, but he effectively only becomes so when recognized as a king by some other significant power. This is usually the pope or, in the East, the emperor. The usual way of demonstrating the acceptance of this new status is the sending of royal regalia. In the West, kings are also anointed with the oil used to create bishops, although priests performing this ritual are careful to not anoint the head of a king as they would a bishop's.

The anointing of kings at coronation gives them several advantages. It clearly indicates they are senior to other nobles. In most dynasties, it also grants minor supernatural powers. Some kings can cure scrofula or leprosy by touching a person and spending a fatigue level.

All kings have minor magic resistance as noted in Chapter Four: Interference.

## The German System

The German system presented below is an abstraction. The empire is such an amalgam of local titles, historical peculiarities, and special cases that there is insufficient space to detail its complexity. At its core the German system, like the French system, is a descendant of the Frankish Empire. Its roles

are similar in many cases, although the titles for various positions have been naturalized or replaced.

In the lists below, ranks are given their title in German, then Latin, then English. Note that the English form is just what a person of that status would be called in English. These titles are not found natively in English-speaking areas.

In the German system, there are three parallel sources of titles. Some titles come directly from the emperor, and these are marked with the prefix *reichs-*. Some titles come from the mists of history, for allodial land, and these are marked with the prefix *frei-*. Some come from local kings, and these have no particular prefix. Assume that an imperial knight has higher status than a free knight, who has higher status than a common knight.

Many of the senior German nobles are sometimes referred to with the title *fürst*. This means prince, in the sense of being the first member of a particular family. The senior English nobility are similarly sometimes referred to as the Princes of the Realm. Prince, in the sense of a person who is the child of a king, is the separate title *prinz*.

### Herr (Generosus, Lord)

This title is used for any member of the nobility lacking a superior title. As such, it is used in much the same way lord is for the English gentry.

### FREIHERR

A *freiherr* is a nobleman with an allodial holding. It is sometimes translated as baron in English, and most *freiherr*en are approximately equivalent in power to a minor count. An allod in the Holy Roman Empire can, however, vary in scale from the equivalent of a single manor up to territory similar in scope to a county. The title *freiherr* is, therefore, not really indicative of the power of the holder.

### Ritter (Miles, Knight)

This is a general term for cavalry soldiers. The German *ritter* plays the same role as the French *chevalier* or the English knight.

### MINISTERIALES (MINISTERS)

Some German knights are not free men. These knights are called *ministeriales*, and initially served militarily in exchange for their upkeep. Over time the role of *ministeriales* has broadened, so that some provide other services to a lord. The *reichsministeriales*, for example, assist many of the legal and administrative functions within the empire. Over time, families of the *ministeriales* are being absorbed into the hereditary class of knights.

### Graf (Comes, Count/Earl)

The role of a *graf* is similar to the role of a count. The term is modified to create many related titles in the German system. These include examples like *buggraf* (*burggrave*), which means the keeper of a castle or fortified town, or *landgraf*, which is a *graf* with a larger area of administrative responsibility than usual. A *burggrave* ranks as a viscount, slightly below the *graf*. A *landgraf* ranks slightly above a count.

### MARKGRAF (MARCHIO, MARGRAVE)

This relatively rare title is a remnant of imperial expansion. A *margrave* was, initially, a count who has been granted fuller legal powers, in order to deal with a difficult border. This title is found in places like Brandenburg, Moravia, and Verona, which are held by the descendants of such *margraves*. Some of the other marches have become powerful, and so have shed this title. Styria and Austria, for example, were originally marches but are now duchies. Others have been dissolved into smaller units once they are settled, like the Breton March in France. The most-powerful *margraves* have the wealth and power of dukes, and in time swap one title for the other.

This title is not found in England, although the role is very similar to that of the counts palatine and marcher lords. It is similarly absent in France, although the County of Marche was once a march. Iberian nobles often believe they are descended from the nobility of the Spanish March founded by Constantine the Great. The family that rules both Barcelona and Provence claims that they are heirs of this ancient *margraviate*.

### Herzog (Dux, Duke)

A *herzog* plays an almost identical role to a French duke. That is, at the time of foundation of his territory, the *herzog's* predecessor was the warlord responsible for an area that had some sort of separate ethnic identity from the people who conquered it. Outside the empire, many duchies have been broken into counties, or have risen to become small kingdoms. The title has persisted in parts of the Holy Roman Empire because *herzogs* have not been permitted to take the title of king.

### König (Rex, King)

Within the Holy Roman Empire the kingdoms are usually monopolized by the emperor. The current emperor-elect has reworked this system a little to suit his political needs, so that at the end of 1220 his son is technically king of the Romans and the Germans, with himself as regent. He has also permitted the duke of Bohemia to take the title of king.

The current emperor is also king of Sicily, but this is not part of the empire, merely his personal possession. When he took the crown he promised the pope to separate the two roles by making his son king of Sicily and appointing a regent. Eventually he decided against this, preferring to keep his base of power in his own hands.

### Römischer Kaiser (Romanorum Imperator, Roman Emperor)

There are no emperors in the classical Roman sense in Mythic Europe. Various kings call themselves "emperor of the Scots" or "emperor of Castile" but these fancies never last. In the West the title of Roman emperor is granted by the electors of the Holy Roman Empire. This work, and other *Ars Magica* books, uses the term "Holy Roman Empire" for this area, although that precise name does not occur in historical Europe until 1254.

The electors of the empire gather, and appoint a king of the Germans. The pope, in a highly technical sense, appoints this man the emperor, and might theoretically





veto their choice. The pope anoints the king of the Germans as emperor of the Romans. When this happens, the emperor automatically becomes king of Burgundy and king of Italy.

The current Holy Roman Emperor-elect is Frederick II. He has held the role in practice since 1215, but is anointed on 22 November 1220. His center of power is in Sicily, although he controls a great deal of territory and has many allies in German-speaking areas. His court is open to Muslim and Christian scholars alike, and is considered a marvel of the age. He is a cultured man, with some interest in magic, but spends much of his time feuding with fractious warlords or the pope.

## Iberian Systems

During the Reconquista, the remnants of Christian Iberia extended their kingdoms across the lands held by Muslims.

As territory was taken, it was settled with highly defensible towns. This created an unusual economic and demographic situation. The continual need for soldiery has lowered the barriers to entry into the knightly class, and the revenue of the nobility is centered not on the farming of agricultural estates, but on the taxing of towns that act as centers for the sale of livestock. Similarly, the royal army, when raiding outside of the kingdom, is a mixture of the king's own household and militias provided by his settlements.

The rights of each of these settlements are guaranteed by a *fuero*, a charter from the nobleman who founded it. *Fueros* vary markedly over time, imposing new obligations on towns as the needs of the founding noblemen change. The obligations of towns are to provide infantry, cavalry, money in lieu of either, and equipment. They also provide other sources of revenue to the king, like a fifth of all spoils from war or the right to control the exchange of prisoners.

The *fueros* also limit the power of the nobleman, in many cases. Towns are usually given an exemption from offensive mustering for a period of years after their settlement, but are required to perform services

like providing castle garrisons and mustering against nearby invasion immediately. Some towns are not required to muster for offensive operations unless the king himself is present. Some may not muster more than once a year for offensive operations, and all contain maximum mustering times, varying from a single day to three months.

As a simplified version of this model, all people who own a house are expected to serve, unless they have an exemption due to a clause in the *fuero*. Exemptions occur for all kinds of reasons, like age, being a widow without sons, being newly wed, or supplying the gear for a knight. Those who fight on foot are referred to as *peons*, and those who fight on horse are called *caballeros*.

## Infanzone

The meaning of this term varies markedly over time and place, but should be considered to be the lowest rank of the gentry. In some areas it is similar to the free peasants of France, while in others it is most similar to the gentry of England. They are considered petty nobles in the second case. The sons of *caballeros*, described below, sometimes remain *infanzones* until they capture booty on campaign, marry well, or their parents die, so that they can afford their gear.

## Caballero

A *caballero* is a mounted warrior. He keeps his rank by maintaining his gear, and by taking the field when required. The *fueros* of towns list what gear is required to uphold *caballero* status. This varies a little but essentially a horse, breastplate, jerkin, javelins, and melee weapons are required. Swords are found rarely in *fueros*, perhaps because of their expense compared to axes and other popular choices. A *caballero* has social status and useful exemptions from some royal taxes, so the rank is a prized one.

The role of *caballero* is based on military function, so it is defended and encouraged by law. Suits of gear, for example, must be passed along intact. Dead horses and destroyed gear must be replaced within a certain time (varying between one month and three years). Men with a certain amount of property are required to buy and maintain horse, so that they can either become a *caballero*.

## Catalonia

The noble classes of all Christian Iberian states have some relationship to the Frankish rulers of the Spanish Marches. Despite the differences between their system and that of the Frankish or modern French, they see their knights as sharing the Carolingian heritage. This is most directly seen in the County of Barcelona. The rulers of Barcelona have such close historical links to southern France, particularly Provence, that Catalonian chivalry is better modeled by the French system.

In Catalonia the condes are served by viscondes, who are served by valvasores. A valvasore is a noble with a retinue of five knights, similar to a banneret. These three classes are considered noble and called barones, collectively. The vassals of these, with subinfeudated holdings, are the vasallos or cavallers. Cavallers are rulers of single castles. Their vassals are called sotcastlàs, who hold fiefs sufficient to support a one knight.

Despite this panoply of titles, the core of the Catalan army is the militias, which are similar to the levy in the English system. They differ in that they are usually based on the trade guilds of towns.

ballero or send a surrogate on campaign. The tax exemptions and the title of caballero are sometimes given for exceptional non-cavalry service. In Portugal, for example a number of archers have this status.

Players designing caballeros can either take the Knight Minor Social Status Virtue, or just use gear that belongs to the covenant. Caballeros are required to fight as dictated by local customs or the fuero of their town (which may be used as a Major Story Flaw, or ignored with troupe approval).

### CABALLERO VILLANO

Within the general body of mounted warriors are further distinctions. A caballero villano is a knight who is closely tied to a particular town. To maintain this status and its useful tax exemptions, a caballero must live in a town and be ready to muster to its defense, or fulfill the campaign requirements of the local militia.

Residency, in many areas, requires the caballero to not leave the town during the autumn or winter, so that he will be ready to campaign in the spring. It also requires that the caballero's wife and children live in the town, so that he will not flee when the frontier is breached by invaders. This style of Wealthy Knight is tied to the town by his Dependents rather than his honor, although troupes may permit players to select Knightly Duties instead.

### CABALLERO HIDALGO (OR FIDALGO)

An hidalgo is an ancestral caballero, often defined as one whose grandfathers were hidalgos. That is, he is a caballero whose family will support him in matters of honor. Lack of money is a matter of honor in Iberia, because a poor caballero can lose his status. Hidalgos are a little like the lords of the manor in the English system, in that they are considered qualitatively superior to the average knight, but they are not necessarily required to have grants of land. In some feros it is assumed that the hidalgos will provide heavy cavalry and the villanos light cavalry, but this is not universal. Hidalgos have the Knight Virtue and either Gentleman or Landed Noble.

### Ricohombre

The ricohombres, or great men, are the aristocratic upper class. They often claim descent from the Frankish Mark, or from the Visigothic kings. These great lords initially received offices from kings, called honores. These honors were rents from towns, or tracts of land in the agricultural hinterland of towns, that permit the ricohombre to maintain a noble lifestyle, including a personal army. Over time these honors have become hereditary in many places.

Ricohombres have varying powers, but most are required to provide two months of military service each year. They may not raise castles without the permission of the king. They are not permitted to perform certain lucrative activities that are royal monopolies, like salt-making. Ricohombres are sometimes called barones. Some go by the title of conde or barone, and they should be designed like English counts or barons. They have the Great Noble Virtue.

## The Italian Model

In Italy the system of nobility is very simple. Those people who have a great deal of land are effectively contes (counts). Italian counts are, however, far less powerful than counts in other places for two reasons. First, all of the significant mainland towns, outside of the Papal States, are governed by a commune. This prevents nobles from drawing revenue from them. Second, all of the counties in Sicily are small and poor by foreign standards. The counts are served by barones, but this class includes landed knights, household knights, and unlanded gentry.

An unusual feature of the Italian nobility is that in many northern areas an additional rank, above squire but below knight, has been added. A patrizio, or patrician, is a member of the ruling elite of a town. The precise definition of the rank varies from place to place, so that in Venice, for example, it may designate that a person is descended from the founders of the city, as listed in the Golden Book, and therefore is able to sit on the Council.

## Byzantine Models

The eastern Empire, before its division, had transformed from a centralized realm into a feudal state. Continual raids on the eastern frontiers of the empire led to the partition of the territory into themes, which were under the control of a strategos, or general, giving a system similar to the counties of the west.

Following the fall of Constantinople, the leaders of the various successor states took over the role of general in their controlled provinces. Such leaders are called despots by those who prefer a different candidate as emperor. The despot grants revenues from lands to particular supporters in exchange for military support. These rights are called pronia, but are modeled on western fiefs. The armies of the Byzantine successor states are highly dependent on mercenaries for their field effectiveness. In the Latin Empire the structure used is essentially the French one.



# Interference

The Code of Hermes strictly forbids interference with mundanes, lest it bring ruin on the Order. This portion of the Code is the most flagrantly abused, with the possible exception of the prohibition against molesting faeries. Hundreds of years ago, when the Code was first sworn, covenants could dwell in allods far outside the concern of any nobleman, but that golden age of Hermetic seclusion is over now. Younger covenants, founded on less perfect sites, must interact with a burgeoning mundane population ruled by a warrior caste that demands the subservience of all other people.

Hermetic justice is democratic, and over time the Code has been stretched to expand how "interference" is defined and demonstrated. Magi in younger covenants are little troubled by the question of whether they should interfere, given that interference at some level is an inevitable consequence of most Hermetic activity. Most magi are more concerned that their actions be justifiable to a Tribunal. In the most pragmatic cases, magi seek ways to never get caught, or to perform crimes so advantageous that the punishments are worth the expense.

## Methods of Interference

Interference, like many crimes, is lucrative for characters able to avoid detection and punishment. Mortal society is fragile, but simultaneously complex, so the actions that magi take may have unintended consequences. These make for interesting future stories. The story seeds that follow the forms of interference in this section give examples of the kinds of stories that mundane interference can generate. These usually relate to the idea that everyone in the Order agrees

is wrong: bringing harm to your sodales because of your actions.

## Alternatives to Conspiracy

In every Tribunal, magi are forbidden to ally with mundane lords, in the sense that they are not permitted to take sides in disputes. Importantly for magi, however, mortal society is fragile and relatively easy to disrupt. Mundane lords fight each other all the time, and so to destroy a rival, it's not actually necessary to ally openly with his enemies. That is, assisting the enemy of one's enemy isn't conspiracy if the assistance is given without the "ally's" knowledge.

A magus, for example, is feuding with a local noble, Lord Cuthbert. Cuthbert has an enemy, Sir Dudley, whom he is preparing to battle. It's not conspiracy to aid Sir Dudley so long as Sir Dudley doesn't know that it is happening. Conspiracy requires conspirators working consciously at common cause. If a magus were to poison the oxen pulling Cuthbert's supply train so he was pinned to a particular location, that would be fine. If Cuthbert's army had a lot of archers, and Dudley had mostly spearmen, causing it to rain so the bowstrings of Cuthbert's army were less effective would not be conspiracy.

## Making Riches

Magi can simply produce money magically, but this has created trouble with the mundanes in previous centuries, so making valuable goods is forbidden in some Tribunals. In others it is permitted as long as the created items are used only in the covenant, or provided that they are not traceable to the Order. Members of House Mercere are will-

ing to transport created trade goods to distant places, and sell them in small amounts, in exchange for a substantial cut.

A side effect of magical wealth creation is that magi with agricultural holdings can reduce the taxes their peasants pay to nothing; indeed they can go further, and pay wages. Although Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs points out that lowering taxes makes peasants more restive, once a covenant offers the peasants more than the king does, they then use that restiveness to defend their unique position. That is, magi can't make peasants personally loyal, but they can make it so that the interests of the peasants align with those of the covenant.

## Interference Varies by Tribunal

The democratic nature of the Order's Tribunal system has led to interference being more strictly defined in some Tribunals than others. The Alps has the strongest regulations. It's a simplification, but there is some truth to the perception that if you can't find an isolated mountain valley and hide the entrance before founding your covenant, then you are not trying hard enough. At the other end of the scale, covenants in Normandy are expected to retain a veneer of mundanity that shields other members of the Order from blame for any trouble they cause. In Normandy an action is interference if it demonstrably harms the interests of other magi, so actions which might be considered interference elsewhere — like magical mind control, bribery, and assassination — are perversely employed in Normandy as ways to prevent demonstrable interference.

## Magic Items

Many members of the Order wish to trade magical items to nobles. The typical case involves the tame noble of a covenant being granted a longevity potion in exchange for his service, and this is easily accommodated by the Order. More difficult is

the trade of magic items for land, money, or political support. Technically, no magus has been permitted to sell magic items to a nobleman since 1061, but an obvious loophole was designed that allows magi to sell magic items to mundane servants, who then may sell the items to outsiders. This means that the sale of magic items is easy, and that regulation occurs on the Tribunal level, rather

### Story Seeds: Conspiracy's Consequences

The characters, or rival magi, have used magic to artificially boost the harvest of a nobleman who hates one of their enemies, and this nobleman they helped used this extra wealth to successfully defeat the hated foe. In this time, the population of the "friendly" nobleman's holding has tripled. If the magi withdraw their support it might lead to famine, and there will certainly be economic refugees. How can the magi reduce the population without causing widespread suffering and feeding Infernal auras?

The characters, or rival magi, have used weather magic or some other effect to help a nobleman win a series of battles.

He takes this as a sign of divine favor and agitates for greater control of the surrounding lands. Driven on, perhaps by a demon of pride, he begins to convince others of his destiny. How can the players prevent needless warfare?

The characters, or rival magi, use illusions to replace a nobleman with a double shortly before a peace conference or other diplomatic event. Do they switch the characters back afterward? If they do, how do they hold the true nobleman to the promises made by his replacement? If they do not swap the characters back, how do they extract their minion? Do they imprison the noble, or kill him?

### Story Seeds: Making Riches

Rich peasants naturally become politically active. In areas where they have traditional rights, they exercise them to defend their new privileges. Historically, this has often meant controls on immigration, regulation of off-manor marriage, or the creation of castes of "old families" (who get most of the benefits) and "new families" (who do not). How does the petty aristocracy form around the covenant? Is it divided by profession, or location in the village? How does it enforce its role in town affairs? If it decides, wisely, to do this by being useful to the magi, how does this express itself?

Noblemen can't ignore magi who "steal" their serfs by offering them better living conditions. The Order allows magi to defend their properties if they are attacked, but a wise noble, perhaps goaded on by the covenant's enemies, declares that unless the characters accede to his demands, he will attack an entirely different covenant. This would make what the characters are doing a high crime, because

it brings ruin on other magi, but are the rest of the Tribunal's magi willing to allow this tactic to succeed, and for this idea to germinate in the minds of the nobility?

A nobleman has a pressing need for money for some worthy cause, like a crusade, and he prefers to take that money from people who are not good, like sorcerers. The covenant is fantastically rich, and so can afford to buy the noble off handsomely, but how far away does his crusade have to go to not bring ruin on the characters' sodales? Initially, the nobleman intends to crusade in Egypt. There are no members of the Order known to reside in that area, so that's probably fine. When magi learn he has changed his mind and will instead campaign in Iberia, can they use magical travel to steal back their resources? Can they find spells that will destroy the materials given to him from a distance? Can they get a message to Iberia and give resources of equal value to the other side, so that they aren't favoring a noble?

### Story Seeds: Items

A nobleman purchases a magic item that allows a single man to harvest a field in a day. This is such a popular idea that the next year, several more are purchased, and the noblemen begins hiring his magical harvesters to other nobles. This causes widespread poverty and prompts the formation of an angry peasant militia seeking to smash the items. Do the characters waylay the militia, or egg them on, knowing that if the devices are destroyed, the nobles will need to buy new ones? If it seems the militia are about to stray onto Hermetic lands, how do the magi divert them?

Some mundane nobles have used potent magic items against others of their class during war. This has led to interest in the Order's military potential, either because they are enduring a civil war, or because they are at peace allowing their rulers to contemplate crusading using magical weapons. Magi are threatened, and the characters are given the task of finding who is to blame. The items, when examined, are centuries old, so there is no magus to punish for their inappropriate use. The characters come to suspect that while the items are ancient, they were purchased recently. How can they find evidence to prove this?

A character seeks out the magi and purchases a single-use item that will strike a bloodline sterile. He does this in the hope of inheriting a portion of the family's land. He delivers the cursed item to a family banquet and it is activated. The player characters would prefer that the lands of the family do not become the battleground of rival claimants, as they have interests nearby. Knowing that they have decades before the heir is required and that the family is unlikely to understand the threat, how can the player characters position a tame nobleman now, to inherit it all? What do they do when the wife of one of their victims becomes pregnant after an affair? How do they deal with the original purchaser? If another covenant finds out, do they cut them in, or feud through proxies?



than on an Order-wide basis.

In most Tribunals there is some sort of limitation on how many magic items a magus may sell to mortal rulers. The commonest is that a magus may sell at most one magic item to a mortal per year, provided the system of mundane intermediaries is maintained. In some Tribunals the regulations are far looser.

This lack of regulation causes frequent problems for individual magi, and sometimes for the Order, and in the near future, such problems are likely to become worse. The current primus of Verditius has declared his intention to push for even freer access to mortal markets for magic items. Other Houses have declared that the current system of sale makes a mockery of the concept of non-interference, and have threatened to seek a Grand Tribunal ruling to restrict what they see as a hazardous practice.

## Involvement

"Involvement" is the term magi use for contact with mundanes that does not breach the Code. The varying definitions of interference make what is considered involvement variable across Tribunals, but all Tribunals recognize the activities described in the sections that follow as permissible acts.

Note that to be acceptable, a magus's actions must usually be proportionate to the threat he faces. If a nobleman steals a keg of beer from a wagon belonging to the cove-

nant, it is probably fair to steal something of equal value in retaliation, or soundly thrash his tax collectors, or burn the words "You owe me a keg of beer" through his door. It is not, according to a Tribunal ruling from Iberia, appropriate to burn down his castle and spell the same message with its smoking ashes.

## Self-Defense

Members of the Order are permitted to defend themselves from harm. Harm is defined very broadly, but the finer level of detail varies by Tribunal. In the Rhine most covenants claim to be allodial and refuse to pay taxes. Trying to take them by force is considered harm to the magus's ability to fund his study, and can be met with force. Similarly, nobles who accidentally try to clear land which contains a vis source may be met with lethal magical force if required. In England, by comparison, there are no allods, and covenants pay a traditional fee, as if they were rented royal demenses, to officers of the king. Sheriffs trying to increase this fee may be met with force along the same general line of reasoning as in the Rhine.

## Defense of Sodales

Members of the Order are permitted to do such things for a sodalis such that as any sensible sodalis would request that

## Story Seeds: Self-Defense?

An elderly magus has refused to attend a county court to give evidence in a boundary dispute between two noblemen. He claims that it would be a waste of potential laboratory time, and that the noble he gave evidence against would consider him to be choosing sides in a dispute. His covenant has been fined by mundane authorities, but they refuse to pay, on the grounds of self-defense. Can other magi see a way forward in this dispute?

A Tribunal has been asked to rule on whether baiting of noblemen is allowed. A group of magi set up a profitable business in a town and made sure that a rival noble knew of it, but not of their ownership. When war began, the noble's troops raided the town. As the noble broke into the business to steal its wares he was killed by a *Waiting Spell* triggered by his specific presence. Is this reasonable self-defense? Some magi believe that a magus has the right to leave a pile of gold in the middle of the road and incinerate anyone who tries to take some, while others believe that frank disclosure of ownership is required before magical self-defense becomes appropriate.



they do, in that sodalis's defense. If a magus is held prisoner, for example, it's not a Hermetic crime to break him out. If a Redcap is harmed, it is a duty to teach humility to his enemies. It is not a Hermetic crime to take children with The Gift, even though they are technically not sodales and are often the serfs of lords.

## Defense of the Art

Members of the Order are permitted to treat as an enemy anyone who publicly declares his intent to purge wizards from an area. These declarations were relatively common during the Schism War. It is the

opinion of the Order that when someone declares all magi his enemy, he may be taken at his word.

## How Much Do Nobles Know?

Most nobles know of magi, although the information they have is usually a mixture of folktale, fabrication, and fact. This is due to a jumble of Hermetic reputation-making,

deliberate lies, demonic deception, faerie games, and the exaggerations of troubadours. Educated nobles may have low Order of Hermes Lore scores, and those who have family members — either current or ancestral — associated with House Jerbiton may know far more. Many nobles who know little about the Order know someone they can ask for greater detail, either a scholarly relative, an advisor from the church, or a hedge wizard.

The factual information nobles have varies, but almost all of them know that magi...

- usually live in the wilderness
- are part of a larger group that forbids them from ruling lands distant from where they live
- are divided into families by the type of magic they do
- cannot teach their own children, or each other's children, but instead take misfits as apprentices from the rest of society
- are forbidden to take sides in wars, but

### Story Seeds: Defense of Sodales

The characters, or NPC allies, steal a child with The Gift from a monastery. The child's father placed him there certain that the pope would release the child from his vows if his older brothers died on crusade, allowing him to become an heir to the father's lands once more. The child has been taken as an apprentice, but has only a smattering of Magic Theory. Should he be returned when his older brothers do, in fact, die, or is a Gifted child taken from a life of mere nobility being given a matchless opportunity, regardless of the wishes of his parents? In some Tribunals, a magus's children may inherit land, skipping over the magus as if he had entered the Church after fathering the child, or been struck down by a disabling malady. Could a rule such as this allow a compromise?

A Redcap has an affair with a married, female serf, who runs away with him and becomes his apprentice. When her lord comes to collect her, the Redcap stabs him, although not fatally, claiming that his apprentice has as much right to protection as any Gifted member of the Order. If the noble attacks the Redcap, what should the player characters do? If the woman demonstrates some magical talent, like Direction Sense or Dowsing, does this change the attitude of the characters? What if she has a personal vis source?

### Story Seed: Defense of the Art

A group of hedge witches have angered a baron and he has declared they are to be purged from the area. Hermetic interests are likely to be disrupted in the short term, although once the wise women have been cleared away the magi may be able to collect vis from sites the witches once claimed. Do the magi simply wait out the purge, or do they want to nip the idea of crushing magicians as quickly as possible? Is this sufficient for the magi to convince a Tribunal that they acted to defend the Art?

A group of invaders believes the best way to pacify the land is to pay off or kill all of its magicians. Does this sort of offer — which may be paraphrased as "Take our gold and shut up, or die!" — allow player character magi to defend the Art? How do the magi deal with more distant covenants who feel that this is a very reasonable way of behaving? Do the magi change their minds when the invading nobleman complains to the Tribunal that the magi are gathering an annual payment from him, but not his enemy? (The basis of his complaint is that the current situation allows his enemy to hire more mercenaries, and so the magi have effectively given preferential treatment to his enemy.) Do the magi give the invader his money back, or opt instead to destroy some of the rival's resources?

### The Nature of the Plea

Most Tribunals have some way for noblemen to make known that they have a legal issue with the Order. The precise method varies from Tribunal to Tribunal, from a magic item that whisks glass bottles to a covenant's safehouse, to an inn where retired redcaps live, to a formalized schedule of audiences with local nobles. These facilities were almost always initially designed by some covenant but over time fell to the administration of the redcaps, House Guernicus, or House Jerbiton. The degree of investigation that actually occurs into the matters noblemen bring to the Order's attention varies among Tribunals.

Note that pleas entered to the Order by noblemen are not considered "real" by most nobles or churchmen, because the Order is not seen as a legitimate font of justice. The plea is, instead, treated rather like a complaint to a guildhall that a member has been using false weights. Sometimes it works, and it is worth a try, but there's no one to complain to if it doesn't work and there is no way to check whether the investigation was carried out properly.

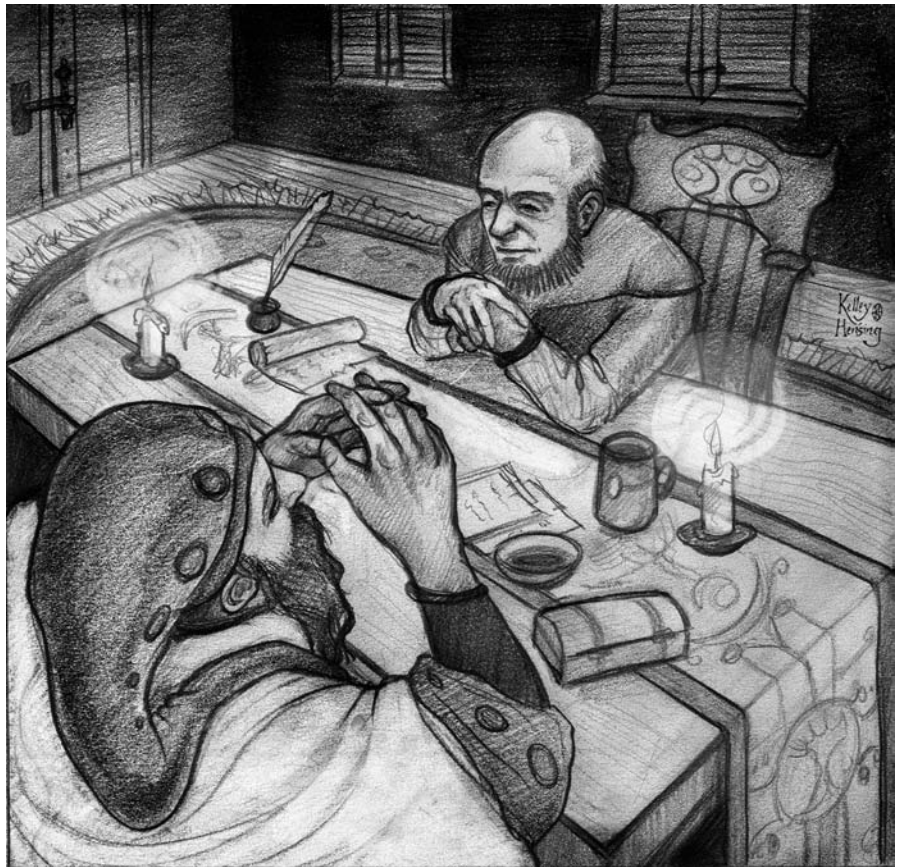


## Magic Resistance For Church Officers and Sovereigns

The religious and secular leaders listed below receive a Magic Resistance score as listed here, and a Soak bonus equal to Resistance / 5. Excommunication cancels these benefits (but only if the excommunication is God's will). Those listed here also have a Penetration 0 *Aura of Rightful Authority* extending to Voice Range.

Pope	25
Cardinal	20
Archbishop	10
King (once crowned)	10

- Wives gain Magic Resistance equal to their husbands.
- Magic Resistance from relics is added to the above, but does not affect Soak.



## Demonstrating Harm

An important part of the process of a plea is the demonstration of harm. Many Jerbiton magi, and some covenants from House Mercere, deliberately intertwine their financial affairs with those of a major city. Damage to its economy, caused by other magi, is therefore a Hermetic crime. This role is not legally recognized by the Order, but is informally recognized by its members, particularly those interested in the enforcement of the Code.

- may fight in self-defense
- are served by a caste of messengers who wear red caps.
- teach cruel lessons to those who harm their messengers
- humiliate and kill those who try to frame their enemies for harming their messengers
- have animal companions with human intelligence
- grow strange trees they harvest for power
- hunt magical animals and faeries
- leave places in response to complaints,

and act on just pleas

- live longer than normal people
- sell magical items, including weapons and methods of extending one's lifespan
- had a terrible war that destroyed much of the countryside centuries ago, when some of their number turned to Satan

Senior nobles of scholarly inclination know more:

- Powerful Christian magi belong to the Order of Hermes.
- There are twelve Houses, each with a different style of magic. The Thirteenth House was destroyed for paganism or Satanism.
- The names of prominent Houses in the local area are known to many nobles. (For example, a lot of Iberian nobles know that one of the Houses uses fire magic and is called Flambeau.)
- The name and approximate boundary of the local Tribunal in which the noble lives.
- The Order is democratic.
- The Order has laws that are enforced by its members.
- Magi usually live in places that feel

strange and vivid.

- Kings and senior churchmen have some mystical protection from magical influence.
- Carrying relics provides some resistance to magical influence.

Many common misconceptions about members of the Order are spread by House Jerbiton. These include:

- All magi make people feel uncomfortable.
- All magi scare animals.
- A mage loses most of his power if you take his staff away.
- Silent magic is impossible.
- Magi wear robes with stars or mystical symbols upon them, often blue.
- Magi wear conical hats with brims, often blue.
- Magi were given their role by a prominent historical figure like King Arthur, Charlemagne, or Constantine.

Nobles who interact with magi, particularly those from Houses other than Jerbiton, are more likely to realize that these are misconceptions.

# Why Don't Magi Break Mythic European Feudalism?

Mythic Europe's political and economic systems are fragile when they interact with magicians. Despite obvious ways for magi to revolutionize Europe, the Order is largely peripheral to Mythic European society, to the extent that Mythic Europe appears virtually identical to historical Europe. One of your tasks, as a player or storyguide in an *Ars Magica* saga, is to explain or ignore this feature of the setting. Troupes should discuss their approach to the impact of magi on society when designing their sagas, selecting an approach that suits the stories they wish to tell. Different options are discussed and explored in the sections that follow.

## Ignore It

Ignoring the elements of the setting that don't seamlessly cohere between Mythic and historical Europe is the simplest solution, and the one suggested for most troupes. Suspension of disbelief is required for the enjoyment of virtually every other roleplaying game or piece of genre fiction. In most sagas, there are knights and castles and magi all thrown together because the players enjoy mixing them, and even if it doesn't make a lot of sense as a simulation of a functioning world, that's not what matters.

## The Code Works as Intended

Players may not be clear why, exactly, but in some sagas the magi who wrote the Code simply understood Mythic Europe better than they do. The Code works. If this seems implausible, it's because players don't understand the underlying structure of the Mythic European world. The Code is a per-

fectly tailored instrument for the preservation of that underlying order.

## Lucky Coincidence

In some sagas, the similarity of Mythic Europe to historical Europe is simply coincidence. These sagas assume that the course of history has been roughly as described by real historians up until 1220. During the saga, the player characters may accidentally or deliberately instigate a clash between the Order and one of the other estates. Alternatively, they may need to react when other characters engineer a confrontation.

## A Conspiracy of Realms

In a campaign with hidden forces, the similarities between historical and Mythic Europe are superficial. Mythic Europe's economy and kingdoms have their structure because an underlying force, or series of contesting forces, have shaped them. These forces defend the status quo, either by coaxing events gently toward a perpetuation of current structures, or by making examples of those who transgress.

### Story Seed: Judgment

Over the centuries, a few covenants have been destroyed by overt acts of God. The Quaesitores examine these sites, hoping to determine what provoked the Divine. Generally they conclude that the destroyed magi were diabolists. Many magi scoff at this conclusion, because God did not directly intervene during the Corruption of House Tytalus. They suggest that there must be some other connecting thread, some other forbidden secret that these magi dared to explore. If a covenant in the characters' Tribunal is destroyed in a way that is clearly a Divine judgement, do they investigate? How does this affect the political factions of the Tribunal? Can a vast, destructive miracle be faked? Who would do such a thing? How many covenants have fallen, over the centuries, to such malefactors?

Each of the following sections details one of the forces that could have shaped Mythic Europe for these reasons, and troupes may mix these influences as suits the stories they wish to tell.

## GOD HAS A PLAN

The will of God is difficult to successfully describe for Mythic Europeans. Some saints, supported by miracles, believe that the poor should be succored at the expense of the rich and that peace is desirable in all circumstances. These gentle souls may be contrasted with the many churchmen who suggest that good kings are instruments of the Divine will, and even wicked kings deserve their due by customary law, because they are the scourges of God.

Many Hermetic magi have personal beliefs concerning the will of God that oppose meddling in mundane affairs. It is clear to them, from simple observation, that God does not favor the casting of magic in large cities, or at the sites of certain holy events, because the Dominion suppresses magic in these places. Similarly, the relics of saints provide Magic Resistance. But at the same time, God does not regularly strike down magi with angelic visitations, overt miracles, or crowds of the Divinely inspired. These manifestation of Divine will are more frequently deployed against diabolists and the worshipers of the pagan gods.

Such magi note that the Divine seems to prefer the Order to do much as it does. But even so, the parameters of the Divine's plan for the Order are unclear. Thus, many magi are cautious when their affairs cross those of agents of the highest Realm, because they are unsure what God will allow.

## MYTHIC EUROPE IS MADE FOR SIN

The current social structure of Mythic Europe tempts the powerful. Europe's military caste engages in indecisive wars, causing great suffering. Noblemen believe, falsely, that they can reduce this suffering by having larger armies so they can conduct shorter and more successful wars. This tempts them further, to levy unjust taxes and commit atrocities, to speed the conduct of the war. Powerful demons would oppose any character who tried to reform the social system of Europe, if in doing so these reformers alleviated the suffering of the poor, or removed the militant ruling caste.



### Story Seed: Rival Demon Factions

Many magi think that an easy way to create wealth is to manipulate the harvests of the towns under their control. This strategy is simple and can be pursued inconspicuously if spells with long Ranges or broad Targets are used. In this story seed, a covenant that creates bountiful crops angers famine demons, who flock from across the country to assault the covenant's servants and supplies. The characters are aided by a mysterious figure, which they later discover to be a demon of avarice. He is hoping that the small town, made wealthy, will develop a strong merchant class where he can more easily claim souls that suit his personal preference.

### FAERIES INADVERTENTLY DEFEND THE STATUS QUO

Fairies force humans to play out stories, but lack the creativity to design new tales. This means that faeries are effectively reservoirs for conservative social roles. So, although it is unlikely that great faeries would rise up to combat magi who interfere with

the course of European civilization, faeries nevertheless slow social change in Mythic Europe in thousands of little interactions every day, reinforcing social boundaries.

Some magi conjecture that in the depths of Arcadia, beyond even the deep realms that great magical voyagers have struggled to reach, there are powerful faeries that no longer need to manifest themselves. These ancient beings, and their narratives, are soothed and fed by the daily cycles of everyday life. Some magi caution that if the way people in Mythic Europe live is radically transformed, these creatures will be required to come to Earth, to redefine and replenish themselves.

### MAGI HELPED DESIGN FEUDALISM

Feudalism may exist in part because magi find it a convenient way to hobble the power of the nobility. Feudalism distributes power, diluting it into antagonistic blocs. This makes it easy for magi to inconspicuously favor one side in mundane affairs. For example, a series of bountiful harvests that allow a particular warlord to hire mercenaries and attack his rival may allow magi to assassinate one of their enemies without any crime, sin, or evidence. Perpetually impoverished and dedicated to petty feuds of honor, the nobility of Mythic Europe are easy prey and willing dupes for clever magi.

### Story Seed: The Counterfeit Lordling

A powerful faerie is the ancestor spirit to the family of noblemen with rights over a nearby village. When the family dies out, it kidnaps a child and, dressing it in the clothes of an infant of the family killed by bandits, deposits it on the doorstep of the town's church. The characters may be able to prove the child is false. This would please the group of merchants hoping that the end of the line will allow the land to revert to the king, who can be paid for charter rights. This would make the village a proper town, with independence from local nobles, and the right to elect a council for a government. The young lord's interests will, however, be defended by the faerie lord and his servants, who take the shapes of ancestral ghosts.

## Chapter Five

# Leisure

The lives of the nobility are busy and their obligations many, yet like everybody else they pursue leisure activities. Having the wealth and opportunity to pursue expensive hobbies and interests, they do so, becoming dedicated to lavish entertainments and sports suitable to their standing. While many noble leisure activities are shared with all orders of society, hunting, hawking, and tournaments are all primarily noble sports and are therefore given more a detailed description in this chapter, as are the feasts that provide entertainment in noble households.

Children play as children always play, exploring their locality, fighting and brawling, and playing with wooden toys or a ball. Noble boys are, of course, expected to show leadership, to play with wooden swords and the ever-popular hobby horse, and to emulate their elders' martial prowess. Some children die and are injured in such games, and while infant mortality is high parents are still distraught and horrified by such tragedies, and fret over their infants' safety. Noble children play with the other household children indiscriminately. Popular children's games often involve imitating adult pursuits, playing at celebrating Mass, or holding mock scholarly debates. Some games, like hoodman's bluff (blind man's bluff), skipping, whipping tops, seesaws, chase, and walking on stilts, are almost entirely children's activities.

## Pets

From childhood onwards the keeping of animals as pets is common. People love animals, and while most beasts kept are for food or as working animals, all classes of society, even monks and nuns, keep pets. These range from the ubiquitous dogs to animals such as caged songbirds, monkeys, squirrels, and magpies. The latter can mimic human voices and are often trained



to speak parrot-fashion. Noble ladies favor tiny lap dogs, which clearly are not working animals, hence demonstrating their ability to spend on frivolities and thus their high status. As with all noble life, conspicuous consumption rather than frugality is to be admired.

## Outdoor Pursuits

Many adults pass leisure time in a variety of sports. Ball games featuring a leather ball are popular, and some use bats or heavy gloves. Handball is played against

any stone wall, with players taking turns to strike the ball so it ricochets back, and bittle-battle involves a stick with a head being used to strike a ball, sometimes to try to knock it in to a hole. There is also stoolball, in which ladies sitting on milking stools try to avoid being struck by a ball bowled or kicked by men. Shuttlecocks are used in racket games, which are very popular.

Throwing stones for distance or accuracy forms the basis of many games, and weightlifting and contests of strength are common. Mob football or camp-ball is played between entire villages. In the wintertime ice skating on bone skates is very popular in northern



climes, though tragedies often occur when the ice breaks. Skaters propel themselves with two wooden poles, and "jousting" with these skate poles on a frozen river is a popular pursuit. Every so often — as with ice skating — the ice breaks and some poor unfortunate drowns, but this seems to do little to deter the practice. Just as common are ball games played on the ice, and the ever popular snowball fight.

## Board Games

More cerebral games are also played. Chess is a common game, prized for its supposed ability to teach military tactics and strategy. There are many variants of the rules of chess, and a large number of players employ dice either to decide what pieces can be moved, or to decide how far certain pieces are moved. Merels, or nine man's morris, is widely played, as is fox and geese, a board game that also has links to one of the most popular board games of all, tafl. Tafl exists in many variants, and involves two unequally matched sets of pieces, with one as defender and one as attacker, played on a cross-shaped board of squares. The defender attempts, as in chess, to protect his king, and the attacker to take it. Only in the last hundred years has chess begun to supplant tafl as the favored noble strategy game, but both are still played extensively. Related is the Celtic fidchell or wood-sense, another game of protect-the-king, in this case played on a seven-by-seven grid of squares. Vying with these games for popularity are the many variants of tables, which resemble backgammon. The academically inclined play rithmomachia, the philosopher's game, another popular board game of the period.

Board games are played by all classes, but skill at them is most important to a noble who thereby demonstrates his understanding of the arts of war, and may gain respect for his ability. Playing well is a social grace, and while the Carouse Ability may allow a win, Etiquette is needed as well to impress one's opponent in what is, after all, a pursuit of polite company.

## Gambling

Gambling is common in Mythic Europe. Though playing cards are as yet unknown, many dice games are popular. The rules for

### Some Unusual Pets

Some medieval pets seem unusual to a modern reader, but were widely kept even by monks and nuns. Game statistics are given for some of these animals here. These animals may be trained by their owners. The animals' Qualities are described here in terms of the rules given in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 40 but necessary skill modifiers are summarized here for ease of reference. These statistics are for mundane versions of these animals, but may be used as templates for Magical Animal Companions.

**MAGPIE**

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +2, Pre -2, Com +1, Str -8, Sta 0, Dex +3, Qik +5

**Size:** -4

**Qualities:** Crafty, Mimicry, Timid, Vocal

**Personality Traits:** Mischievous +2

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +4, Attack +9, Defense +9, Damage -7

**Dodge:** Init +4, Attack n/a, Defense +9, Damage n/a

**Soak:** 0

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (flying), Awareness 4 (predators), Brawl 4 (dodge), Music 3 (mimicry), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (foraging)

**MONKEY**

**Characteristics:** Cun +2, Per 0, Pre -3, Com -3, Str -6, Sta 0, Dex +2, Qik +3

**Size:** -3

**Qualities:** Crafty, Defensive Fighter, Skilled Climber, Timid

+3 to all climb rolls.

**Personality Traits:** Mischievous +2

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +3, Attack +9, Defense +8, Damage -5

**Dodge:** Init +3, Attack n/a, Defense +8, Damage n/a

**Soak:** 0

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-2), -3 (3-4), -5 (5-6), Incapacitated (7-8), Dead (9+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (climbing), Awareness 4 (food), Brawl 4 (dodge), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (foraging)

**SQUIRREL**

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per 0, Pre -3, Com -5, Str -12, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +5

**Size:** -7

**Qualities:** Crafty, Defensive Fighter, Skilled Climber, Timid

+3 to all climb rolls.

**Virtues & Flaws:** Lightning Reflexes

**Personality Traits:** Timid +3, Acquisitive +2, Inquisitive +1

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +5, Attack n/a, Defense +10, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (climbing), Awareness 4 (food), Brawl 4 (dodge), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (foraging)

hazard can be found in *Tales of Mythic Europe*, The Ship of Desire. Raffle is even simpler, as three dice are thrown and the highest total, or the highest matching numbers on two or three dice, wins. In "pair with an ace," three dice are thrown in turn by each player, and the first to roll a matching pair and a one wins. These are the simplest dice games, with dozens more known, many with much more complex rules. It is simple — if six-sided dice are available — for *Ars Magica* players to play several authentic medieval games, and allow those with successful Legerdemain

tests or the Virtue Luck to change one die to the desired result! Even without dice at hand, Mythic Europeans played "heads or tails" (or, rather, "cross or piles," for the designs on the coins).

People gamble on almost anything to relieve boredom, from races between people or animals, to the weather, to the outcome of contests of skill. Games of chance are based upon the Ability Carouse, games of skill upon the Ability Concentration.

### Story Seed: Chess Partners

A great noble has two great passions: chess, and war, in that order. As a dynastic struggle threatens the kingdom, the noble's decision whether to rebel against the king or to remain loyal may well determine the future of the realm. This noble is well-known to spend much time playing chess against a scholar, one Octavian of Tremere. Is Octavian breaking the Code of Hermes by simply playing board games and teaching chess to the noble? Can anyone find an answer to the Coeris Gambit, the move he prides himself on, and break his influence over the noble before it is too late?

### A Game of Chance?

Dice are commonly made from bones or wood, or even fired clay, and are by their manufacture not perfectly even. As a result, any given die may be subtly weighted so that even an honest player can observe the pattern and use Perception + Carouse Ability to gain an advantage over an unskilled player. The Virtue Luck also directly provides a bonus to die rolls, and the skill Legerdemain allows for the manipulation of the dice, and cheating. Many a brawl has broken out when someone, especially a stranger, seems to be winning rather more than his share, and allegations of cheating follow. Problems with dice manufacture are well understood, and crooked dice are warned against in many of the books on gaming of the period.

### Story Seed: The New Dance

A visiting noble lady introduces a new dance to the court, and causes a sensation. The dance involves leaping, pirouetting, and performing spirals in a chain of dancers, and is very hard to get right, but when it is finally achieved everyone present is consumed with mirth and great excitement. But later that night, a number of the dancers slip off to adulterous liaisons, while others act lewdly and inappropriately in polite company. The chaplain is horrified, and entertains the whispered claims of the guilty that the dance bewitched them. What is the secret of the dance, and is the lady involved in some intrigue against the household?

## Good Drink, Song, and Dance

Where there is gambling there is drinking, and vice versa. A gallon of ale is purchased by a group of men in the village from one of the many ale-wives, and the men drink themselves inebriated while gambling, telling stories, and sharing their news. The noble has rather better alcohol in the form of wine and mead, but is excluded by his status from the rough company of the ale-wife's house. Instead, he expects to be entertained by his household staff playing music, singing, or telling stories. Alternately, a traveling jongleur might be hired to play. Many castle halls have a gallery where minstrels and players stand to perform for the assembled guests and host. Performance is covered in detail in *Art & Academe*, Chapter Eight.

With music and singing comes dancing. The most popular form of dance is the carol, a joyful form of energetic dance performed in a circle with linked hands, as a line dance, or in a processional of couples with linked hands. The leader, usually the musician, stands in the center and calls out actions that the dancers perform. Carols were occasionally condemned by the Church for inappropriate bodily contact, but are extremely popular, and dance remains a common occurrence at religious festivities and even in church services. Some carols had names, the ductia and rondeau being particular forms of carol common in France. Another joyous and noisy dance is the estampie, performed

with hopping and stamping, to a genre of music of the same name performed by jongleurs in France. Another innovative dance originates from Naples: the salterello, a new dance that involves great leaping steps and jumps, and which is very much — like estampie — a courtly fashion. The estampie is the first-known purely instrumental dance, whereas with carols it is normal for the dancers and musicians to all sing along. Prowess in dancing is a source of considerable pride and favorable Reputations. While knowledge of the steps of any given court dance is based upon Etiquette (local folk dances fall under Area Lore), a successful performance depends upon the Ability Athletics.

## The Feast

Good food is always appreciated, and with many who can lay claim to a lord's hospitality, the feast was a frequent feature of noble life. Although peasants often hold communal feasts like picnics in the village to mark holidays and important occasions like marriages, with much drinking, dancing, and lewd behavior, the noble feast stands apart as a particularly special event.

While all meals in noble households are taken communally in the hall, feasts are special occasions when a celebration is put on to entertain guests or mark a holiday. But while they are special events, feasts are also very

common, and a host who does not put on a feast for a guest will soon gain a Reputation for being inhospitable. It is also customary in many manors for the lord to provide a public feast on certain holidays or special occasions.

### PREPARING THE FEAST

The noble feast is prepared as any other meal is, in the kitchen and bakehouse, which are usually detached structures built outside the hall to lessen the ever-present risk of fire. The kitchen often possesses cellars for the purpose of storing hanging meat. Cooking is performed on spits over an open fire, the spit turned by a small boy shielded from the heat by a screen of wet rushes. A metal dripping tray is placed below the meat to catch the fats and juices, and it is not uncommon for several large fires to be kept each with its own spit laden with cooking game and poultry. Stone ovens are heated by fires lit within them, and then, when the flames have burned down to embers, the ovens are swept clean and are used for baking, with bread, pies, and pastries placed inside and allowed to cook as the oven cools. Adjustable cranes (a curved pole or metal rod) support cauldrons dangling over fires, in which sauces, stews, and boiled foods are prepared, the temperature being adjusted by raising or lowering the cauldron. The kitchen staff carries wood-handled metal ripping forks called



### Story Seed: Rats in the Kitchens

One fine morning, on the Feast of St. John, the whole household is in great excitement. The noble's liege has accepted an invitation to stay, and a huge feast of exquisite finery has been promised to impress the lord, as a very delicate situation has arisen and his full support is required. But soon after breakfast a shout goes up — every member of the kitchen staff has vanished, and a plague of rats has mysteriously appeared in the manor. Can the vermin be dealt with, and untrained characters manage to somehow cook such a huge meal in time? Plenty of womenfolk from the manor know how to cook, but none has the skills to produce a noble feast. Why has disaster fallen today, and where are the kitchen folk?

### Story Seed: Damsel's Tresses

A particularly rare and exotic spice is damsel's tresses, a golden plant of unknown origin. With an important feast due soon a knight has stumbled upon the source of the plant, growing like mistletoe on an ancient oak on the manor. Delighted, the noble has ordered it be harvested and brought back to adorn the main dish, honey-glazed pig, to render a delicious dish truly succulent. Who are the strange scholars who seem so upset by the harvesting, and why do they seem to believe eating the spice may have unfortunate effects?

### Story Seed: The Silent Damsel

On a dark winter's night a mysterious lady arrives at the court with a very small escort and claims hospitality. Young, noble in demeanor, and beautiful, she refuses to speak. Her escort explains she is vowed to silence by a solemn oath until what troubles her is resolved, but will not say, or do not know, what troubles her. None will speak of her rank or dignity, and with several important guests present, the household is troubled by the question of where she should be seated given that her birth is unknown. And why does the elderly nurse, a woman with a deep knowledge of the family history that reaches back generations, seem so worried by the visitor?

flesh hooks for tasting the stew and checking if the meat is properly cooked. Work in a kitchen is extremely hot. Smoke and fumes exit through a louver of latticed boards set into the roof. Once ready, the food is placed in bowls of red or gray earthenware that is finished with a greenish lead glaze and sometimes decorated with simple patterns and carried to the hall to be served. With some castles having a staff of up to three hundred servants, officials, and others with the customary right to take certain meals in the lord's hall, the kitchens are continuously busy and the cooks are extremely important members of the household.

### THE NOBLE DIET

Meat and fish served at feasts has usually been preserved by smoking, pickling, or salting, though par-boiling removes much of the salt before cooking in the case of roasts. Spices can be extremely expensive, especially if imported over long distances, but are used for their flavoring. However, because of the great price, they are used in small quantities and so much of the food tastes quite bland. No root vegetables are eaten, and it is considered unhealthy to eat fruit raw. (Fruit is, however, often served stewed or in preserves.) Even so, the noble household can draw upon a varied range of foodstuffs, all prepared with seasonal berries, vegetables,

and large quantities of bread, eggs, and dairy produce.

While cooks frequently mix sweet and savory flavors in the same dish, the general pattern of food service places sweet dishes last, as dessert. A simple meal as served in the hall might open with pork brawn, served with bread and butter, before proceeding to salt bacon served with peas pottage, and then stewed mutton, boiled chickens, and roast pork, all served with seasonal produce. The next course would consist of mortrewes, which is a thick-ground meat or fish soup, served alongside a meat pie of birds or rabbit, and perhaps some roast pork. Finally, sweet dessert dishes would be served, with baked apples and pears in pies, and cheese and spiced cakes washed down with mead.

Plainer food was served to the staff and less-important guests, but was still offered in large quantities. Other foods one might expect to grace a noble's table include game, be it boar or venison; doves from the cote; figs, olives, and oranges where available; small songbirds and larger fowl such as goose, duck, and peacock; and dishes of pickles or preserves served with bread. The finest, near-white wheat bread was served at the lord's table, with those lower down the social order eating inferior bread made from barley or rye.

### SEATING THE GUESTS, AND GOOD MANNERS

Within the hall itself, benches against either wall have trestles set up in front of them, so the staff sit with their backs to the walls.

Dancing and other entertainments take place in the central area, while at the top end of the hall a table is placed for the lord, his family, and important guests. The top table is headed by a chair where the lord himself sits, with guests sitting closer to or further from him in order of precedence. Most are seated on benches, but important guests are sometimes seated on wooden stools. Placing someone in too low a position can be seen as an insult, so Etiquette is used to decide the correct seating. The ladies eat with the men, and everyone on a table shares similar dishes, with the top table having the very best food. The top table is laid with a white tablecloth, with guests bringing their own eating knives and napkins. The food is served from bowls onto trenchers of flat, stale bread, which serve as plates, often with two guests to one trencher. Spoons may be used, and forks, though the latter are used mainly for serving rather than eating. A servant moves around with bowls of warm water and cloths for washing and drying hands throughout the meal, with fresh warm water brought for each course. Each table has its own dish of salt, with the finest salt on the top table, and coarser salt lower down. Salt degrades as guests dip their food in it, even though proper etiquette suggests they should avoid this practice and instead sprinkle salt onto their plates to season their food.

Etiquette is gaining in popularity, with good table manners being a mark of noble birth. Polite conversation, gracious remarks

## Story Seed: Village Politics

Each Christmas time it is traditional for six leading tenants and six of the poorest tenants, plus the freemen of the manor, to gather in the lord's hall for a lavish feast, with as much good ale as they can drink. This year, however, resentment and village politics threaten to boil over. Several squabbles break out, becoming more and more heated as calls are made for justice and a brawl seems about to break out. Normally the lord would quickly deal with such foolishness, but earlier in the day, news arrived that a gang of outlaws had ransacked the church and made off with the altar plate, and most of the fighting men have set off with the lord in pursuit. Can the ladies of the court manage to achieve peace, when so many of the servants are related to the disputants, or will the feast end in a fight?

about the host, and restraint in eating are always appreciated, and gluttons and the crass are noted for their base behavior. At the lower tables, less emphasis is placed on manners, and good cheer and companionship as reflected in the Ability Carouse are more important than gracious manners governed by the Ability Etiquette.

## TIME TO EAT

Feasts are an exception to the usual meal pattern. In most noble households breakfast is taken soon after dawn, with dinner served at some point between the hours of nine and eleven in the morning, although in warm climes it comes later, towards noon. Supper is usually served at six in the evening. A feast generally takes place in the very late hours of the night, with noble households often sitting down long after the sun has set, and eating and drinking until the early hours. With multiple courses and entertainers performing throughout, the feast takes many hours to conclude, and it is not uncommon for guests to fall asleep or succumb to drink and be placed on the hall floor. A few feasts break this pattern, mainly those held on religious holidays like Christmas and Easter. These feasts are held in the daytime, often with a number of tenants and even villeins

traditionally invited by right to dine in their lord's hall. Such largesse was not, however, without its price, for many holdings require a fee — a chicken, several eggs, or greater amounts in line with the peasants' wealth — to be given for the lord's festivities, whether or not a reciprocal invitation to dine is extended. Likewise, lords are often required to pay annual fees in the form of food and animals to their lieges to support their own feasts, and certain feasts, such as those that mark a noble wedding, are also occasions for special taxation.

## THE HOST

A feast can be a rowdy and exciting occasion, or a simple and dignified one, depending on the desires of the host. While guests may bring gifts, the host dictates the customs, and in some instances chooses a theme, for the feast; very popular at the moment in England are Arthurian-themed feasts.

The standard of hospitality offered is extremely important. To offer poor hospitality to a visiting liege or peer is to offer a grave insult, though most understand difficult circumstances. Feasting is known to be a considerable expense, and lieges are warned not to demand hospitality too often from their vassals, lest they bankrupt them with the costs of entertainment. On the other hand, the kings of England employ this requirement of hospitality as a method of restricting their vassals' power. By arriving and requesting hospitality, they can both impoverish a potentially rebellious baron (thereby diminishing his power), and also keep an eye on things in their subordinate's manor firsthand. But even though the costs can be large, feasts are joyful occasions, and a good host who puts on a lavish feast will soon gain a Reputation for hospitality and generosity, and for feasts that are exceptional in food, entertainment, and gifts, even a Gratitude point.

To keep a well-stocked larder and ensure a well-provisioned pantry requires considerable expenditure, as well as purchases from distant markets. The feast is an example of the conspicuous consumption that marks a noble and characterizes his lifestyle, and gifts from liege lords and grants of food are needed to allow such lavish entertaining. Fortunately, the produce of one of the great noble sports is directly consumed on the noble's table; that is, hunting does much to ensure a well-stocked larder for entertaining.

## The Hunt

Hunting is an activity common to nobles across Mythic Europe. Whereas the Church is often opposed to tournaments, hunting is seen as a vigorous and manly exercise befitting a knight, and it is an expected leisure pursuit of all males of noble birth, also participated in by many ladies. It serves three purposes. First, it is considered a thrilling and enjoyable pursuit in its own right, occupying energies that might otherwise be spent on more sinful pursuits. Second, it is a martial pursuit, and those well trained in the tactics and skills needed for hunting can employ those skills in time of war, so it is a form of training for the knight's primary role. Finally, there is a purely pragmatic benefit, in that the prey is taken home for the larder, and hunting therefore serves an important role in the noble diet and in providing for the household.

The lower orders also engage in hunting, albeit outside of the chases, warrens, and forests where hunting rights are reserved. Game elsewhere may be freely taken by anyone with the ability to do so. (A chase or warren is a Minor Surroundings Boon; see *Covenants*, page 23.) In any area where hunting rights are not protected (as they will be increasingly in a century if your saga follows mundane history) peasants hunt and trap game with impunity. In some areas, like the Pyrenees or the forests of Germany, villages have specialist huntsmen who use bows, nets, and snares to catch prey and sell the game on the open market. However, within the Angevin domains and France it is customary for feudal grants of exclusive hunting rights to be made, and large parts of the countryside are designated as warrens or chases, places where hunting is forbidden to all but the noble (or clergyman) who holds the right. Given the economic importance of hunting, this is a minor source of income, and given the extremely high status attached to noble hunting, especially hunting with hounds, a grant of lands as a warren or chase is extremely prestigious, and fiercely protected with vicious gamekeepers and, against noble trespassers, lawsuits. Most protected of all were the forests, areas where hunting rights were held by the king. The designation of forests in England (where a third of the nation was designated as forest during the reign of King John) have become a major political issue. It is worth noting that a "forest" is not necessarily a wooded area, but rather a term designating a hunting reserve. The Royal





Forest of Dartmoor in England, for example, is comprised of moorland.

Wherever there are forests there are also usually poachers. Just as noble hunting is a high-status occupation, the poacher — who apes and deprives his betters of their rights — is a high-status criminal, and armed gangs of even clerical and noble poachers participate in this lucrative and illegal pastime, a significant insult to the landholder's prerogatives, and therefore fiercely punished whenever practical. Holding hunting rights is therefore not only a privilege and sign of status, it can also require expenditure and effort to protect the right and to maintain it.

The association of snares, nets, and traps with poaching and with commoners' hunting makes all nobles decry such practices as contemptible, and such pragmatic approaches to taking game are considered to be a sign of low birth, and crass in the extreme. For the nobility hunting is a sport, and is played by rules and strict procedures governed by a well-established hunting etiquette, even if the taking of game is ultimately for practical reasons, that is, for the kitchen. Noble hunters do accept supernatural aid as being within the "rules of the game," and frequently seek out charms, amulets, or prayers to bring success. Nobles are highly likely to seek such aid from any magician they are aware of in the vicinity. Spells that cause the prey to simply fall over dead, or otherwise fail to provide a challenging pursuit, are, however, regarded as a breach of etiquette as serious as the employment of nets or traps, and bring about nothing but embarrassment and hostility when employed, for they ruin

the sport. Similarly, only the healthiest and finest specimens of prey are sought after, as there is no status or sport in hunting a beast unable to provide anything less than a serious challenge. Old, sick, or lame animals might be hunted by clergymen or ladies, but for anyone else to pursue them results in a poor Reputation and a loss of respect from one's peers.

Noble hunting falls into two main types, which are similar across Mythic Europe: hunting with hounds, and bow and stable hunting.

## Varieties of Hunting Hounds

Hunting is a prestige sport that requires the upkeep of specialist kennels, trained dog handlers, and considerable expenditure. The breeding, care, and acquisition of hounds are a noble preoccupation and source of conversation, even if much of the work is conducted by paid professionals attached to the household of the noble.

The types of dogs found in noble households show considerable variation in breed and characteristics, but can be classified into main groups differentiated by the role for which they are bred. The main classes are lymers, running dogs, greyhounds, alaunts, mastiffs, harriers, and bird dogs. The first four are used when hunting with hounds, whereas harriers have a role in bow and stable hunting, and bird dogs are primarily

employed in hawking.

Before considering how a hunt proceeds, one must be familiar with the role and characteristics of the hounds themselves. All hunting dogs are highly trained, requiring many seasons of work to teach them their specialist duties. This is the work of a commoner called a master of kennels, a skilled professional who holds a high-status position within the noble household, but there is no shame — and indeed there is some respect and status (represented by Reputation)—for the noble who participates directly in training his own pack of hounds.

Lymers, heavy-jowled beasts related to the modern bloodhound, are dogs bred for their sense of scent and ability to move quietly while tracking prey. From an early age they are taught to remain silent, and to suppress yaps or barks while following an almost imperceptible trail. Running dogs are the animals that actually pursue the prey, and work in pairs, trained to move together and fight as a team with other pairs when the prey is finally cornered, exhausted. Like lymers they require a good sense of smell to follow the trail of the prey, but they lack the lymers' stealth and restraint. Many running dogs resemble modern foxhounds and come in many colors. By far the best breed is the St. Hubert, from the Swiss monastery of that name where the abbot breeds these superb hounds, which, while slow, have unrivaled noses for prey. Greyhounds, the best examples of which hail from Scotland, are used to catch and bring down the prey, but are expensive and

## Hunting Dogs

The hunting dog statistics presented here are based upon the rules in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 38, but can be used fully without that book.

### LYMER

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +3, Pre -3, Com 0, Str -4, Sta +1, Dex +2, Qik +2

**Size:** -2

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Keen Sense of Smell, Pursuit Predator, Timid, Vocal (silent)

+2 to all Hunt rolls.

**Personality Traits:** Obedient +3, Placid +1

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage -3

**Dodge:** Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 4 (deer), Brawl 3 (bite), Hunt 4 (deer), Stealth 4 (stalking)

### ALAUNT

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per +1, Pre -2, Com -4, Str +2, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik 0

**Size:** -1

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Ferocity (Boar)

**Qualities:** Aggressive, Domesticated, Grapple, Keen Sense of Smell, Pursuit Predator

+2 to all Hunt rolls.

**Personality Traits:** Aggressive +3

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +0, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +3

**Dodge:** Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense 0, Damage n/a

**Grapple:** Init +0, Attack +5, Defense +5, Damage special (see ArM5, page 174)

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (deer), Brawl 5 (bite), Hunt 4 (boar)

### GREYHOUND

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +1, Pre -2, Com -4, Str -4, Sta 0, Dex +1, Qik +5

**Size:** -2

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Fast Runner, Grappler, Keen Eyesight, Pursuit Predator

+3 to all running rolls, +3 to all sight rolls.

**Personality Traits:** Persistent +3

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +5, Attack +8, Defense +10, Damage -3

**Dodge:** Init +5, Attack n/a, Defense +8, Damage n/a

**Grapple:** Init +5, Attack +4, Defense +8, Damage special (see ArM5, page 174)

**Soak:** 0

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (deer), Brawl 3 (bite), Hunt 4 (deer)

### RUNNING DOG

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +3, Pre -2, Com -4, Str -4, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik +4

**Size:** -2

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Fast Runner, Keen Sense of Smell, Pack Animal, Pursuit Predator, Tireless

+3 to all running rolls, +2 to all Hunt rolls.

The Pack leader has Com -3, Leadership 5.

**Personality Traits:** Cooperative +3, Loyal +3

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +4, Attack +7, Defense +9, Damage -3

**Dodge:** Init +4, Attack n/a, Defense +7, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (deer), Brawl 3 (bite), Hunt 4 (deer)

### MASTIFF

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per +1, Pre -4, Com -4, Str +1, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +1

**Size:** -1

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Ferocity (defending owner)

**Qualities:** Aggressive, Domesticated, Keen Sense of Smell, Large Teeth  
+3 to all rolls using scent, +2 to all Hunt rolls.

**Personality Traits:** Loyal +3, Vicious +1

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +1, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +4

**Dodge:** Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +6, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (intruders), Brawl 5 (bite)



limited to Northern Europe. The Irish provide the shaggy-coated wolfhound, which performs a similar role. The greyhound has unparalleled speed, but a poor sense of scent, and must be unleashed within sight of the prey or it will soon lose its quarry. Alaunts (Great Danes) are powerful animals that are generally brought forward for the final kill, held on leashes till the last stages of the chase. They are fighting animals, fresh and ready for the dangerous task of holding the quarry until the huntsmen can administer the killing blow. The best are white with black patches, and because of their vicious temperaments they are frequently kept muzzled. Where greyhounds or wolfhounds are not available, the lower-status alaut performs the same role. Mastiffs are shaggy, powerful dogs, slower than a greyhound but bred for viciousness and strength, used when facing dangerous prey such as boar or bear. Mastiffs can be formidable opponents even to a man. They are kept as guard dogs or to protect flocks, are common throughout society, and are sometimes employed in the hunt instead of more expensive greyhounds. Harriers are small dogs used to chase hares, and employed in bow and stable hunting. Finally, bird dogs are trained for hawking. The best come from Iberia, and they are sometimes called espagnols or spaniels. Exceptional kennels may also use pairs of leashed leopards, but this is very rare even in Mythic Europe and only the very wealthiest can afford this extravagance. There are, of course, many other breeds of medieval dogs, from the lady's lap dog to exotic animals from Scandinavia or the East, and a considerable trade exists, with animals being bred and imported from afar by ship. Any noble could be interested in acquiring a high-status or unusual hound for his kennels, and many regional varieties exist of each of these hounds.

## HOUNDS AND AGING

There is generally no need to keep track of the births and deaths of individual hounds. However, in the case of favorite dogs, trained animals, and other hounds important to the saga it may be desirable to keep track of their individual age and health. Medieval hounds can expect to live up to fourteen years, but some exceptional animals may live longer.

A dog begins to age at ten years, and must make an Aging roll every season thereafter except in the spring, rather than every

## Taming Creatures

Taming creatures is a seasonal activity. A character undertaking it accumulates a number of points each season towards taming a given animal equal to Intelligence + Animal Handling (no die). The taming is complete when the accumulated total of points exceeds a total equal to  $1 + (2 \times \text{the creature's Confidence Score})$ . Points only accumulate between consecutive seasons, so if the character does something else for a season, accumulated points are lost. Points for taming animals cannot be transferred between trainers. The tamer must be able to interact daily with the creature throughout the season.

If the tamer can generate enough points to tame a creature in a single season he may split his point total among the taming of several creatures of the same species, but he cannot tame a number of additional creatures in excess of his Animal Handling Ability Score.

Once an animal is tamed characters with an Intelligence characteristic may command it. The animal can be commanded by any such character with the Animal Handling Ability, or by a character to whom the animal is loyal (as described in the next paragraph).

Once a creature is tamed it acquires the Personality Trait (Loyal +0), directed towards the character who tamed it. If the creature already had a Loyal Personality Trait before it was tamed, it does not gain a new Trait, but rather, the old Trait becomes focused towards the trainer and its level does not change. Sometimes, commanding an animal calls for a Loyalty test, and as this is a "social interaction," penalties for *The Gift* apply.

If he wishes, any character with the Animal Handling Ability may spend additional seasons with an already-tamed creature to improve or transfer the loyalty of that creature. Each additional season of training increases the Loyal Personality Trait by +1, to a maximum of +3. A character can only improve the loyalty of an animal that is loyal to him. Instead of increasing a creature's Loyal Personality Trait with a season of extra training, the trainer can choose to instead transfer the animal's loyalty to another character, who must also be present for the season. The trainer may even transfer the loyalty of the animal to himself if he was not the character who originally tamed the animal.

Any character with the Animal Handling Ability may train and therefore improve a tamed animal's Abilities using the standard training rules (see *ArM5*, page 164). As normal, the master must have a greater score in the Ability than the animal does.

Usually, an animal may only be trained in Abilities that it already has a score in, as other Abilities are beyond its capacity, but the troupe may relax this restriction on a case-by-case basis, for example, to allow a horse to be taught to swim. At the end of any season spent training an Ability that the animal does not already have a score in, make a Loyalty test for the animal against an Ease Factor of 6. If this Loyalty test fails, then the animal does not gain any training experience and the season is wasted. Loyalty tests are not required to improve existing Abilities.

year as with a human. Every four years the aging modifier increases by one. Kennels provide a positive Living Conditions modifier, representing appropriate care, veterinary medicine, and good food and exercise. This, however, requires a score in the Ability Profession Master of Kennels.

## Hunting with Hounds

Hunting with hounds is by far the most prestigious version of the sport, and is widely engaged in all across Mythic Europe, being

from Iberia to Novgorod part of noble culture. While minor regional variations exist, the general format is known and accepted by anyone with a score in the Ability Etiquette.

## THE QUEST

A formal hunt begins an hour or so before dawn when the first glimmer of light shows. The huntsmen set out in different directions on foot with leashed lymers to seek out suitable prey, in a process known as the quest. The huntsmen will have gathered the night before for a feast to discuss

## Story Seed: Poachers

Recently, game has been diminishing in a noble's forest. Last night two gamekeepers were found dead, one apparently slain by a sword, the other's skull crushed by a club or mace. Clearly, this is not the work of peasant poachers, and a person of some wealth was involved. Frightened villagers claim to have heard the sound of hooves and armor, as if several men rode through the woods at night, and whispers have begun to circulate of devils in the forest. Who is responsible, and can they be brought to justice?

and determine the nature of the hunt's prey, and then stayed overnight as guests of the host. The huntsmen's job is to locate a suitable example of the chosen beast, in perfect condition, that will give good sport. Huntsmen each make Perception + (the lymers' or huntsman's Hunt Ability, whichever is lower) rolls against Ease Factor 9, to track an appropriate beast to its lair. After locating potentially suitable prey the huntsman does not approach, but instead tests Presence + Animal Handling against Ease Factor 9 to keep the lymers quiet. He then circles the prey collecting droppings and examining marks. The huntsman makes an Intelligence + Hunt roll against Ease Factor 9 to establish the quarry's age and condition, and whether the beast is suitable, and then returns swiftly to be back in time for the hunt breakfast.

### THE ASSEMBLY

When the huntsmen return the guests have risen, and as dawn breaks and breakfast is served at a meal called the assembly, the huntsmen make their respective cases for the suitability for the day's hunt of the prey they have found. The huntsmen pass around the table animal feces they have collected for the guests to inspect as they eat. These are examined with a test of Perception + Hunt against Ease Factor 12, with success telling a great deal about the age, health, and size of the animals. Based upon this the prey for the day's sport is selected. The successful huntsman is praised and rewarded, and the guests hurry outside to mount.

### THE RELAY

After the assembly, the lymers are taken back out — their role is now to ensure that the quarry has not left the immediate vicinity, and to act as spotters for the hunt. Now the huntsmen (a role admirably performed by grogs) take the running dogs, alaunts, greyhounds, and mastiffs out to positions arranged in consultation between the noble hunters and the huntsmen. They are positioned in pairs (called couples) or two-couples (four dogs) on leashes in carefully selected positions based upon the predicted flight of the prey. Area Lore is essential to understand the lay of the land, and the Ability Hunting to predict the pursued animal's erratic path correctly. If positioned poorly, the main pack of running dogs may corner the prey some miles from the specialist hounds used in the last stages of the kill, which may lead to the exhausted dogs being injured or killed when the pursued animal is finally cornered. If the dogs are positioned well, fresh pairs are available all along the route the animal takes, to supplement the pack as tired dogs drop back, and the greyhounds and alaunts are positioned. The process of positioning these dogs is called the relay.

### THE FINDING

Now the main pack of hounds and the noble hunters move off, riding to the quarry's position as identified by the lymers. This is a good chance for the nobles to gossip and swap stories of former hunts, display their manners and fine hunting knowledge.

### THE CHASE

As the animal hears the hunters approach it flees, the hounds give cry, and the chase begins. The chase is a severe test of the hunters' Ride Ability, with good horsemanship vital. Some are thrown by obstacles, some simply fail to keep up and become lost, while others choose to fall back and accompany the ladies. The hounds are subject to the hunters' commands, and tests of the Animal Handling Ability are required to keep them on the trail, rather than pursuing other prey or becoming distracted. (An animal that leads the hunt astray from its desired prey is called a "rascal.") Unexpected hazards may befall the hunters, and the chase may lead them into adventure as they charge across the countryside in single-minded pursuit.

The length of the chase varies, and it may well last hours, but eventually tired hunters and exhausted horses and hounds run the prey to the ground, and the animal — deeply fatigued and terrified — turns to face them. If fresh dogs, or the greyhounds and alaunts, are available they drag the beast down, but the kill is performed not by the dogs but by the hunters.

Each round of the chase represents one hour of pursuit, and requires a Dexterity + Ride stress roll against Ease Factor 6 to keep in sight of the hounds. Many hunters fall behind, sometimes intentionally. The hounds lose one level of fatigue per round unless they can succeed in a simple roll of Stamina + Athletics against Ease Factor 12, as does the prey. For every three rounds of hunting hunters must succeed in a simple Stamina + Ride roll against Ease Factor 9, or lose one long term fatigue level.

As well as accumulating long term fatigue, the hunters test to see whether they can catch the prey. Use the hounds' Perception + Hunt Ability + stress die (using the best total of any individual dog, if they differ) to generate their Pursuit Total. Match this against the prey's Dexterity + Athletics + Terrain Bonus + stress die, representing its Evasion Total. Remember to include all fatigue modifiers. Storyguides should also add events, encounters, and other challenges to each round to represent the terrain that the chase is occurring through.

**PURSUIT TOTAL:** Hound's Perception + hound's Hunt + stress die – lowest Fatigue penalty among the hounds

vs.

**EVASION TOTAL:** Prey's Dexterity + Athletics + Terrain Bonus (starts at 6) + stress die – Fatigue penalty

If the Evasion Total is higher, the prey has won that round, if the Pursuit Total is higher, the hounds have won. On a tie, neither side wins. If the prey wins four rounds (which need not be successive), it has escaped. Similarly, if darkness falls before the prey is cornered (very unlikely), the prey escapes. If the hounds win four rounds (which, again, need not be successive), they have cornered the prey, ready for the kill.

### THE KILL

The hunters dismount now, and close in on foot to kill the prey. The host normally makes the kill with a sword, though he may



grant this honor to one of his guests if he wishes, and with dangerous creatures like bear or boar the hunters may all approach, or even call upon the huntsmen to assist with spears if the situation is severe enough. This is best resolved as a melee combat, but as the prey is typically fatigued it is normally over swiftly.

### THE UNMAKING AND CUREE

Once the animal is slain it is butchered, which is known as the unmaking, and the dogs rewarded with offal and blood – the curee. There is a formal set of customs to this, represented by the Hunt Ability, and the hunters perform the task of skinning and cutting up the beast, while the huntsmen then carry it back to the larder. The hunters return home for the hunt feast, hopefully satisfied with a good day's sport, but if the animal was run to ground too quickly then the whole process may be continued with another quarry selected from the report at that morning's assembly.

Of course not all hunts are this formal. Knights and lesser nobles often participate in quite informal hunts. Nonetheless, whenever possible, formal hunting is preferred.

## Bow and Stable Hunting

Bow and stable hunting is very different from hunting with hounds. In bow and stable hunting the noble hunters divide in to two groups, the archers, who dress in green hunting clothing for camouflage purposes, and the mounted huntsmen. An area of woodland is selected, preferably with either a natural boundary such as a river or cliff on either side, or with local villagers guarding the flanks with sticks and stones, to drive any animal that tries to flee past them back in to the woods. The archers on foot take up positions in a line across the bottom of the area, spaced several yards apart, and the hunters on horses — with a small group of beaters whose job is to run alongside them, making noise — do likewise at the top of the area, a mile or so away, completing the rectangle.

The hunters now ride slowly forward, flushing out the game. Every animal in the area runs for cover, and, finding no escape left or right, runs forward towards where the archers wait. As the game comes in sight the

### The Terrain Bonus

Assuming the hunted animal is native to the environment through which it is being pursued, it stands a good chance of escape. This is reflected in a Terrain Bonus of +6 added to the prey's Evasion Total. This can be reduced in two ways: through the relay, and through the actions of the hunters. These actions can turn the Terrain Bonus into a penalty in a sufficiently long hunt.

join the pack in the next round, reducing the hounds' Fatigue penalty to zero.

On a successful roll, the same character may make a stress roll of Intelligence + Area Lore against an Ease Factor equal to the Evasion Total. If this also succeeds, the prey's Terrain Bonus is reduced by 1 for the rest of the hunt. The planning of the relay can only reduce the Terrain Bonus by 1 point per round.

#### THE RELAY

Every round, any character who participated in establishing the relay must make a stress roll of Intelligence + Hunt + 6 against an Ease Factor equal to the Evasion Total. If at least one roll succeeds, that character chose to station fresh dogs in an appropriate place, and new hounds

#### THE HUNTERS

Every round, any hunter who is still with the pack may make a Perception + Area Lore stress roll against an Ease Factor equal to the prey's Evasion Total in the current round. If any of these rolls succeed, the Terrain Bonus is reduced by 1 for the rest of the hunt.

### Story Seed: Errant Arrow

While out hunting in the forest, an arrow glances off a stag and kills a prominent noble. The knight who fired the arrow is a vassal of another noble with a long-time enmity for the dead man. Was it an accident, or a deliberate assassination? The knight has been captured attempting to flee the country, but protests his innocence before God. The only witnesses are the wounded stag and the silent trees. Magi can question either easily enough, but who will believe their testimony?

This story idea is taken directly from a historical incident, the death of William Rufus, King of England, in August 1100 after William Tyrell accidentally shot him.

archers take careful aim and shoot. If they fire too quickly, their arrows have the potential to strike oncoming hunters, so they normally wait until the beasts are almost upon them, but if they wait too long and shoot as the animal passes through their line, they may well shoot their fellow archers (as, in fact, happens quite frequently).

Large amounts of game can be taken in this manner, but bow and stable hunting lacks the status of hunting with hounds, and is regarded as rather archaic and boorish in many areas. In parts of the Loch Leglean, Hibernian, Stonehenge, Iberian, Rhine, and Novgorod Tribunals it is, however, a perfectly socially acceptable form of hunting for nobles, as acceptable as hunting with hounds.

## Hunting Stories

While the process of playing out a hunt might not seem attractive, it has great dramatic potential, as the many medieval hunting tales show. A hunt ranges over large areas of wilderness filled with animals magical and mundane, and many hazards not found in the manor, village, or road. It involves characters from all levels of society who wander in small groups, often guided only by the distant cries of the hounds.

Any hunting story should involve many encounters and mysteries stumbled upon in the depths of the woods. The wilderness of Mythic Europe is a strange and dangerous place, and no hunt should ever feel safe or mundane, just as in medieval stories no hunt was ever prosaic. It is quite possible for the hunters to become the hunted if they stum-



ble upon predators or enemies, and in one of the most common medieval folklore motifs this happens quite literally, when a magician or fairy transforms one of the hunters into a beast of prey by some enchantment. Hermetic magi who make their homes in the wilderness may be troubled by hunts that come to the covenant, especially if the quarry takes refuge therein, and given that Beasts of Virtue and magical animals are the highest aspirations of any hunter as quarry, there are many possibilities for stories arising from hunting.

## The Prey

Certain rules apply when it comes to choosing the prey for a hunt. Many animals are only hunted in the season when they are at their healthiest, and hunting is avoided when they are weaker or engaged in mating, to ensure future stocks. One always seeks healthy animals, for to kill sick or poor specimens is contemptible. The very best animals are therefore Beasts of Virtue, exemplars of their kind that possess mythic powers and abilities. The order of preference for prey begins with powerful, unusual, and exotic magical animals (especially those that offer a great challenge and threaten the estate); continues to Beasts of Virtue; and ends with the very best specimens of mundane animals.

While one might not hunt a dragon with hounds, many magical animals do make for good prey. The unicorn is almost impossible to catch, and while luring one into the open with a virgin ploy is a well-known device,

the subsequent pursuit rarely results in a kill. Those who do manage to hunt a unicorn certainly benefit in terms of Reputation.

The hart is hunted in the spring and summer, and the stag's magnificent antlers make fine trophies. When the animal turns at bay it can be a dangerous adversary, and it is widely recognized as a fine animal to hunt — indeed it is the object of most hunts. (Statistics can be found in *The Book of Mundane Beasts, Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 140–144). The fallow deer is rare, and the roe too small to be considered worthy of much attention. Some hunters have traveled to Scandinavia to pursue the fabled reindeer, which is said to give good sport.

For those who seek danger the malicious and hard-to-slay boar makes excellent prey. The season runs from midsummer through the autumn, when the hart is not available, and while many dogs and even the hunter's own life can be lost hunting this dangerous game, success makes for good eating. A boar spear is a special spear with a bar across the haft, for even impaled and dying the ferocious boar often makes a final attempt to gore the hunter with its tusks.

Perhaps even more dangerous than the boar is the bear. Bears may be hunted in summer or autumn, or, if they can be found and flushed out of hibernation, even in winter, with only spring as a closed season, while cubs are licked into shape. Bears have great stamina, and bear hunts may last for days and cover a dozen or more miles of terrain before the final terrible battle when the hunters. This final stage often takes place without the exhausted hounds, with all the hunters assaulting the bear together, rather than the host making the kill alone, as is usual for

other creatures.

Far safer, especially for those who do not wish to stray far, is the hare. A fine runner, it gives the dogs a good chase, but is better suited for pursuit by sighthounds like greyhounds than by running dogs who hunt by scent. The hare is frequently found in the peasants' fields in spring and summer, and crops are sometimes trampled, making this chase unpopular with the farmers.

Wolves are difficult prey, as they must somehow be separated from the pack. Killing them holds little honor (though they give a good chase), but is instead a necessity, for wolves are ferocious predators, and a threat to man and beast in Mythic Europe. Wolves are feared and hated, and many a huntsman has become the hunted when, separated from his fellows, he stumbles upon a wolf pack that pursues and devours him and his tired horse.

The fox is known for its cunning. While less a threat than the wolf, the fox gives good sport, often outwitting the dogs by its guile and deceitful tricks. Hunting foxes is perfectly acceptable, but lacks the prestige of hunting the hart or boar. Otters are regarded with similar disdain — they are seen as the riverine equivalent of foxes, predators that need to be killed. The best time to hunt them is summer or autumn when the water levels are low.



# Horses

A huntsman requires excellent hounds, but fine horses are essential to all aspects of noble life. The use of horses goes far beyond hunting and leisure; travel, war, and even some farm work is also often best served by a fine horse. Medieval horses are not differentiated from one another by breed, but rather by their suitability for certain roles. (A war horse is not suited for lengthy journeys, for example, and a farm horse is unsuitable for war or travel.) Horses are distinguished by pedigree (usually given orally but sometimes recorded in writing), by coloration, and by country of origin, but at the most basic level a horse is described by a name designating its role.

Horses, even farm horses, are expensive to possess, and give the owner status. Theft

of a horse is often a capital crime, and horse markets have developed a shady reputation across most of Mythic Europe. Horse dealers (or "horse coursers" as they are called in England) seem to attract a uniformly bad reputation as unscrupulous and dishonest at best, and outright criminals at worst, from Novgorod to France; only in Iberia and the Levant is the profession widely respected and reputable, no matter how desirable the animals they sell and how skilled they are in assessing horseflesh.

While some commoners can afford to employ the more-efficient horse to replace the traditional yoked oxen, the ox remains the primary agricultural working animal in most parts of Mythic Europe. The horse collar allows a horse to outperform an ox, and teams of working horses known as draught horses are an increasingly common sight on the land. Working horses are invariably

mares, as are those employed for travel and to pull carts and wagons, while many war-horses are stallions prized for their aggression and temperament. The exception is in Muslim lands, particularly Iberia and the Levant, where mares are employed commonly as warhorses for their ability to be trained. Either gender of horse can be, if properly trained, adapted to any given role, but training a horse is a specialist and highly valued skill.

## The Types of Horses

Horses are, as noted, distinguished by their role rather than their breed. Horse templates typical of each type are provided that the storyguide can modify to individualize horses available at market or presented

### Horses

The following templates describe the types of horse most commonly found in Mythic Europe.

#### NOBLE WARHORSE (DESTRIER)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per +1, Pre +1, Com -4, Str +6, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Size:** +3

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Ferocity (when ridden in battle), Improved Characteristics x 2, Long-Winded, Proud (minor)

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Fast Runner, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Proud +3, Loyal +2, Brave +1

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 5 (in battle), Awareness 2 (bad footing), Brawl 3 (hooves)

**Combat:**

**Hooves:** Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +7

Destriers are the highest-status horses in Mythic Europe. Often from Spain, these

fine animals may stand fifteen hands (sixty inches) high, and are superb warhorses. Extremely rare, they can command prices from 50 to 140 pounds, and for an exceptional horse far more. A disproportionate number are aligned with the Magic, Faerie, Divine, or Infernal realm in some way, and these often possess Might and powers appropriate to that realm. The best tournament horses are destriers. Only major nobility and the extremely wealthy are ever likely to possess such a fine animal, unless found through a story, granted as a gift, or won as a prize in a tournament. Owning such a beast is worth at least a single experience point in Reputation: Prudhomme.

#### WARHORSE (COURSER OR ROUNCEY)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per 0, Pre 0, Com -4, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Size:** +2

**Confidence Score** 1 (3)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Ferocity (when ridden in battle), Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded, Proud (minor)

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Fast Runner, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Proud +3, Loyal +2, Brave +1

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 5 (in battle), Awareness 2 (bad footing), Brawl 3 (hooves)

**Combat:**

**Hooves:** Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +5

Coursers are the most common combat-trained warhorses of the era. Like most horses in Mythic Europe, they are between fourteen and fifteen hands in height. A courser usually costs around 10 to 20 pounds, varying based on the horse's quality, with 16 pounds being the average price for most sagas (see *Covenants*, page 71). Coursers are completed unsuited as pack animals and workhorses, and are temperamentally unsuited as general riding horses for travel. A rouncey, often favored by squires, can be used as a general utility horse, but retains the combat training of the courser; such horses lack Ferocity and Confidence, and gain the Flaw Proud. A rouncey costs between five and ten pounds, though some fine specimens cost many times that sum. A commoner or squire who rides a particularly fine rouncey may attract a Reputation as having ideas above his station, and the scorn of his betters.

*(continued on the next page)*

## Horses (continued)

### RIDING HORSE (PALFREY OR JENNET)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per -1, Pre 0, Com -4, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik +1

**Size:** +2

**Virtues & Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Fast Runner, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Skittish +3, Brave -2 (Jennet: Docile +1, Brave -3)

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 5 (distance riding), Awareness 2 (escape routes), Brawl 1 (hooves)

**Combat:**

**Hooves:** Init +3, Attack +5, Defense +6, Damage +5

Palfreys are the standard riding horse favored for general usage, capable of being ridden in a hunt, being controlled in combat by anyone with a Ride Ability of 3 or more, and suitable for long-distance travel, being able to make thirty miles a day or more on good roads if ridden hard. Most palfreys are mares rather than stallions. They lack the aggression of coursers. The palfrey, if ridden by a lady, is often referred to as a jennet, which is always a mare. It is extremely uncommon for ladies to ride side-saddle in Mythic Europe, though a few might if their gowns are particularly unsuited to riding and the need is urgent. (Riding

side-saddle is not a feature of etiquette in this period, simply something forced upon ladies in some circumstances. Riding astride a horse is entirely normal and provokes no unfavorable comment.) A palfrey or jennet stands a little over fourteen hands, and can be purchased for around two pounds.

### DRAUGHT HORSE (HACKNEY)

**Characteristics:** Cun -3, Per -1, Pre 0, Com -4, Str +6, Sta +4, Dex +1, Qik -2

**Size:** +3

**Virtues & Flaws:** Long-Winded, Noncombatant

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Placid +2, Stubborn +1, Brave -2

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (stamina), Awareness 2 (commands), Brawl 1 (hooves)

The hackney is a large horse of up to sixteen hands used for general riding, and as a workhorse. With the new horse collar, and teamed either one in front of the other or in parallel pairs, they are half again as efficient as a similar number of oxen. Hackneys are slow and ponderous beasts not suited for combat or hunting, but they can be ridden for long journeys, or by those not bothered about appearances or speed. Primarily they are used for farm work. A pair of hackneys can be bought for as little as a pound, but no noble would ever be seen

riding such a beast. A hackney with a horse collar can easily pull a heavily laden cart, which might otherwise require two oxen.

### WORKING PONY (FELL OR ICELANDIC)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per +1, Pre 0, Com -4, Str +2, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik 0

**Size:** +1

**Virtues & Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded, Perfect Balance, Noncombatant

**Qualities:** Domesticated, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Brave+2, Resilient +1

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-6), -3 (7-12), -5 (13-18), Incapacitated (19-24), Dead (25+)

**Abilities:** Awareness 2 (footing)

This sturdy pony is suited for use on the roughest terrain. These statistics may be used to represent animals from the north of England and Scotland, or Iceland, and such beasts are greatly prized for their ability to cross mountain trails and treacherous moors. A working pony costs about one pound in Northern Europe, but far more in southern regions. Superb pack animals, sure footed and sturdy, they are used to carry supplies over long distances where no cart can go, and across country. The Perfect Balance Virtue represents their abilities on treacherous mountain paths.

as gifts. Individualizing a horse can be as simple as adding a new Personality trait, adding a new Quality (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 40), altering the characteristics to reflect unusual speed or intelligence, or — for faerie or magical horses (though Divine horses and Infernal horses are also known) — adding Might and Magical Qualities using the process described in *Realms of Power: Magic* or *Realms of Power: Faerie*. No two horses should ever be identical, and each should have a distinct personality and quirks, whether a proclivity to eat hedges or

being frightened of rabbits.

Even more than with other horses, there is no such thing as a standard destrier. The term denotes not so much a type of horse as a horse of exceptional quality far beyond the norm. Many destriers are Horses of Virtue, and others have powers aligned with one of the realms and possess appropriate Might, but no two destriers are the same.

As well as being differentiated by type, horses are differentiated by country of origin. Barbs from North Africa, the Muslim regions of Iberia, or the Levant, make fine

coursers and destriers, as do Spanish horses, with perhaps the majority of destriers being stallions from Iberia, and in particular Andalusia. Northern Britain produces particularly fine fell ponies, with Iceland being the source of the very best beasts of this type. Hungary is known for the quality of its riding horses, such as palfreys and jennets, with fine rounceys being available in England, Ireland, France, and Scandinavia. The Low Countries and the Novgorod Tribunal produce good draught horses, with English and German breeds also being notable.



## The Care of Horses

Horses are extremely important and valuable, so their care can be come an important consideration in the saga.

### HORSES AND AGING

If the stables rules are being used (see *Running an Establishment*, later) there is no need to keep track of the births and deaths of individual horses, though a shoddy stable

### A Note on Size and Capacity

Horses are measured in hands, abbreviated "hh." A hand is four inches, or approximately ten centimeters, and the horse is measured from the ground to the top of the withers, which is the highest point on a horse's back. In modern terms a horse up to 14.2 hands is classified as a pony, but medieval horses are smaller. A modern thoroughbred averages about sixteen hands in comparison, so is eight inches higher than the horses of Mythic Europe. A horse can carry unencumbered about 30% of its weight in pounds, so a 14 hh horse weighing perhaps 1,200 pounds can carry 400 pounds of goods or riders without being encumbered.

loses one horse every three years to bad conditions, requiring replacement. However, in the case of destriers, favorite warhorses, trained animals, and other horses important to the saga it may be desirable to keep track of individual animals' ages and health. Medieval horses can expect to live up to twenty years, but some exceptional animals may live into their fifties. A horse begins to age at 14 years, and must make an aging roll every season thereafter, rather than every year as humans do. Every five years a horse's aging modifier increases by one.

Stables provide a positive Living Conditions modifier, representing appropriate care, veterinary medicine, and good food and exercise. This, however, requires a score in the Ability Profession Marshal, as described in *Running an Establishment*.

## Hawking

While hunting is a prestigious activity, there is one other form of sport that is perhaps even more prestigious. Hawking, or falconry, is a truly noble pursuit, with almost endless opportunities to spend money on training and equipping birds of prey that are used to hunt either small game like rabbits, or other birds.

The birds employed are divided into two classes, hawks and falcons, though the terms "hawking" and "falconry" are used as synonyms irrespective of the actual bird employed. Training a bird of prey to take orders

is an extremely specialized skill subsumed under the Ability Animal Handling, and wealthy nobles who pursue hawking employ at least one falconer to train their birds, and maintain a building for the falconer and the birds. The upkeep of hawks requires perches, a good water supply, and a specialist diet, all of which increase the expense. A dove cote is often also maintained to feed the hawks as well as supplement the household diet. It is worth noting, however, that dove cotes are often a cause of contention between a lord and his tenants, as the tenants usually believe that the lord's birds eat their grain and seed from the fields. Even after all this expense, even the best-trained hawks and falcons sometimes stray, and the loss of a rare bird causes much sorrow — not to mention expense — to its owner. Anyone finding a hawk or falcon can expect a substantial reward for returning it, and many areas have laws making any such stray bird the property of the lord upon whose land it is found.

Hawking birds often live within a chamber in the falconer's house, where they are secured to their perches by leather or silk cords called jesses. The far end is placed on a ring called a terret, which is slipped over the perch, or can be worn over the finger on the creep, the great leather gloves worn by the hawker to protect his hands from the birds' talons when they are taken out to hunt. A new fashion originating at the court of Sicily but becoming increasingly widespread involves the hawk being kept calm with a hood, often elaborately embroidered or jeweled.

Hunting birds are first trained by professional falconers, and then afterward trained



to be loyal to their owners (see the rules for animal training earlier for information about how this transfer of loyalty is effected).

When hunting, the hawkler rides out with a party, and beaters or sometimes bird dogs are used to flush the game out. Prey varies from rabbit and hare on the ground to birds in flight, with experienced hawkers able to get two birds to work together to bring down such large birds as ducks and cranes, though pigeons are more normal prey.

The mechanics of hunting require a Presence + Animal Handling roll from the hawkler, as he releases the hawk and issues commands. The result is determined on the table below. Penalties for The Gift apply as normal.

ROLL	RESULT
0 or less	Make a Loyalty check for the animal. On a failure, the animal leaves, never to be seen again.
1–3	The hawk flies off to a nearby tree and looks at the hawkler quizzically.
4–6	The hawk disregards its intended target and merely circles before returning.
7–9	The hawk conducts a single attack against its prey, which may result in a kill.
10–12	The hawk attacks with a +1 bonus to its attack roll.
13–15	The hawk attacks with a +2 bonus to its attack roll.
16–20	The hawk attacks with a +3 bonus to its attack roll.
21+	The hawk attacks with a +5 bonus to both its attack and initiative rolls, and continues launching additional attacks after the first.

While certain birds are ascribed by tradition and etiquette to certain social classes, in practice birds are employed as available and as required for specific roles, irrespective of social rank. Hawking is largely the preserve of the noble classes (irrespective of gender), though some clergymen do engage in it.

### BIRDS AND AGING

If the mews rules (see Running an Establishment, later) are being used it is not

TYPE	SIZE	STR	STA	DEX	QIK	INIT	ATK	DEF	DAM	SOAK
Partridge	-5	-10	0	+3	+6	+6	+5	+9	-9	0
Hare	-6	-6	+1	+3	+4	+4	n/a	+4	n/a	+1
Duck	-3	-6	0	+3	+4	+4	+5	+7	-5	0
Goose	-2	-4	+1	+3	+3	+3	+5	+6	-3	+1
Pheasant	-2	-4	0	+3	+4	+4	n/a	+7	n/a	0
Heron	-2	-4	-1	+4	+4	+2	+3	+7	-5	-1
Crane	-1	-2	0	+3	+3	+2	+5	+5	-1	0

necessary to keep track of the births and deaths of individual hawks, though a shoddy mews will kill all of its birds quickly, losing twenty percent of them every season. However, in the case of trained birds and other hawks important to the saga it may be desirable to keep track of particular birds' ages and health. Medieval hawks and falcons can expect to live up to 15 years, but some exceptional animals may live in to their twenties. A hawk or falcon begins to age at ten years, and must make an Aging roll every season thereafter, rather than every year as with a human, with an additional Aging roll in the winter during the molt when the bird's plumage changes. Sparrowhawks must make an Aging roll every winter from their very first year owing to these birds' extreme fragility. Every four years after age ten the aging modifier increases by 1.

Mews provide a positive Living Conditions modifier, representing appropriate care, veterinary medicine, and good food and exercise. This, however, requires a score in the Ability Profession Falconer, as described in Running an Establishment.

## Running an Establishment

Nobles often wish to ensure they have available the finest hounds, horses, and hawks for their pleasure. The following rules provide a simple system for maintaining kennels, stables, and mews, which are interchangeably referred to as "establishments" here.

The quality of kennels, stables, or mews

### Story Seed: The Vanishing Hawk

A contest of falconry has been declared, with a great prize to be awarded by the king. One lady who wishes to enter has recently lost her prize hawk, which simply vanished in mid-air over a sunny meadow while in plain sight of the hawking party. She is distraught, and offers a great prize to any who can solve the mystery and return the magnificent bird to her in time for the contest.

describe their capacity, bonus to the housed animals' Living Conditions modifier, and the prestige they confer upon their owner. All nobles are assumed to own standard stables at no cost, as part of their estate. Mews and kennels must be built if desired. Note that a noble's (and his visitors') horses, hackneys, ponies, mules, and farm horses generally do not require more than minimal stabling — a paddock and a stable for wintering — so do not apply these rules, which are intended for more valuable and delicate war and riding horses, to such common beasts.

Establishments are defined by a quality, such as "shoddy" or "superior." Each quality corresponds to a rank of noble to which its ownership is typically appropriate.

A given establishment's quality corresponds to a capacity of active animals it may support. The actual number of animals present may include up to one-third again the capacity in immature beasts and breeding stock.

Each establishment has a maintenance cost for a year listed, but a stable of appropriate level to its owner's rank can be main-



## Hawks and Falcons

Rather than provide characteristics for each type of hawk and falcon, the gyrfalcon template can be modified to represent better quality birds and different breeds as appropriate and as described below. The Size characteristic reflects a female bird, the gender primarily used in hawking. Many male birds are a Size smaller, usually weighing one-half to two-thirds the body weight of a female.

### GYRFALCON (FALCO)

**Characteristics:** Cun -1, Per +3, Pre -1, Com 0, Str -6, Sta -2, Dex +1, Qik +6

**Size:** -3

**Qualities:** Accomplished Flier, Fast Flier, Keen Eyesight, Pursuit Predator, Extra Natural Weapons

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Ferocity (swooping attack), Keen Vision, Fragile Constitution

**Personality Traits:** Fierce +3

**Combat:**

**Talons:** Init +8\*, Attack +6, Defense +12, Damage -4

**Beak:** Init +9\*, Attack +6, Defense +9, Damage -5

\* Includes +3 bonus for Fast Flyer Quality.

**Soak:** -2

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-2), -3 (3-4), -5 (5-6), Incapacitated (7-8), Dead (9+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 5 (swift flight), Awareness 4 (spotting prey), Brawl 2 (talons), Hunt 4 (game birds), Survival 3 (cold climates)

**Natural Weapons:** The unmodified weapon statistics for a falcon's talons are Init -1, Attack +2, Defense +3, Damage

+2. The statistics for its beak are Init 0, Attack +3, Defense +1, Damage +1.

**GYRFALCON:** These statistics are for a gyrfalcon, the largest and most prized of falcons. Its wingspan can exceed four feet. It has a short, hooked beak and dark eyes. Its plumage may be white, grey, or dark brown and has a banded pattern. The gyrfalcon is among the swiftest of birds and hunts on the wing, overtaking its prey in flight. Nobles use falcons to hunt game birds such as partridge. In the wild, the gyrfalcon can kill prey as large as a goose, and usually hunts birds and small rodents. It lives in cold northern lands including Scandinavia, Iceland, and Russia. An untrained bird costs about three to four pounds, and they are greatly prized.

**PEREGRINE FALCON:** Smaller than the gyrfalcon, with Size -4, the peregrine attacks from flight, hovering overhead and then falling like a stone to grab its prey in outstretched talons in a swooping attack. The peregrine is an Ambush Predator, not a Pursuit Predator, and has Str -8, Qik +7, and Talons with Init +7, Attack +6, Defense +14, Damage -6. It has Stealth 3 (ambush prey) but only Athletics 3 (climbing flight). If it makes a stealthy attack on unsuspecting prey it automatically gains +3 to its attack total and wins initiative. A peregrine falcon costs around one pound untrained.

**GOSHAWK:** The female goshawk is the same size as a gyrfalcon, but the goshawk is flown from the fist, with a distinctive graceful flight style. Remove the Quality Fast Flyer and add Aggressive for a +3 bonus to Attack. Despite this aggression, goshawks

do not attack prey larger than Size -2 unless specifically trained to hunt that particular type of prey. An untrained goshawk can be purchased for a pound.

**MERLIN:** A small but very fast falcon. Modify the gyrfalcon statistics to Size -5, Str -10, Qik +8, and Beak Init +11\*, Attack +6, Defense +11, Damage -9. Merlins are useful for hunting small prey up to partridge size (-6). Four untrained birds can be purchased for a pound.

**LANNER:** Found mainly in North Africa and Mediterranean climes, the lanner is often used to teach falconry. A Size -4 falcon, it lacks the Ferocity virtue and Confidence Score and is therefore easy to train. Lanners are, uniquely, usually taught to hunt in pairs. The lanner has Str -8, Qik +7, and Talons with Init +7, Attack +6, Defense +14, Damage -6, but a pair can be taught to fight as a trained group, and a lanner has Leadership 1. A trained pair therefore attacks with Str -8, Qik +7, and Talons with Init +7, Attack +12, Defense +14, Damage -6. A pair of untrained birds can be purchased for a pound.

**SPARROWHAWK:** The most commonly found hawk in Mythic Europe, and hence the most widely flown, sparrowhawks are often captured in the wild. If purchased, six untrained bird can be bought for a pound. Remove the Quality Fast Flyer, reduce Size to -4, and add Beak Init +8, Attack +6, Defense +13, Damage -7. Sparrowhawks are notoriously difficult to raise, with an Aging rolls modifier of -3 and a Stamina of -3, giving them Soak -3 to reflect their extreme fragility. They are naturally perverse, sometimes dying just to spite their owners.

tained at no cost. (Thus, a knight running a standard stable does not incur a maintenance cost, nor an earl who keeps an excellent stable. However, if a covenant of Hermetic magi wished to own anything better than a standard stable, or a knight wished to maintain a superior stable, the cost would be incurred as given.) Kennels and mews always require the maintenance cost to be paid.

Staff are any folk who are dedicated to the care and maintenance of the stables as their primary occupation, spending at least three seasons a year in this role and typically possessing the Abilities Animal Handling, Ride, and Hunt.

The Living Conditions modifier applies to the animals, not the staff, but if it is higher than the prevailing Living Condition of the residences, then the staff also benefit from it. The Living Conditions modifier assumes that a suitable specialist is available (see Living Conditions and Specialists, later.)

Paying the annual maintenance cost keeps the number of animals constant, through breeding and training. Exceptional circumstances, such as an outbreak of disease, may reduce the number of animals, as may failure to meet maintenance costs, or an interruption of supplies, such as during a siege. Reduce the number of animals

by 15% (round up) for each season these requirements are not met. The cost of initially purchasing the animals is not included in the maintenance cost. Failure to meet the annual maintenance cost results in the establishment dropping to the next lower level of quality immediately.

While the maintenance cost covers replacing normal losses, players may wish to keep track of the aging of superior and particular animals separately, as described in the various sections describing horses, hounds, and hawks earlier in this chapter.

A superior stables or better requires at least one specialist (a marshal, head falconer,

or master of kennels) with the appropriate Profession Ability. Royal quality establishments require additional specialists.

## The Kennels

The size of a noble's kennels is a reliable indicator of his prestige and status. While even a lowly knight may own a greyhound as a companion, a mastiff for guarding his home, and a pair or two of running dogs, landed nobles and the higher aristocracy are often expected to maintain large kennels at sometimes ruinous expense. A major noble might possess fifty to sixty hounds, but any huntsman requires a dozen good running dogs and a lymer as a minimum for the hunt. Other nobles participating in a hunt typically bring some of their own hounds with them, with the most valuable dogs often transported in special wagons. Kings and liege lords may require, as a feudal duty, the maintenance of a kennel by their vassals, for when they are hunting in the vicinity. Woe betide the noble who fails to provide hounds of suitable excellence for his lord's pleasure.

A kennel usually houses a certain ratio of types of hounds, so that for every 12 running dogs there is one lymer and three greyhounds or alaunts, though the numbers are approximate. A standard kennel has this basic quantity of dogs, which constitute the very minimum for hunting. A superior kennel has two to four times these basic quantities, and an excellent or royal kennel five or more times the basic quantities. Mastiffs kept as working dogs are usually available if required, and bird dogs and harriers are kept if hawking and bow and stable hunting are favored pursuits of the kennel's owner.

## The Mews

Falcons and hawks are kept in a mews, a house set aside for this purpose, where the falconer and his assistant live with the birds. They may have their own caged courtyard and fountain as well, and a low, stable-like building if the mews is large enough.

## The Stables

Horses are kept in stables. See the Stables table for more information.

# Kennels, Mews, and Stables Tables

### KENNELS

QUALITY	CAPACITY (HOUNDS)	MAINTENANCE (POUNDS/YEAR)	STAFF	LIVING CONDITIONS MODIFIER
Shoddy (Inn/Farm)	8	0	0	-1
Standard (Knight)	16	1	2	0
Superior (Noble)	48	5	6	+1
Excellent (Great Noble)	80	20	12	+2
Royal	150+	100	36	+3

### MEWS

QUALITY	CAPACITY (BIRDS)	MAINTENANCE (POUNDS/YEAR)	STAFF	LIVING CONDITIONS MODIFIER
Shoddy (Loft)	3	0	0	-1
Standard (Knight)	6	0	1	0
Superior (Noble)	15	5	3	+1
Excellent (Great Noble)	30	10	5	+2
Royal	100	100	10	+3

### STABLES

QUALITY	CAPACITY (HORSES)	MAINTENANCE (POUNDS/YEAR)	STAFF	LIVING CONDITIONS MODIFIER
Shoddy (Inn/Farm)	3	0	0	-1
Standard (Knight)	6	1 per horse*	2	0
Superior (Noble)	18	2 per horse	6	+1
Excellent (Great Noble) 40	3 per horse	12	+2	
Royal	250	5 per horse	36	+3

\*Knights do not need to pay this maintenance, however, as it is already calculated in their expenditure.

## Living Conditions and Specialists

An individual with a score in the relevant Profession Ability equal to at least twice the Living Conditions modifier is required for an establishment to make use of a positive Living Conditions modifier. Alternatively, an individual without the appropriate Ability may dedicate a season each year to running the establishment and thereby preserve the Living Conditions modifier, so long as he has a

score in Animal Handling at least three times the positive Living Conditions modifier.

A stress roll of Intelligence + Animal Handling against Ease Factor 9, or Intelligence + Profession Marshal, Profession Falconer, or Profession Master of Kennels as appropriate against Ease Factor 9, should be made annually in the winter. A success indicates the establishment is well run. A failure causes a decline of establishment quality by one class, which does not improve until the test is made successfully in a later year, when it reverts one class upwards toward its



## New Virtues

### MASTER OF KENNELS

*Social Status, Minor*

The character manages the kennels for a noble patron, and is responsible for the training, breeding, and health of the animals. He has an appropriate staff under him, depending on the size of the kennels, and often possesses the privilege of riding with the hunt. He may be considered an intimate and important member of the noble household, despite his common birth, and be treated with commensurate respect. He is also expected to organize the huntsmen — that is, the dog handlers — and train servants or locals to perform that role. He should possess the Ability Profession Master of Kennels, which governs the care of the dogs, treatment of their diseases, and acquisition and breeding of hounds. The Ability Animal Handling is used for the training of the animals. A master of kennels receives 50 extra experience points at character generation to spend on the abilities Animal Handling, Etiquette, Hunt, Latin, Profession Master of Kennels, and Ride, and may take Martial Abilities freely.

### FALCONER

*Social Status, Minor*

The character trains hawks and falcons for a noble patron, and is responsible for the training, breeding, and health of the animals. He often has a personal servant to assist, and is an important member of the noble household, treated with great respect. He should possess the Ability Profession Falconer, which governs the care of the birds, treatment of their diseases, and acquisition and breeding of hawks and fal-

cons. The Ability Animal Handling is used for the training of the hawks. A specialist in non-falcons, such as the hawks, is called an austringer.

A falconer receives 50 extra experience points at character generation to spend on the Abilities Animal Handling, Area Lore, Etiquette, Hunt, Latin, Profession Falconer, and Ride. Many falconers are also Educated.

### MARSHAL

*Social Status, Minor*

As well as their non-specialist staff, superior stables and above require a specialist to coordinate the care, feeding, and welfare of the animals. This person is called a marshal, and the title holds considerable honor. The Marshal of England is the king's official in charge of his cavalry, but even the marshal of a baron is an important personage, given the vital roles played by horses in warfare and hunting, as well as routine travel.

A marshal should take the Ability Profession Marshal, which deals with understanding, purchasing, and caring for horses. It functions as the Ability Medicine for the purpose of treating veterinary diseases, and for surgery involving these animals. A marshal receives 50 extra experience points at character generation to spend on the abilities Animal Handling, Etiquette, Hunt, Latin, Profession Marshal and Ride, and may take Martial Abilities freely.

A marshal may oversee other specialists, including farriers who make horse-shoes; leatherworkers who produce tack, harness, and saddles; and the trained staff who administer day-to-day grooming and mucking out of the stables.

original quality. Maintenance costs remains at the original level regardless of a temporarily lower quality due to poor maintenance. A botch indicates a catastrophe, of which the most common are fires, outbreaks of disease in the animals, theft, or a situation requiring a story to resolve.

## Romance

There is one form of noble sport, perhaps akin to hunting, that raises more controversy than any other does. This is the practice of *fin' amors*, or, as it sometimes called, courtly love. Originating in Provence and Burgundy, the practice was popularized by Eleanor of Aquitaine, through her reached England and France, and is also now widely known in the regions comprising the Iberian, Rhine, and Roman Tribunals. Celebrated by the troubadours, the practice has elaborate rules, causes considerable scandal, and is widely condemned by the Church.

In 1174 Andreas Capellanus wrote the definitive work on *fin' amors*, entitled *Incipit liber amoris et curtesie*, more often referred to by the shorter title *De Amore*. This book sets the rules of romance, and it is clear why controversy has dogged the work. Capellanus declares that true love between a man and wife is impossible, in contradiction to the teachings of the Church, and the apparently happy marriages of many. It follows, for Capellanus, that one must seek love outside of the marital home, practiced ideally in a love affair between a noble suitor and a married lady. Indeed, if the lady is not married, and hence unobtainable, true love may not blossom.

## The Pursuit of Love

The affair begins with the noble beholding a lady of great worth and beauty, and being entranced by her physical charms. The beholder immediately loses his composure, and from this point on is subject to nothing but thoughts of the lady, and the urgent need to win her favors. Sleep escapes him, and other pursuits hold no excitement; he devotes himself completely to the romantic quest to obtain her love.

The pursuit must be achieved by certain methods alone. A handsome appearance,



honesty of character, and fluent and eloquent speech are the primary methods. However, acts of great valor or heroism inspired by the lady, or dedicated to her, are also part of the pursuit. Love knows no social boundaries, and a male — even a commoner if learned in the arts of love — may seek romance from the noblest lady, even a queen. Here is another threat to the divinely ordered nature of things, and any commoner presumptuous enough to pursue the love of a noble lady runs a terrible risk. Only the clergy should seek to avoid romance. Equally deadly, according to Capellanus, is to seek the heart of a nun, and so vile an infamy that it destroys one's reputation forever. Equally unacceptable is to love a whore, for that cheapens the noble romance to a coarse and commercial prospect.

At first the lover should adore his lady secretly, and take every opportunity to seek out her company and gaze lovingly upon her person. Eventually there comes a time when he must profess his love to her, and she then chastely refuse his advances, with scorn and coldness. Even if the lady ardently desires the lover, and deliberately sought his attentions (for many ladies initiate the romance by their actions and subtle encouragements),

she must act coldly, and treat the lover as if he was a source of disgust to her. He must then prove his devotion, and pursue her. The pursuit of the lady is primarily a matter of Charm, but appropriate gifts and performances in her honor are to be expected. Gifts may be given and received, but money should not be the means of gaining her heart. At all times both parties must be discreet, and under no circumstances must the lady's husband discover the affair. Trusted servants and friends act as go betweens, and Intrigue is used to arrange meetings in suitably romantic situations.

At all times the lover should be jealous and passionate, and watch out for rivals, suspecting all. He must also eschew all other ladies, for to pursue another or seek comfort elsewhere would be to betray love. He must obey every whim and command of his lady, and prove his moral worth, bravery, and most of all utter devotion. To him salvation is his lady, and she is his religion, she his lord, he her obedient vassal in all matters of the heart.

Finally the lady deigns to grant the lover her favor, and the affair is consummated. In the southern tradition this may imply a full sexual relationship, and adultery. To what

extent this actually occurs is little known, since couples who do and don't all have strong reasons to keep the facts secret, but both parties run the risk of death if an affair is discovered. In France and England the platonic nature of the love is stressed, and adultery denied and decried, as in the popular romance of Tristan and Iseult, where their adultery brings disaster upon the lovers. In these regions, romance is seen as a chaste game, and may even be smilingly approved by trusting husbands. Most husbands, however, with an eye to ensuring their heirs are truly their own, regard the *fin' amors* as a dangerous and corrupting pastime, not to be practiced on their wives.

Love is an inborn suffering, which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex. This feeling makes a man desire before all else the embraces of the other sex, and to achieve the utter fulfillment of the commands of love in the other's embrace by their common desire

— Andreas Capellanus

## The Rules of Love

Andreas Capellanus lists 12 Laws of Love.

1. You shall avoid avarice like a deadly pestilence and embrace its opposite.
2. You shall keep yourself chaste for the sake of her whom you love.
3. You shall not knowingly strive to break up a correct love affair that someone else is engaged in.
4. You shall not choose for your lover anyone whom a natural sense of shame forbids you to marry.
5. You shall completely avoid lying.
6. You shall not have many who know of your love affair.
7. Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, you shall ever strive to ally yourself to the service of love.
8. In giving and receiving love be modest at all times.
9. You shall speak no slander.
10. You shall not be a revealer of love affairs.
11. You shall be in all things polite and courteous.
12. You shall not exceed the desires of your lover.



## Is Love True?

Historians remain deeply divided over to what extent courtly love was an ideal, and to what extent a reality, in medieval society. Troupes should decide for their saga whether courtly love represents an ideal played at by knights and ladies, or a real practice. Is courtly love an idealized platonic romance mainly playacted, and accepted by many as harmless and diverting, or a tempestuous and real passion leading many to adultery and ruin? In some sagas romance will not feature at all, being merely something troubadours sing about. In others, it will be a real and potent force — this is Mythic Europe after all! It is hard from the extant sources for us to be sure of the truth, so the troupe must decide if it wishes to employ the motif in its stories. Three main considerations apply.

First, no character with the True Love or Lost Love Virtue or Flaw may ever be caught up in romance, except with the object of their affections.

Second, no character should be involved in a romance subplot unless the character actively seeks it out. Keep in mind that a romance can be initiated by a lady as much as her suitor; indeed, scheming to ensnare a noble's love is perfectly acceptable. While Andreas Capellanus writes mainly from the male perspective, the lady is a full partner in whom power is ultimately vested in the relationship. She has the ability to end it at any time, or choose to scorn any potential lover.

Finally, romances should always require stories, rather than being something that "just happens." As the ancient cliché has it, "the path of true love never runs smooth," and complications, opportunities for heroic adventure, and moonlit intrigues are the very stuff of the romance. Stories, not mechanics, should drive a developing relationship between lovers, and the ever-present threat of discovery should add a certain spice.

## Patronage

Medieval society runs off a series of interconnected obligations and favors. The feudal system has a set of vassal-licge relationships that run from the lowest level of society to the very highest, but the process is not one-way despite the hierarchical basis of society. Even landed knights and nobles struggle to meet from their manorial incomes the many expenses they face, and just as they offer support and justice to the villeins, cottars, and freemen who reside upon their estates, and receive service on the demesne and fees and dues in return, so they expect to receive assistance from their social betters. Without significant assistance many lesser nobles would be unable to enjoy the lifestyles they do. Gifting money, food, expensive equipment, or even land grants is common and expected of one's liege. Traditionally, gifting takes place at the major religious festivals, Christmas, Pentecost, and Easter. The nature of gifts may be proscribed or left to the discretion of those who give them.

Patronage — the distribution of land, money, favors, and titles to one's loyal vassals — is a vital part of the politics game. A generous gift can secure support as much or more than a politically advantageous marriage, and greater nobles and kings use this power wisely. If too much is granted, such as a hereditary fief, the noble can grow to become a potentially dangerous rival, yet if too little is given he may brood in resentment and begin to plot treachery. Recognition and status are as important as monetary gifts. A feast given in a noble's honor, a title bestowed (even if accompanied by little actual wealth), a gift of clothing, or even a fine horse publicly given, may all increase a noble's reputation as a prudhomme — "an upstanding man" — and result, in game terms, in an increase in a positive noble Reputation. Favors may be as intangible as words of friendship, but those who understand Intrigue realize that the having ear of a king makes jealous enemies as well as powerful friends.

It is important to reflect the customs of gift- and grant-giving in play. Lieges should provide their vassals with wealth, and player characters should benefit from this largesse, lest their feudal relationships appear entirely one-sided. Vassals who find themselves under attack or threat from others may appeal to the king for justice, and in some cases even receive military assistance (although usually, news that a high-ranking noble backs one's cause is sufficient to end any unpleasantness,

lest his wrath descend upon a transgressor).

Just as a lord is a recipient of patronage, so he should be a generous giver to cement useful alliances. The Intrigue Ability allows an understanding of the complicated politics of any given situation, and the leverage that a carefully given gift might bring to bear. Even the lowliest cottar should receive (indirectly) the benefits of his lord's largesse, in acts of alms or public feasts, because this ensures the loyalty of the estate's people.

When characters direct their patronage at specific individuals who belong to a certain social group, this is reflected in a new Reputation applicable to that social group, and improves a Loyal Personality Trait in the recipient that is directed toward the patron. (For more on Reputations and Noble Reputation in particular see Chapter Two: Politics, Reputation.) For example, if Jonathan Carpenter builds a new nave for the dilapidated parish church, he may gain the Reputation Patron (Clergy) and the benefits of a Loyal +1 (or more) Personality Trait in the priest, as well as a single Gratitude point on behalf of the Church from the grateful priest and parishioners, which may well prove useful in future stories. (Remember that the Church is a major landholder, and the ecclesiastical authorities can grant manors or bring influence to bear to help you achieve an office, like any other lord.) All nobles of both genders should indulge in generous patronage of causes dear to their hearts, and many a noble lady has been a patron to a struggling artist, paid for fine renovations to a church, or supported a scholar and received a book dedicated to her in return.

The main groups who can be influenced by a Reputation arising from patronage are the types listed in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*, with two additions. Reputations can pertain to Local (meaning all in the vicinity), Clergy, Order of Hermes, Nobles, or Academics. Artists may also be patronized, but the Reputation thus gained applies to one of the other groups, designated as the intended audience. Someone who is known by reputation as a generous patron in one of these groups can expect positive modifiers in future social interactions with others of the same class. Appropriate forms of patronage are discussed for each of these groups in turn in the sections that follow.

Local Reputations generally apply when a noble grants patronage to his own estates or local area. The granting of royal charters is a form of patronage performed by the crown that raises its Reputation, but most nobles, lacking the authority to grant royal charters,

are only able to offer feasts, alms, or possibly the relaxation of feudal dues, though the latter creates a dangerous precedent and diminishes the noble's power. Acts of kind charity and impartial justice can go a long way towards gaining a positive Reputation, and a small amount of silver can help in times of hardship. The granting of offices is one very popular way of expressing patronage (see Chapter Two: Politics, Offices). Unfortunately, this form of patronage is unlikely to earn Gratitude points.

Acting as a patron to the Order of Hermes is fraught with difficulties, discussed in Chapter Four: Interference.

Patronage to other nobles usually means granting gifts to one's vassals, such as knights, or to one's liege in hope of favor. Meeting one's feudal obligations is not patronage, however. Patronage means an exceptional gift, whether of a manor, a fine horse or hound, or a gift of money or food to assist in times of hardship. Outfitting one's knights with fine chargers and excellent quality arms and armor might be a normal gift, unworthy of any Reputation increase, whereas granting a sum of thirty pounds to a knight experiencing difficulties would be an exceptional gift worthy of praise. Gifts may, however, be offered to one's liege to help cement the relationship. A finely trained Hawk of Virtue, the hide of a magical beast hunted and slain by one's own hand, or a magical device or ancient treasure might qualify as a gift worthy of one's liege, and earn a point of Gratitude (see Chapter Two: Politics, Gratitude), as well as experience in one's Noble Reputation.

Artists are frequent recipients of patronage, and indeed many of them depend upon patronage for their survival and continued work. Artistic patronage may seem strangely altruistic, for artists generally seem to have little to offer in return other than their aesthetic productions. Yet in fact art is a powerful political force. Troubadours, for example, may sing of a noble's distinguished genealogy, cementing his claim to nobility and importance, granting him legendary ancestors of distinction, and perhaps legitimizing future legal or inheritance claims based upon these very legends. A noble's arms and device seen in fine artworks may spread knowledge to the burgers of nearby towns his learning, culture, and benign justice. The art a patron funds usually celebrates him and his dynasty as much as it does the artwork's supposed theme. The Reputation of a patron of artists does not increase among artists (though other artists definitely pay attention

to the patronage of their peers, and enthusiastically seek further patronage of known patrons), but rather among a group the patron wishes to target. Paying an artist to produce ecclesiastical murals or statuary, for example, increases one's reputation with the clergy, whereas having a fine miniature painted of one's liege improves one's standing in noble circles. A story ostensibly about Arthurian legend but that celebrates one's ancestor's prowess as, say, a dragon slayer, or memorializes her legendary beauty, may well improve one's standing in the local community, and even academics can be won over by suitably fine works of art. Artistic patronage is therefore extremely versatile, but it does require a lengthy relationship and considerable continued expenditure compared with granting a benefice to a clergyman or helping out a knight who faces a famine on his manor after terrible crop blight. Full rules for artistic patronage from the recipients' perspective are given in *Art & Academe*, page 130.

Academic patronage can serve the purpose of promoting an idealized view of its patron. Supporting a scholar, however, also has definite benefits in terms of access to learning, and further helps with the education of a patron's children. Nobles are not unaware of the importance of academics in extending political influence, and so many academic works are dedicated to a patron who sponsored their writing. This form of immortality, like artistic patronage, can be undertaken for purely altruistic reasons, but generally the patron enjoys basking in the reflected glory of his protégé's success. Nonetheless, one must be careful, for many a noble has supported an academic only to find their beneficiary guilty of heresy or worse, and this can lead to disaster.

It is far safer to provide patronage to the Church, normally in the form of a monastery or parish church. The most basic form of patronage is the right to appoint a priest. If a noble builds a church upon his land, the right to appoint the incumbent who receives its income resides with the noble, not with the Church. Many parishes all over Europe were created this way, and these rights of appointment are inherited by the noble's heirs. The right of a noble to appoint clergy who reflect his own concerns as well the Church's interests is a very useful one, and it also provides a handy way of dealing with younger sons who will not stand to inherit. Similarly, patronage of a monastery, which always seem keen to conduct expensive building works, gains one not only a potentially powerful ally but also a place to retire

*in extremis*, place unmarried daughters, or seek medical aid. Many prosperous peasants give money to monasteries as a kind of retirement pension, paying sums that guarantee them the right to retire there when they are too frail to work their lands, and do not wish to be a burden on or dependent to their heirs. Nobles have less need to plan for this eventuality, though there remains for nobles the further consideration of the state of their immortal soul.

Whatever patronage is granted, giving generously is a noble virtue that has important real-world benefits. Noble characters do well to consider the options available to them, and to plan carefully how to best employ their wealth to cement their position and to further their long-term goals. To be a miser is a terrible thing; medieval society does not value frugality, but quite the reverse. To be a noble is to be given stewardship, by God, of wealth. Failure to shower coin upon the pursuit of a noble life is to deny one's social standing, attract the contempt of one's peers, and possibly earn a bad Reputation.

## The Tournament

Tournaments of the 13th century mean three things to those who take part: experience, reputation, and wealth. Young knights crave the rush of battle while noble sponsors seek recognition and status. Worldly participants enter the tournament looking to extract ransom from prisoners, and the humble peasant classes take what earnings they can from the gathered nobility. But above all, the tournament is the practice ground for war.

Tournaments generally last only a day or two. The first day sees the knights gather, find lodgings, feast, and socialize. As the evening wears on and the office of vespers is sung, the knights may gather for *commencailles*, individual trials of sword and lance that continue while the light lasts.

The melee, a mock battle between hundreds or even thousands of combatants divided into two teams, takes place on the final day of the tournament. On the morning of the melee, the heralds run through the streets and encampments calling the knights to mass. After they have massed, there is often time for the younger knights to resume their *commencailles*. This allows them to be



seen by potential employers, and provides further opportunity for ransom to be claimed from defeated opponents.

The main event starts with the *regars*, or review, where both sides parade in all their colors and call out their war cries in a show of high pomp and ceremony. The teams are usually drawn up along national or political lines. Members of each team know who has arrived, who will participate in the melee, and which factions they would naturally fight alongside. Team allegiance is shown through pennons tied to lances or bridles. The heralds make every effort to ensure the teams are roughly equal in strength, and knights generally accept reassignment with good grace.

With the opposing lines formed, the *estor*, or signal to charge, is sounded. The knights, accompanied by a cacophony of cries, drums, and trumpets, charge forward. As the lines draw close the knights lower their lances and pick their targets. After the clash of the initial charge the sides turn and descend into melee.

Before long the field is littered with smaller fights, lone knights in individual combat, and groups wheeling around each other. Here and there the desperate cry of "*fiance*" is heard as a knight submits under force of arms.

The grand charge always pits two teams against each other but each larger team usually consists of several smaller companies. The priorities of any knight in the melee are his own fortune and safety, followed by that of his company, and finally that of his team. Being on a team does not preclude making deals with the opposition. Despite never fighting side-by-side, William Marshal and the Flemish knight Roger de Jouy had an arrangement to share the profit from all ransoms they took in a single tournament year.

The night of the melee turns to feasting, and the most prestigious feast is that hosted by the tournament's patron. It is there that the prizes are announced and awarded.

## Staging a Tournament

Tournaments range from the grand events of France with thousands of knights riding in the retinues of wealthy nobles to more modest affairs with around one hundred knights, nobles, patrons, and sponsors in attendance. Large and small, tournaments are held throughout the year with the exceptions of Lent and harvest time. Even in winter

## Bohorts, Tirocinia, and Jousts

A bohort is an informal and impromptu tournament, essentially a rough-and-tumble between friends and comrades, usually conducted with blunted or even wooden weapons (the latter of which are very often simply sticks taken up from the roadside). Armor is not generally within the spirit of the bohort. Use the non-lethal combat rules on ArM5, page 174 or the additional rules in Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules, Option: Non-Lethal Combat.

Tirocinia are tournaments open to younger and less-experienced knights that remove the threat of being targeted by

seasoned elders looking for easy ransom. The rules of tirocinia are the same as for open events, but participants over the age of 25 are rare.

The joust sees two knights ride at each other with couched lances. Jousting usually takes place before the melee. At some tournaments, a whole day may be set aside for jousting, providing additional practice and entertainment. The ransoms won and lost are the same as for the melee. The joust is gaining in popularity as an event in itself, as a means of avoiding bans on grand tournaments.

months the circuit is active and a tournament can usually be found every two weeks. This schedule allows participants time to recover from their wounds and travel between tournament sites. In each country, a large tournament — in excess of a thousand knights — can be found on average once per season, while an event in excess of three thousand will likely take place only once per year.

France is the tournament heartland, home to the largest events, and knights from all across Mythic Europe journey there to compete. But tournaments can also be found anywhere that European knights and nobles are found, including the Holy Land. Tournaments in England and the Levant, which are often relatively small, are most often sited near towns, while the continent favors locations on the borders between neighboring nobles, where it is common for both to sponsor the event.

### PATRONAGE

Tournaments need wealthy patrons who give over their land, time, and fortune to stage these events, often against pressure from both Church and state. Even in France, the tournament can be seen as a challenge to royal authority. Participants in the tournament risk excommunication, and those who die at such events are often denied Christian burial.

But such considerations are not enough to stop patrons from holding tournaments. The opportunity to strengthen friendships and monitor enemies is rarely passed up. And in any case, nobles are brought up to enjoy certain things and the tournament provides them all: fighting, feasting, politicking, and other entertainments.

In 1220, tournaments in England are more rare than on the continent. For much of the previous century, hard on the heels of a civil war, tournaments had been banned by King Henry II. It was not until 1194 that King Richard allowed the events to take place, though he controlled them by granting royal charters. Even in the reign of Henry III tournaments are sometimes viewed as challenges to royal authority. The draw of the tournament is such that patrons are often willing to hold unlicensed events.

### COSTS

Holding a tournament is a costly business. Messengers are employed to attract participants; while criers draw knights to the tourney, envoys take written invitations to select dignitaries. And in the meantime, the tournament site needs preparation, with carpenters and laborers building stands to allow wealthy observers a comfortable view of events. Patrons also engage artists, chroniclers, or poets to record their events for posterity, commissioning artworks to portray their tournaments in the best and most exciting light. And since tournaments attract powerful individuals, grand receptions, feasts, and fitting entertainments must be provided. A degree of opulence is both expected and provided.

Patrons award prizes to those knights who show great courage, and to the knight judged to have been the best. Jewels and artifacts of silver and gold are often awarded. Their value most often comes from being unusual, unique, or masterworks. Patrons take delight in awarding prizes not seen at other tournaments. Crafted items awarded as priz-

### Story Seed: The Silent Tourney

The king has banned all tournaments but there is talk of a private circuit run by a mysterious sponsor. The events are by invitation only and nobody seems to know where they will take place next. After a lapse in piety, a knight known to the covenant receives an invitation.

The sponsor is a corrupting demon and the teams who fight at his tournaments are filled with those who have died at tournament, live in a state of sin, and have been denied God's grace.

After discovering the truth behind the silent tournament, can the magi or their companions help the dead gain release? Can these unfortunate souls be absolved, or are the undead knights too entrenched in sin to be saved? And why is the herald a point of calm in the Infernal maelstrom?

### Story Seed: The Falcon of Virtue

A nobleman sends to the covenant for help in trapping a rare bird that he intends to award as a tournament prize. He has heard of a falcon whose feathers burn with the sunlight, whose talons are sharp as flint, whose flight is as silent as the air, and whose temper is as calm as a summer lake. The nobleman is wealthy and prepared to lay down a handsome price for the bird. Upon capturing the bird the covenant discovers it carries a shocking secret. Can they now turn the falcon over to the lord?

### Story Seed: A Hermetic Sponsor

A nearby magus is secretly sponsoring a team of knights active in the local tourney circuit. Other knights in the area ask the covenant for aid against the seemingly unbeatable team. But what does the Code say about this? Has the Hermetic sponsor exposed a weakness the covenant can use against him?

## TOURNAMENT AS FAIR

The tournament is very much like a fair, with crowds that must be fed, watered, and entertained. Local armorers, horse merchants, and other traders ensure they have wares for knights who lose mounts and equipment. Carpenters and laborers gain work building and taking down the lists and stands. In most cases these journeymen supply their labor in return for being allowed to retain the materials bought by the patron. Chirurgeons turn a brisk trade as they patch up wounded knights after each round of contests.

Heralds are central to the tournament. They range from lowly, unwashed criers to those who travel the circuit memorizing the names, ensigns, and achievements of men of worth. Whatever their status, they also provide commentary, crying out at events within the melee. Senior heralds also act as adjudicators during the *commencailles* and melee.

## Rules of Melee

A tournament's melee is subject to certain rules and customs. The *recets*, and any villages and churches in the melee field, are safe territory and no fighting is allowed within them. In addition, those not taking part are not to be molested. Beyond these rules, there are also points of honor to observe. A noble who enters his company into the melee is expected to ride with them, and gains little credit if he does not place himself in harm's way.

While the rules of tourney are clear, they are not always obeyed. Knights may be fined for breaking rules and in particular may be forced to pay for damages to the host's property or churches. Tactical advantage may outweigh this threat and the knights often do as they please. One noted

es are never less than superior quality works (see *City & Guild*, page 69). It is common for noble animals to be awarded as prizes, often with costly harnesses. Falcons, hounds, and horses are popular. Sometimes animals are chosen for their comedy value.

As a rule of thumb, a patron should spend ten Mythic Pounds per point of his Prudhomme Reputation to hold a tournament. Anything less is seen as not befitting his station.

## TEAM SPONSORS

Some sponsors pay substantial retainers to companies of knights to fight under their banner. The sponsor is responsible for replacing lost horses, arming his men, and ensuring that all their needs are paid for. Henry the Young King, son of Henry II of England, took five hundred knights to the tourney at Lagny-sur-Marne in November 1179 at a cost of over two hundred pounds per day. Most nobles can expect to pay four Mythic Pounds per season per knight retained for tourney.

## THE TOURNAMENT SITE

A tournament site stretches over acres of land marked out by landmarks such as roads

or villages. Most of this land is given over to the melee, allowing the fighting to sprawl out.

The lists, usually wooden hoardings, stakes, or earth embankments, mark out the starting points for both sides and are found next to the melee ground. It is here that many of the *commencailles* and much of the individual jousting takes place.

Stands are often built close to the lists to afford the best view of the knights. Those of lower birth must content themselves with watching from the hillsides that usually overlook the fields.

*Recets* are safe havens, clearly marked out within the melee fields. No fighting is allowed within these *recets*, and knights that have succumbed to their enemies make their way back to either the *recets* or the lists.

## LODGINGS

Knights arriving at tournament are divided into two teams, according to national or local allegiances, and two sets of lodgings are provided. Where the tournament is held outside a town lodgings are provided both "within" and "without" the town walls, a naming convention that also applies to open encampments. The lodgings are considered *recets*, out of bounds for the melee.

Prices of goods and lodging within towns hosting tournaments are often very high. There is little deference shown for social standing and rooms are quickly taken by those who arrive early. The wealthy often send agents ahead to ensure lodgings are secured.



underhand tactic is to ride to the lists prior to *estor* but not join the melee until later, when the fighting has taken its toll on the other participants. The heralds acting as adjudicators are not above purchase, and may be paid to look the other way, allowing such knights free rein.

### RANSOM

The aim of the melee is to force surrender, or *fiance*, and thereby secure a ransom, usually the knight's horse, his armor, or even his weapons. Great sums of money can also be extracted, and the wealthy should expect to be held to account if they lose at tournament.

Payment of ransom is a matter of honor. Those who do not make good their promises gain 1 experience point towards an appropriate negative Reputation. It is considered poor etiquette to extract too high a price from a poor, young, or inexperienced knight. There have been many cases of knights being forced by their peers to return ransoms to those who could not afford the price. The wealthy expect to pay ransoms according to their status, and may take umbrage if a ransom beneath their station is demanded.

It is reasonable to take both horse and armor from a wealthy knight, either horse or armor from a knight of average means, and perhaps weapons from a poor knight. Service cannot be demanded as a ransom, nor can oaths of loyalty.

### COMPANIES OF MEN

An independent knight makes an easy target, so most knights entering the tournament do so within the protection of a company. Companies can be of any size, and ride out wearing common colors and under a single banner so as to be identified. They also cry out chants and war cries both at the *estor* and through the melee. Companies engage as trained groups of usually no more than ten individuals (or six if using the core combat rules), with larger companies breaking into smaller groups.

Knights attacking as groups often attempt to separate their target from a defending group. They then grapple or cut the knight's reins and lead his horse, along with its powerless rider, away so as to extract ransom. See the grappling rules in ArM5, page 174. A grappled rider loses control of his horse to his attackers.

## Profession Herald

It is the job of the herald to know the tournament circuit, the knights who attend, and their devices, colors, and deeds. The conscientious herald ensures that he knows of upcoming tournaments, and so may find work as a crier sent out to publicize them. The Ability Profession: Herald allows a character to recognize knights by their colors

and heraldic devices, and to recall their various victories, defeats, and even injuries. This Ability represents the herald's knowledge of the procedures of a tournament, and helps him adjudicate matters of process and tournament law. It also allows him to locate any tournaments in any area for which he has an Area Lore score of at least 1.

## Magic at the Tournament

Magi of House Verditiis often send agents to tournaments in anticipation of business. Over the years many minor enchantments have been created and sold specifically for the tournament, including reins that cannot be cut, saddles that grasp their rider firmly, and arms and armor of unnatural quality. Most such enchantments are designed to last only a lifetime. The legality of this remains questionable and the view taken may differ between Tribunals.

There are other minor workers of magic who also offer charms and potions, blessings and sometimes curses, to knights eager for advantage. Faeries, too, may seek out those whose stories attract and feed them, offering them arms, armor, or even horses with unusual powers.

Both the Divine and Infernal can also

be found at tournaments. The devout invoke patron saints and ask for protection on the field and success against their enemies. The unwary or unscrupulous may enter into bargains with diabolic forces to assure victory, wealth, and acclaim.

### STORY SEED: THE CRAFTSMAN

A local Verditiis complains to a Quaesitor that a magus from a neighboring Tribunal is flouting the Code by crossing the border and selling enchanted devices to knights at local tournaments. What is the legal situation? Does the foreign magus know where his devices are being sold? And is the Quaesitor simply becoming a pawn in a vendetta between the two magi?

## Tournament Combat

Knights in the melee should use the temporary damage rules in Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules, Options: Non-Lethal Combat, but in the heat of battle, the fighting may become more earnest. Characters may choose on a round-by-round basis whether they intend to use non-lethal combat. Botches in non-lethal combat almost always inflict real damage to one party or another.

The full range of special maneuvers described in Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules can be employed in both the *commencailles* and the melee. Combatants may attempt to pull their opponents from their saddles, or cut their reins and lead their horses away.

## The Commencailles

The vespers, or *commencailles*, are an important showcase for individual talent and another source of ransoms for the victors. These contests can take several forms but are most often single combat, either jousting or fencing.

### JOUSTING

At the call to charge, two opposing knights, both mounted and armed with lances, attempt to unhorse the other. Each charge comprises a single combat round, and each knight has enough time between charges to take up a new lance or shield. Botches may result in the breaking of equipment or injury to either horse or rider. Use the shock

## Melee Events Table

Rolls on this table have a modifier equal to the character's Prudhomme Reputation. The character may also spend Confidence Points on the roll, which can be used to modify the roll in either direction. Botch dice on the roll are equal to 1 + (1 per melee event rolled so far). Botches generally cause accidents, such as falling from a mount, breaking equipment, or seriously injuring an opponent.

ROLL	RESULT
0-2	An inexperienced knight presents as a target.
3-4	A lone Poor knight presents as a target.
5-6	A lone average knight presents as a target.
7-8	A Poor knight protected by a company presents as a target.
9-10	An average knight protected by a company presents as a target.
11-12	A Wealthy knight protected by a company presents as a target.
13-14	The character's company is targeted by a group of equal size.
15-16	The character's company is targeted by a large company of two combat groups.
17+	The character's company is targeted by a large company of three combat groups.

of the charge rules (see Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules, Option: Shock of the Charge) to determine the outcome of each charge.

The rules of the joust may change between venues. The simplest sees the winner declared if he knocks his opponent from his horse. In some cases, if both riders remain in their saddles after a set number of passes, judges may declare a winner, perhaps by a count of broken lances or by which knight took the lightest hit. In others venues the

joust continues until one knights submits. This almost always means that the contest goes beyond lances and horseback, and ends with the two knights engaged on foot.

## FENCING

Contests between two knights on foot are usually fought in a roped-off ring. As with the joust, the rules often vary from meet to meet. Some restrict the choice of weapons, others allow new weapons to be taken up in mid-fight. The aim always remains clear: to force one's opponent to offer *fiance*.

It is common for men of lower birth to show their prowess in bare-knuckle fighting. Covenants looking for tough men in need of employment seek out the less seemly parts of tournaments.

## The Grand Charge

There are two ways to adjudicate the grand charge in play. The first is as a set of random encounters on the tourney field. These present opportunities for the characters to collect ransoms. The second is as a battle between the two armies, with the player characters in the pivotal positions.

As a set of random encounters, characters in the melee make a stress roll on the Melee Events Table. If the character takes the opportunity and does not lose (he may also refuse the opportunity or attempt to disengage), he has the option of making another roll on the table. Characters riding as a company make a single, collective rolls on the table.

Opponents encountered on the field are likely to pick up minor injuries the longer the melee goes on. At each event past the first assume that the opponent(s) have picked up a new short-term light wound. So if the characters attempt a third event, their opponents normally have two short-term light wounds.

## HIGH AMBITION

For characters wanting to influence the overall outcome of the melee, the troupe should devise one or more story events based on how the player characters want to influence the battle. Examples might include hunting down the most senior knight in the opposing army, defending a set position, or sweeping through the field targeting stray

knights.

The massed combat rules can be applied with the following modifications:

- *Recets* and other out-of-bounds areas are treated as baggage areas.
- All combat is non-lethal.
- The only troops involved are knights, serjeants, and men-at-arms.
- There is no territorial advantage or weight of numbers bonus.

If the player characters survive the events without surrendering, their side wins the tourney and they gain prizes and recognition in line with their efforts.

## Gaining and Losing Reputation

As described in Chapter Two: Politics, a noble character seeks to improve his standing and reputation with his fellow nobles, represented by his Prudhomme Reputation. If a character achieves any of the following in a season of tourneying, he gains the highest indicated experience point reward towards his Prudhomme Reputation.

- Riding at the head of a company earns 1 experience point.
- Extracting ransom from a well-matched opponent earns 1 experience points.
- Performing a feat of daring (as adjudicated by the troupe) earns 1 experience point.
- Performing a feat of unquestionable honor earns 1 experience point.
- Extracting ransom from a stronger opponent earns 2 experience points.
- Being awarded a prize at tournament earns 2 experience points.

## COMPANY REPUTATIONS

Deeds done while under the banner of a company also feed that company's Reputation. Companies have a Reputation named after its leader or chant, which applies only within the tournament circuit.

To gain the benefit of a company Reputation, a knight must travel under the colors of that company or be otherwise identified as a member (by using the company motto, for instance).



## Story Seed: The Mantle is Passed

An elderly knight is looking for a way to see his colors ride onto the field of tourney once more and one of the grogs is surprisingly willing to help. Armed in the old knight's armor, riding his horse, and carrying his sword, lance, and shield, the grog finds himself invincible in the melee. He has claimed ransom after ransom and not lost a single contest. But the assembled knights are suspicious and claim witchcraft is afoot. Can the magi extract their increasingly determined grog from the tournament and free him from the old knight's curse?

### PATRONAGE

Those hosting tournaments gain experience points towards their Prudhomme Reputation. If multiple patrons work together to host tournaments in any given season, all experience points are divided equally between them.

- Hosting one or more tournaments in a season earns 1 experience point, or 2 if the event is particularly lavish.
- Commissioning an artist to record the event awards 1 additional experience point (see *Art & Academe*, page 123) if the work's aesthetic quality is at least equal to the sponsor's Prudhomme Reputation.

## Tournaments as Income

Labor Points (see *City & Guild*, page 38) describe how tradesmen, laborers, and merchants develop their business. The same rules can be applied to knights, as many make their living from the tournament circuit rather than drawing income from a fief.

It costs 36 Labor Points per year for an errant knight to sustain himself. The knight gains  $\text{Dexterity} + \text{Single/Great Weapon}$  Labor Points per season on the tourney circuit. The figure is multiplied by two if the character is Poor, by three if the character is average, and by six if the character is Wealthy. This means that an errant knight must tourney for a number of seasons a year determined by his wealth. Knights with the Poor flaw must tourney for three seasons a year,

## Labor Points from Stories

Characters can gain additional Labor Points from stories involving tournaments. For a craftsman, this might mean a knight in need of armor before dawn, a bullying merchant, or a faerie apprentice with a rare gift seeking out a master craftsman for their own ends. For knights, awards have a value in seasons, with a season being equal to the charac-

ter's ( $\text{Dexterity} + \text{Single/Great Weapon}$ ) x Wealth Multiplier. As a guideline, stories bestow half a season's Labor Points if they are a subplot of a wider story, bestow a season's worth of Labor Points if the character faces severe danger or hardship in resolving the subplot, and bestow even more as the character's risk and involvement in the story increase.

## William Marshal

In 1220 the memory of William Marshal is still alive, and he is held up as an example of a great knight. Much of William's reputation was earned on the tournament fields, but while he died a wealthy and influential man, his birth gave him few advantages.

Inheriting nothing from his father, William spent most of his childhood in the household of his father's cousin, William de Tancarville, an influential Norman noble. Tancarville introduced him to the tournament where he developed not only his fighting prowess but also his tenacity, resolve, and social connections. Despite early setbacks resulting in poverty, he won ransom after ransom on the field and was soon charged by Henry II of England to tutor his son Henry the Young King.

Though rewarded generously by the Young King, William's ambition got the better of him and he was soon tourney-

ing under his own banner. The promise of even greater wealth lured him to the side of Count Philip of Flanders.

But while William's loyalty on the tournament circuit was for sale, his loyalty to successive kings of England never wavered. (He served Henry II, his son Henry the Young King, Richard, and John before becoming regent for Henry III.). He was rewarded with earldoms, a fruitful dynastic marriage, and huge wealth and political influence.

So powerful was William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, that he was elected regent to Henry III on the death of John in 1216. And at the age of 70 in 1217, he personally led the fighting in the relief of Lincoln, which led to the expulsion of Louis of France from English shores. William died two years later in 1219.

William Marshal's story is one to which every knight entering the tournament aspires.

an average character for two, and a Wealthy character for one.

For simplicity it is assumed that any seasons spent at tourney have a balance of wins, losses, and prizes to ensure the character gains the Labor Points he requires to maintain his living. Characters may spend any surplus Labor Points towards increasing their financial and social status as described in *City & Guild*, page 38.

## Awards

Winning awards at tournament is a matter of drawing attention to one's feats and accomplishments. When a character increases

his Prudhomme Reputation he comes to the notice of the patron. Martial achievements are certainly rewarded, but so too are great noblesse and generosity.

Storyguides might also want to present specific challenges of talent and resolve that, if passed, show a character's worth. These should be tailored to the player characters involved in the tournament. The actual awarding of prizes is determined by storyguide fiat, with the patron's character taken into account and the efforts of the troupe in drawing attention to their characters also noted.

The value of a prize should be in keeping with the Reputation of its beneficiary. Storyguides should consider one Mythic Pound per point of Prudhomme Reputation as a baseline.

# Money in *Ars Magica*: A Recap

*Ars Magica* has two compatible systems for measuring wealth: a simple system for troupes who do not like to spend too much time considering money, and a system based on tracking the approximate values of goods and services in Mythic Pounds.

## THE SIMPLE SYSTEM, FROM THE CORE RULEBOOK

In the simple system a character's level of wealth is an effect of social status, modified by Virtues and Flaws like Wealthy or Poor. In Mythic Europe, a knight who holds at least a single manor has the Social Status Virtue Landed Noble, for example. A character with an area of land so large that it requires infeudation to be run effectively has the Social Status Virtue Great Noble. In this system a character is wealthy or poor compared only to other people of the same social class; a wealthy peasant is less rich than a poor king.

Most manorial lords cannot meet their basic expenses in difficult times without patronage from their lords, or by finding supplemental income through raiding or banditry. That lords are perpetually short of money does not grant them the Poor Flaw. Their precarious financial situation is, rather, the average for their social class. A manorial lord is only poor if disaster has already struck and his social status is at risk. Wealthy manorial lords have sources of income beyond a basic manor. These may include additional land, or the right to collect sources of income usually reserved for greater nobles, like river tolls or port duties.

In the simple system, fiefs increase in value only as a reward for stories. This reward may be directly related to the story, or might have no obvious link within the game setting, but be agreed as a reward by the troupe.

Many people in Mythic Europe believe that the bounty of all land is arises — or fails to — through the grace God. This, to them, explains why the croplands of tyrants produce only lean harvests, and why during periods of anarchy, starvation is so widespread. Conversely, the reign of wise and just kings is rewarded with bountiful crops. This idea is not generally used *Ars Magica* but it provides a rationale for troupes who wish to reward characters for completing great tasks by improving the value of their land.

## THE MYTHIC POUND SYSTEM, FROM COVENANTS

In this system, published initially in *Covenants*, players keep records using Mythic Pounds. These are units of account based on the value of a pound of silver (rather than coins that the characters spend). The prices of goods and services are estimated so troupes have approximate figures from which to work. Each Mythic Pound can be divided into 20 shillings or 240 pence. Actual coins that characters can spend are almost always silver pennies. In brief, a manor's traditional sources of income equal 20 pounds, and a knight's expenses are a similar amount. If a covenant has a manor and does not owe knight-service on it, then it is a lesser income source.

The expenses of a knight may be calculated using the system given in *Covenants*, and the rules there may be used to tweak the fief's budget. (Those rules measure inhabitants in points, with each point requiring one pound of expenditure.) The manor's inhabitants are considered to be the knight himself (3 points), his family (aggregated as 3 points), his reeve or steward (2 points), his squire (2t points), a couple of veteran men at arms (4 points), and his horses (2 points). He tithes two pounds per

year. This leaves two pounds per year surplus that is considered to cover exceptional expenses like scutage, new horses, and repairing buildings that burn down. The lord has other staff, but they are paid in rights to land rather than from his income. These include the priest, miller, baker and, in many places, the shepherd, swineherd, and reeve.

For a character to become wealthy from land he needs more than one manor, preferably without a corresponding debt of additional knight service. Players who do not wish to consider the numbers too deeply should assume that a knight makes ten pounds each year for each manor that does not owe knight service. If knight service is owed, it might be paid out in scutage (a fine paid in lieu of service), which costs up to three pounds per year, met by hiring a mercenary knight, which costs two pounds, or met by sending a knight of the lord's mesnie. Mesnie knights cost about five pounds per year to maintain at a basic standard of chivalric living, but many lords pay much more as largesse.

The average fief in England in 1220 contains five manors. Most of these manors are held by relatives or vassals of the lord. Knights are expected to live slightly beyond their income, regardless of how much that actually is, so even those with additional manors are usually chronically cash-poor, live on credit, and are dependent on the largesse of their lords. Many lords like things this way. This is discussed further in Chapter Two: Politics.

As the 13th century unfolds, unless the player characters do something to radically change society, many knightly families will slip into the wealthier part of the freeman class. Single manors will become increasingly rare as land consolidates in the hands of noblemen and the Church, both of which generally prefer to give their knights cash fiefs.



# Manorial Fiefs

Feudal society is made up of a series of personal relationships. A powerful man offers to loan land, or some other valuable right, to a less powerful man in exchange for his military support, his counsel, and other benefits. These other benefits often include a share of the harvest from the land and may also include services like acting as a judge, garrisoning a castle, or collecting tolls. After this transaction, the more-powerful man is the less powerful man's liege, the less powerful man is the liege's vassal, and the valuable right or land is called a fief.

This arrangement is solemnized by a ritual called the commendation ceremony. During the commendation ceremony, the lord and vassal are tied by oaths before mortal witnesses and God. The form of this ceremony differs between places and times, but a popular version begins with an act of homage. In this, the vassal-to-be kneels before the lord and places his hands together in the position of prayer. The lord then places his hands over the hands of his supplicant, enclosing them. The supplicant then asks to become a vassal and is accepted.

Following this, the new vassal swears an oath of fealty to the lord on a Bible or holy relic. "Fealty" means "faithfulness." The vassal

promises the liege aid in war, good counsel, and whatever else is usual in the area. The oath of fealty is usually kept brief, so the finer points of what exactly is owed, and on what schedule, are not described. In some areas, there is no break between the act of homage and the oath of fealty, so it is completed with the vassal still on his knees. The lord may reply with an oath of his own, promising land and military support to great vassals, or financial support to lesser vassals.

## Subinfeudation

In England, which has the simplest feudal system, all land has been owned by the king since the Norman invasion in 1066. Soon after the Conquest, the king parceled out land to his most powerful supporters, in exchange for military service. Although the makeup of this group of families has changed since that time, the tenants-in-chief of the king still form England's upper nobility. It was initially intended that the tenants-in-chief would only hold their land for a lifetime, but in times of trouble successive kings have made great volumes of land the hereditary possessions of powerful families.

Each of these powerful nobles requires a personal army to fulfill his obligations to the king. Some few maintain a standing army paid with coin, but this is expensive and thus rare. Most have divided up their estates into smaller parcels, each with sufficient land and workers to support a warrior. In turn, some of these parcels of land, once developed, have been further divided.

At the bottom of this pyramid of power is the individual knight, with a personal holding theoretically sufficient to maintain his equipment and lifestyle. Most knights have fiefs that are agricultural, and for the purposes of this book, such a holding is called a manor. A

manor's size varies depending on the fertility of the land, the population working the land, and the value of the crops produced.

## The Manor: The Model Fief

The basic fief is a single the manor. A manor, for the purposes of the game, comprises the amount of land traditionally required to maintain a knight, his family, and his household retainers. Powerful noblemen have other minor sources of income, but most such noblemen also have many manors for which they do not owe the service of a knight. This provides them the surplus income required to support their opulent lifestyle.

The simplest manor is made up of a large hall where the lord's representative lives, surrounded by farmlands and a village. Large villages may, however, be divided between two or more manors. Most manors have all of the elements described in the following sections, although many manors may lack one or more of them. The *Domesday Book* even records one manor that had no inhabitants. It was farmed by men from neighboring manors for a fee.

## Alternatives to the Manor With Demesne

This section describes in detail a manor with demesne and resident bailiff. (A demesne — pronounced "domain" — is land farmed on behalf of a lord by his villeins as part of their rent.) This might give the impression that this is the dominant mode of

### Knighthood

The ceremony that creates a knight and the ceremony that creates a vassal are often tied together. This is because a knight is usually created with the understanding that he will join the household of the liege, and fight in his service. He is, therefore, a sort of minor vassal. Most such knights are supported by a salary from their lord. Knights who achieve particular favor may be offered the smallest possible land fief, a manor.

## How Big is a...?

This insert provides average measures of land size to help players get a sense of the scale of medieval landholdings. The terms used are regional English. This book lacks space to describe the thousands of forms of land division in Mythic Europe.

An acre is the amount of land a single person with an ox can plow in one day. The definition of an acre is a historical one predating the use of ox teams; no actual person plows an acre a day with his personal ox in Mythic Europe. In Mythic Europe the size of acres varies, even within kingdoms, depending on local custom. For the sake of simplicity an acre is considered to be 4,840 square yards. An acre has no particular shape, and plowmen prefer fields that are long, thin strips so that they do not need to turn their plows very often. An acre that was square would be just short of seventy yards on a side. For *Terramagic* affecting dirt to a depth of two feet, this makes it an Individual Target with three size modifiers.

A manor is sufficient land to maintain a knight. It is around six hundred acres in area, although land fertility, manors which collect rights instead of farming, and other considerations can increase or decrease the size of a manor by a third without it being considered exceptional. The prototypical manor is a single unit of land whose residents make some use of the woods, marshes, and waters that surround it, but in most areas manors actually abut each other, and their lands may intermingle in confusing ways.

A landed knight's income from a typical manor is twenty pounds per year, realized as a mixture of labor, goods, and money. This is sufficient to sustain the knight's household and maintain his equipment. The income from a manor is not sufficient to pay for personal crises, such as the need to replace a lost war horse, commission an entire suit of armor, or ransom gear lost at tournament. The manorial system is failing in Mythic Europe. Some knights supplement this income by working as mercenaries, officers of a lord, outlaws, or pirates.

A hide is the amount of land required

to maintain a family of affluent, free peasants. Even neighboring villages have hides of dramatically different sizes. For the sake of visualization, a hide is 120 to 144 acres, adjusted for the fertility of the land and local farming practices. A hide produces four pounds of income for a lord, usually in money or goods. Free peasants make up less than ten percent of the population of most manors. They have inordinate influence in manorial affairs, and are often selected as jurors in manorial courts.

A virgate (or yardland, or rood) is the amount of land a two-ox team could plow in one day. It is either one-quarter or one-sixth of a hide, between 24 and 32 acres. Many peasants, called virgaters, rent an area of land this size. This amount of land is sufficient to support a family of unfree peasants, who pay their taxes partially through service on the lord's demesnes. A virgate provides a little surplus in good years, so a virgater with a run of luck can buy off a succession of villein obligations. This frees additional money and allows him to take on extra land. It's unlikely that he, personally, will become free, but he may reasonably hope that the children of his eldest son might, some day. A virgater family, between services, fines, fees, and other forms of usefulness, is worth about a pound a year to a lord.

Some peasants rent an area half the size of a virgate. This is called a bovate in a limited area of Britain, but it has been favored in this book over the usual term "half-virgate." Bovaters supplement their main income, which usually comes from performing some other service, by farming this small area around their homes. Bovaters, for example, are often millers, reeves, shepherds, or the personal servants at the manor. A bovate, in a good year, can support a family of unfree peasants, but is usually intended to supplement the income of a family whose primary income comes from other work.

Cottars have smaller areas of land, ten acres or less, far too small to support a

family. They live either by hiring out their services as laborers or by pursuing a trade. Blacksmiths, for example, are often cottars, farming only small personal gardens or tiny pieces of the common land, living in the main by their craft.

As a rough guide, only a handful of peasant families in any given manor have more than a virgate. Twenty percent have a full virgate, thirty percent have a bovate, and fifty percent are cottars. This does not include servants who are landless or have cottar strips.

A village may technically be of any size: a village becomes a town not because of its population, but because of legal rights granted it by a nobleman in a charter. The residents of a town are free in the sense that they do not owe the services of villeinage. A village is literally a place where villeins live. The process by which villages become towns is discussed in *City & Guild*.

The average village has around sixty families, each with five members, and grows very slowly. An average village adds only five new people to its permanent population every two years. Villages larger than five hundred people are all but unknown.

Towns are like villages that have been granted rights by an overlord. The first of these rights, freedom of the residents, is what distinguishes the town from a village. There are, therefore, new towns, with only a handful of families in them. Some planned towns fail, and during this process it is possible that a town's population may dwindle to a few families who then agree to rejoin the manor of the lord who granted the charter. An "average" town has perhaps three hundred people, the same as an average village, although many towns are smaller, and a handful are many times larger. In England, 40% of towns hold their land from the king, 35% from a neighboring lord, and 25% from the Church. In the rest of Europe the proportion that holds from the king is far higher.

A city is a settlement where a cathedral is.

land use in Mythic Europe, but it is not, because it is dependent on a particular soil type and a particular balance between the cost of labor and the price of grain. The manor with demesne is considered in such detail in this chapter because its alternatives are simpler,

and so troupes can design them using the information provided here as a basis.

Large-field farming, as described here, uses up roughly half of the agricultural land in Mythic Europe. It is only suited to heavy soil types. It is found in most of central Eng-

land, although it is rare in the east, northwest, and wooded and mountainous parts of the country. It is found in France and Germany, as a rough guide, near large cities. In areas unsuited to this style of farming, farmers instead care for individual plots, or herd



sheep or cattle. Each troupe can, therefore, choose any type of agriculture for their covenant, and simply state that the soil, vegetation, or topography make it the suitable choice for their locale.

Demesnes are found on just over half of the manors using the large field system. Before 1220, it was more common for the lord's portion of the cropland, or even the manor as a whole, to be rented out. Players doing their own research should be aware that the period term for renting out land, in England, is "farming," which can be confusing.

Land is rented out for many reasons. A manor that is some distance from the rest of a lord's estate may, for example, be rented to one of its neighbors. This provides the owner with easy coin, and the renter with economies of scale. Churches and towns sometimes rent lands that abut their territory. Free tenants occasionally pool their money to rent their manor from a distant lord, allowing them to take control of the apparatus of local justice. Renting is a convenient institution for the Order of Hermes, because it is not against the Code to pay for land use.

Renting out manors is falling from favor in 1220, because the population of Europe is booming. Settlers are available to extend

manors and make them increasingly valuable. Renters usually do not extend manors because they see no point in suffering the expense involved. The large population means that wages are very low, while, simultaneously, the prices for foodstuffs are high. It is more profitable for a lord to crop his own lands than rent them out.

The most profitable way of using cropland in much of Europe is to stop cropping it and turn it over to sheep. Turning farmed land over to sheep improves the land's income after expenses markedly. It does this not by boosting the lord's income, but by cutting his expenses. Manors that have been turned over to sheep require virtually no staff beyond the lord's immediate household. Depending on the transport available, some nobles who turn their lands over to sheep pull their villages down to sell the wood and stones in the houses. Transforming a cropping manor into a sheep manor thus causes immense social dislocation.

Even given the potential for profit, few manors have been changed over from cropping to sheep, because characters in Mythic Europe do not know how long the current boom in the price of wool will continue. Thus, few nobles are willing to take the dras-

tic step of pulling down their villages on the chance it will be sustained.

### GREATER FIEFS

The lands of greater nobles, the surplus they produce, and the number of soldiers they are expected to provide are detailed in Chapter Three: A Comparison of Titles.

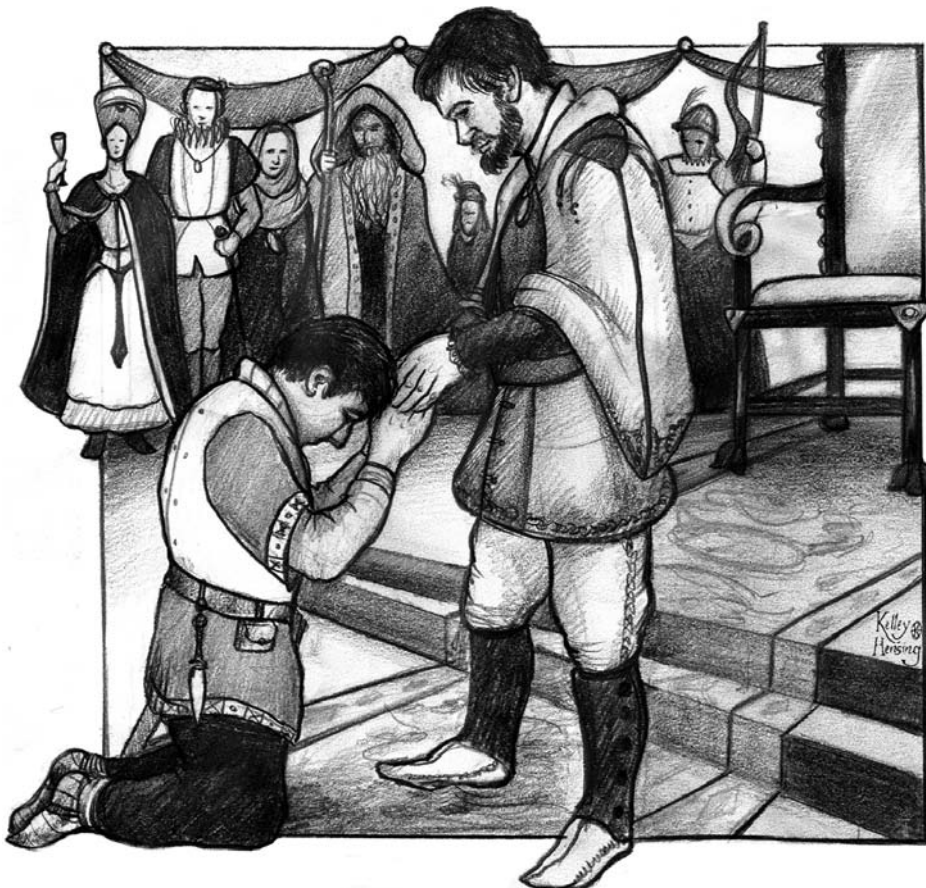
## Capital Message

A message is a small, enclosed piece of land around a house. The capital message of an estate is the message belonging to the lord. It contains his hall, the outbuildings described in the sections that follow, and curtilage. Many of the structures below are placed in the message to increase their security. They contain valuable items, like food and equipment, and proximity to the residence implies that the lord and his personal servants can confront raiders or thieves. In Mythic Europe many workers sleep in their workplaces, providing extra security, but this is less pronounced in manors, particularly those that have bovaters.

### HALL

The chief building in a manor is the hall. This is the residence of the lord, if he lives at the manor, or of his appointed deputy, called a bailiff, if the lord does not. Many lords with multiple manors travel between them in a great circuit, exhausting the surplus food collected from the rents of their tenants at each in turn. The bailiff is expected to keep the residence in good order, and to be able to vacate the best lodging when the lord or his steward arrives. Bailiffs and their staff are dealt with in considerable detail in Chapter Seven: The Peasantry. Halls vary considerably in size, construction, and opulence, depending on the value of the manor and the degree to which the lord uses it.

This system of circulating the court of the noble to where his rent is stored as food is swiftly being eclipsed in those parts of Mythic Europe where the economy is strongly monetarized. This is a fortunate circumstance for covenants with agricultural holdings, because most magi prefer to stay near a static laboratory. The unwillingness of most magi to circuit their holdings has, in the past, meant that they could not fully



### Story Seed: The Foundation Charm

Many halls have a charm in their walls or foundations to protect the building. Such a charm can be placed by a hedge witch (see *Hedge Magic*) or using traditional sacrifices described by local folklore. These charms may cause stories. For example, a sacrificed animal's body may become the spiritual anchor of a faerie that takes the role of the hall's guardian spirit. Characters may have to protect the corpse, or find and destroy it, based on the friendliness of the faerie that has anchored to it. In some pre-Christian areas, humans were occasionally walled into new buildings. Their spirits may seek burial, cause mischief, or have come to terms with their fate and aid the current inhabitants of the hall.

In some areas, the charm is a witch bottle. Witch bottles prevent minor magic users from entering buildings by hexing them if they attempt to do so. These hexes are weak, and easily resisted by Hermetic magic. Magi aware of a properly made witch bottle sometimes leave it in place to see who it harms as a way to identify young Gifted people as potential apprentices, for example.

Witch bottles have a wide variety of effects, which can be simulated using the rules in *Hedge Magic*. These effects usually have two components: they weaken the witch, but they also mark the witch. Attacks on the body are common, so witch bottles may fill a witch's face with boils, strike her blind, fill her so full of urine that she bursts, make blood pour from her nose, or snap the bones of her feet. If you do not have *Hedge Magic* assume that the bottles can detect the magical power to curse (InVi 10, Penetration 5) as well as the Gift (InVi 15, Penetration 0), and that they have a PeCo effect up to level 40, with a Penetration of 5, that they use when triggered.

utilize the income of their rents. The need to sell their surplus, then use the money to buy food closer to home, has been a necessary expense. The greater nobility of Europe similarly prefer that their surplus food be translated into money by the inhabitants of

### Castles in Lieu of Halls

On large estates, a castle may replace the hall. Castles have been described in detail in the *Covenants* supplement. An overview of that material is included in Chapter Eight: Massed Combat.

towns so it can be spent on food and luxuries close to the nobles' preferred residences.

Most halls are not fortified; they serve as simple centers of administration and accommodation. The vast majority of halls are constructed of timber and delay attackers only briefly. Those halls that serve as the chief accommodation of their lords are more imposing. In areas where there is, or has been, frequent raiding, manor houses are more formidable. In England, for example, some manor houses that have survived since the Normans subdued the country are built from stone and have defensible ditches or moats. Similarly, on the Scottish border, many lesser nobles live in defensible towers.

The average manorial hall is rectangular, between 60 and 75 feet long, and 30 to 40 feet wide. Additional rooms may augment this space, and these are sometimes constructed after the completion of the initial hall. The long axis of the hall often lies north-south. Typically a hall has two doors, facing each other, piercing the wider sides of the building near its middle. Windows are absent or small in lands where raiding is likely.

The space within the hall is usually divided into two sections. The great hall, which gives the building its name and function, is the area where the personal servants of the lord eat and, often, sleep. It usually contains a hearth that provides warmth and may be used for cooking, but it is also common for manors to have kitchens separate from the hall. Hearths are usually set on the long axis of the hall, about one-third of the distance from one of the shorter walls. The great hall takes up approximately three-quarters of the space in a basic manorial long house. The remaining space is separated off as a chamber for the lord.

### ANIMAL SHEDS

Many types of animals are kept within the messuage. Chickens and geese are raised

for the table. Dairy cows may be milked here, to provide butter. Sheep are often herded into a pen in the messuage before lambing and shearing.

A dovecote is a small building used to raise doves or pigeons. A dovecote may contain several hundred birds, and they may not be harmed by the lord's tenants. In some areas it is permissible to scare away doves as long as they are not harmed, so one of the main responsibilities of small children during sowing is to shy rocks near the lord's birds. Peasants are forbidden from raising these birds because they might feed on the lord's demesne.

In some areas dovecotes are kept in the fields, but in many others they are kept within the messuage to prevent theft of eggs or birds. In some areas they are built into the upper stories of manor houses or watch towers.

A stable is a building where horses and other animals are cared for, and their equipment is kept. Horses are valuable as draft animals, but lords who act as knights require finer stables, for their war horses. Stables are often subdivided into smaller pens, called stalls, to prevent horses from harming each other.

Some messuages contain a pen for impounded animals called a pinfold. Animals that stray are the property of the lord, but in some manors it is possible for a tenant to have his animal returned in exchange for a fine.

### BARN

A barn is a work-building. It is often split into two levels, and the upper level used to store hay, grain, flour, or other produce away from rodents. The barn might be used as the threshing floor in a manor. When threshing is complete, it is often used as a dry space to perform wet-weather work, like mending equipment. Many of the manor's lesser servants sleep in the barn, which is warm and has comfortable straw within it. Ignoble characters offered impromptu hospitality are often lodged in a barn.

### CURTILAGE

Curtilage is unroofed land enclosed within the messuage's wall. Lords use this space for a variety of purposes: some have orchards in their curtilage, while others hold court in these yards. The curtilage of a manor may be over an acre, even in small manors.



Some manors' curtilage is surrounded by a moat used to pen animals and exclude predators. It is not usually designed as a defensive feature.

### FISHPONDS

Fishponds are a feature of large messuages that have a stream as one border of their curtilage, but that are far from river or sea fisheries. Fish serve an important role in the medieval diet, as the Church requires abstinence from meat on Fridays, during fasts, and on certain feast days. A person keeping all of the required days is forbidden flesh, but permitted fish, on 175 days a year, although this degree of self-denial is found only in monasteries and among the poor. A manor cannot entirely fulfill its need for fish from fishponds, so salted and smoked fish are eaten on most fish days, with fresh fish drawn from the ponds on special occasions. In manors where there are fishponds, unsupervised fishing is sometimes forbidden.

### GRANARY

This is a building where threshed grain is stored, prior to milling into flour, and where flour is kept. Some granaries are raised on steedles, which are small pillars, to prevent rodent infestation. Others have steedles within the building that hold up a false floor.

Granaries are prime targets for raiders. The theft of grain allows an enemy army to remain in the field longer. Burning a granary causes famine, destroys the grain reserved for use as seed, and ruins the place where grain is stored to keep it free of mold and rodents.

### KITCHEN

The kitchen of the messuage, and its bakery if its bread is not supplied by the communal bakery of a village, is often a separate building from the hall. This reduces the risk of fire spreading from the kitchen to the hall. The kitchen is one of the busiest parts of a manor because its workers do not cease to labor when the sun sets, or during winter.

### STACKYARD

A stackyard is where harvested grain is kept until it is threshed. It is located with-

in the messuage to prevent theft. The way grain is stacked varies across Europe, but a common idea is that one cartload makes one stack. The wider a stack, the less tall it needs to be, but a conventional size is twelve feet in diameter, sloping inward to twelve feet high. After stacking a net is placed over the grain and, in some places, weighted with a heavy stone. Over the next week the stack settles, and during this time wooden props are used to encourage the stack to retain a stable shape.

Steedles are used to raise the stored crops above the ground, to prevent rats and insects from nesting in the grain. Some steedles are themselves a dozen feet wide, but in less wealthy estates the steedles support a framework of boards on which the stacks of grain rest.

Stackyards are fenced more robustly than other areas of the messuage. In many areas, where buildings and fences are made of wattle and daub, the fences around the stackyard are triple the usual thickness. This additional effort is required because oxen like to raid stackyards. Oxen are known to push their way through conventional wattled fences, and even through the wattled walls of buildings, to reach the grain drying in the stackyard. The defensibility and limited lines of sight within stackyards make them interesting places to stage combats.

## Farmland

Mythic Europe's economy is essentially agricultural. The economy is monetarizing, and trade is making the cities blossom, which allows colorful people to rise to power and gather armies to do interesting things to each other. Beneath that drama, however, the trade system of Mythic Europe is a method of getting grains and clothes from the areas of production to the centers of population.

Each piece of land has one of six legal statuses. It may be an allod, which means that it is held by the occupant without a feudal relationship. The land may be part of the demesne, which is land reserved for the lord's own use to provide income and maintain his household. The land may be part of the glebe, which is reserved for the maintenance of the Church and its servants. The land may be rented to free peasants. The land may be granted to villeins in return for rents and services. Free men taking up villein land owe service for it, despite their freedom, although they are generally wealthy enough to

## Story Seeds: Dovecotes

Pigeons are delectable; that's why nobles raise them. These delicacies attract both carnivorous familiars and magical animals suitable to become familiars, so characters who prevent raids on a dovecote by such animals may gain both a favor from the lord and a magical creature as well.

Some Mythic Europeans kill crows and hang them in prominent places, to scare the doves away. In Italy animal skulls on poles are placed in the fields, and in Germany carvings of witches are used for similar purpose. Each of these activities excites the interest of faerie powers. Killing crows and nailing them over a field may also draw the interest of the Infernal, whose servants take crow shape.

The British style of scarecrow, a manikin of old clothes and straw, has not been invented in Mythic Europe. In this story seed, they are invented due to a local outbreak of plague. The plague kills the old and the young, so there are no boys to be hired as bird-scarers and replacements must be made. The idea of the scarecrow spreads across the continent, and faeries are strongly drawn to them because they are human in shape, act as guardians, and are replacements for children who have been lost. The scarecrows are capable of taking on many new faerie roles, including forming armies to harm the lords of disgruntled peasants.

hire a laborer to do the actual work. Finally, the land may be unfarmed; that is, it may be wasteland.

The main land types in the heavily farmed sections of Mythic Europe are arable, meadow, pasture, and waste.

### ARABLE

The most precious land is the arable, which is used to grow grain and legumes. After the harvest, this land reverts to common use, and is used as a supplement to dedicated grazing land. In 1220, an increasing amount of land is being drawn from meadow into arable land, but a few nobles have noticed that



the price of wool is so high that it is more profitable to force land the other way.

Yield on farms is poor. The average winter grain crop is sown at two bushels an acre, and repays that effort with eight bushels of grain. Spring crops are sown at four bushels an acre, and their yield varies, but averages sixteen bushels. The lowest yielding grain, oats, will grow in marginal land where other grains are not profitable.

A bushel measures volume, not weight, so the amount of food it represents varies between grains, but for wheat a bushel weighs roughly sixty pounds, and is made into seventy pounds of bread.

### MEADOW

Meadow is used for growing grass. This is harvested and stored as hay, to provide stock feed when the weather turns cold. No manor has as much hay as it would like. Hay supply determines the maximum size of a herd after winter, so a community with more hay could increase the size of its herds. Unless additional land is bought into meadow through improvement or by not cropping arable land, herds cannot increase in size.

Haymaking is, therefore, an obvious form of magical economic interference.

### PASTURE

Sheep are the primary grazing animals raised in Europe. A piece of land over which the right to graze sheep has been granted is called a foldcourse. As a rule of thumb, land that is heavily wooded can support fewer grazing animals than land that is lightly wooded, and marshy areas can support the highest numbers of sheep per acre. This is because sheep can pick through land too stony or soggy for the plow, seeking food.

In England, the lords of some of the marshy manors in Anglia run sheep instead of cultivating much of their demesne, and these lords have demesne flocks of over a one thousand head apiece. The average lord has a demesne flock of six hundred, and lords in highly wooded areas often have only three hundred sheep. This is a small enough flock for a single shepherd to supervise.

The number of sheep kept by any peasant family varies considerably with the type of land they hold. In some areas, 12 sheep are paid as the rent for each hide of land ev-

ery year. In others, peasant families are permitted to keep six sheep, and they pay one lamb per year for this privilege. As a general rule, the lord has two-thirds of the sheep of any manor in his demesne flock. Sheep that are grazed by peasants must often be driven to the lord's demesne for penning at night. This allows the lord to move the sheeps pens around the demesne and harvest their dung for himself. Other animals are also grazed, but are scarcer than sheep.

Pigs are, individually, more valuable than sheep, but they are less valued as farming animals. Their grazing damages land, their manure is not as good for crops, and they lack the herd instinct that enables a single shepherd to drove and supervise hundreds of sheep. It is common for pigs to be turned loose in woods, particularly after acorns begin to fall. This is a right, called pannage, for which a villein pays his lord. Pannage varies from one pig in six to one pig in ten. On most manors, the lord's swineherd is in charge of a number of pigs equal to one-quarter the size of the lord's flock. This is inadequate work for continuous employment, so the swineherd may also care for the pigs of free men and villeins.

Goats are used as grazers on land that will not support sheep. They do not thrive on summer stubble, which limits their usefulness. They tend to eat things that might otherwise be eaten by pigs, and it is therefore unusual to find a manor that has large numbers of both. As woodland is cleared and made arable, the numbers of pigs and goats on a manor fall and the numbers of sheep rise.

Nobles eat beef regularly, but peasants eat it rarely. The average ox is considered to take two years to train, and to work for four, after which it is killed and salted or smoked for winter. Cows are rarely killed until past bearing.

## The Lord's Portion: The Demesne

The demesne of the lord is land that is worked for his profit, by his peasants, as part of their rent. In some manors, the demesne is separated from the land of the peasants, while in others it is intermingled. There are advantages to each system: a lord with a separate demesne can watch his crops for theft, and can supervise his laborers more effectively. A demesne that is scattered through



the striplands of the manor is worked as the peasants work their own lands, which makes the task less onerous.

Villeins do about a quarter of the work required to plow, sow, and reap the demesne. The rest is done by paid laborers or the lord's liveried famuli, who are described in detail in Chapter Seven: The Peasantry. The famuli are those who live at the manor, or whom the lord is required to feed, for a substantial proportion of the year. The famuli include those who have a little land, like the bovaters, or virtually no land, and are paid in kind for labor.

The lord's demesne is the most fertile land in the manor. His right to demand that all of the livestock of his tenants be grazed on the stubble of his crops also means it is the best fertilized. It is not, however, the most productive: that land belongs to the free tenants. Many of the ways that free peasants increase their yield are highly labor intensive. A lord does not keep sufficient famuli, or hire enough day laborers, to de-stone and weed his demesne in the way that free tenants do, because for him, the additional cost of this labor is less than the additional yield from grain. Free peasants lose nothing but time to these processes, and so undertake them more readily.

## MARKET FAIR

A market fair is useful to both the lord and his tenants. It provides them with the opportunity to exchange their agricultural surplus for manufactured goods. It does, however, provide slightly less money than if the lord ships his grain to the city himself. Cartage is one of the many duties owed by villeins. This means that market fairs are more common where roads are poor, river transport is unavailable, or travelers are insecure due to banditry. Markets are almost always held on the demesne of the lord, so the manure of animals penned for sale falls on his ground.

Most towns with the right to hold a fair do so twice a year. More frequent fairs are common in richer towns, but the frequency of the fair is in large part due to the agricultural cycle, so more frequent fairs serve little purpose in small communities. Fairs are described in greater detail in *City & Guild*.

## MILLS

On certain manors, milling is one of the lord's greatest sources of income, exceeding the value of the crops grown on the

## The Tragedy of the Commons

Players may mistakenly believe that commons are desolate places, destroyed by overuse. After the game period, the Enclosure Movement in England popularized this idea. They suggested that each peasant, acting in his own interest, ran additional stock on the green, which demanded more from the green than it could provide, destroying it. This metaphor is popular in the economic discussion of many environmental problems. The Enclosure Movement's solution was basically to give the green to neighboring landed gentry, who could look after it properly. This also had the useful effect, from their

perspective, of making the peasants dependent on day labor, so wages fell.

Greens actually don't operate in this way, because peasants aren't allowed to just choose how many animals they will run on the common. Commons are highly regulated by the manor court, and are defended by the vigilance of every other villager who uses the green. Greens are less productive than if they were cropped with wheat in the sense that they produce less food, but they are more productive in the sense that they provide a minor element of social security, and provide a venue for events required by the social life of the village.

demesne. This is particularly true on those manors where the demesne has been carved up or leased out in previous generations.

The simplest technology with which grain can be milled into flour is the quern, or hand mill. Querns were widespread in Roman times and virtually every peasant knows how to make one. Querns are illegal in some places, because lords demand that their tenants use the lord's mill. In some areas free men are permitted to use querns. In some areas, the population is too dispersed, or insufficiently interested in agriculture, to make mills worthwhile, and everyone uses a quern.

Mills on smaller manors do not have sufficient business to support the miller, and it is common for the miller to have a second occupation. Many have land, a virgate being typical. A miller might also have a trade and work at it from the mill. Some millers are members of the famuli, and so they receive food and lodging, but owe the lord agricultural labor in addition to their duties as miller.

Millers sometimes rent mills. They pay for them with their labor and either with a proportion of the grain milled (a fee called the multure), with the grain from land they farm in addition to their mill work, or with fish. Rents of fish for water mills are surprisingly common and large. Some millers provide thousands of eels a year, or a similar value of salmon, for the right to their mills.

## BAKING

Peasants are often required to use the lord's bakery. The bakers take a proportion

of all the bread baked. Bakers sometimes rent the bakeries from the lords, paying a fixed fee for the monopoly of the manor's bread.

## Commons

The commons of a village are areas set aside for the use of the villeins, or, in some cases, all of the residents. The commons are typically pasture, with a pond to water stock. It is from this pasture that these areas sometimes take the name "village green." Common land can, however, include buildings or woodlands. Land becomes part of the green through tradition of use, or by being set aside when the village is first laid out. A green is useful in that it gives a mustering area for a large village court, a venue for village fairs, and space for sports and dancing on holidays.

The use of the green is regulated by the manor court. Each villager is permitted to have some stock graze the green, but the other users of the green, and the hayward, monitor overgrazing. The number of sheep or goats that may forage on the green varies with its size and fertility, and this number of stock may be divided equally by all villagers, or by their obligation to villein service. The right to run some stock on the green, collect a little firewood there, and in some cases plant small gardens or harvest wild nuts and berries, acts to mitigate poverty. Villages without greens have cheaper labor costs, because more workers have to accept day labor or starve.

## Waste

On a manor, the waste is land that is not planted. It is vital to the manorial economy because it includes woods and marshlands. Marginal land on the edge of the waste is often used for grazing, is called pasture, and is described earlier.

The wasteland is the domain of the faeries. It is part of the known landscape of the community, but does not fall within the boundaries of the fields that are blessed at various times of the year. Humans who clear land are, for a time at least, going onto faerie lands to spread the Dominion.

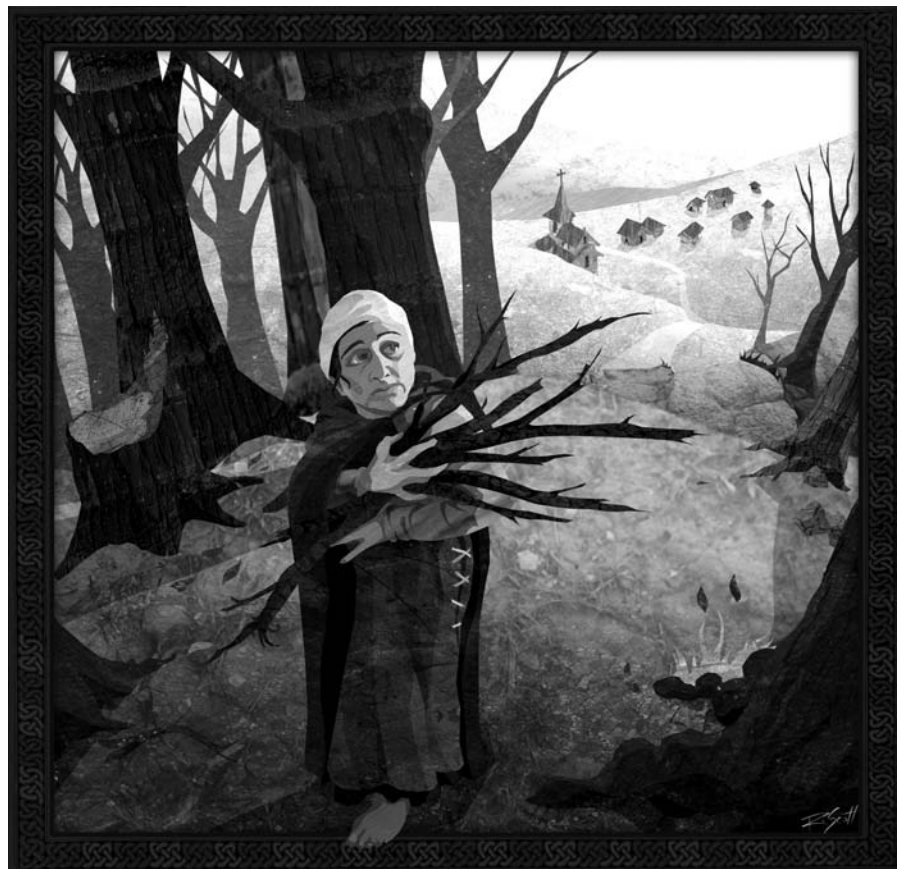
## Fisheries and Marshes

Many communities draw their income from the sea, or from marshland. Fish and salt are both common exports from coastal areas. The duties of villeins who live by the sea vary with the strength and greed of their lord. At minimum, the king or his representative has the right to the proceeds of shipwrecks, to certain species of fish and waterfowl, and to commandeer any villein's vessel at any time. Greater nobles usually have the right to demand the services of ships from towns to which they have granted charters.

Marshes are the source of many useful raw materials. The lord sells the right to use these resources or demands that villeins harvest them on his behalf. The right to cut peat, called turbarry, alleviates the lord's monopoly on firewood in some areas. Some marsh plants, particularly sedges, make superior roofing thatch and woven implements. Draining marshland is one of the main ways that additional arable land is bought into production. This is covered in more detail later, in the section on assarting.

## Woods

The woodland on the edge of a community is its main source of wood, which is used for fuel, and as the main resource for the creation of all implements and tools. This means that the demand for wood is insatiable, and lords ration how much of it may be gathered, and by what method. In many areas, a peasant may take whatever wood he can carry, provided that it is lying on the ground or can be pulled down with a hand



### Story Seed: Joining The Navy

Proportionately, far fewer nobles than covenants have private ships. Those nobles who have trade vessels may prepare them as troop transports when needed in war, but even this is rare. It is far more common for a nobleman simply to demand the carriage of troops from a port city, and then turn up on the appointed day with an army motivated by the promise of pillage in some far distant place. Few towns want these men to be both disappointed and nearby, and either accede to the nobleman's demands or haggle a price for carriage. The negotiating posi-

tion of such a town may appear weak, but a lord with a feudal levy is under extreme time pressure. Even a brief siege destroys his campaign season.

A covenant hears that a powerful nobleman has sent word to a town near the covenant that carriage will be expected on a certain day. The covenant may want to hide their own ships, or offer them for hire, or find other ways to profit from the presence of an army. Might they trick the army into crossing the lands of a troublesome faerie, or rival covenant?

tool. After major storms, wise peasants head for the wood to seek "windfalls," trees that have been knocked over by the storm.

The lord can often be convinced to sell a particular tree to a peasant for a small sum; trees of the right shape and size are required for building the internal supports of most peasant homes. Villeins are often required to pay the lord for use of his wood, although this service is often in the form of cutting and carting wood for the lord.

In England, much of the woodland belongs to the royal demesne, and most of it is forest, as described in Chapter Five: Leisure, Hunting. A forest warden is sent to inspect the king's woodland on a regular basis. If, standing on a tree stump, he can see two other tree stumps, he has the right to lay a heavy fine on those who have paid for the right to harvest from the king's wood, for overgathering.

The warden also charges nobles who have made illegal clearances in the king's



forest. This is so unpopular that in the time of King John, the common people of Devon and Cornwall paid the king 2,200 marks and 20 palfreys, and 5,000 marks, respectively, to have their land "desforested." That is, they had all the land, in the whole of their counties, legally reclassified as woodland rather than royal forest, so that no fine would be due for clearances.

## PARKS AND LODGES

Lords often reserve a portion of the wasteland around a manor for their own pleasure. This land is harvested for wood and other useful resources, but is also used as a game reserve. The use of these areas is covered in greater detail in Chapter Five: Leisure, Hunting.

## WARRENS

On a less-regal level, the right to trap small game is also held by the lord, and called the right of warren. Much as a lord can raise doves and leave them to feast on the crops of his tenants, so similarly is he entitled to raise as many small game animals as he likes and let them feed on the lands of his tenants. Poaching is, therefore, one of the most popular crimes in Mythic Europe. In some areas lords have banned the ownership of small dogs that can be used to chase hares down their burrows. There are records of arable land being abandoned because it has been destroyed by a lord's rabbits.

The laws protecting warren extend to pests like foxes, which cannot be killed without the lord's permission, regardless of the damage they are causing. Magical monsters, including potential familiars and vis sources, may also belong to the lord under the right of warren.

## MINERAL RIGHTS

Certain mineral rights are reserved by the king, and major mining operations rapidly evolve into towns. Rights to minor resources are significant on a manorial level. On the principle that the lord owns everything, and has the right to charge for the use of anything, any valuable thing beneath the ground might attract a fee for use. In Mythic Europe a character who finds a gold nugget, or even a gold mine, doesn't own it; just because the lord doesn't know that it exists doesn't mean

he doesn't own it. Useful mined resources include slate, quarried stone, flint, potter's clay, fuller's earth, and clay dyes.

## Legal Rights and the Manor Court

A serf leading a typical life regularly pays fines to his lord. Fines are not, in this case, the result of a criminal act, but are instead a monetary compensation paid to the lord in exchange for him waiving one of his rights. Lords have so many rights, and they are so burdensome to administer, that it has become easier in most places for these breaches and resolutions to become monetary payments.

## ENTERING THE MANOR

A peasant pays a fee to the lord for entering the manor by taking possession of a piece of land. This fee may be varied if the land is poor, to be assarted, or the villein has some skill sought by the lord.

## HERIOT, MORTUARY, AND LAITY OBJECTS

The heriot is a death duty owed when the head of a household dies. The heriot is the peasant's best beast in many places, but far heavier penalties are found in others. In some locales even free men pay the heriot. On some manors the death of a wife also triggers a heriot, and on others a man owes a heriot for every hide he had. On some manors a heriot is just under half of the man's goods, including many of his best beasts, anything he possessed made of metal, all of the wool and sides of bacon he had, and the things his widow will no longer need, such as his tools and clothes. In exceptional cases the heriot is but a token, purely symbolic of the fact that everything the serf owned is the lord's anyway. On one manor, for example, the heriot is the best copper pan from the house.

Mortuary is technically a fine, not a tax, but is collected with the heriot in many places so the two seem connected. It is the second-best beast that the peasant owned, or its negotiated equivalent. If there is no second-best beast, crops or tools are taken instead.

The mortuary is based on the assumption that every peasant is a thief. It is taken

to make good the share of the Church tithes that the peasant — it is assumed — artfully withheld during his life. The peasant, having paid mortuary, is forgiven his debt to the Church and therefore has an easier passage through Purgatory. Serfs on monastic manors pay both heriot and mortuary to an agent of the monks.

Laity objects are items that are given as gifts to the Church by dying people. Common laity objects include the bed in which the person dies, his best robe, or some other object given as charity. Many priests assume that since these gifts are customary they are compulsory.

Most lords believe that serfs cannot make wills. Serfs do not own anything; everything they think they own has risen from their labor, which is owed to the lord, and thus they have nothing to give away. The Church wishes to collect the laity objects offered by rich serfs and sees no reason why it should not, given that in practice serfs do own personal property. Clashes between local lords and minor priests over this issue are common.

Death duties strike poor widows particularly hard. In addition to the death of her husband, the widow generally loses her working animals, or next-best assets, as well. This means she is short both of human and animal labor. Given that her home is rented with labor, the loss of a husband quickly becomes the loss of a home. Fortunate widows remarry, or fall into the lower subclasses of serfdom. Those less fortunate become vagrants.

## TALLAGE

Lords have a right called tallage, which they exercise sparingly, but may legally employ whenever they wish. By this right a lord may, at any time, and for any reason, tally an amount of money from the manor and his villeins are required under law to supply it to him, with each villein responsible for an amount proportional to his land holding in the manor. The tallage may be as high as the lord wishes, up to and including the sale of everything his villeins own, the repossession of their land, and the sale of their service and progeny to another lord. Tallage does not apply to free men, because the things that they own are theirs, not the lord's, so he may not demand them.

Few lords actually tally exorbitant amounts. To do so causes his serfs to flee the manor and seek work elsewhere, stealing much of the manor's removable wealth

## Story Seed: The Gite

In France there is a tax called the gite, which is a feast for the lord and his retinue to celebrate his arrival on his tour of inspection of his manors. The gite has become increasingly extravagant over time. In politically unstable areas the gite is now unsustainably large, but this does not bother the nobles because they do not expect to hold their lands in the long term, and so see no point in preserving them. Some nobles now take their gite in coin, but this is difficult to transport, so they give or sell the gite to a friend, political contact, or anyone else who would like to feel like a lord of the manor for a day.

A village that has ties to the covenant has had its gite purchased by a merchant. Merchants who purchase a manor's gite tend to be greedy and cruel on that day even if they are not not on others, because they only have one day to live the vices of the lordship. The village is preparing for the merchant to descend with dozens of people in his retinue, drink and eat as much as they wish, order any beasts killed that they wish,

and sleep in whatever houses they wish. The peasants also fear that the merchant and his retinue will rape indiscriminately and burn down a few buildings, and that the lord — rather than the peasants — will ultimately be compensated.

It would be difficult for the peasants to arrange it, but if the merchant could be waylaid in the woods, then all might be well. The gite falls only on a certain day, and although the merchant could simply use his guards to force the peasants to submit on a later day, that would be a crime for which the lord could, and would, take him to court for tremendous damages. The lord would not care if the merchant misses his date of opportunity, for he keeps the price he sold it for regardless. The difficulty is the guards that each of the merchant's friends will have with them. The characters do, however, know where the merchant will stop the night before the gite, so there's some chance they can waylay him for the 12 hours necessary to ruin the feast.

as they go. In times of national crisis, like during civil wars, tallage is very high, its proceeds used to pay for mercenaries. Since many lords embroiled in a civil war feel uncertain that they will hold their lordships through the course of the war and the ensuing negotiations for peace, they take as much as they can, while they can.

On some manors, the peasants have convinced the lord to commute his demands for tallage to a set fee, paid every year. This has advantages to both sides in times of peace. The lord gets his money with less ill will, and the peasants are freed of the uncertainties of tallage at whim.

## The Manor Court

Medieval justice is, as a simplification, divided into three spheres. The Church's courts deal with those who are priests, and with crimes against God or the Church. The royal courts deal with the rights of the king. This includes the right to maintain the king's peace.

This allows royal officers to try anything that might be punished with death. Such crimes include murder, rape, burglary, and arson. The manorial courts deal with lesser matters. These include assault, minor thefts, and commercial disputes between villeins.

## Procedure of the Court

A court meets as is customary for that manor. In some places this is as rarely as twice a year, or on set days at a traditional interval. In others the court meets as often as the lord or steward deems necessary. An announcement that court will be held may be made in church, or the beadle may knock on doors and inform his neighbors.

The court often gathers at the manor hall, but this is far from universal. In many areas a particular tree or part of the common is the traditional site for the court. Courts are rarely held in churches, despite their spaciousness. The steward convenes the court, and sees to the rights of the lord. He is attended by the bailiff, and perhaps the mes-sor, who keep order. He is also assisted by a clerk who keeps the manorial rolls, which are long records of previous cases and debts.

## Juries

The court often begins with an empaneling of jurors. Many free men resist the duty of jury, although free men are prized as jurors because they are seen as having more free time than villeins. The agreements that make men free often includes a clause requiring them to continue performing jury service.

A jury may serve three purposes, described below.

The simplest jury is a body of free men gathered together to swear that all of the duties owed by the free men of the manor have been completed, or, alternatively, to put forward those matters that require consideration. The members of such a jury are responsible for the accuracy of their statement. They may be penalized if they fail to draw attention to matters that affect the rights of the lord.

Juries are often used to decide matters of court custom in cases between villeins, or between villeins and free men, or between serfs and the lord. On some manors, there are separate juries for the matters of free men and the matters of villeins. Membership on these juries is decided by election, or the lord's appointment, or a system which mixes these. On other manors, these decisions are made by the steward or the acclaim of the entire court.

Juries of inquisition are groups of men appointed by the court to investigate a matter and report their findings at the next session. For example, in a case of sheep theft the jury might be asked to review the animals, consider the upkeep of fences and hedges between the lands, and use their knowledge of the character of the claimants to come to a decision. The considerations of juries are not private. If some members of the jury obstinately refuse to see reason, as determined by a different jury, then the victorious party in the later suit may sue earlier jury members for failure to provide a unanimous verdict.

## Disputes

Most of the court's work involves disputes between serfs, or between serfs and the lord. Disputes between serfs provide the lord with fines, so it is cheaper for villeins to come to some agreement on their own before the bailiff becomes aware of the dispute, if they can. A smaller fine is paid when a dispute is settled amicably outside the



court. Other villeins deliberately hold disputes until the coming of the court and then demand that their claims be checked against the court roll. There is a small fine for this, perhaps a couple of pence, which is doubled if the court roll is found to not support the villein's argument. Similarly, a man may pay a fine to demand that the court hear his case when the case could instead be summarily dealt with by one of the lesser officers. The court's ruling becomes binding, is added to the manorial roll, and the villein pays about a shilling for the court's time and trouble, or two shillings if the case went against him.

### DISPUTES BASED ON WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

There are no standard measures in any kingdom of Mythic Europe. This means that a character required to pay a pound of flour to his lord may be giving slightly more or less flour than an equivalent peasant with an equivalent debt in a neighboring lordship. Medieval people work around this lack in two ways: they use natural measures, and they haggle.

Natural measures are supposed to be unarguable, but they generally favor the lord because of his dominance of the manor court. Natural measures include injunctions that salmon paid to the lord must be "as thick as a man's wrist," that wheat paid to the lord must heap up "as high as a man's thighs," or that nuts gathered for the lord must fill "a pair of hose of medium size." These measures favor the lord because in marginal cases, it is for the manorial court to decide which man's wrist is too thick or too bony, which man is too short or too tall, and whose legs are too fat or too thin to act as a natural measure.

In some courts, each man is his own measure. A man due three handfuls of oats for carrying a load of oats in his cart is in luck if his hands are big. As a restraining feature, many men are allowed to have as much as they can carry, provided none of it spills. For example, many haycutters are allowed to take from their work as much hay as their scythe can carry, but if the scythe breaks they get nothing and are fined.

### Fines

There are a wide variety of fines levied on peasants. Fines vary between manors, but some of the commonest are described below.

## Story Seeds

### TINY EGGS

Faeries often play with natural measures as a way of causing tension in human communities. As an example, a popular natural measure is the egg. Many peasants have a number of eggs incorporated in their dues. If a faerie makes every egg laid on a manor the size of a thimble, it causes tension in the community. Either the lord accepts a reduced income, or the lord's servants try to take more from the peasants, who themselves already have less, as a way of maintaining his income. This sort of trickery often leads to accusations of witchcraft, so magi may feel the need to resolve these kinds of situations.

### WEIGHT IN GOLD

A mercenary captain has saved a monastery from raiders, but the abbot foolishly agreed to pay the mercenary his weight in gold in exchange. The local baron has demanded that he be present for the weighing, as an arbiter, and that he be permitted to bring his entire court, as it will amuse them. The baron has done this because he hates the abbot, and the procession of the lord's court will delay the weighing for a month. The mercenary has retired to a nearby town to stuff himself with sweet luxuries before the official weighing.

The abbot is praying for a miracle, because Daniel was able to fix a weigh-in with the help of God. In case there is no miracle, the abbot would like the help of the magi. He has heard that magically created food does not nourish. He'd like the magi to make sure that his rival eats nothing but magically created food for the rest of the month. That should save the abbot a tidy sum, which he'll divide with the magi. If the captain actually loses weight, the priest will pay them a bonus.

### WARPED CONSORS

An Autumn covenant in a neighboring Tribunal has fallen and its covenfolk, who are in some cases highly Warped, have spread into neighboring towns. This has led to strife with the local nobility and church. For example, a village that has the right to take one handful of salt from every pan boiled has become far richer, at the local lord's expense, by convincing a man Warped with a hand five times normal size to settle locally. Although none of the Warped consors have magical powers, and although they are no longer strictly the business of the Order of Hermes, the sum of their actions has disadvantaged a large proportion of the region's magnates.

### SEIZURE

The goods of a felon automatically become the possession of his lord. A felon who flees or is put to death leaves his land vacant. A new landholder pays the lord a fee to enter the land, and so death is particularly lucrative for lords, but the death penalty is restricted to the greater nobility in many areas. Some buy the right to kill felons from their kings.

### SEX TAXES: MERCHET, LEYWRITE, CHILDWRITE, AND FINES FOR CELIBACY

It is legally forbidden for the serfs of different lords to marry. To secure the permission of the lord, each serf pays a fine called merchet.

Merchets are higher if the woman is receiving a large dowry, because the lord's permission gives the bridegroom a greater benefit. The merchet is also larger if the bride is moving into the manor of her husband's lord.

The bride's lord collects a larger merchet to be compensated not only for her lost labor, but also for her lost brood. That is, she is fined because her children, if any, will not become her master's serfs. This fine is sometimes lowered when the two lords have adjoining estates, and come to an arrangement concerning the division of the brood between their manors.

Merchet is widely loathed by peasants. They see it as a tax on their children. In theory, if not in practice, the law of the Church forbade any people within seven degrees of consanguinity from marrying each other until 1215. This was found to be so unworkable that a majority of marriages, in many places, were

## Story Seed: Fines for the King

The king of England owns all of England. (This is unusual; generally kings are owed the service of various nobles to various degrees.) This means that the king of England is in a unique position to cause the Order of Hermes discomfort. In this story seed, he does this by claiming that he is owed fines when magi in England are fined.

If a Hermetic magus is found guilty of abusing a magus from a neighboring Tribunal, a fine is often paid. This requires material of value to pass from England to another kingdom. This deprives the king of what is his, because everything that comes from England is his. This means he is due reparation of equal value to the thing lost. The king sends a representative to Tribunal, who is laden with relics to ensure he is not mishandled by magic, to demand the king's rights.

Characters may need to deal with this request from the king. It is likely a ploy to establish an ongoing payment of money in exchange for the king's recognition of the authority of the Hermetic Tribunals as courts. Payment could be a problem, though, because it would be made public and set a precedent that other kings would seek to follow, regardless of the unique legal niceties of the English situation. Characters might also seek the Hermetic magi who arranged the king's intervention. Fingers might be pointed at House Tyalus, whose *domus magna* floats smugly off the coast of Normandy and is the cause of much strife in its neighboring Tribunals. Could it, however, have been someone else, seeking to embarrass the Tyalus? They have many enemies that have become as cunning as they are.

legally incestuous and therefore false. The pope reduced the prohibited degrees to four, so that only people who share a great-great-grandparent cannot marry. Since peasants live in tiny villages and do not travel far in their lives, their communities are either incestuous or are continually paying for the fresh blood that their community requires. On some manors, lords ask merchet even if their own villeins marry.

## Story Seed: Tithe of Vis

A representative of the bishop arrives with a writ to examine the covenant, from top to bottom, to determine its compliance with his lord's tithes. Many of the things that magi collect are suited to tithing. Vis arises from the natural processes of the world, and therefore is suitable for tithe. Magi create things from their skills, such as books and magic items, so these things are also tithable. Can the characters hide their vis sources from the bishop's inspector? How does he know about vis? Why does he want to collect it anyway? To sell it back to the covenant, or to force them to perform a small favor?

Peasants who sidestep the issue of merchet by simply not marrying face an even stiffer fine, for *leywrite*. *Leywrite*, the right for laying down, is theoretically an adultery tax. It is charged by the lord on a woman who has deprived him of merchet by making herself unmarried by losing her virginity. This is difficult to prove. *Leywrite* often absorbs a related fee, *childwrite*, which is a tax on unmarried pregnancy. It is due each time an unmarried serf becomes pregnant. *Leywrite* is far more common than merchet: it's a particularly lucrative tax.

Fines cannot be avoided by celibacy. On many manors, a fine is paid annually by every serf, of marriageable age, who has been unmarried for more than a year. Some serfs bargain with their lords to receive a bulk rate for a lifetime without marriage. On other manors, men are regularly fined for choosing not to marry the widows appointed to them by their lords. When the daughter of free peasants sells herself into serfdom, it is often on the condition that she will not be forced to marry. Serfs and free men who die without children cannot, generally, will their property to their nephews. It automatically belongs to their lord.

### FINES FOR BEING FINED

It is illegal for a peasant to waste the things his lord owns. The lord owns everything that the peasant owns. Therefore, if the peasant is fined somewhere outside the manorial court, like the ecclesiastical court

## Trade

Trade is heavily taxed, but only by the upper nobility or representatives of the king. There are ways for characters to make money from manufacture and trade. These are considered in detail in *City & Guild*.

In this supplement, non-agricultural sources of wealth are treated either as an unremarked component of agricultural income or as a bonus to the character's agricultural income. As an example, a manor by the sea that considers fish and eels as part of its income is nevertheless treated, in the economic rules, as an agricultural manor. The fact that the goods it produces for its lord's use include some fish rather than wheat or honey or cheese is significant to the color of the stories told, but not to the mechanics in these rules. If the same manor is permitted to run a salt kin as service to its lord, and use a portion of the salt to pay its taxes, this is treated as a simple monetary bonus.

A player character nobleman who uses the agricultural surplus of his lands to engage in local and international trade should be designed using the rules given in *City & Guild*.

or the shire court, then the fine paid has been stolen from the lord, and the peasant owes the lord equivalent compensation.

For example, sins may lead to fines in ecclesiastical courts. A man convicted of being a fornicator, if a villein, must pay a fine, and then pay his lord a second fine for paying the first. As another example, in parts of France it is considered a breach of the peace for one person to call another person a serf as a term of abuse, even if the person actually is a serf. Similarly, clever synonyms, like "villein," "bondman," or "rusticum," are illegal words and a fine is due. That fine is paid from the transgressing serf's money, which belongs to the lord, and so a second fine is due.

## Church

Religion plays a significant role in the life of almost every person in Mythic Europe. In feudal areas, that role is to provide the sacra-



ments that mark significant occasions in the life of each person. Each community has a local priest appointed by the bishop, with the duty to care for souls in that community. This priest is called a curate, and the parish that supports him is his living. In many communities that have multiple manors, there are separate churches, and priests, for each manor. This is because the individual churches are owned by their respective secular nobleman and lent to the Church.

Curates are required to provide the sacraments required by the life of the community. They oversee celebrations of holy days. Each is required to preach four sermons a year, although this rule is only weakly enforced. The curate has the duty to maintain the Church's land in the vicinity of his flock. The income from this land, and the tithes of the community, are used for the priest's own support, to maintain the fabric of the Church, and to aid the poor.

Over time, the role of priest has become enmeshed in the financial and political structures of medieval life. This means that a particular priest may be curate for lands distant from each other, or for a contiguous area larger than it is possible for him to actually serve. Such curates pay assistants to perform their religious functions. The Church calls these servants "temporary curates", contrasting them to the "perpetual curates" they serve. For simplicity, this book uses "curate" for whoever is providing local services, and "rector," which means "ruler," for whoever has the right to collect tithes.

Curates of minor parishes are likely to have poor education by the standards of the Order of Hermes. Perhaps one-fifth of all the local priests in Mythic Europe are able to do little more than repeat the sacraments by rote, and cannot read Latin in any effective way. The sacraments of these priests are, nonetheless, completely effective, and these priests still serve their communities as resolvers of disputes, witnesses of oaths, and maintainers of the Church lands. Many provide religious education through their sermons, and some provide basic schooling for children.

## Churchyard

The churchyard plays an important role in the civic life of the manor. It is common, on Sundays, for many villagers to gather in their churchyards, to drink, dance, and gossip. Informal markets are also held in churchyards. Priests have been forbidding unsol-



emn behavior in churchyards as sinful for hundreds of years, but this has not prevented it in most areas. Churchyards are hallowed places, protected by the Divine.

## Glebe

The glebe is farmland set aside for the use of the Church. It may, like the lord's demesnes, either be set aside from the fields of the villeins or may be intermingled. On lands that have an ecclesiastical lord, like the manors belonging to monasteries, the glebe and demesne may combine, or the glebe may be left separate, for the use of that particular curate.

Glebes may be cropped in a variety of ways. Glebes may be rented out, which alleviates the need for the Church to have involvement in their management. This is a popular option on lands that have a distant rector and a salaried curate. In this case a small amount of land around the curate's house is usually retained as a garden. Small glebes are tilled by the priest himself in many cases, but larger glebes are tilled by hired

workers. If the glebe is of sufficient size, the priest may have a permanent staff of villeins, much like the famuli of the manor's lord.

The most contentious of a curate's servants is the "hearth mate." A hearth mate is technically a woman of all work recruited to perform domestic labor. Effectively, the hearth mate is often a wife. Provided the relationship is deniable, or the priest claims to be penitent when found guilty of fornication by ecclesiastical authorities, this does not much damage the prospects of a manorial curate.

## Church and Priest's House

Parish churches are not the grand structures of arching stone found in the cities. Most are built in the same way as the houses of manorial lords, so in areas where manor houses are made from timber with thatched roofs, the churches are made the same way. The interiors of churches tend to be highly decorated. The church is one of the few

## Story Seeds

### BROTHERHOOD OF THE BLACK MASK

In England the problem of rectors is felt more intensely than in any other part of Europe. While King John was excommunicate, many livings fell vacant, and when he swore fealty to the pope, many of these were filled with Vatican functionaries who never visited England. Many others were filled with priests who did come to their livings, but did not understand English customs and were considered severe in their interpretation of their rights.

Roughly parallel to the game period, a minor nobleman whose church is given away without his permission forms a league of equally annoyed minor nobles, called the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood robs and beats Italian priests in their part of northern England. As word of the attacks spreads, other nobles, with no connection to the original Brotherhood, join in. If a comparable organization to the Brotherhood appears in the player characters' Tribunal, magi may be targeted. The magi, after all, speak Latin, and in many cases act in strange and possibly foreign ways.

Player characters who attempt to track down the leaders of the Brotherhood face several obstacles. The Brotherhood is more a social movement than an organization, so it has no ultimate leader. Its members often keep what they steal, but many of the brothers have emptied the tithe barns of the local churches and given the food stored there to the peasantry, so they are very popular with the common

people. Many Brotherhood attacks are staged by great nobles, seeking revenge on priests they dislike. If there is a coordinating hand behind the best-planned of the attacks, it is likely one of the king's inner circle, who is deliberately spreading disorder for political ends.

### SWIFT ASSARTING

It is possible to assart land far faster than normal by hiring a large workforce and then dismissing them afterward. When a lord does this, it leads to many problems. Petty crime rates rise while the outsiders are in the manor, particularly as their work comes to an end. The workers know they will move on soon and are unlikely to be caught in petty theft. Some groups go further than this, and stage burglaries after their work is done, or become brigands.

In this story seed for a Spring covenant, a band of brigands has begun to raid areas nearby. They have been telling the victims of their crimes that they were once workers from the group that assarted the covenant's lands. The magi, however, know that they assarted their own land magically. They must find this band, determine who they are working for, and figure out what this mysterious individual hopes to achieve by blaming the magi for a series of crimes. In the interim, the magi must deal with aggrieved local lords, who claim compensation for the damage caused by the covenant's reckless practice of hiring massive assarting teams.

buildings where it is considered inappropriate for servants of the owner of the building to sleep, so priests require residences other than the church building.

The houses of curates in minor parishes are flimsy things. This is because the curates of minor places are usually no wealthier than villeins, given that the tithes and perhaps even the crops from the Church lands are collected by the curate for the rector, rather than for his own use. The curate receives a small wage that is supplemented by farming a small section of the glebe.

The houses of curates on manors where the glebe is more significant, or where the rector is also the curate, are far more substantial. Local priests of this type are as wealthy as prosperous free men. In some cases their houses are ex-

tremely large, second only to the great hall in size, because they provide accommodation for a personal staff of laborers who farm the glebe. Other wealthy priests simply rent the glebe to peasants who do not share the rector's home.

In some richer holdings, the lord has a personal confessor and a private chapel. This priest is a member of the lord's household staff and is paid a wage or offered part of the demesnes to farm, rather than drawing on the glebe. When not providing the sacraments, a personal confessor often acts as a secretary, teacher for children, or estate manager. It is possible for a lord's personal confessor to also be his manor's curate, particularly if the rector is distant from the manor and the lord allows the wage he offers his confessor to partially offset the wage of the curate.

## Improvement

Non-magical characters may improve their fiefs in a limited number of ways. Most nobles do not bother with land improvement if the realm is in dispute. If landholders cannot be certain of keeping their lands, soldiers and castles are considered a wiser investment than improvements to the land. Absolute peace is rare, but sometimes war is restricted to the zones where two realms abut, and those far behind the battle lines see improvements as profitable.

### Assarting

Hermetic scholars know that the weather in Mythic Europe is notably drier in the 13th century than it was in preceding years. This has made farmable a great deal of land that was previously marginal. Coupled with the population boom being experienced in Europe, one of the simplest ways of expanding a fief is assarting: carving new cropland or meadow from fertile wasteland. This has been occurring for much of the last century, so marginal land is becoming increasingly scarce.

A single strong laborer with proper tools clears one acre of lightly wooded land per month, if he does no other work. This means that villeins who assart land work much slower than an acre a month because their other duties take precedence. Many lords use only local labor, or hire a small team of famuli who assist with the clearing and then are kept on to work the lord's increased demesne, so that assarting is a gradual but continual process that takes years to have a marked effect.

There are many ways of assarting land magically. Changing the topography or soil type to allow large-field farming where it was previously impossible, altering water flows for irrigation, and removing trees or reducing them to ash are all simple and popular strategies.

A covenant that secretly clears land for itself using magic alarms nearby lords. The sudden appearance of cropland in an area that was previously waste indicates to neighboring nobles that the lord of that land has hired an enormous workforce. This, it is assumed, will cause predictable problems when the workforce is dispersed.

### Conquest

Taking land by conquest is rare among the lower nobility in most of feudal Europe because it requires political skill and perfect tim-



ing. Conquered land must be taken from someone, and the lord of the dispossessed noble appears weak if he does nothing in response to conquest. In some cases such lords do as little as demand a fine and fealty from the invader, but this is seen as a pathetic response by the lord's other vassals, who, sensing their lack of security, form coalitions of mutual support that are often provoked into open war with each other. All nobles know this, so unless a lord is beset by more important issues, conquest is rarely able to succeed in the extended term.

Nobles often are, however, beset by more important issues. Conquest can take place in times of general anarchy, because there is no lord able to prevent it. It can also take place during civil war, provided a conqueror chooses the winning side and limits his depredations to followers of the rival cause.

## Land Management

The rules in this chapter assume manors that are controlled by a competent bailiff. Monastic centers have, for centuries, been researching ways to improve the yield of land. Their conclusions have recently been popularized among secular landlords. It is assumed in this section that characters cannot improve their lands simply by managing them better unless, during the setup of the covenant, or during story events, it has been noted that the covenant is run badly.

Players using *City & Guild* may develop businesses on the land, using the rules in that book. Those businesses that are part of the fief by custom, however, like the mills and bakery, are already included in the manor's income source.

## Marriage

Marriage to heiresses and widows is one of the most lucrative ways of extending a character's fief. It is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Two: Politics.



## Allods

In England and Normandy, it is illegal for farmland to exist outside the feudal system. Every piece of land must have a lord, and that lord must hold by permission of the king. In other parts of Mythic Europe it is possible for a person to hold land without owning allegiance to anyone.

A piece of land that its lord owns outright is called an allod. Allodial land is significant to the Order of Hermes because this entire system of villages and manors is less than three centuries old, so the oldest covenants in the Order predate it and are therefore allods.

## Alms and Charities

The Church is the greatest landholder in Mythic Europe, and individual priests may hold land as if they were noblemen, on behalf of the Church. Some Church land is allodial, because successive groups of monks following the Benedictine model have sought places in the wilderness to settle as monasteries, and peasant land-holdings have grown up around these sites. In England and Normandy this is considered legally impossible because all land is held from the king. There are two main types of non-allodial Church land, which are described in the following sections.

### ALMS LAND

Alms land is land given to the Church for its use, in perpetuity. It is still held from a major noble. The Church may farm the land or offer it to vassals. Other rights, like the right to take tolls, to require knight service, or to take a portion of the fines from local courts, stay with the nobleman. This means that the Church is required to have a small standing army and fight on both sides of many wars, simply to render service for its lands.

### CHARITIES

Charities are lands given to the Church in exchange for particular services. The most popular service connected to a charity is the

## Purchase

Characters may purchase land from their neighbors. This costs between thirty and fifty times its annual income, although this may be adjusted downward if the characters allow the seller to retain some of the rights of the land, or agree to take on some of its dues. Characters can get a better price by paying in immediate coin, since large transactions for land are usually paid in installments over many years. In some areas, the lord of a landholder must acquire the right to sell the land from his lord, who typically demands a cut of the price, which correspondingly raises the price.

## Fief-like Holdings

In Mythic Europe there are some land holdings that are not fiefs, but can be treated as such for the purposes of these rules.

provision of sacraments to the residents of a parish. They may also include masses for the soul for the land's initial donor, prayers for the success of a lord's ventures, the provisioning of hospitals and hospices, clerical duties, and teaching the lord's children. Under law, if these services are not provided, the lord can reclaim the land.

Over time, charities are increasingly being offered to nunneries. They are considered more dependable in providing services than priests or monasteries. Men are too often distracted, in the eyes of some donors, by secular concerns that women are barred from by their gender.

## Towns With Royal Charters

Towns are founded by the lords who hold the land on which the town stands. Lords create them for several reasons. The higher population of a town means that even if the lord cannot claim as much rent per person as he can for peasants, he still makes additional money by packing more people into the space of the town. The townspeople also provide a ready market for the agricultural products that make up a large portion of the taxes collected by the lord, allowing them to be sold easily

### Story Seed: Catching Up On Masses

If a charity is based on masses for the soul of a dead donor, but the priest hasn't been saying the masses as frequently as he should, then a court can confiscate the land and grant it back to the donor's heir. If the local abbot or bishop has significant power, this is a serious step with possible political consequences. A minor lord may, instead, ask the court to declare that the land be resumed unless the unsaid masses are made good. When this occurs, it is common for a group of priests to be sent to the charity. They perform many masses every day until the backlog, which may comprise many hundreds of masses, is completed. They often perform additional masses, so that there can be no question that the charity remains with the Church. The performance of the many masses in

these situations attracts pilgrims, and seems to boost the Dominion.

Such an intense series of masses is one of the possible effects of Hermetic magi encouraging sloth in priests. When a marathon of masses is being said in an area, the creatures of the Faerie realm behave in odd ways. Some are geographically dislocated by the process. Some pretend to be refugees, or to be vacationing away from town. Some seem to go mad. Similarly, minor demons leave their usual haunts and seek new victims in the countryside. Powerful magical creatures, who must stay in Magic auras to avoid being affected by the creeping mundanity of the mortal world, may find their home's aura suppressed, and seek lodging at the covenant.

and quickly converted into manufactured goods. Townsfolk often pay their rent in money, which is convenient when a lord needs to settle his debts with his liege. Towns that already exist are coveted prizes, because the lord has all the benefits of a town with none of the foundation costs.

Some towns, however, hold directly from the king. Towns usually gain this

right by offering the king money in exchange for a charter during a period of civil strife. Their offer is likely to be accepted if the town's noble overlord is a rebel. A royal charter places a town beyond the rapaciousness of the agricultural aristocracy. The council of such a town, as represented by its mayor, may even act as a feudal overlord itself.



# Discuss Poverty in Your Saga

Different troupes of *Ars Magica* players select different degrees of realism for the setting of their stories. The material in this book tends to the historic, rather than the fantastic. (This orientation has been chosen because accurate historical detail is difficult for storyguides to research, but not to remove.) The consequence of this book's historical rather than fantastic position is that the lot of the poor in Mythic Europe seems miserable by modern standards. Worse, it is in part made miserable by rich characters, like the player characters, and by the Church. Troupes should discuss this and choose a degree of realism that suits the stories they wish to tell.

## THE SIMPLEST CHOICE: THE HAPPY PEASANT

Many troupes will find it convenient to simply select the level of peasant happiness for their covenant at creation, as they would any other feature. The covenant design system allows sagas set in flying castles that are defended by undead knights riding mechanical manticores, so choosing happy peasants represents a comparatively mundane option. The rest of this chapter is for troupes who want greater realism, a darker tone, and more extensive material to work into the backgrounds of their companions and grogs.

## YOU DON'T WANT TO BE A SWINEHERD! YOU WANT TO SEE THE WORLD!

The aspiration to escape poverty and become prosperous is found throughout period folklore and also acts as a powerful driver for player characters. Characters from peasant backgrounds who serve in most covenants find that their working conditions are far superior to those of peasant life.

## NOBLE VILLAINS PROVIDE A CHANGE OF PACE

How far a lord pushes his rights, and how much harm he does his peasantry as a consequence, is often a matter left to the lord's conscience. In many cases, medieval society's tolerance of the abuse of the peasantry encourages that same abuse.

Nobles who behave villainously with respect to their peasants can provide adversaries that are qualitatively different from monsters and demons, and therefore require different strategies to overcome. This allows players who want their characters to kill monsters and loot their bodies to share the limelight with players who wish to design magi from Houses like Merinita, Jerbiton, and Criamon, which have a weaker focus on combat.

## THE CHURCH WAS SOMETIMES OPPRESSIVE

In this chapter, the Church is portrayed as oppressive by modern standards. The Church in the 13th century is an institution of its time. Its members, for the most part, believe that many activities that modern players consider oppressive are morally just. These activities are presented so that stories and character backgrounds may be framed according to these medieval beliefs.

In 1220 the Church's officers also do many things that they know are morally questionable, but are less bad than any alternative they perceive. This is particularly true in financial matters. Much of the work of the papal court is performed by non-resident and pluralist priests, for example. The Church knows this is not ideal, but can see no better option given that the work of the Church is so important. The real-world Church worked through these complex issues over the centuries following the game period.

There is no need for troupes to play in a setting with a realistic Church. Some troupes may prefer that a Church guided constantly toward righteousness by the Holy Spirit. For such troupes, the material here may instead provide examples of the sins of exceptional priests, who can serve as foes during stories.

## Chapter Seven

# The Peasantry

Peasant life is unpleasant. Peasants, for the most part, live a marginal existence filled with toil. They have little scope to improve their lives, and often lack the education to know how their lives could be improved in the first place. Most peasants never travel more than a few miles from their birthplace.

Peasants are not, however, stupid, and many grasp opportunities to escape the worst of their lot. Over the generations, peasants have bargained and paid for little ameliorations of the worst of their conditions. In 1220, some peasants are even free of serfdom. That is, they are not required to labor for a lord, and can instead pay him for their use of land.

## Classes of Peasant

There is an ascending scale of wealth and status in peasant communities. Generally, richer peasants have the highest status, and those who have the most land are the wealthiest. Some of the terms used in this section to define land holdings are defined in the Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs. This section uses English peasantry as its model, although similar social roles are found in most of Mythic Europe.

## The Unemployed and Day Workers

The population of Mythic Europe is swelling rapidly in 1220. In most agricultural areas, for the length of any usual saga, the unemployment rate is around twenty percent outside of the planting and reaping seasons.

These people pour into towns looking for a better life, but often find that they are barred from seeking guild-controlled employment. Lacking other skills they turn to crime, which is why the term "villain" has such negative connotations.

Many day workers tramp the roads, seeking employment. Peak agricultural periods differ for various crops and grazing animals, so many laborers chase work. Others stay in a single village, where they are known as being free to work odd days. These are generally the poorest people in any village.

In France, any stranger who dwells in a manor for more than a year is automatically the villein of the lord, unless he can prove that he is free, or that he is the villein of someone else. A lord is, technically, not permitted to allow his villeins to starve, so many lords force the poor to move on so that they do not gain a claim to the lord's charity. A compromise between vagrants and lords is often reached whereby the itinerant poor keep to Church land, such as pilgrimage sites. This, legally speaking, is outside the manor.

## Famuli and Other Retained Servants

The famuli are the household staff of the lord. These serfs include agricultural laborers as well as those who provide a second service in addition to labor, like the lord's shepherd, swineherd, and dairymaid. The famuli usually also includes cooking and cleaning staff.

The famuli are lodged and fed by the lord, but theirs is not a luxurious life. Famuli tend to sleep where they work, or in the great hall. They eat simply and usually drink only water except at special celebrations. The food and lodging provided for famuli are usually for the servant alone — many cannot afford to marry.

Many members of the famuli are allowed little treats based on their job. Shepherds are given lambs occasionally and dairymaids are allowed to take cheeses. These small gifts are not, however, enough to make a famulus as wealthy as a villein farming a virgate. Some famuli members supplement their income as bovaters, described in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs, which enables them to marry.

It's possible to be a retained servant, like a famulus, without being a servant of the lord. The agricultural laborers who tend the glebe on behalf of the priest are sometimes like a famuli to him, for example, and live in his house and are fed from the produce of the glebe. Many free peasants are wealthy enough to have domestic servants of their own. Members of the lord's famuli live under the care of the lord's bailiff, so they are usually considered to be of higher status than similar servants working for less influential people.

Comparing the status of famuli to villeins who farm their own land is complicated. In areas where villeins are relatively rich, and lords comparatively stingy, the villeins are considered better off, and so are of higher social standing. In other areas the comparative freedom from famine of the famuli, and their relatively high standard of living as recipients of their lord's largesse, makes them socially superior to the villeins. Generally, famuli cannot afford families and villeins with land can, and so villeins with land may be considered richer than famuli for that reason. Service in the famuli may, however, be an excellent form of advancement for the son of a landed villein, while he saves sufficient money and becomes well enough known to seek land in an assart, or to marry well.

## Serf or Villein

A serf or villein is an agricultural worker whose labor is owned by his lord in exchange



for the use of land. Serfs are not free; they cannot choose who to work for or what work to do. This also means they cannot choose where to live. Serfdom is passed to the children of serfs. Serfs are not, however, slaves, and so they cannot legally be whimsically murdered or maimed. It is legal, however — indeed, it is usual in some areas — to casually beat serfs. One particular Churchman is famous for his saintly character in part because he never raised his hand to his servants.

Serfs owe their lord rent, week works, and boon works. Rent is traditionally a penny an acre a year, but may be far higher. A serf's week works are usually expressed as a certain number of days per week, but these "days" are generally measured from sunrise to noon. Many serfs work four or five of these "days" for their lords, although in some areas they work as few as two, paying higher rents instead. This is common, for example, in lands where money is made by running sheep and so the lord has little use for additional agricultural labor.

On some manors peasants pay an annual fee to be excused from week work for a year. This is called the *censum*. The desirability of the *censum* depends on its price. On some manors rich peasants embrace the *censum*, while on others it is used as a punishment of the manor court for people whose labor is poor or tardy.

Boon works are added days theoretically performed out of love for the lord. The lord, by tradition, usually feeds his laborers during boon works. Most serfs owe more week work or boon work during the harvest period (August and September) than during other parts of the year.

Technically no serf is able to own anything: he does not own his labor and therefore cannot own the profit of his labor. In practice, in most areas, serfs are able to keep some of what they produce. Most of this they pay in rent or fines to their lords, but over time they can save sufficient money to buy off some of the worst of the taxes and charges they face.

As noted in the Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs, the status of peasants increases as the amount of land they rent with their labor increases. Generally virgaters are wealthier than bovaters, who are wealthier than cottars. There is, however, a major exception to this: tradesmen.

Many tradesmen are members of the *famuli*, or hold small crofts of land surrounding their homes and owe little or no villein service. Millers, blacksmiths, and reeves are examples of men who live more richly than most villeins, but have little land and so owe only minor villein service. The most unusual such tradesmen are the *ministeriales* found in some of the German duchies. These villeins are knights who pay for their keep with military service. In areas within the Norman sphere of influence it is considered wrong to knight serfs without freeing them first.

### OFFICES FOR VILLEINS

The least desirable, and yet most lucrative, of the official positions on a manor is that of reeve. The reeve is responsible for the direct oversight of the daily work of the villeins of the manor. He is also responsible for making sure each villein does his days of

work, or is reported to the bailiff for failing to. The reeve is usually appointed annually on Michaelmas (29 September, just after harvest) although some reeves are re-appointed each year for decades.

Reeves, in most areas, must be villeins. Proof that a peasant has served as a reeve is taken in many courts as proof he is a serf and not free. It is usual for the reeve to be selected by the villeins in the manor court, from among the villeins with the largest landholdings in the manor. The lord or his steward may veto their choice. Villeins who absent themselves from the manor court may find they are given this job in their absence.

Many people dislike being reeve for three main reasons. The reeve is financially responsible for any failure of the administration of the manor that it was his responsibility to prevent. He can be fined if people shirk work or steal, or if equipment breaks because it was poorly maintained, unless he can fine someone else for the fault. The reeve, as the enforcer of the lord's due, is the person who makes sure that the other members of his community don't take easy options when working. As a result, he's hated for the extra hassle he causes and the little thefts of time and material he prevents. Finally, being reeve takes time away from the work the villein could do on his own behalf during harvest season.

The role is so unpopular that on some manors there is land specifically reserved to pay the reeve. On other manors all of the major villeins pay a fee so that they need not have a reeve at all. This fee is as high as a shilling a head a year in some places. In other places, a person elected as reeve may pay a



### Story Seed: The Wandering Poor

The wandering poor are defined by the fact that they do not come from the community — they are strangers. Many are simply poor people. Some have strange customs, but are nonetheless human beings with personal tales of woe that might turn to the better or worse when they encounter the player characters. Some wanderers, however, are far more than they appear. Saints, even God himself in some folktales, take the form of wandering beggars to test the morals of people who profess Christianity, rewarding the good and shaming the hypocritical. Demons also walk the roads and bring temptations with them. Faeries seem to walk the roads, seeking to be nearby when interesting things occur. Some faeries steal children, or enter strange bargains with lords, reeves, or individual peasants, offering treasure or terror.

substantial fine to force the manor court to pick an alternative reeve.

Reeves gain wealth from five sources. Most are forgiven all, or part, of their rent. Reeves are usually paid a small wage: generally double whatever is being paid to other laborers, and for the entire year rather than simply the harvest periods. This wage is sometimes given as grain from the demesne, and may be increased by the right to be fed by the lord either for the whole year, or during the planting and reaping seasons. Reeves are excused many services to the lord, allowing them extra time with their own crops and crafts, other than at harvest and planting. Reeves, as mentioned above, may be granted the use of certain lands during their tenure. The final source of wealth for reeves is corruption, and most villeins consider corruption among reeves to be rife.

It is the corruption of reeves that makes the searching annual audits, which prepare the figures for the steward, necessary. Reeves have a tremendous opportunity to take bribes for unprovable returns, like the right to finish work early or be assigned the easy bit of the haymaking. They also have many opportunities to steal directly from the lord. Regardless, a reeve owes the lord any goods or services not collected or remitted in his term.

### Story Seeds: Famuli Matters

The stories of the famuli are similar to the stories about servants in many other genres. Theirs is the “below stairs” view of the world of the nobility or magi. Servants know their masters intimately and even if they like their masters, they recognize their weaknesses and human foibles. Stories set among the servants can allow a change of pace from the heroic stories which involve magi.

#### CLEANING UP

The famuli are the hidden characters who clean up the stage between the episodes in the lives of the magi. If a horde of faeries attacks the covenant, it is the famuli who tidy up afterwards by rebuilding damaged walls, washing the blood off the courtyard, carting away the bits the magi don't want for experiments, and finding ways to bury them. This style of story works best for covenants with magi who deal with immediate crises and then retire swiftly to their laboratories.

There are many other positions to which villeins are elected by the manor court. The most significant of these is the office of mesor (or beadle), which is usually coupled with the office of hayward. The beadle acts as the reeve's enforcer. He implements the customs of the manor, summons people to the court, collects fines, and warns people that they will be due for services and tallages. The hayward is the overseer of the harvesting laborers and the guard of the harvested crop. He is also the person charged with the health of the pasture, so he is the confiscator of wandering stock. The hayward is paid, much like the reeve, by reduction of his rent, excusal from services, use of reserved meadow, and feeding at the lord's expense at harvest time. He is also sometimes given free seed corn. Haywards tend to hold less substantial lands than reeves, so their effective rewards for office are less.

Other lesser offices include woodward, who cares for the lord's plantations, forester, who cares for the lord's hunting wood, and herdsman. In East Anglia there are peasants who are charged with the maintenance of

### The Church Supports Serfdom

The church in 1220 does not see keeping serfs as evil. Most Churchmen even consider slavery morally acceptable provided masters stay within certain limits of behavior. Serfdom, which is better than slavery, is actively supported by the Church.

dykes. On some manors, plowmen are appointed by the lord and live as his officers, although in most places a lord's plowmen are simply famuli. Ale-tasters, who ensure ale brewed on the manor is of sufficient quality for sale, are often women.

### Half-free

A half-free peasant is one who is a free man or woman, as described below, but who has accepted the rental of villein land from a lord, and therefore owes villein service. Half-free peasants are sometimes wealthy enough to pay a hired worker to carry out their villein service. A half-free peasant is free of non-agricultural taxes and services, like a free peasant.

### Free Peasants

A free man or free woman is, in this case, an agricultural worker who does not owe service to the lord for land. Freedom from service is rarely absolute, the exact nature of freedom varies in accordance with manor custom. This means that in some areas, for example, free men are still required to serve as jurors, members of the military levy, or supervisors of unfree laborers at harvest. These requirements vary not only between neighboring manors, but between free men of the same manor. Many free peasants owe the Church a small fee, called church-scot, each year in November. A free tenant can theoretically leave his farm at any time by ceasing to pay the rent, but this usually leaves him in poverty.

Free parents have children who are also free. A free person who marries a servile one makes his spouse free for the length of the marriage, although she reverts to servile



status upon the partner's death or if they separate. The children of such a union are, usually, free, although customs vary. A free peasant must pay a fine for freeing a spouse by marriage, and can generally arrange a higher fine to ensure that the partner does not return to servile status after the marriage ends.

Free peasants make up less than ten percent of the population of most manors, but on some manors, all of the peasants are free. This is particularly common on assarts and in newly founded towns, where men are offered freedom in exchange for their sweat and shillings. Free peasants are most common on royal manors, and are more common on secular manors than ecclesiastical ones. This is because setting villeins free is a common form of charity among secular rulers, particularly in their wills, but to free villeins is forbidden to Churchmen by canon law.

## Officers

A manor's officers hold positions of trust from the lord and administer the manor's affairs. There is a great confusion of manorial officers. The same titles are used on neighboring manors for different jobs, and the titles on the same manor may change over time without any observable change in workload for the officer. As a general rule, though, there are two free men who are highly significant to the running of the manor.

The steward, or seneschal, is the lord's representative on the manor. He is required to act in the lord's stead at the manorial courts, and to account for the fief's business annually, down to the last egg. Some stewards are chosen from the prominent free men of the fief, and where this is done the office is circulated to limit corruption. Other stewards are members of the professional class of estate managers that is beginning to form. These are often free men with some education. The role of steward is, for example, a job often taken by the younger or illegitimate sons of minor noblemen who do not desire to enter the priesthood.

The steward is the master of all of the other manorial servants of the fief, and is paid highly for his services. The payment varies by the size of the estate from half a pound a year for a free man on a manor, to twenty pounds a year for stewards who are maintained as knights, to vast grants of land for those who act as stewards on behalf of kings.

## Story Seed: The Rolls

The records of the manorial court are kept on rolls of parchment, and special decisions are sewn onto the rolls. A peasant who could tamper with the rolls, by sewing on a ruling that indicated that he was personally free and only acted like a villein because he held villein land, could gain substantial advantage. The main barrier to this is that the roll is guarded and the villein illiterate.

A villein brings a scheme to change the roll to the attention of the magi. He has a little money from a crime, which he can't spend publicly, and offers it for the aid of someone who can write in Latin. The magi, considering his plan, might give him the letter free, provided he also adds another document to the rolls that is to their advantage. They might also give him greater assistance, because it would be embarrassing for him to be caught before the two additions had been made to the roll.

The bailiff (or beadle, or sergeant) is the controller of the daily operation of the manor, through the reeve. A bailiff may be responsible for a handful of manors, if they form a tight group and travel between them is easy. The bailiff answers twice a year to the steward, and must give a detailed account of the manor's finances. Bailiffs are almost always free men who live locally to the manor, and in most places they have the right to live in the manor house. Bailiffs are, more than any other manorial official, most likely to be attacked by aggrieved peasants.

Bailiffs are rich, for peasants. A bailiff is paid approximately ten shillings a year in the smallest fiefs, although this amount may rise as high as six pounds for bailiffs who handle large, difficult territories for their masters. Bailiffs are known for their corruption, including for failing to enforce laws and for distorting custom to gain extra service or money from the peasants.

The term "bailie" is used in northern France to describe an official with a role similar to that of an English sheriff, and this title is usually anglicized as "bailiff." These are different roles, however.

## Standard of Living

The standard of living of peasants is strongly affected by the proximity of towns. In areas where flight from the manor is viable, standards are higher. As the living conditions improve in towns, so too the living conditions in the hinterlands of the towns improve. The sections that follow most accurately describe manors more than two days from a major town.

## Housing

Many peasant houses have a single room. Wealthier peasants might, however, have a chamber, pantry, buttery (a room where alcohol, not butter, is kept), and separate kitchen. Many peasant homes contain a byre, a room for penning animals.

Peasant houses are usually constructed by building a frame, which holds up a ridge pole, then using wattle and daub to build walls. The frame, called a bay, usually contains an area 15 feet square. The average house is two bays in size, although they vary between one and five bays, based on the wealth of the builder or the obligation of the tenant.

Wattle and daub is a technique for wall building. A weave of twigs is created to act as the core of the wall. This is plastered with layers of mud, or mud mixed with straw. The wall is allowed to cure in the sun, and is often whitewashed with lime to discourage vermin. Stone sections are rare in peasant houses. Wattle-and-daub houses are fragile: housebreakers regularly rob them by literally smashing through their walls.

Peasant houses are often roofed with thatch or wooden shingles. Thatch is made from straw, which is a byproduct of the grain harvest. Rye straw is considered superior to wheat straw for this purpose. In some areas reeds are used instead of straw, because these make the most durable roofs. Thatched roofs are often built with a higher pitch than shingle roofs, because this allows more rapid runoff.

Thatch roofs provide good insulation, but are slightly permeable, so many peasants do not have chimneys. The smoke from their fires rises through the thatch and reduces infestations by insects. Thatch roofs are difficult to extinguish once they have caught

## Peasant Loyalty

### COMMUNITY LOYALTY

Peasants in Mythic Europe are not required to be loyal to their lord. Most have never seen their lord, and only see his steward twice a year. Some lords, who have heads filled with poetic tales, believe that their peasants sit in their hovels blessing their lord for his charities, and do boon works because they love their lord so much. In Mythic Europe, unless your troupe decides otherwise, this is simply naive. Peasants may be happy or unhappy because of the actions of their lords, but they are never loyal to strangers. Peasants who interact with their lords may develop a personal bond of loyalty, but this is rare.

Players used to computer games may feel that lowering taxes should make peasants more manageable, because this is a common game mechanic. It doesn't work well in Mythic Europe, however, except in the very short term. Peasants, when they become rich enough to have free time, use it to organize politically. Rather than becoming complacent with their gains, rich villeins become increasingly politically restive. This is particularly true if nearby towns offer greater personal freedom and a higher standard of living.

Military household servants — the *mesnie* — are an exception to the idea that loyalty is not expected of servants. As knights, they are expected to be loyal to their lord, provided their lord maintains their standard of living and dignity. The loyalty of the *mesnie* may be tracked using the system given in *Covenants*, page 38, or simply assumed to be strong while times are good and less good during difficulty. Characters may take Virtues and Flaws to change the loyalty of their underlings.

Magi can prevent their rich peasants from becoming restive by offering them a deal better than that provided by the nearest town's royal charter. These peasants do not become loyal to the magi, who likely remain strangers because of The Gift. They may, however, be loyal to the community that the magi create and govern, or to the community's figurehead if they know him personally. Many peasants support covenants simply from self-interest. When magi attempt to develop communities with very high living standards, this creates resistance from nearby nobles and Churchmen, which provides opportunities for stories.

### FLIGHT AND REBELLION

The loyalty mechanic given in *Covenants*, beginning on page 36, is suited to organizations of magi, perhaps with the occasional nobleman as their peer or servant, who are somewhat distant from the rest of the world. The *Covenants* rules are suitable for the large households of senior nobles, but they don't work as well when modeling the relationships of lesser nobles to their agricultural peasants. Noblemen lack the means or ability to provide many of the factors that make covenants loyal, and further lack the capacity for magical retribution. To their benefit, however, they also lack The Gift's social penalties.

A peasant flees the land when it seems he has better prospects elsewhere. This choice may be based on individual factors, like fear of being punished for a particular crime, or wider factors, like rumors of

war. The presence of large towns makes the decision to flee far easier for peasants, as do stories of successful flight carried back to their village by travelers with messages from those who have left.

Peasants rebel when they feel they have no other choice. Rebellions are rare, because they tend to end badly, with the rebel leaders put to death. This occurs despite laws that prevent lesser nobles from usurping the mortal justice of the king. Short of armed rebellion, some peasants choose — as a group — to refuse to labor. Such villeins can be evicted and replaced, but this is expensive for their lord, and this inconvenience sometimes leads to a change in his policies.

### NOTHING GROWS FOR THE WICKED

Players may prefer a more folkloric approach to peasant loyalty. In many ballads, the reign of a good king is marked by God with fertile harvests, while the reign of a bad king is blighted with famine. Similarly, if the player characters are virtuous and successful, then God raises the standard of living of the peasants in the covenant's area of influence. The peasants notice this and attribute it to the magi. This generates community loyalty.

Troupes using this system select good harvests rather than making the annual roll called for by the Mythic Pound system (see *Covenants*). Alternatively, peasant characters from the covenant's lands, when they appear in stories, may always be portrayed as happy and wealthy. This system is not used through the rest of the chapter.

fire, though, and in some cities new thatched roofs are forbidden. In London, thatched roofs now have a layer of plaster on their underside, which acts as a fire retardant. In other areas, the thatch lies on a layer of turf, which improves its insulating properties.

Most peasant houses have no luxuries. The floor is usually beaten earth, strewn with straw. There is a table, a few stools, and a chest for clothes. Some peasants have bed frames, while others sleep on sacks of straw or wool off-cuts. Some prefer to sleep on lofts that are reached with a ladder. Richer peasants have more furniture.

## Food and Drink

The main food of the peasants is bread. It is sometimes made from wheat, but in many areas wheat is grown primarily to pay the rent of the lord, or for sale. Rye and barley bread are common. Even in areas where wheat is consumed by peasants, their bread is often made from maslin. Maslin is a mixture of the lowest class of the manor's main grain (usually wheat or barley) with some cheaper foodstuff. This is usually rye, but may be barely or even beans.

The peasants' second staple is pottage, which is a soup or stew made by boiling miscellaneous things together. In many places pottage is simply made of rolled oats, but barley, peas, and lentils are common in pottages, as are garden vegetables, herbs, and spare bits of meat. Meals of pottage are cheaper than those of bread because they are exempt from milling and baking charges. Pottage is also a more filling way of cooking limited amounts of grain, because pottages gain bulk from the chaff that has not been winnowed from them, and they contain far more water than bread.



Meat is rare in the peasant diet. It is added for special occasions, like religious festivals and the customary feasts given by the lord to mark the end of sowing or planting. The diet may be supplemented with additional meat by poaching small game, which is one of the most popular crimes in Mythic Europe. Fish are also added to the diet in areas where they are readily available. Fat is similarly scarce in peasant diets.

There is a rough line across the center of Europe, north of which peasants drink ale, and south of which they drink wine. Neither, however, is particularly potent. In half the manors of England the famuli are given no allowance of ale, and drink water. In most places this is considered unsafe. In limited areas cider is more common than either ale or wine.

Ale is vital to the economies of many manors. It provides a source of nourishment that keeps well and, unlike bread, is free of the lord's taxes. Most manors have ale tasters, who are minor officers of the manorial court who assure that ale is not too watery. Most ale-making is done by women. Widows sometimes turn their attention to the craft as a way of supplementing their income.

## Improvement in Living Standards

One handbook for senior clerics and estate managers lists the sins described in the following sections as popular with peasants who seek to increase their material wealth at the risk of their souls. Characters performing any of these sins will be substantially wealthier than their more pious neighbors, but expensive piety is rare in peasant families.

### Paying Tithes Inadequately

One tenth of everything that a person gets must be given to the Church. Theological theories that would limit tithes to the natural increase of plants and animals aside, every person owes tithes, for everything of

### Story Seed: Excommunication

Peasants who do not pay their tithes are cursed. That is, they are excommunicated by their priests. The widespread use of excommunication calls demons to an area, as they sense an easy harvest of souls.

A bishop near the covenant has pronounced an anathema on all those in his see who have failed him in the matter of tithes. Since those who knowingly have contact with an excommunicant are also excommunicated, he has placed large numbers of souls outside the protection of the Church. Various competing factions of demons flock to his see, and create mischief for the magi and each other. The characters can stop this by getting the bishop to lift his ban.

value, always. Every person, it is assumed, lies about his tithes and defrauds the Church. The mortuary, a charge described in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs, is always levied on the dying. Its function is to make things right between the Church and the dying thief.

Common peasant rationales for paying lesser amounts include subtracting the expenses of collecting the harvest before the division, paying for only the primary crop of the field, not tithing byproducts of the harvest like straw, tithing with the worst of the fruit or grain instead of the best, paying late, delivering tithes to a local church instead of the church appointed to the manor, or docking the pay of a poor-quality priest.

Senior officers of the Church may, out of a sense of mercy, excuse the tithe in limited circumstances. Beggars, for example, owe tithes on the alms they collect. They are excused payment for alms sufficient to prevent them starving. Note that exceptions may never be self-assessed.

The Church puts a little leeway into tithe-exemption calculations. People who think they are likely to starve if they pay their tithe can only be compelled to pay by sending armed men to arrest them and seize their property. This is, itself, expensive, and so on some manors, it's not considered worth the effort. On other manors, strict enforcement is thought to be the obligation of the lord for the spiritual betterment of the peasantry, and so uneconomic tithes are levied anyway.

### The Economics of Tithing

Tithing effectively swallows twenty percent of the income of most peasants. This is because the tithe is ten percent of the peasant's crop, rather than ten percent of what he has left once his seed corn for the next year, wages for laborers, and taxes to his lord have been accounted for. In areas where farm yields are higher, tithing is less onerous, but in much of Mythic Europe, average land returns less than four bushels of grain for every bushel planted. Lay lords and monasteries, because they do not owe themselves rent, sometimes farm land even more marginal than this.

By tradition, tithes are divided in the following way. One-quarter of all tithes go to the rector of the manor. One-quarter goes to the support of his curate and other priests. One-quarter is used to maintain the fabric of the church building. Finally, one-quarter is used to feed the poor. Many authorities, even within the Church, claim that this system is not followed in practice in many places. They point to the run-down churches found on some manors, and the lack of a dole for the poor, as signs that the priests are keeping too much for themselves.

Some demons try to persuade priests that monks, having no personal possessions, are therefore poor. As such, it is not necessary for the Church to give the final quarter of the tithe to the servile poor. They are less deserving, the demons argue, because their work is less important than prayer.

### Paying the Lord Less Than You Owe

The simplest way for a peasant to have more money is to give less to the lord than is owed. This is difficult where there are cash rents, but is relatively simple in areas where rent is paid in the form of goods. Typical techniques include giving the lord the smallest fish, fruit, or eggs, and the worst quality grain.

One practice considered particularly pernicious is seen close to some of the capitals of Mythic Europe. The peasants of a

### Story Seed: Claiming the Covenant

In some parts of Mythic Europe, anyone who lives on a lord's holding for more than a year, and lacks written proof that they are free, is automatically a villein. This can cause trouble for a covenant that hides its magical status, because it means that every servant of the covenant, and even the magi themselves, are legally the property of the local baron. Even if the baron does not attempt to press his claim and force the magi to take to the plow, he feels he has a right to a large payment in exchange for their manumission.

lord simultaneously refuse to pay their taxes. This holds his lifestyle to ransom. This tactic generally only works if the lord is unable to bring force to bear, such as if he is deeply in debt or needs the money to pay the king's scutage.

### Paying the Lord Only What You Owe

If a lord is getting only what he is owed, by custom and law, and this leads him into a life that is below what his peers enjoy, it is the moral duty of his peasants to give him more. The lord, technically, owns everything they own anyway. See the concept of tallage in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs for more detail.

### Not Resting on Holy Days

Refraining from work on the sabbath and on the holy days of the Church isn't a privilege, it's a duty. The holy days on which a peasant is forbidden to work theoretically take up about a quarter of the year. This is so uneconomic that no lord of the manor respects it, and all serfs work on lesser holy days. Peasants who do refrain from work on a holy day are expected to make up the day owed to the lord from their free time. Similarly, it is considered wrong to take in only the mass of the service (such as by waiting

### Story Seed: Sending Lawyers and Money

In the classic form of peasants withholding their tax (which causes the most alarm among the writers of estate management handbooks), a group of peasants sends a delegation to the capital to hire a lawyer. They give the lawyer the money that they owe to their lord, to argue against the lord in a court of law. If the peasants win, they have lost nothing: their fees for the lawyer are smaller than the continual stream of fees that the lord could otherwise demand. If the lord wins, he has still suffered a great expense, great disruption to his domestic staff if he had no cash in reserve, and is unlikely to be able to collect the full amount his peasants owe him regardless.

The characters become involved because the carrier of the peasants' message is a redcap. When the redcap is found dead, the characters must determine who is responsible, and where the money has gone.

outside the church with others to conduct business until the moment of the mass, then rushing inside, then departing again when the mass is done). Meeting after church to drink and dance is also considered sinful, but it is common.

### Perjury on Behalf of Lords

Many peasants, as a way of increasing their financial well-being, are tempted to lie in court disputes on behalf of their lord. This is particularly prevalent in boundary disputes. Lying on behalf of one's lord in the royal court is one of the fastest ways to make easy money.

### Stealing from Neighbors

The two most common thefts in Mythic Europe are of firewood and stock. Stolen stock is relatively easy to hide, because all sheep look identical when skinned. Stolen

### Story Seed: Saving a Village, or Saving For a Village

The lord of a local village is marrying for the second time. He demands the peasants pay an extra tax, to allow him the sort of feast required by his new father-in-law, who is a baron. This extra tax will impoverish the village. The characters may prevent this, or encourage it, to find ways to benefit from the lord's greed and the peasants' suffering.

The characters may seek to prevent the tax being tallied. They may do this by sabotaging the marriage. This is difficult, but not impossible, because although the lord does not usually dwell at the manor, he will be in residence for a few weeks before the nuptials take place.

The characters may instead encourage the nobleman to impoverish his people. They may do this by offering rare and expensive delights and entertainments for the feast, through their intermediaries. This leaves the villagers and lord open to the covenant's financial influence. It allows the covenant to lure away the manor's tradesmen, and may even make the village so marginal that the lord would accept a cash offer for it, or the role of tame nobleman.

firewood is even easier to hide: wood looks like other wood and the evidence literally goes up in smoke. Communal fields allow many other opportunities for theft. These include moving border markers, plowing in ignorance of the markers, and over-reaping such that one's scythe cuts down a little of a neighbor's crop.

### Changing Priests Without Permission, or Deducting Tithe for his Flaws

Some unscrupulous priests allow their flocks to pay an incomplete tithe. This leads peasants into sin, encouraging them to shop around for the priest who will give them the best rate regarding their tithes and other du-



### Story Seed: Lying for the Lord

A peasant flees to the covenant seeking protection. His lord asked him, along with a group of compurgators, to lie about the ownership of a piece of land that was in dispute. Some of the others who acted as witnesses have gone missing, and the peasant thinks they have been murdered. He is not sure if his lord had them killed to make sure that they cannot tell the truth to the royal court, or if the slighted party carried out the killings, taking revenge. In truth it is far worse than this: a demon is murdering parties on both sides of the dispute, hoping to trigger a regional war.

### Story Seed: Deodand Donkey

Stealing from neighbors is considered particularly heinous if the neighbor is frail, but this stops few criminally minded people because the elderly are such easy victims. The covenant has unknowingly bought a donkey that was stolen from an elderly man who died when it bucked him. It was stolen by a neighbor when it wandered out of its byre afterward, seeking grass. This animal, because it has caused a death, should be given to the Church. Theoretically the price of its sale would be used to provide for the dead man's relatives, but effectively this is just another tax.

The deodand donkey contains a little of the ghost of the dead man. The fragment of his spirit that resides in the deodand is angry at his death. It can transform its host animal into a spectral, centaur-like creature with the hindquarters of a donkey. It uses its powers to cause trouble in the area where it is kept, until it is given to the Church or destroyed.

ties. Medieval peasants are not permitted to choose who their priests should be. They are required to accept the care of their souls by the person appointed to them by the bishop, regardless of his competence or piety.

Even a local priest who is heretical should

### Story Seed: The Bishop's Mistress

There is a folk story about the hearth mate of a priest who heard that the bishop was on his way to reprimand her partner for living with a woman. It is said that she filled a basket with good things to eat and took a shortcut through the woods. Reaching the bishop's party before he arrived in town, she was asked who she was, and where she traveled, all alone in the wood. She answered that she was taking food to the bishop's mistress, whom she had heard was with child. The bishop, mortified by his shame, returned home.

A bishop on good, or at least neutral, terms with the Order has contacted the covenant and asked for help. He is the bishop in the story. The strange part, for him, is that he doesn't actually have a mistress, and yet everyone he meets seems to believe he does. His home has a room for her, decorations selected by her, and clothes that she seems to have discarded for the maids to wash. One of his rooms has become a nursery, and between visits someone is filling it with furniture and toys. He does not know if this is some mundane trick engineered to drive him mad, if the mistress of the priest made a deal with the faeries of the wood, or if demons are bedeviling him.

be assessed and removed by the bishop, not judged by laymen. Some peasants ignore this and deduct a fine from their tithe for the things their priest does that they are sure are sins. This is unacceptable to the Church. The Church has, however, made some rulings that allow parishioners to ignore their priests. The most significant of these, to the daily life of peasants, is that they are enjoined not to attend the services of priests who live as if married. They are still required to tithe in such cases, although most do so parsimoniously.

### Sexual Abstinence

Many peasants limit the size of their families by abstinence or contraception. This is a sin because it robs a lord of the peasant's brood, and reduces the size of the family available to support the peasant in his old

### Story Seed: Gift to the Faeries

Many mothers of illegitimate children, or of children in families that are too large, leave their babies exposed in the wilderness, comforted by the idea that they will be taken and raised by the faeries. The lack of corpses in the traditional sites where children are abandoned reinforces this hope.

Each site has its own explanation. In some the children are taken and raised by faeries, or given to mothers who want children but cannot have them. In others, faeries or other predators consume the children. In Transylvania and the Alps, these places are monitored by magi, who find that a surprising proportion of these children are Gifted. Even those who are not become highly loyal servants to the secret communities that rescued them from death.

In this story seed, a noble whose son has died on crusade is desperate for an heir. He knows he has a bastard son, and seeks him out only to find that his mother abandoned him on the Waif Rock, a faerie site near her village. He asks the magi to find his child, and return him home. Perhaps he has been taken by the faeries. Perhaps he is now a servant of the covenant. Perhaps the characters can just pick a suitable servant and claim he is the lost son returned. If they substitute a fake, eventually the prodigal returns, filled with faerie power and mischief.

age. Unsupported elderly peasants become a drain on the economy of the manor or the Church, so failing to have sufficient children is considered antisocial.

### Working in Old Age

Elderly people who work are considered avaricious. Instead, society expects that they should turn their lands over to their children. On many manors it is usual, before the land is handed over, for a written contract to be sown to the manorial roll. This lays out precisely how much the retired person may expect each year, in grain, cheese, money, and clothes. It almost always promises "a place



### Story Seed: The Inn of Good Rest

A character of interest to the covenant dies of poisoning and the characters decide to investigate. They discover there have been a series of poisonings, all pilgrims who have worshiped at a local shrine. The deaths are being caused by the followers of the faerie lord to whom the shire's site was sacred before the coming of Christianity. They run a brothel, and occasionally kill pilgrims who visit it. They do this because their faerie patron guards the border between the profane and sacred, and feel that they further this by killing people who are at spiritual risk.

Some pilgrims mistakenly assume that since pilgrimage washes clean some of their sins, they can perform some of the more interesting sins the night before the pilgrimage concludes and not suffer any spiritual ills. The faerie lord, is more influenced by commonly believed stories than by theological accuracy, and has, his followers use slow-acting poison, because it is sure not to kill any given victim before his pilgrimage is complete. The faerie's followers believe that they can catch the pilgrims just after they enter a state of grace, killing them before they can sully themselves again.

to offer more for farm labor than is traditional, which prevents them from spending this surplus on charity, crusading, and other good works. Offering more for labor encourages people who ask for more than is customarily theirs — that is, it encourages thieves.

### Not Working Hard

A peasant is required, by scripture, to cheerfully work to his utmost to please his lord. A peasant choosing not to exhaust himself in his labors for his lord, who does not have a heart filled with a desire to serve, is in a state of sin. A peasant who makes a contract with his lord such that he is not required to work to exhaustion is seeking license to sin, and such licenses are false documents.

### Story Seed: Even Demons Have Limits

A local baron is taking to ridiculous extremes the idea that his servants are required to labor for him cheerfully and with a whole heart, working people almost to death. The characters are contacted by an agent of a local demon of greed, who does his best to hide his involvement, retaining the guise of a local taverner. The demon believes that the peasants of the area are too exhausted to sin properly. The demon thinks that he has the lord's soul safely claimed by now, but regrets that his experiment has cost him the souls of the exhausted peasantry. The demon hopes that the characters will be able to somehow intervene with the lord to ease the peasants' burden, that all will be able to freely sin again.

by the fire." In some parts of Mythic Europe, people over forty are considered to be aged, but they are not expected to turn over their lands until a more advanced age.

### Story Seed: Misguided Faeries

Characters breaking the taboo of working in old age attract faeries that represent their fear of decrepitude and powerlessness. Magi also attract these creatures, despite the fact that a magus in his sixties is only middle aged. These faeries, lacking experience with magi, cannot see the magicians for what they really are, or at least pretend they cannot. This makes their attacks humorously ineffective, if still annoying.

### Moving Manor

Flight is theft, because a peasant's labor is not his own, to dispense as he wishes. It also encourages lords to attempt to buy popularity, by meeting the rising living standards in nearby towns. The Church has mixed views on this, but in large sections of the Church this is seen as wrong, because physical poverty leads to a desirable spiritual state, and because this forces the ecclesiastical landlords



## Being Hard on Pilgrims and the Poor

Peasants are required to aid pilgrims and the poor. Providing for the poor is increasingly difficult in Mythic Europe, due to the booming population. Some peasants believe that the poor should be provided for from the tithes of the Church. They therefore surmise that it is not their duty to succor the poor, given that they, themselves, live a marginal existence.

Similarly, pilgrims tend to be wealthier than peasants. They at least have sufficient free time to travel. It's not clear to some peasants why they should offer food and lodging to people richer than they are, who choose to pretend to be poor briefly while engaging in a sort of spiritual tourism. In some parts of Mythic Europe, pilgrims are also considered troublemakers. It's believed that many pilgrims use the opportunity of anonymity away from their home communities to engage in theft, inebriation, and — particularly — fornication.

## The Gaining of Freedom

For many serfs, freedom is an important goal. A serf who is free has the right to own property, marry as he or she wishes, have children who are not born to servitude, and work in a profession of his choice. Free people are also, in the minds of Mythic Europeans, fundamentally better people than serfs. There is a strong sentiment in Mythic European law that serfs are legally incomplete, like children, the insane, or women. This is why, for example, all priests are free.

Manumission, the freeing of serfs by lords, is favored by the teaching of the Church, but is rarely practiced by senior Churchmen. Far fewer serfs from Church lands are made free than from the lands of lay rulers. This is because secular lords, at death or to give thanks for the birth of an heir, often bestow charity on the poor. One of the forms this charity takes is the manumission of serfs. Churchmen almost never give charity in this form.

## MANUMISSION BY LAY LORDS

The process by which lay lords give manumissions varies between kingdoms. In France, for example, a lord may only free a serf if the lord's feudal superiors, up to the king himself, give him license to do so. In England, this is not the case; a lord personally owns the service of his serfs and may do as he wishes with them.

Manumission costs whatever the lord wants it to cost, so the price varies tremendously based on the financial needs of lords. It is higher in England, where demesne farming is popular, than in France, where renting land to free men is preferred. It is lower in lands at war, and higher in lands at peace. It falls tremendously just before a major campaign is mounted. It falls when labor is cheap. If a lord sets the price of manumission too high, many of his peasants instead use their wealth to rent additional land. As a rule of thumb, a player character can purchase freedom, for himself and his descendants, for between six and ten pounds.

In many areas, because it is believed that serfs technically do not own anything, a legal ritual is used to manumit serfs. The serf gives his money to a free man, and then that free man and the lord come to a bargain whereby the lord is given the money, and in exchange manumits the serf. The lord is, therefore, not setting the precedent that his serf had the right to keep the money that was used to buy his freedom.

If a boy begins schooling to become a priest, then he is free. The father of the child then owes the lord a fine. This is far smaller than the usual fee for manumission. For player characters, assume this sum to be ten shillings, and the duty to say masses for the soul of the lord on a regular basis. In some areas if such a person ceases to be a priest — for example, if he is cast out of the holy office due to scandal — then he becomes a serf again.

## Manumission by the Church

Manumission of serfs is explicitly forbidden to senior Churchmen, banned as a form of alienation of property from the Church. Senior Churchmen, in theory, hold no property of their own. They instead administer the property of the Church, which they cannot sell. How much is the lifetime labor of a peasant worth? How much, in addition, the

work of every descendant, though all generations until doomsday? No peasant has that sort of money, and so he cannot pay his worth to the Church.

More practical Churchmen counter with the idea that sale of Church assets, at the going rate, does not diminish the Church's holdings. They feel that it is right to free serfs for money, provided that they don't pocket the money themselves. Refusal to release any serfs is seen as a way of keeping priests away from this temptation. The Church, practically speaking, does manumit serfs, but almost exclusively in exchange for money, and only when finances are unusually weak.

## Manumission by Membership of a Town's Guild

In many areas it is possible to become free by being a member of a town's guild for a period of time. The idea that a person becomes free by living in a town for a year and a day oversimplifies this legal point. To become free the person must not stray from the town, and must be accepted as a resident by the authorities of the town. This generally requires guild membership, which, in turn, generally requires the active support of a wealthy patron who gives the villein employment. It is, therefore, far easier for villeins who have relatives living in a town to escape villeinage in this way.

## Manumission by Force of Crusading Sentiment

It is felt by many people that there is something ignoble about forcing one who has fought for the cross back into serfdom. Legally, a crusader has no right to claim his freedom. Effectively, in most kingdoms, a man who has been able to attend crusade as part of the retinue of a great lord is freed by his service to God.

# The Agricultural Year

The agricultural year is divided into four uneven seasons by the work done at that time, which is dependent on climate. Roughly speaking, winter runs from September 29 (which is the first day of the administrative year) until Christmas. Twelve days of recreation follow Christmas, and then spring begins. Spring lasts until Easter. Easter again is followed by a week of festivities, and heralds Summer, which ends at the start of August. Autumn lasts until the end of September.

## Two- or Three-Field Rotation

All of the villeins labor together during the sowing and reaping, but most manors have distinctly marked blocks belonging to individuals within the great fields. Plowing is done by individuals, or by teams of men who lend each other oxen and plows in turn, so that they form a complete ox team. Reaping is done by individual crop owners and their servants.

In a three-field manor, wheat or rye is planted in autumn in the first field. An alternate crop, which varies by climate and locale, is planted in the spring in the second field.

Popular crops include oats, vetches, beans, peas, and barley. The third field is left fallow. In the following year, the wheat is moved to the fallow field, the secondary crop to the wheat field, and the secondary crop field is left fallow. In the two-field system, one field is left fallow while the other is divided in half and planted much like the second field in the three-field system.

Parts of either field may be sown with crops other than the main one selected for that season. The field is divided into sections, called furlongs, which are long rectangles. The manor court selects what is planted in each furlong, and all holders of land in that furlong must plant the correct crop. This makes planting and harvesting easier. This also allows the manorial court to ensure that a village has the correct balance of crops.

### Story Seed: A New Crusade

Crusades are extremely expensive. They create problems for peasants unable to resist the tallage of their lords (as described in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs), but also provide opportunities for those who have sufficient power to stare down their lords. At the beginning of the Third Crusade, peasants throughout England found that their lords wanted a great deal of money very quickly. They sold manumissions and land cheaply. They were willing to grant concessions on villein fees and services. Some were even willing to sell their demesne lands, de-

termined to make their fortune in the Holy Land or be buried there.

A new crusade is also an opportunity for covenants with spare money, or who are willing to engage in usury. The demands of the lords for money in coin make it difficult to come by. Usurers respond by raising their interest rates. A covenant willing to loan money to the local peasants at a cheap rate could become very popular, while one willing to loan money at the going rate would be unpopular, but comparatively wealthy.

## August and September

August and September are the months for the harvest. Every serf is required to give extra service to his lord, which can make bringing in his own crops difficult. Even freemen are usually required to work at this time, although their work is supervising the day laborers they have hired to do their physical labor. After the harvest, poor people wander the fields looking for missed grain. They are permitted to keep these gleanings as an act of charity. After this, the cattle are set loose in this field, to graze on the wheat stubble. The peasant then takes his tithe to the Church and his rent to the lord. By tradition the harvest is meant to be complete by Michaelmas (29 September) because that is the day of reckoning for manorial taxes, not only for the peasants, but also for the reeve, who must give account up until this day, and who is replaced or reaffirmed in office on this day.

On many manors pigs must have rings through their snouts after Michaelmas. This prevents the pig from uprooting plants with its nose. Each sow is expected to give birth to around 14 young a year, so their population grows rapidly. Pigs are only considered good eating in their second year, but they are generally able to keep themselves alive by foraging over winter. This foraging can damage the crops of other peasants, necessitating the ring.

Cattle are bred in September. This allows them to calf after winter ends.

### Richard's Deed

King Richard — who was always more at home in Normandy than England — said at the start of the Third Crusade that he would sell London, if only he could find a buyer. In Mythic Europe, kings can't say silly things like that without someone, or something, answering their summons.

Magi might have bought London. There have always been rumors in the Order that House Tytalus wanted to take him up on the offer. Many other covenants, at this time, sought charters from the king guaranteeing their rights. There is also a Mercer House in London that seems to thrive.

Faeries would gladly have bought the right to access some or all of London, for their court. This gives them a Right of En-

try, as described in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, which lessens the impact of the Dominion. It also provides great hunting opportunities for some dark faeries. Those that cannot cross thresholds without being invited in would be free to attack people in their homes in London because Richard is their landlord, and so can "invite in" whatever he likes.

Richard may have sold similar rights to demons, thinking them magi or faeries.

The player characters may seek the title deed for London, if by seizing it they prevent a demon from burning down the town, or a malevolent faerie from spreading a sickness. The Deed of London is kept in a regio, closely guarded by demons or faeries.



## October

The movement of the cattle onto the wheat field leaves the fallow field free for a third, slightly deeper, plowing. After this is complete the peasants make preparations for winter. The most important preparation is the gathering of wood. This is used as fuel, but is also the raw material for the craft work that the peasants expect to do over winter. This usually includes house repairs. As the weather became progressively worse, increasing amounts of work are done indoors. Threshing, for example, needs to be completed. October ends with All Saint's Eve, Hallowe'en, when the dead are thought to walk.

Sheep are bred in October. Breeding can occur earlier, but October breeding allows them to drop their lambs after the worst of winter.

## November

Martinmas, the Feast of the Plowman, is celebrated with a feast on the 11th of November. The annual slaughter of beasts that the peasants do not wish to feed through the winter begins, in some areas, as early as Michaelmas, but is usually the work of this slower part of the year. Cows are rarely slaughtered if they are still capable of bearing calves, but oxen that are older than six are often killed, as they are considered to be at the end of their strength. Sheep are only killed for lack of fodder, if their health fails, or on special occasions, because they are considered to have better value alive.

## December

Christmas usually marks the end of fieldwork, other than the spreading of manure or agricultural lime, until the following January. Many use this time to perform craft work, make repairs around their houses, and beget children. The time of the year between Christmas and Epiphany is set aside for festivals and prayer. It is a time for lords to grant largesse to their followers. Peasants owe their lords their respects and regards, a sort of theoretically voluntary tax, usually of poultry.

## January

A feast is held to celebrate the resumption of work, although in colder climes there is little to be done in the fields at this time. In many areas plow races are held. In Britain bands of young men travel the streets asking for money for the plow, and destroying the yards of those who refuse. Animal husbandry begins in January, with the breeding of pigs and the first lambing. Lambing in England occurs in March, but in pleasanter climes comes earlier.

## February

Once the ground has softened a little, whatever soiled straw a peasant has collected during the winter is laid on the surface of his land, so that when the plow turns the soil, the straw and manure are dug in. On manors that are relatively warm, and that have many sheep, ewes are sometimes shorn in this month to prepare them for lambing in March. Calving beings in February.

The middle of February is commemorated as the day of the Purification of the Virgin. This refers to a ceremony that mothers perform after giving birth to make them spir-

### Story Seeds: Faeries at Christmas

In many areas a game is played where a bean, or silver trinket, is hidden in a treat and the person who finds this foreign object in his serving is the king of revels for the feast. Some people believe that, in ancient times, these bean kings were killed by the pagans. Dark faeries, who do not care if a story is true or false as long as it ends in screaming and blood, have difficulty finding admittance to communities on Christmas, and so they rarely hunt bean kings. A bean king who wanders, however, might find himself pursued, if his term is up, or treated with the greatest courtesy and showered with gifts, if his day has time remaining.

One way for faeries to enter the human lands during the 12 days of Christmas is to take on the role of mummers. Mummers are humans who form bands, put on masks, and then parade, beg for money, or fight. Many bands of mummers perform

traditional plays. The mixture of traditional roles, artistically performed stories, and transgressions made possible by assumed identities draws in some of the strangest and most obscure faeries, who are only ever discovered if they are forced to remove their masks.

In this story seed some faeries conspire to make real the things that are only the pretenses of the mummer's play. The actor playing the fool loses his wits for a year until he plays the same role again. The actor playing a woman similarly has his gender changed, until she can repeat her performance the following year. The characters do not know that these curses are of limited duration and seek the assistance of the player characters. They are aided in their quest to fix this trick by a prop from the play: the pills of the doctor, which bring the dead hero back to life, can now cure all wounds instantly, and contain Corpus vis.

### Story Seed: Holly and Baby

A hedge witch has reason for vengeance on a noble lady. She put a small holly branch over the window of the nursery of the lady's child last Candlemas night. Dark faeries, able to enter the house because of the invitation of the holly, killed the child in its cot, leaving it cold and lifeless with not a mark.

The revenge of the witch, however, is not yet finished. This year she plans to

put up the holly again, so that a faerie, in the shape of the dead child, will attack the mother. Characters may prevent this by removing the holly, or they may appease the faeries entirely by burning a candle in every window of the noble lady's house. The witch will try to snuff one of the candles and hang more holly. How do the characters monitor all of the candles at once?

### Story Seed: Mob Football

On any festive day when the weather is suitable, peasants may play football. The rules of football vary greatly from place to place. Whichever team gets the ball back to a designated spot in their village (or to their end of the village, in a game played by halves of a single village) is the winner.

- Each side may have an unlimited number of players. Players have a side by birth or residence. That is, those born in the poor part of a town, in many places, must play for that part of the town.

- Killing the players of the other side is forbidden, but striking them with a certain degree of force is inevitable.
- Striking members of your own team is allowed. On some manors, it's considered impossible to commit an assault during a football match, because the crowd of drunken football players will swear that whoever is charged before the manor court didn't strike the blow.
- Players may trespass where they like. Trampling crops is permitted — but low — play in many areas. As with assault, there's no way to assign blame.

### Story Seed: Faerie Kidnapper

Three of the girls of the village are pregnant. They are greatly distressed, because two of them claim not to have known men, and their prospects of marriage have been seriously damaged. Investigation demonstrates that all three were kidnapped at Hocktide by a man they thought was their beau, and each of them gave him a kiss as their ransom. When their children are born, it is obvious that they have a faerie father. The characters may wish to shield the children from the abuse that is likely to follow. They may also seek the father, because faerie satyromaniacs can't be left to make mischief so close to the covenant.

itually clean enough to re-enter the church. It involves a procession with candles, a feast, and — in parts of France — eating crepes.

Candlemas is considered an excellent day for divination by hedge witches. Even the untalented know simple folk observances. These include predictions of lean times for those who don't still have half their flour and hay, and a present end to winter if Candlemas is rainy. Candlemas is also a day to predict the death of relatives by listening for soul bells.

Peasants caution that greenery used to make the house colorful for Christmas must be taken down before this day. To fail to do so angers the spirits of dead children, and this is one of the many origin stories of faeries. Faeries express their annoyance with tricks or, in the worst case, by killing someone who lives in the house. They prefer to kill children, who are like themselves.

## March

Lambing occurs slightly before sowing. This is busy time on manors that graze sheep, particularly those that graze in preference to cropping. Lambing on estates with large herds is done in pasture, which requires more work than barn lambing, because some ewes seek privacy while giving birth. Humans are often able to rectify problems that might otherwise kill a ewe or lamb, and sometimes are able to graft orphaned lambs onto ewes whose lambs have died.

The primary crop is sown in March, and this takes as much labor as the manor can provide. In areas where the last neck of grain

is saved from the previous harvest, either as a bundle or having been made into a corn doll, it must be plowed in now.

The field is then harrowed. That is, a tool is drawn over it to cover the seeds so they are not eaten by birds or rodents. On some manors, the primary crop is all wheat; this is particularly true on wealthy manors where the crop is being grown for sale at a nearby town. On more independent manors, only a quarter of the primary crop is wheat. The remainder is a mixture of other grains and legumes.

At the beginning of Lent, in some areas, a great feast is held to use up forbidden foods which cannot be stored until after Easter. For peasants these are eggs, butter, and milk, which become pancakes and pastries. Races of various types are held, and mob football is played. In other areas, peasants just eat their normal fare, which is so humble that it is considered suitable for fast days.

## April

Easter is a time for processions of various types, and for the veiling of the cross until Good Friday. A vigil is held between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and it is believed by many peasants that Infernal powers are strongest at this time. The week after Easter is a holiday for peasants according to the Church, although most lords do not accept this and merely allow peasants to work their time in some other week. As the weather is warming, sports and games are popular.

The week after Easter ends, in parts of England, with Hocktide Monday and Tues-

day. The celebration of Hocktide varies from place to place, sometimes including bizarre rituals of mutual flagellation by husbands and wives. In its more usual form, women use ropes to capture male travelers and refuse to release them until they pay a penny, or a kiss in some cases, on the Monday, and the men return the favor on the Tuesday. The money collected is spent on a worthy cause.

In this month the fallow field must be given a shallow plowing to kill the weeds. Weaning begins, which prompts dairying. Piglets are born, a process called farrowing.

## May

During this month the peasants perform such labors as are required by the customs of the manor. This may include construction work, maintenance, or warfare. The month begins with the celebration of May Day. It is also the month for capturing swarms of wild bees to create hives.

In some areas, strict sexual morality is abandoned on May Day and people spend the night in the forest. May Day celebrations often involve fires around which people dance, or over which people leap. Some people think their rye will grow as tall as they leap over the fire, although Hermetic magi have never demonstrated this to be true. Peasants "bring in the May" by carrying flowers and green boughs back to their homes in the morning.



### Story Seed: Rogation Blood

There is always some concern at Rogation that a parent will not hurt a boy sufficiently for him to remember the landmarks. In one village the blood of so many virgin boys spilled on a particular stone, year after year, is a sacrifice to an almost-forgotten pagan god. When the Rogation becomes so lax that there is not enough blood, the deity stirs to seek repayment for the village's debt.

### Story Seed: Wake Day

Wakes are celebrations where people stay up the night before a feast day. Wake Day is a special wake that is celebrated at different times on various manors. The wake is celebrated on the evening before the day of the patron saint of the Church in the manor. Festivities vary, to suit that saint. In many areas the saint reflects the local industry.

Informally, many Jerbiton-influenced covenants celebrate September 26 as their Wake Day. This is the Feast of Saints Cyprian and Justina of Antioch. Cyprian was a sorcerer, and perhaps a diabolist, who tried to use his powers to seduce a Christian virgin, but then forsook evil when his spells failed. He is the patron of the church at Valnastium, the domus magna of House Jerbiton.

A character comes to the player characters on Wake Day and claims to be a penitent Infernalist. He offers to name the nobleman who recruited him, and the other members of his coven. How can the player characters be sure he is telling the truth? Do they give him a chance to live a life of atonement, or assume that he is an agent of the Infernal attempting some scheme?

Many peasants run their cattle or sheep between two May Day fires, to defend them against the curses of hedge witches and this is — in some areas — completely effective. This may be because local witches sometimes make sure the effect works, to protect their village from interlopers. The Beltaine rituals can hex those who practice magic, which includes Hermetic magi who are lax in renewing their Parma Magica while outside their covenant's Aegis.

The Rogation Days begin forty days after Easter. On these days, the people of a village walk its boundaries, and prayers are said in traditional places. Young men are taken on the walk and abused so that they do not forget where the landmarks are. They may be dunked in pools and rivers, have their faces mashed against rocks and trees, or be beaten at particular points. This is done for the good of the boys, often by people who love them. There is a feast afterwards.

In May or June, Pentecost is celebrated. This day, 49 days after Easter, represents the giving of the Commandments to Moses, and the entry of the Holy Spirit into the apostles before they began the ministry detailed the Book of Acts. A feast, dancing, and horse racing are popular on this day. Pentecost is often followed by a week of holidays.

## June

Shearing occurs in this month.

Other duties also require attention from the peasants. A second, shallow plowing for the fallow field occurs at this time. It is considered unlucky to plow before Midsummer

(24 June) because thistles killed before this time are thought to grow back threefold.

Midsummer Eve, the night before the Feast of John the Baptist, is a mystical evening. In many parts of Europe it is believed that ferns drop fiery seeds on this night, and that if you collect the seeds then the Devil is forced to appear and give you a bag of money. In a separate tradition, children race around the village with flaming sticks and set alight piles of rubbish to scare away dragons that would otherwise poison the wells.

Midsummer is the traditional start of haymaking. Each laborer can cut about an acre a day in good weather. It is vital to make hay while the sun shines, because cut hay is left to dry for hours. If stacked while it is still wet, hay begins to rot. This generates heat deep within the haystack and, if left unchecked, may cause the haystack to ignite. Most stock will not eat hay that smells of smoke, so if a single haystack catches flame in a stackyard, it can ruin much of the crop.

## July

By tradition, the last day of July is the last day of haymaking; in August the manor switches to reaping its harvest. Many manors finish haymaking more quickly than this, provided the weather is fine. During July women harvest, prepare, and spin flax and linen, to make cloth or string. Men weed their fields. For this they use a pair of sticks, one forked, the other with a blade at its end. At the end of July, after the meadow has recovered from haymaking, it is reopened to stock.

## Chapter Eight

# Massed Combat

The focus of *Ars Magica* is on telling stories, and the field of battle is no exception to this. This chapter provides rules for raising armies and running battles with the player characters at the heart of the action, with their resolve and fighting spirit deciding the outcome of the day.

## Medieval Armies

Across Mythic Europe, all armies contain troops that fall into the same broad categories. Knights are the best-armored and often the best-trained troops on the battlefield. Serjeants are lighter cavalry. They are professional soldiers retained by a noble or wealthy master.

Infantry are the foundation on which formations are built, while archers give pause to even the quickest and heaviest of troops. Levies are the lowest and most meager soldiers, usually quickly drafted and poorly equipped. They also provide the labor force for siege operations. The baggage train contains cooks, clerks, wives, children, priests, surgeons, and armorers — everything the army needs to support it on campaign.

Characters suffer a  $-1$  Living Conditions modifier for each year during which they spend at least one season in a campaigning army. After a whole year spent in a campaigning army, characters must make a Disease Avoidance Roll as per *Art & Academe*, page 46.

It is important for a captain to bring a mixture of units to the field. Among every ten units, a captain typically looks to field two units of cavalry, three of archers, three of infantry, and two of levies.

For every ten units in an army (rounded up) the army also needs one unit of baggage.

For every unit of baggage less than the quantity required (such as if, for example, baggage units are lost in battle), the characters leading the army suffer a  $-1$  penalty to any totals based on their Leadership Ability.

The total number of combat groups (see later) in the army is important and should be recorded for later use.

## Raising an Army

Armies are drawn from three main sources. The core of a noble's army comes from his household and vassals. This is supplemented with mercenaries. Lords who are the masters of a region may also gain additional forces from their allies.

### VASSALS

The size and composition of the forces a lord can raise varies across Mythic Europe, but the table below shows the average number of standard combat groups (each consisting of five fully equipped men) that can be raised in strongly feudal areas.

TITLE	KNIGHTS	SERGEANTS	INFANTRY & ARCHERS	LEVIES (WHEN ON HOME GROUND)
Poor/Average Landed Noble	0	1	2	2
Wealthy Landed Noble	1	1	10	10
Greater Baron	4	4	40	40
Earl or Count	10	10	100	100
Duke	25	25	150	150

Note that the cavalry element of these forces can be renewed during the course of a war. For example if a lord has six household knights and five of them die in a cavalry charge gone wrong, then it's possible for the lord to simply appoint replacements, which doesn't cost the lord any money. Peasant levies can also be renewed in a similar way, if the lord can recruit additional peasants from outside his lands.

The command of vassal armies is hindered by traditions, such as how long the force is to remain in the field, or how far from home it can travel. Many lords allow their vassals to pay a fee, called scutage, instead of mustering. This allows the lord to hire mercenaries who are more expensive but allow greater strategic flexibility.

### ALLIES

A character who has an ally or agent due to a Virtue or story event may claim the forces of that ally or agent, with the approval of the troupe.

### AFFINITY

A character who acts as the leader of a region may use his personal authority and charisma to draw lesser nobles into his force. These allies expect to be treated well after victory, and their political demands may then become story hooks. The character's success in drawing other nobles to his banner is represented by multiplying his core vassal forces (before scutage or mercenaries are considered) by some proportion. The result generally provides additional troops to support his own.

A character wishing to call on his allies for support makes a Presence + Leadership + Affinity score simple roll and looks up the result — which corresponds to the proportion by which his core force is multiplied — on the Allied Troops Table.



## The Articles of War

The Church has issued two proclamations directly concerning the waging of war. The Peace of God (Pax Dei) attempts to protect certain classes of people who are to be exempt from violence. These are principally the poor, Churchmen, and merchants. The Truce of God (Treuga Dei) restricts the days on which war can be waged. This means that Fridays, Sundays, holy days, and Lent are exempt from fighting.

Breaking either the Pax Dei or the Treuga Dei is considered an unchristian act, as is the execution of prisoners. Captains fearful for their souls, and those who ask for the blessings of saints, do well to obey these articles of war, but easier paths are often more attractive.

## CHEVAUCHEE

The chevauchee is a tactic used to weaken the resolve of a population and to provoke an army into confrontation. Enemy territory is ravaged, crops are burned, and the people are driven from their land to the relative safety of towns and castles. The chevauchee not only secures territory and supplies for the ravaging army but also denies them to the enemy. Even defending armies may leave destruction in their wake as they spoil crops and poison wells in order to deny the enemy. This tactic is used across Mythic Europe and the Levant.

Land put to chevauchee is subject to disease and famine, with farmland spoiled and livestock and population alike slaughtered. Those returning to such an area suffer a -2 Living Conditions modifier (in addition to any existing modifiers) to their next Aging roll. In extreme cases some areas may develop a Malevolent Infernal aura (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 11 and 15).

## MERCENARY BUDGET

Living on the very edge of solvency is an expectation of the noble lifestyle. Fortunately, nobles see hiring mercenaries as an appropriate way to express wealth, and so mercenaries can be hired from the money usually spent on the luxuries of life like fine meals and entertainment. This does not low-

## Allied Troops Table

The proportion in the table below is applied as a modifier to the size of the noble's own vassal army. To be clear, a character must roll better than 12 to raise additional allied forces past his own core force.

TOTAL	PROPORTION
6	Half
12	Equal
18	Double
24	Treble

The following table suggests modifiers to this roll.

SITUATION	MODIFIER
Raising an army in winter	-3
Raising an army around harvest	-1
The same lord raised an army the previous season	-3
The same lord raised an army earlier in the same year (not cumulative with previous season, above)	-1
Raising an army during an active crusade	-3
The lord has the Wealthy Virtue	+1
The lord has the Poor Flaw	-1
The lord has the Inspirational Virtue	+3
The lord has the Difficult Underlings Flaw	-2
The lands of the affinity are under threat	+1
The lord is in revolt against his own liege	-2
The lord has a Major social Virtue	+3
The lord has a Minor social Virtue	+1
The lord has a Minor social Flaw	-1
The lord has a Major social Flaw	-3
The promise of wealth and/or title (the spoils from a city, for instance)	+3

er the living standard of the lord, although it may concern dependent characters in the lord's household. In times of peace a lord who spends all of his money on soldiers is considered a brute. In times of war, a man who spends too much of his money on anything but soldiers is seen as an adolescent.

The table below shows the average amount of money in Mythic Pounds that a noble may spend on mercenary troops based on his wealth.

TITLE	POOR	AVERAGE	WEALTHY
Landed Noble	0	2	5
Baron	0	40	100
Earl (Count)	0	100	250
Duke	0	250	500+

Characters lacking sufficient surplus money sometimes take out loans against their source of income. A character who is Poor may not do this. A character who is average may become Poor and in exchange borrow five times the average mercenary budget of someone of

## Mercenary Units

The table below lists the costs of typical mercenary combat groups.

TYPE	MYTHIC POUNDS	VALUE
Knights	15	Exp.
Serjeants	5	Exp.
Infantry	2	Std.
Archers	2	Std.
Levies	1	Inexp.

## Crusaders

The Church may also attempt to raise an army to crusade. It draws its funding from its own holy orders, the vassals on its own lands, and the obedience of those living under the protection of the Church. A character with the Senior Clergy Virtue (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 93) is treated as having an affinity equal to the most prominent noble within his diocese or see. He makes a Holy Influence roll (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 38) and compares his total to the Army Size Table.

## Covenants

Chapter Five of *Covenants* provides guidelines for the cost of maintaining an armed force. The prices of units listed here are only used when the covenant recruits additional mercenary forces. In this case, the covenant is restricted only in the amount of money it can raise or conjure.

his class in coin. This loan may be paid off with the spoils of war or through stories.

A character who is Wealthy may become average and gain five times the difference between the Wealthy and average mercenary budgets for his class, or may become Poor and borrow five times the budget for a Wealthy person of his class.

Note that these transactions depend on the availability of a banker with enough money to loan the character, or enough

credit to pay those the character would like to pay, as well as (in either case) the power to collect the character's lands if he defaults on his loan. Some kings and banks have this much power, as do the bankers for the Church. Transactions of this magnitude may take many weeks to complete, and so are not suited to lightning war.

In most areas lords cannot easily sell their land to raise extra funds. In those areas where the sales of lands is possible, the king's share of any transaction is often so large as to make the value of any such transaction questionable.

## Heroic Endeavors

Battles are played as a series of vignettes, each with a player character as the decisive force. The success of that character reflects the success of the wider army.

These rules use either the standard combat rules from ArM5, Chapter 11, or the optional combat rules in Chapter Nine of this book. Unless otherwise stated, each participating player character is the leader or vanguard of a combat group of similarly skilled combatants. An overall army commander must also be nominated, who can be either a player or a storyguide character.

## Territorial Advantage

Before the battle, both armies vie for territorial advantage by generating a Deployment Total as they deploy their force.

**DEPLOYMENT TOTAL:** Intelligence  
+ Area Lore + Stress Die

If he wishes, an army commander may assign a lieutenant to determine the best ground. If the commander does this, the lieutenant generates the Deployment Total. If the commander is unhappy with his lieutenant's advice, he may then generate his own Deployment Total. However, if he does generate his own Deployment Total, the commander must use it, even if it is lower than his lieutenant's.

Territorial advantage is calculated at the beginning of the battle based on each side's

## Winning the Battle from Afar

These rules assume that player characters take an active and pivotal role in the fighting. Where this is not the case, the storyguide should simply decide the outcome of the battle, basing his decision on two factors. First, the demands of the wider story in which the battle figures, and second, the actions taken by player characters to influence the battle.

## The Flow of Battle

Battles are carried out by following these steps:

1. Commanders determine Territorial Advantage.
2. The Weight of Numbers modifier is determined and assigned.
3. The storyguide assigns and plays out as a combat encounter a battlefield event for each participating player character in turn. After each battlefield event, the losses are counted on both sides and the Weight of Numbers modifier is optionally recalculated.
4. Victory is decided and the outcome of the battle is described.

## Knights Banneret and Mercenary Captains

Characters with certain status or Virtues, such as a Knight Banneret or a Mercenary Captain, always treat their company as a single combat group regardless of any Weight of Numbers modifiers.

Deployment Totals, and does not change until one side surrenders the field.

**TERRITORIAL ADVANTAGE:** Deployment  
Total – Enemy Deployment Total

Storyguides should designate specific features on the battlefield (a chapel, a series





of hills, a bridge, etc.). These provide the settings for battlefield events. The supernatural auras present should also be considered. Infernal auras, for instance, have damaging and insidious effects that cause wounds to open more easily or promote maltreatment of prisoners (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 10).

### USING MAGIC TO SEIZE ADVANTAGE

Magic aids in seizing territorial advantage, such as by misdirecting enemy troops in a fog, redirecting a stream to make a forced march easier, or even altering the rise and fall of the battlefield itself. Add the highest magnitude of any spell used to affect the terrain, or the deployment of troops, to the friendly side's Deployment Total.

### Weight of Numbers

The size of an army is measured in standard combat groups of five individuals. If the troupe's army outnumbered the enemy army, then the troupe gains a bonus to the event totals generated during this battle. If the enemy has the advantage, the troupe suffers a penalty. The magnitude of these bonuses and penalties are determined using the table beginning at the top of the next column.

RATIO OF ARMY SIZES (ROUNDED DOWN)	BONUS/PENALTY	DESCRIPTION	BATTLE EASE FACTOR
1:1	none	Engaged	9
3:2	±1	Advantage or Setback	12
2:1	±2	Imminent Victory or Defeat	15
3:1	±3		
4:1	±4		

This bonus is calculated at the beginning of the battle but should be recalculated during the battle to account for losses on either side.

### Battlefield Events

Battlefield events represent the pivotal action points during the battle. They are the heroic moments that veterans and chroniclers will recount when the battle is over.

The storyguide decides how these battlefield events are spaced. Different events may take place a few minutes apart or on consecutive days. Events do not even have to take place on the same battlefield. You could play one event describing how enemy reinforcements are delayed from reaching the battle, and others to describe the overrunning of the smaller, and now unsupported, main force.

Wherever and whenever they are set, each stage of the battle has a target ease factor that increases as the battle wears on. While three events are typical, storyguides should feel free to vary this.

The troupe selects a focal player character for each stage of the battle, upon whose efforts the story is focused at that moment. That character attempts to win the event by calculating an Event Total at least equal to the Battle Ease Factor as below.

The Event Total is based substantially on an Event Bonus, which the character generates by freely choosing and summing a Maneuver, an Enemy, and a Size. These chosen factors in turn define the specifics of the event that the character must overcome or endure in order to win the event.

A character may choose a combination of Maneuver, Enemy, and Size that are not sufficient to exceed the Battle Ease Factor, if he wishes. The event is still played out, but the players have no hope of winning the event overall in this case.

**EVENT TOTAL:** Stamina + Leadership + Territorial Advantage + Weight of Numbers Bonus + Event Bonus

**EVENT BONUS:** Maneuver + Enemy + Size

For example, during the "Engaged" stage of a battle, a character with Stamina +2 and Leadership 4 with a Territorial Advantage of 1 and no Weight of Numbers bonus needs an

Event Bonus of at least 2 in order to reach the Battle Ease Factor of 9.

The troupe is assumed to have the initiative (replacing the initiative roll) on starting a battlefield event, but may surrender the initiative for that event to gain a +1 bonus to the Event Total. Unless otherwise stated, each battlefield event lasts five combat rounds.

## MANEUVER

The Maneuver describes the kind of action the characters must undertake during the battlefield event.

**DEFEND (+0):** The characters receive an enemy assault or must defend a place, item, or person under attack. Success is decided by defeating the attackers or by defending for a number of turns decided by the storyguide. If the characters withdraw or are killed, the defended location, item, or character is taken by the enemy and the event is lost. Defending characters typically have some defenses, such as stakes, walls, or even complete buildings which provide combat bonuses.

**ATTACK (+1):** The characters attack the enemy line or location. Success is decided by defeating or routing the opponents.

**RUN THE GAUNTLET (+2):** This maneuver is a catch-all for events that include activities other than direct combat, such as climbing a tower while under attack to light a beacon, swimming across a river, or reaching a hill to safely load and launch a trebuchet.

**TAKE (+3):** The characters must attack the enemy line or location as a precursor to defeating or taking a given place, item, or character, which must then be defended against counter-attack. The target of the attack may be also defended by an additional group of opponents. Expect these events to last longer than five rounds.

**HEROIC GESTURE (+4):** This is a daring feat of foolhardy bravery. If the leading character dies during a Heroic Gesture, the event is won and the player should describe how that death secures victory. The event is lost if any other player character is killed. The storyguide should set additional win conditions to ensure the leading character has a chance to make it out alive.

## SIZE

The Size of a battlefield event describes the number of combat groups the characters must defeat before they can win the event.

The Weight of Numbers modifier modifies the size of the combat groups involved in the battlefield event. If the troupe has the advantage, each of their combat groups has five combatants plus bonus individuals equal to the Weight of Numbers modifier. If the troupe is outnumbered, the enemy combat groups consist of five + bonus individuals.

**LESSER (+0):** The characters face a standard combat group about half the size of their own.

**EVEN (+1):** The characters face a single combat group.

**OUTNUMBERED (+2):** The characters face two combat groups.

**OVERWHELMED (+3):** The characters face three combat groups.

**I STAND ALONE (+4):** A single character steps forward to meet the enemy, or undertakes the challenge singlehandedly, against overwhelming odds, typically a full-strength combat group.

## ENEMY

The Enemy of a battlefield event describes the kind of opponents the characters must face.

**INEXPENSIVE (+0):** The characters' opponents are inexpensive troops in the form of levies.

**STANDARD (+1):** The characters face standard-cost troops such as infantry or archers.

**EXPENSIVE (+2):** The characters face expensive individuals or groups such as knights or sergeants.

**SPECIAL (+3):** The characters must face leading enemy characters (who will likely be defended), supernatural troops, or other dangerous phenomena such as fire, a collapsing building, etc.

**BAGGAGE (+4):** Attacking the baggage may swing the battle either way. It can stave off defeat by drawing troops or can seal victory by crushing morale. Characters choosing this Enemy option gain 1 experience point towards a bad Reputation. The baggage is normally guarded by inexpensive troops.

## WOUNDS AND ATTRITION

At the end of each battlefield event, the defeated side loses a number of combat groups equal to the event's Size characteristic multiplied by the winning side's Weight of Numbers bonus (if positive), representing the efforts of the winning side elsewhere

on the battlefield. The type of the units lost should match the event's Enemy characteristic. (These losses are in addition to any losses sustained in the course of the event itself.)

In addition, the commander of the losing side must make a Morale roll (see Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules) against Ease Factor 6. On a failure, the commander can attempt to rally his forces (Ease Factor 9) at the beginning of the next event. If this fails, apply the behaviors of Disordered or Routed groups to the losing army.

Player characters may attempt to rally a failing army. An additional story event (with no target Ease Factor) may be played in which one or more characters take command. Alternatively, a simple roll to assume leadership in combat may be made.

The Morale rules in Chapter Nine: Optional Combat Rules can also be applied during battlefield events as the combatant groups take damage. Rolls made during the event affect only the group or groups involved.

## EXAMPLE BATTLEFIELD EVENTS

### Skirmish

Event Bonus +0

*Maneuver: Defend, Size: Lesser, Enemy: Inexpensive*

The character must defend against an ambush of enemy scouts, attempt to disengage, and get back to his troop. Enemy reinforcements will arrive in five rounds at which point the weight of their troops becomes overwhelming. If the character(s) defend and disengage within five rounds, or the overwhelming troops are defeated, the event is won. The event is lost if the lead character dies.

(+0 Defend, +0 Lesser, +0 Inexpensive)

### Hold the Line

Event Bonus +2

*Maneuver: Defend, Size: Even, Enemy: Standard*

The character must receive the enemy charge and hold the line. The enemy group exerts itself on the attack. The event is lost if the character is pushed backwards, forced to disengage, or dies under the onslaught.

(+0 Defend, +1 Even, +1 Standard)

### Rescue

Event Bonus +5

*Maneuver: Run the Gauntlet, Size: Lesser, Enemy: Special*





One of the character's knights is thrown from his horse and rolls into the river. The character must rescue the knight before he drowns. Storyguides may require Athletics rolls to reach the river, Swim rolls to find the sinking knight, and further Athletics rolls to drag him to the side. Once the knight has been brought to the bank, there are be enemy troops to fight off. All rolls during this event are made with stress dice and have two botch dice. The event is lost if the knight drowns or the character is swept away in the rescue attempt. Use the deprivation rules on ArM5, page 180 to provide the maximum duration for this event.

(+2 Run the Gauntlet, +0 Lesser, +3 Special)

### Loose

Event Bonus +5

*Maneuver: Attack, Size: Outnumbered, Enemy: Expensive*

The enemy cavalry round for a charge. The character's archer group must loose arrows into them to slow their advance. The cavalry start thirty paces away. Each round in which a light wound is inflicted on them prevents them advancing, otherwise they advance 15 paces each round. The event is won if the cavalry are held at bay, unable to attack. If they reach the character's line, their attack may form part of the next event.

(+1 Attack, +2 Outnumbered, +2 Expensive)

### On All Sides

Event Bonus +5

*Maneuver: Defend, Size: Overwhelmed, Enemy: Expensive*

The character and his combat group become separated from their unit and the enemy bears down. The group must defend themselves from an overwhelming enemy force for five combat rounds while help arrives. If the enemy groups are killed or driven off, or the character survives until the reinforcements arrive, the event is won. The event is lost if the character dies.

(+0 Defend, +3 Overwhelmed, +2 Expensive)

### Ransom

Event Bonus +6

*Maneuver: Take, Size: Lesser, Enemy: Special*

The enemy captain is separated from his own formation. A single Expensive enemy combat group stands between the character and the stray captain. The character must rush through the defending group and engage the captain, forcing his surrender.

(+3 Take, +0 Lesser, +3 Special)

### Feint

Event Bonus +7

*Maneuver: Run the Gauntlet, Size: Overwhelmed, Enemy: Expensive*

The character must take a small force and offer the enemy flank a target. He must engage them however he can in the first round, then disengage and draw them away from the main army. The disengaging rules can be found in ArM5, page 173. Each enemy combat group attempts to attack each round. Once disengaged, the enemy pursues.

If the lead character disengages and survives for five rounds, the enemy has been drawn away and the flank opened up. If the character is unable to disengage or is killed in the action, the event fails.

(+2 Run the Gauntlet, +3 Overwhelmed, +2 Expensive)

### Seize the Colors

Event Bonus +8

*Maneuver: Take, Size: Outnumbered, Enemy: Special*

The enemy continually rally to their standard. If that can be taken, morale will falter. The character must engage the mounted enemy standard bearer and his man-at-arms defenders. The standard contains a supernatural artifact that seems to urge the defenders on and redoubles their efforts despite their wounds. The event only succeeds if the standard is captured.

(+3 Take, +2 Outnumbered, +3 Special)

### A "Heroic" Maneuver

Event Bonus +9

*Maneuver: Run the Gauntlet, Size: Overwhelmed, Enemy: Baggage*

The character must take his unit through the woods covering his left flank, dispatching enemy scouts before they can raise the alarm. Once in position, he must break cover and attack the enemy baggage.

The lead character must first take the three sentries in turn without alerting the others. He must then lead an attack on the enemy baggage area. There is no time limit against this part of the event. Destroying

or routing three combat groups forces the remainder to rout, and forces the enemy to make a Discipline roll (Ease Factor 9) to prevent their flank from being pulled into disarray as they return to protect the baggage.

(+2 Run the Gauntlet, +3 Overwhelmed, +4 Baggage)

### Alone Against the Many

Event Bonus +11

*Maneuver: Heroic Gesture, Size: I Stand Alone,*

*Enemy: Special*

The character, alone, must defend the burning gatehouse for five rounds, prevent the enemy (standard troops) from surging through, and cover his men as they retreat. The character is considered to be defending the way through the gatehouse so cannot be passed by the attacking troops. If the character dies before the five rounds are up, or manages to hold the enemy at bay, the gatehouse collapses, sealing the way.

(+4 Heroic Gesture, +4 I Stand Alone, +3 Special)

### The Aftermath of Battle

Each battle is fought over an objective such as to defend the town, take the bridge, or destroy the enemy siege engines. If the enemy concedes or loses outright, the objective is achieved. A successful battle earns the victorious characters one Confidence Point for each successful battlefield event whether they took part in that event or not. The leader of the army also gains 1 experience point towards an appropriate Reputation.

After a battle, the wounded are tended by the many surgeons amid the camp followers. It is safe to assume that a surgeon with skill equal to a character's primary weapon skill is on hand to tend him. *Art & Academe*, page 43 provides more information on the treatment of injuries. After treatment, those with total wound penalties of -6 or greater cannot travel while those with -3 or greater can travel but cannot maintain pace with the army.

Prisoners taken on the battlefield face two very different fates depending on their class. Men of rank are usually ransomed, being stripped of arms and armor and released on assurance of payment. Soldiers of no standing are either executed (as Richard Lionheart did to 3,000 men at Acre) or mutilated. The kings of eastern Europe particularly use the blinding of captives as an example to others.

## Standard Combat Groups

Groups of knights, serjeants, and infantry are treated as trained groups, while archer, levy, and baggage units are untrained. However, a group that serves together for a season is treated as trained thereafter. Each group is assumed to be five individuals.

UNIT	WEAPON	INIT	ATK	DEF	DAM	SOAK	GROUP BONUS
Knight	Lance, Heater Shield (M)	+1	+17	+16	+6	+10	+15
	Long sword, Heater Shield (M)	+2	+16	+16	+7	+10	+15
Serjeant	Spear, Round Shield (M)	+2	+12	+9	+8	+7	+12
	Long sword, Round Shield (M)	+1	+10	+8	+7	+7	+12
Infantry	Poleaxe	+1	+13	+7	+13	+5	+9
	Mace, Round Shield	+1	+11	+9	+10	+5	+9
Archer	Bow	+0	+10	+6	+8	+1	+0
	Bow, Long	-1	+11	+6	+10	+1	+0
	Crossbow	+6	+12	+11	+8	+1	+0
Levy	Hatchet, Buckler	+1	+9	+6	+6	+1	+0
	Spear, Round Shield	+3	+6	+6	+7	+2	+0
Baggage	Knife	+1	+5	+6	+4	+2	+0
	Bludgeon	-2	+5	+1	+5	+3	+0

### MERCENARY TROOPS

The table above lists the statistics for standard units of each type, but throughout the *Ars Magica* period there are also specialist troops from Welsh longbowmen to Flemish pikemen to Genoese crossbowmen. Their combat statistics may vary from those above and these soldiers are highly sought after as mercenaries. And of course, as this is Mythic Europe, there is always the potential for strange and supernatural units to be deployed by the ambitious or the unwary.

Most armies rely on mercenary forces for a large proportion of their skilled contingent. As can be expected of men paid to fight and kill, the conduct of many mercenary troops leaves much to be desired. Nearly thirty years ago, Richard Lionheart sought to create a paid standing army by employing professional soldiers for what was to be his final clash with the forces of Philip II of France. His army included Welsh men-at-arms, Brabantine mercenaries, and even Saracen fighters. Richard's knights received one shilling per day while his mounted serjeants received four pence per day, double the two pence per day earned by the infantry.

Characters with some social standing are not protected by class etiquette, their power and influence is such that any magus captured in battle is likely to be ransomed to his covenant rather than killed or maimed.



## Story Seed: A Wizard's Ransom

A young magus, stripped of his talisman, arrives at the covenant. He admits to having been caught up in a conflict through his own naivety and also confesses, to his shame, that he was captured and has been ransomed. His captor has promised the return of his talisman on receipt of something the magus simply cannot provide. He asks the covenant for help in securing both his talisman and his good name.

Battles are almost always fought during daylight hours, and forces usually retreat from the field as evening approaches. If the day is neither won nor lost, a temporary truce holds and the dead and wounded are collected from the field.

## Siegecraft

It is the attempt to capture castles that usually determines the paths of military campaigns, because castles left in enemy hands may be used to stage counter-attacks, and as rallying points for enemy troops. This section describe how military might can take or defend castles, walled towns, or other fortified places. It does not, however, cover negotiations or diplomacy, which should be roleplayed.

It is for the troupe to determine when a castle finally becomes indefensible. Player characters should always have the chance to turn things around, through story events. A castle may fall only to be retaken by a relief force or through player character subterfuge.

## Castles

Castles are described in detail in *Covenants*. A limited version of that material is repeated here.

## Magic on the Battlefield

The battlefield is a loud and confusing place. The potential targets of a magus's spells clash and intermix with his allies, constantly obscuring his view. A magus engaged in a battle must make a Concentration roll against an. Ease Factor of 12 to cast spells. A magus who is not yet engaged or is standing off observing the melee must make an a Concentration roll against an Ease Factor of 9 in order to cast spells. A battle is always a stressful situation.

### TARGET: GROUP

The Hermetic Group target represents a continuous recognizable group of up to ten individuals. This target is rarely useful in a battle. Although these rules describe combat groups as being of a set size, they are never so simply arranged on the battle-

field, almost always instead presenting as a united mass with other troops. However, if a unit of any kind can be separated from the army then a spell using the Group target, with one magnitude spent to increase the size of of the target (to 100 individuals), then a spell can be cast to affect all combat groups within that unit.

### TARGET: BOUNDARY

The standard Boundary target covers an area roughly circular with a diameter of 100 paces. It must also be marked out by a well-defined natural or man-made boundary. This is rarely enough to encompass a complete battlefield and nor is the battlefield likely to conveniently marked out. Boosting the spell level by one magnitude increases the diameter to around 300 paces.

## Example Battle

The forces of Milan are amassed against the troupe's larger Veronese army. Neither side gained Territorial Advantage in deploying their troops. The battle opens with an Ease Factor 9 battlefield event. The lead character for this event has a Stamina + Leadership (battle) of 5 and a +2 Weight of Numbers modifier. He needs an Event Bonus of +2 to reach the Ease Factor. The storyguide describes the enemy charge; the character must Hold the Line (+0 Defend, +1 Even, +1 Standard). As vanguard of his combat group the character engages in a combat encounter with a single enemy combat group that is smaller than his own (since his army outnumbers the enemy). Luck is on his side and the enemy group is quickly routed. The enemy is pushed back and takes losses.

Some time later, the fighting has intensified. The second character to lead an event has a Stamina + Leadership (battle) of 5 as well, and the Weight of Numbers modifier is still +2. But the Ease Factor is now 12, so an Event Bonus of at least +5 is required. The storyguide describes how

the character's commander has become surrounded and is thrown from his horse. The Rescue event is used and provides the necessary +5 bonus. The character is successful at resolving the event and the army rallies to its commander.

Almost immediately, the enemy knights round for a charge on the left flank. The last character to lead an event, an experienced knight, has a Stamina + Leadership (battle) of 7, with the same +2 Weight of Numbers modifier. As the Ease Factor is now 15 he must have an Event Bonus worth +6. The enemy charge has left the enemy commander exposed. Seizing the opportunity, the character attempts to capture and Ransom (+3 Take, +0 Lesser, +3 Special) the enemy commander. While the character's combat group takes on the commander's bodyguards, the character engages in single combat with the commander. Despite taking wounds, the character knocks his opponent from his horse and forces surrender. With the fall of their commander the enemy troops either rout or submit to ransom and the day is won.

### EVERY CASTLE SENDS A MESSAGE

Castles serve three functions. A castle acts as a refuge from military forces, so it defends territory. A castle acts as a staging ground for armies, so it threatens its neighbors. A castle costs a fortune to create and maintain, and in many places requires the permission of the king to build, so it communicates the status of its owner. A castle, then, is a claim to political power, backed with the threat of force.

A brigade of knights, supported by a castle, can travel about twenty miles in a day. This means they have the ability to raid targets up to ten miles away and return to their barracks before nightfall. All people who live within that radius, or have interests there, rapidly become aware of the existence of the castle. The temporal and spiritual authorities of an area cannot ignore any castle.

### FREE CHOICES

A character with the Landed Noble or Great Noble Virtue may select any of these options to describe his stronghold without spending extra money annually.

**ISLAND:** The manor is surrounded on all sides by water so the lord has no defensive buildings. The water is shallow enough to be forded in places, but these are easily protected by missile troops.

**MANOR HOUSE:** This is detailed in the paragraphs concerning manorial halls in Chapter Six: Manorial Fiefs.

**RINGWORK:** This is the most primitive sort of castle. It begins with the excavation of a vast ditch, in some cases twenty feet deep and wide. The soil from this excavation is piled and packed down to create a rampart as much as 15 feet high. A thin, stone wall without a walkway is placed upon the rampart.

Wooden buildings, including a short tower of little defensive value, lie within the ring. Some ringworks partition the defended space into two wards. The inner ward houses the ruler of the ringwork and his attendants, the outer their servants and supporters.

A ringwork cannot resist a determined military assault for long, as it lacks the elevation that aids the defenders of other sorts of castles, but it can act as a staging area for a force of knights, so it cannot be bypassed by invaders.

**SMALL TOWER:** The manor house is a small tower, four stories high, with one or two rooms per story. The tower is attached

to a fortified courtyard, into which stock are driven in troubled times. Larger manors surround this tower with outbuildings, which are wooden and lack defensive value. A stone wall, six feet high and without a walkway, surrounds these buildings.

Towers allow their inhabitants to see approaching forces from a greater distance, and increase the field of fire of magi and archers, but are far less comfortable to live in than manor houses. The lord may have a hall in the courtyard and use the tower as a storehouse, retreating to it only in times of immediate threat.

A small tower cannot act as a staging area for large military groups, and alarms minor landholders only.

### MINOR CASTLES

Minor castles may be selected by characters who are Landed or Great Nobles. Characters who maintain these castles must pay two pounds per year, out of the money that they are described as being able to spend frivolously in Chapter Two: Politics, to maintain their fortifications. They may also wish to hire extra guards, at the rate of one pound per man per year for mediocre servants.

### Shell Keep

The shell keep is a modification of the motte-and-bailey castle. A motte is an artificial mound of earth, between ten and one hundred feet tall, on which a wooden tower is built. This tower overlooks and defends a courtyard that is surrounded by a ditch, embankment, and wooden palisade. This courtyard is called the bailey. Some noblemen still build motte-and-bailey castles in 1220.

Most motte-and-bailey castles have been strengthened with stonework since their creation. A problem for a nobleman planning improvements is that the motte dominates the bailey, and so cannot be ignored, but is not strong enough to hold a stone tower keep of the style found in more modern castles. Such noblemen usually build a shell keep.

A shell keep is a stone wall, usually two stories high, that replaces the wooden palisade atop the motte. The wall is thin compared to other fortifications, between eight and fifteen feet, and has a crenelated walkway. Some structures like this are so large that it is not clear if they are a shell keep or a small inner bailey: Restormel in Cornwall is 40 yards across. Within its ring, buildings are constructed. These are usually wooden,

or thin stone, and lack defensive use, but are far more spacious, airy, and comfortable to live in than those of a conventional keep. The center of the ring of buildings is usually a courtyard.

The wooden palisade around the bailey is also replaced, by a thick stone wall about ten feet high. This has a crenelated walk. Entry to the castle now lies through the lowest story of a square tower, two stories high.

### Tower Keep

Most tower keeps were built during the 12th century and are, generally, four stories high and square or rectangular. Entry is via an external stairway to the second floor. The keep is usually topped with crenelated battlements. Newer keeps may be polygonal or, most recently, round, in profile.

As an example of size, the two largest keeps of each type in Britain are Pembroke and Colchester. Pembroke is 80 feet high, 53 feet in diameter, and has walls 16 feet thick at the base. Colchester's keep is 151 feet long, 111 feet wide, and over three stories high. Castles that have works on this scale awe the local nobility.

The great tower of the castle is surrounded by a courtyard, which contains wooden or stone buildings of no tactical value. The courtyard's wall is made of thick stone, and is about ten feet high. It is topped with a crenelated walk. A small tower, two stories high, defends the gate.

### CURTAIN WALLS AND MURAL TOWERS

Great castles are only held by Great Nobles or their officers. Players who select these castles must pay additional expenses to maintain their fortifications. A castle costs five pounds a year to maintain, and the character must also hire additional infantry as guards. Many castles have land attached to them to help defray this enormous cost.

A curtain wall is a crenelated wall around a bailey. The wall is around thirty feet high and between eight and twenty feet thick. It has an exterior of dressed stones and is filled with a rubble core. Mural towers protect a curtain wall.

Most mural towers built before 1200 are square in cross-section. Round and semi-circular towers are the preferred types for contemporary building. Most towers are enclosed buildings, but some — particularly semicircular towers — have no masonry on



the inside face, so that if they are captured, they do not provide the enemy with cover. Others are closed until they reach the level of the parapet, and are then open.

A castle may have as many mural towers as suits the troupe. Framlingham has 13 towers, including two for its gate, while others built at the same time are rectangular baileys with a fat tower at each corner and two at the gate. There are two disadvantages to having a dozen towers: they are expensive to build, maintain, and garrison, and they declare to all nearby nobles that their owner intends to rule the county someday. Every extra tower makes a castle more difficult to ignore.

### KEEP ALTERNATIVES FOR CASTLES WITH CURTAIN WALLS

The defenses of curtain walls are so formidable that the role of the keep changes in response to them. The keep is still able to assist in the defense of the walls, and can act as a place of refuge if the walls are lost, but many castle builders diminish these roles, and find alternatives to the tower or shell keep for fortifications that have curtain walls.

A hall keep is a long, low building made of stone that is, structurally, an evolved form of the manorial hall. It is usually two stories high and has a limited number of entry points to minimize the number of defenders required to hold it. A hall keep, lacking a fortuitous hillock, is not as tall as the curtain walls, which limits its usefulness to archers. The hall keep's great advantage is that it is the most spacious and comfortable form of keep.

A courtyard castle focuses on the defense of the bailey, forgoing a keep entirely. Players designing courtyard castles may take another large structure, like a gatehouse or moat, in lieu of a keep. Most masters of a courtyard castle plan, in the worst case, fall back to their strongest tower, which is usually the gatehouse.

A gatehouse keep is a large building, usually three stories high, that serves as gatehouse and keep for the castle. Its lowest level is given over to storage and the entry to the bailey. The middle level is used for living space, equipment for the drawbridge and portcullis, and murder holes. The lord and his family dwell on the uppermost level.

### Barbican and Moat

A barbican, for game purposes, is a series of works that limit the access to the gate-

house by an invader. This includes barbican walls and yards, which channel an invader into a narrow space overlooked by archers. It includes barriers like portcullises, drawbridges, fall-away causeways, murder holes, pit traps, and whatever other fiendish devices the player characters can come up with to kill invaders.

A moat is a body of water at least twenty feet wide and six feet deep that surrounds the castle. The key function of a moat is to prevent enemies from mining under the castle's walls. The walls can rise either directly from the moat, or from a berm, which is a small circuit of land that separates the moat and the castle. If the moat flows swiftly into a natural body of water, like a stream or lake, then its water is fresh. Otherwise, a moat is a stagnant ditch that is probably an open sewer. Many castles do not have moats, and instead use ditches. A moat has no upkeep fee; it's a free choice for characters with castles that have curtain walls.

Moats are often used to augment gate defenses. Some castles have a barbican on a small island that is separated from the gatehouse by the moat. Others have causeways across the moat that approach the gatehouse indirectly, exposing attackers to crossbow fire from the walls.

A barbican and moat are included in the cost of a castle with curtain walls. A small castle lacking these features, but which has a barbican and moat, costs two pounds more than a normal small castle to maintain.

## Describing Castles

A castle is described by three main characteristics: Garrison, Defenses, and Supplies. Each characteristic has a measure of quality and an interval. Intervals vary from "day" to "year," and the lowest interval pertaining to a given castle determines how often key siege events are played out when the castle is besieged.

### GARRISON

The castle Garrison is measured in combat groups, usually a combination of infantry and levies, though larger castles also include knights, serjeants, and archers.

UNITS	INTERVAL	WEIGHT OF NUMBERS	EXAMPLE
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10 or less	Day	+1	motte-and-bailey castle
11 to 20	Week	+2	small castle
21 to 40	Month	+3	large castle or walled town
41 or more	Season	+4	city

The garrison units should be described as for field warfare. The defending garrison may also include siege engines (see *Siege Engines*).

### DEFENSES

Defenses describes both castle walls and other specific defensive engineering, earthworks, or moats. Their quality is measured using the grades presented in *City & Guild*, page 67. In this case quality represents the age, upkeep, and extent of the defenses as well as their inherent construction quality.

Permanent defensive enchantments also add +1 to the overall Defense Bonus.

DEFENSE QUALITY	INTERVAL	DEFENSE BONUS	EXAMPLE
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Shoddy	Day	+1	Make-shift defenses
Standard	Week	+2	Any free castle choice
Superior	Month	+3	Any minor castle choice
Excellent	Season	+4	Any great castle choice

Regardless of the castle's actual shape and construction, each castle is considered to have four sides or walls, corresponding to the cardinal compass points.

The castle's size, along with its Defense Bonus, determines how many damage levels each wall has, according to the following table.

SIZE	EXAMPLE	DAMAGE LEVEL MODIFIER
+5 to +8	A house, watch tower, barbican, or shell keep	3
+9 and larger	A fortified castle, town, or city	4

The castle's Defense Bonus is multiplied by the damage level modifier from the above table to determine the castle's damage levels. The walls of a fortified city (taking the curtain walls great castle choice) each have  $4 \times 4 = 16$  damage levels, while the walls of a tower keep have  $3 \times 3 = 9$  damage levels.

## SUPPLIES

Supplies include the food, water, and raw materials stored inside the castle, and the ability of the castle to resupply itself. Castles are almost never completely cut off as a besieging army is rarely large enough to encircle what is often difficult and porous terrain.

SUPPLY QUALITY	INTERVAL	SIEGE CONDITIONS BONUS	EXAMPLE
Shoddy	Week	+1	Easily surrounded
Standard	Month	+3	Large reserves
Superior	Season	+5	Situated on a river
Excellent	Year	+7	Situated on the sea

It is worth noting that a castle with excellent supplies is able to hold out against a siege for years. Stories providing the opportunity to improve or reduce the Supply Quality may be run, such as organizing a blockade to prevent resupply from the sea.

## Life Under Siege

A siege begins with the arrival of the attacking army in the area of the castle. This

gives the defenders time to pull supplies and the garrison back inside the defenses. A castle keeps only those resources that support it during the siege; children, the sick, and the elderly are frequently sent from castles awaiting siege. Cities, being harder to stockade, have better supplies and rarely send their populations away. But this often means that they are more sensitive to deprivation than a garrison of soldiers, and may look to sue for terms with a besieging force.

Characters under siege suffer from a  $-2$  Living Conditions modifier each year in which at least one season is spent under siege.

## STOCKADE

Well-defended castles can rarely be taken without heavy losses. In those cases, it is preferable to starve the garrison into surrender. And with so many people and so little space, even if getting enough food isn't a problem then getting rid of the waste often is.

To stockade a castle, the besieging army must assign units to at least three of its walls. This is enough to restrict movement in and out of the castle and limit effective resupply. Castles that cannot be surrounded in this way cannot be subject to stockade.

A castle subject to stockade at the end of a check interval, as determined by its supplies characteristics, make a supplies roll.

**SUPPLIES ROLL: Siege Conditions Bonus + stress die**

**EASE FACTOR: 3 + Garrison Weight of Numbers Modifiers + Number of Years Under Siege**

A failed roll reduces the castle's supplies characteristic by one level, which in turn increases the frequency that checks against supplies need to be made. On a botched supplies roll some form of disease breaks out within the castle. Botch dice are equal to 1 plus the number of full seasons spent under siege.

Unless a story event intervenes, the castle surrenders after failing a supplies roll while having shoddy supplies. Otherwise, all player characters in the besieged castle make deprivation checks as per ArM5, page 180.

## Making Supply Rolls

If it's not important to track a given siege with great precision, instead of making individual rolls, consider rolling in batches. For example, for roll involving castle with shoddy supplies, roll four dice to quickly resolve the passing of a month. Or, if the castle has standard supplies, roll three dice each season.

## Story Seed: Refugees

A nearby town is besieged and the some of the elderly, the young, and the infirm flee to the covenant for sanctuary. After granting them access, the covenant seem drawn to the town's plight. How do the magi contend with calls from the covenant to resupply the besieged town?

## Siege Engines

Siege engines are used both to coney forces inside a castle and to bring down its walls. A ballista is a large arbalest mounted on a frame. Providing power and accuracy, it is often employed as a sniper weapon and to launch ropes over castle walls. A mangonel is a tension-powered catapult that shoots stones on a low trajectory and at high velocity from a bowl-shaped bucket on the end of a single arm. They are primarily used to bombard walls and gates but can also be turned against armies on the ground. A trebuchet uses a huge counterweight on one end of a long arm to lob stones from a sling on the other end in a high, arcing trajectory.

## Laying Siege

A siege is represented in play through a series of decisive events. The first is played when the siege is first invested, with subsequent events at intervals determined by the lowest of the castle's characteristics.

The besieging army is proactive and chooses how it will attack the castle. There are three options: undermining the walls, launching an artillery assault, or scaling the defenses. For its part, the castle garrison is rarely passive, and can respond to these tac-





tics by sallying out, counter-mining, or even launching an artillery assault of their own. Attempts to gain entry through subterfuge and trickery are best left as roleplaying opportunities.

Unlike battles where victory can easily be decided, sieges have a natural lifespan and the castle garrison can not remain unsupported indefinitely. The rules for stockade as described above run alongside any military efforts.

### TROOP DEPLOYMENT

In a siege, each army may nominate any number of its units as miners, artillery, or soldiers. Artillery units and soldiers are as standard but miners are generally drawn from the levies. It is important to track these units as certain attacks can only be made if the army has units of the appropriate type.

Starting with the besieging army, followed by the castle garrison, both sides assign their units among the four castle walls. For simplicity it is suggested that these deployments remain unchanged throughout the siege, but some troupes may wish to re-deploy ahead of each event. Any wall that is undefended by the garrison may, if the besieging army deploys men to that wall, provoke an undefended escalade (see Escalade, below).

### UNDERMINING

If the besieging army has at least one unit of miners, an attempt can be made to undermine the castle walls. A single wall is targeted in each undermining attempt.

Starting at a safe distance from the walls, the mine, supported by wooden posts, is dug towards the castle. Once beneath the walls the tunnel is filled with dry wood and kindling and then set alight. When the supports burn through the tunnel collapses, bringing a section of wall down with it.

**MINE ATTACK TOTAL:** Intelligence + Profession Sapper + Stress Die

**CASTLE DEFENSE:** Intelligence + Profession Sapper + Defense Bonus + Stress Die

If the castle has a moat treat the Defense Quality as one step higher for the purpose of determine the Defense Bonus. If the Mine Attack Total exceeds the Castle Defense, the mine attack is successful.

### Siege Engines

	INIT	ATK	DEF	DAM	CREW	RANGE	MYTHIC POUNDS	COST
Ballista	+5	+5	6*	+15**	3	50	5	Exp.
Mangonel	-3	+3	6*	+20**	5	20-150	10	Exp.
Trebuchet	-4	+1	6*	+25**	5	50-200	15	Exp.

\* As these engines are essentially static, the Defense is not rolled but is instead an Ease Factor.

\*\* Treated as non-combat damage (see ArM5, page 181).

### NOTES

**BALLISTA:** Reloading a ballista is a two-round Extended Action (as per the combat actions in Chapter Eight, Optional Combat Rules) that takes the full crew.

**MANGONEL AND TREBUCHET:** When used against castle walls, a mangonel or trebuchet use the rules described in the Artillery section. In standard combat, both of these weapons target combat groups rather than individuals. Reloading these weapons takes two minutes and requires the whole crew.

The cost of these weapons in Mythic Pounds represents either the cost of building of them on-site or transporting them from a central armory. It also represents the cost of provisioning sufficient ammunition, which for the catapult devices, involves teams of quarrymen and an army of carts to transport stone to the engines.

## Story Seed: Construction

A powerful noble begins taking trees from a nearby magical forest to construct siege engines. If challenged, he agrees to stop, but at a price; he wants the magi to work their magic and breach the castle.

## New Abilities

### PROFESSION SAPPER

The planning and execution of tunneling operations to undermine castle walls is governed by the Ability Profession Sapper. It includes the siting of mines, the coordination of laborers, and the eventual firing of the tunnels. It also covers counter-mining activities, which are used to defend against the sapper's art. This Ability may not be used untrained, though characters with Profession Miner may conduct mining operations with three botch dice.

**Specialities:** specific types of wall. (General)

### PROFESSION SIEGE ENGINEER

The Ability Profession Siege Engineer describes the ability to design and construct siege engines, as well as the understanding of defensive engineering. Most siege engineers oversee construction rather than construct the devices themselves. Siege engineers are in high demand from wealthy clients needing defenses against siege, and from armies needing to breach those defenses.

**Specialities:** ballistae, mangonels, trebuchets, siege towers, castle walls. (Academic)

### SIEGE WEAPON

The Siege Weapon ability governs the operation of siege weapons, either individually for small engines, or as the leader of a crew for larger engines.

**Specialities:** ballistae, mangonels, trebuchets. (Martial)

A successful mine attack reduces the castle's Defense Quality by one step. A botched defense roll reduces the Defense Quality an additional step while a botched attack kills the sapper's unit (or requires a rescue story event to save them).

Storyguides may wish to develop these events further. It is common for the castle to counter-mine the enemy miners and collapse the tunnels themselves, before their enemies have chance to affect the castle walls. And on occasion, miners from both sides end up fighting for control over tunnels.

### ARTILLERY

Artillery can be employed against the castle walls if the besieging army includes at least one mangonel or trebuchet. These attacks are based on the damaged goods rules found in *City & Guild*, page 77. Siege engines attack in groups of up to five engines and a successful hit inflicts a number of damage levels equal to the size of the group. Each group makes a single attack roll during each artillery event. Multiple walls may be targeted in a given artillery event, provided the attacking force has enough engines to do so.

**ARTILLERY ATTACK:** Intelligence + Siege Weapon Ability + Engine Attack Bonus + Stress Die

**CASTLE DEFENSE:** Intelligence + Profession Siege Engineer + Defense Bonus + Stress Die

An attack is successful if the Artillery Attack exceeds the Castle Defense.

When a wall has been reduced to zero damage levels, the castle no longer benefits from its Defense Bonus at that wall.

### ESCALADE

The most direct way of assaulting a castle is the escalade, in which the attacking army scales the castle walls using wooden towers, ladders, and ropes.

The besieging commander may either use an escalade to probe for weaknesses and thin the garrison, in which case a single battlefield event is played out in the current check interval. Alternatively, the attacker can attempt to take the castle in one battle, in which case the standard battle rules apply using the castle walls as a backdrop.

In the case of an event where the attack-

## Option: External Defenses

Some castles have key defenses outside of their main structures that the attacking force must take before the castle itself can be assaulted. The Accursed Tower at the siege of Acre in 1191 is one such example. A separately purchased, additional minor castle can effectively be used to defend a larger partner. In these cases, the besieging army must first take the lesser defending structure before moving onto the main castle itself. Such features have their own Defense Bonus but rely on the larger castle's supplies and garrison.

## Escalade Weapons and Defenses

Siege towers are built on wheeled bases that can be moved up against the castle walls. These allow troops to gain a foothold on the walls while protected from archers. A more direct route is to use ladders and ropes to scale the walls. This is much more dangerous but can be more quickly, and more troops advanced. A cat is a covered mobile shelter used to defend attacking troops from a castle garrison as they move into position at the base of the castle walls. Battering rams are treated as bludgeons. Using a ram against a castle door forces a stress check (see *City & Guild*, page 77) against the vanguard's Brawl attack total.

Incendiaries are used primarily by the defenders to dissuade attackers from scaling the walls. Boiling water, oil, and hot sand are all commonly used. Treat each of these as a bludgeon for the purposes of Initiative and Attack totals, but use the heat and corrosion table for damage (see *ArM5*, page 181). Of course, anything could conceivably be pitched over the walls in defense against an escalade, and troupes should feel free to explore their creativity.

er simply tries to win the castle in a single battle, the defending garrison gains some advantages. The garrison characteristic's Weight of Numbers modifier is used in place





of a Weight of Numbers modifier based on the defending side's quantity of units, and the castle's Defense Bonus is used in place of Territorial Advantage. In some cases, it is advisable for the attacking army to break down the defenses with undermining and artillery before attempting such an assault.

The battlefield events rules presented earlier in this chapter should be used to determine the outcome of an escalate assault, with the following modifications:

- The escalate involves only those troops assigned to the nominated wall.
- Each victory by the attacking side reduces the castle's garrison characteristic by one step (beginning with the next siege event).
- The attacking army must use a tower or ladders to scale any standing walls.
- Baggage troops cannot be targeted by the attacking army.

If the attacking army wins a battle against a shoddy wall they breach the castle, which then becomes the backdrop for a standard battle using the battle rules presented earlier in this chapter.

## COUNTERATTACK

As a response to any besieging action, or as an action during stockade, the garrison may send out troops to attack the enemy directly. These actions have a Battle Ease Factor of 9. Neither Territorial Advantage nor Weight of Numbers apply. The sallying force must leave the castle, reach their tar-

### Example Siege Events

#### Scale the Ladders

Event Bonus +7  
*Man: Run the Gauntlet, Size: Overwhelmed, Enemy: Standard*

The character must scale the ladders while the defenders assault him with archery and boiling oil. The character is third on the ladder, gaining partial cover from the two soldiers ahead of him. It takes three rounds to reach the top of the ladder, each of which requires a Dexterity + Climb stress roll against Ease Factor 6. Once at the top, the character must stand his ground against a combat group of standard troops for two more rounds while the rest of his men arrive.  
 (+2 Run the Gauntlet, +3 Overwhelmed, +2 Standard)

the outside. The character must tip boiling water onto them before the men-at-arms defending them scale the stairs and attack the character. Tipping the water takes a Strength + Athletics stress roll against Ease Factor 9. There are three botch dice. On a botch the character douses himself with the boiling water. The attacking force will arrive in three rounds. If the defenders are scattered by then, the attackers will be able to breach the gate.  
 (+2 Run the Gauntlet, +4 I Stand Alone, +2 Expensive)

#### Open the Gates

Event Bonus +8  
*Man: Run the Gauntlet, Size: I Stand Alone, Enemy: Expensive*

Inside the castle (such as in the wake of the Scale the Ladders event described previously), the character spots a group of defenders shoring up the gates, which are under pressure from the attacking force on

#### Take the Marshal

Event Bonus +9  
*Man: Take, Size: Overwhelmed, Enemy: Special*

The knight marshal controlling the castle rides at the head of three groups of knights attempting to charge down the character and his group. The character must bring the marshal down and either kill him or force his surrender. To complicate matters, the character's escape route is blocked.  
 (+3 Take, +3 Overwhelmed, +3 Special)

get, and return to the safety of the walls. The intention is to attack and eliminate certain troops (visible mining operations, siege artillery, etc.). A successful event removes those

units from the enemy army. The besieging baggage units are normally defended and so may not be targeted.

The garrison may also use any siege en-

gines it has to target the attacker's siege engines. Engines are targeted individually. Each hit forces a damage check against the attack total with damage levels lost according to the size of the attacking group. If not using the damage rules from *City & Guild*, assume that a single hit from a mangonel or trebuchet is enough to destroy a siege engine.

## Aftermath

With the castle taken and the siege over, the castle's new masters decide on its fate. The behavior of the victor is something to be roleplayed, but castles and cities generally suffer more the longer they hold out. Those responsible for holding out against the siege risk being taken and killed. Other men of value are likely to be ransomed, either bring imprisoned locally or forced out of the castle as a hostage of the attacker. Civilians are likely to be robbed, and worse, by the victorious army. Unless they escape, the defending garrison is frequently hanged as an example to others.

Depending on its location, its importance, and the needs of the wider campaign, it is usual for the attacking force to appoint a governor and leave behind a force in the castle to secure it.

## Siege Magic

On finding themselves besieged by a determined Milanese force, the magi of Castro Selvaggio worked together to create a number of spells and rituals to help them outlast their attackers. The following laboratory texts survived the sacking of the castle. It is not known precisely how the castle fell, but suspicion quickly fell upon the covenant's Milanese rivals.

### CONJURATION OF BREAD

CrHe 35

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Group, Ritual

This ritual creates enough bread to support a moderately sized covenant for a season. The bread is a long-lived ciabatta which lasts if stored well. The ritual is enough to provide a +7 bonus to all Supply rolls made by a besieged castle in that season.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 Group, +5 size)

### RAISE THE VERONESE FLAG

CrIm 30

R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Group

This spell creates the illusion of ten Veronese men-at-arms manning the castle walls. Each soldier moves and speaks (though they seem to have Veronese accents, they form no intelligible words) but never strays from its post. Using this spell, the Veronese magi fooled the Milanese

force into thinking that all of the castle walls were protected.

(Base 2, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +2 movement and complexity)

### RAISE THE SIEGE

ReMe 30

R: Arc, D: Sun, T: Ind

Given an arcane connection to the besieging commander, this spell suggests a pessimistic view of any siege assessment. The effect is not sudden, but rather, is reinforced through the day as the commander reviews the siege. On an Intelligence + Leadership simple roll against Ease Factor 12 the commander resists the suggestions made by the spell.

(Base 5, +4 Arc, +1 Sun)

### SEAL THE BREACH

CrTe 20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

This ritual conjures a section of wall in a shape marked out during the casting of the spell. It is designed to knit together with adjoining sections of existing fortifications to repair already standing walls. The spell is enough to repair a single section of wall collapsed through mining or artillery assault (restoring up to five damage levels).

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 size, +1 finesse, ritual minimum level 20)



# Optional Combat Rules

This chapter expands on the *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* combat rules to add many new possibilities, including tactical movement and mounted combat. Most of the new rules introduced here are presented as options that you can use in your saga if you want a more-detailed combat system or disregard if you prefer to keep things simple.

## The Combat Round

*Ars Magica Fifth Edition* defines a combat round on pages 171–172. Every character gets to act once per round, in an order defined by the Initiative roll. Each round represents about six seconds of time in the game world.

This section introduces more formal rules that categorize common character actions. The terminology that describes these categories (such as “actions” and “fast actions”) is used throughout the rest of this chapter. However, it is all right to ignore the distinctions between different types of actions if the troupe wants to keep combat simple.

## When to Use Combat Rounds

Contrary to what their name suggests, combat rounds can be useful for situations other than combat. A storyguide can use them any time she wants to keep close track of what two or more characters are doing, moment-by-moment. They’re best for scenes where the order of the characters’ actions could affect the outcome. A chase scene, a certamen, or even a complicated courtly

dance could all be resolved by dividing the action into rounds and having each character act once per round, in a specific order.

## Initiative

The basics of initiative are explained in *ArM5*, pages 171–172.

The storyguide should call for Initiative rolls whenever she wants to start using combat rounds. Any action that doesn’t require a weapon, including spellcasting, has a weapon initiative modifier of 0.

### WHEN TO ROLL INITIATIVE

When combat begins (or when the storyguide wants to start tracking events using combat rounds), roll for Initiative for each character present. Even characters who don’t want to get involved in the battle should roll Initiative and act only on their turn.

If new characters approach a battle in progress, there’s no need to roll Initiative for them until they’re close enough either to attack with missiles or to reach the battle with one round’s movement (see *Moving in Combat*, later). At that point, roll Initiative for the new arrivals at the start of the first round when they’re within range and insert their actions into the combat sequence as usual.

## Actions in Combat

An action is something a character can choose to do when it’s his turn in the combat sequence. The *ArM5* rules say that a character can act once per round (on his turn); these rules elaborate on what it means to “act.” Normally, a character can perform one action on his turn.

Actions include anything the storyguide

agrees a character can reasonably do in about six seconds. Attacking is an action, so is casting a formulaic or spontaneous spell.

A character can only perform an action on his turn in the combat sequence.

### NOT EVERYTHING IS AN ACTION

Since an action is something a character does on his turn, not every die roll a player makes corresponds to an action. Generally, rolls required by the storyguide (as opposed to initiated by the player) don’t count as actions. There is no limit to how many die rolls a player can make in one round, because die rolls are not necessarily actions.

### EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS

It would be impossible to list every possible action, but some common examples include:

- Trigger an enchanted item (see *ArM5*, page 98)
- Attack in melee
- Attack with missiles
- Cast a spell (see *ArM5*, page 174)
- Move (see *Tactical Movement*, later in this chapter)
- Charge (see *Attacking*, later in this chapter)
- Stand up
- Mount or dismount a horse
- Pick up an item off the ground
- Open or close (and bar) a door or window

### REACTIONS

A common situation in combat arises when a character must immediately respond to some external event, such as making a Defense roll to avoid an enemy’s attack or a

Concentration roll to maintain a spell. These rolls are called reactions. Reactions are not actions and don't interfere with the character's ability to perform an action later in the same round.

- A character can perform a reaction any time the storyguide asks him to, even if it's not the character's turn, and even if the character hasn't yet had his first turn since the battle began.
- There is no limit to how many reactions a character can *attempt* in a round (though there may be practical limitations to how many he can successfully complete).
- Reactions aren't actions, so they don't count against the limit of one action per round.

Some examples of reactions include:

- Defense rolls against incoming attacks.
- Fast Casting a spell (see ArM5, pages 83 and 174).
- Concentration rolls to maintain a spell (see ArM5, page 82).
- Ride rolls to avoid falling off a horse.

### EXTENDED ACTIONS

Sometimes, characters want to do something that takes an entire six-second combat round or longer. These are extended actions. The differences between an action and an extended action are:

- Extended actions can't be delayed (see *Delaying Actions*, later in this chapter).
- An extended action isn't finished until some round *after* the character starts it.
- If you are using the fast actions optional rule, a character can only perform a fast action before beginning or after finishing the extended action, not while it is in progress.

Some extended actions take two or more rounds to complete. These are described as, for example, "a two-round extended action."

For the purposes of determining the duration over which an extended action is performed, a round begins on the character's turn in the combat sequence and ends immediately before his next turn. An extended action is continuously in progress during this time.

A character may cease an extended action at any time. If exact timing is important, use the interrupting actions option to deter-

mine when, precisely, the extended action is ceased (see *Delaying Actions*, later in this chapter).

A character can't perform any other actions, including fast actions, while he is carrying out an extended action.

While a character is performing an extended action, any distraction (including being attacked) requires the player to make a Concentration roll. Handle this similarly to a magus being distracted while casting a spell (see ArM5, page 82) but the storyguide may wish to reduce the Ease Factor if the extended action is fairly simple. If the roll fails, the extended action fails immediately, and is considered to be ceased (as described earlier).

Magi can cast spells while performing extended actions, which is an exception to the general rule prohibiting actions during extended actions, but doing so requires a Concentration rolls against an Ease Factor set by the storyguide, and may require them to cast without use of their hands.

Examples of extended actions include:

- Hide
- Retrieve an item from a pouch or pack
- Span a crossbow
- String a bow
- Cast a ritual spell (which may take hundreds of combat rounds!)

### OPTION: FAST ACTIONS

Some things a character might want to do, such as drawing a dagger or shouting a warning, take considerably less than a six-second combat round to complete. Under this optional rule, such activities are called fast actions. (If you prefer not to use this option, then the storyguide should make ad hoc decisions about whether a character can do more than one thing in a round.)

As a rule of thumb, a character can perform one fast action, in addition to his regular action, on his turn. The fast action may come before or after the regular action. The storyguide can allow more than one fast action if circumstances warrant.

Alternatively, a character can perform up to four fast actions on his turn instead of any regular actions.

A character can only perform a fast action on the first round of an extended action, before actually starting the extended action. Once the extended action is begun, the character can't perform fast actions until after it's finished.

Examples of fast actions:

- Draw a weapon
- Drop an item
- Pick up an item from a tabletop
- Shout a brief order or warning (ten words or less)
- Leap from the saddle (see *Mounting and Dismounting*, later in this chapter)
- Stand from a kneeling or crouching position
- Vault into the saddle
- Transform to or from heartbeat form (specifically, outer heartbeat form; see ArM5, page 92 and *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 22).
- Shoot a readied bow or crossbow, if the troupe is using the optional ready missiles rules (see *Option: Ready Missiles*, later in this chapter).

## Delaying Actions

A character or group can choose to delay its action as it would delay its opportunity to act according to the regular rules of initiative (see ArM5, page 171). There are many reasons one might want to do this: a wary magus might be unsure of an opponent's motives and prefer not to make the first aggressive move, or a knight might choose to defend a narrow bridge, attacking the first enemy who tries to cross.

When a character chooses to delay his action, he can act normally at any later time, whenever the player wishes. However, this does not permit the character to actually interrupt another character's action (as, for example, a Fast-Cast spell would). A character who wants to act in response to an opponent's action must wait for his opponent to complete his action, and may only then take an action of his own.

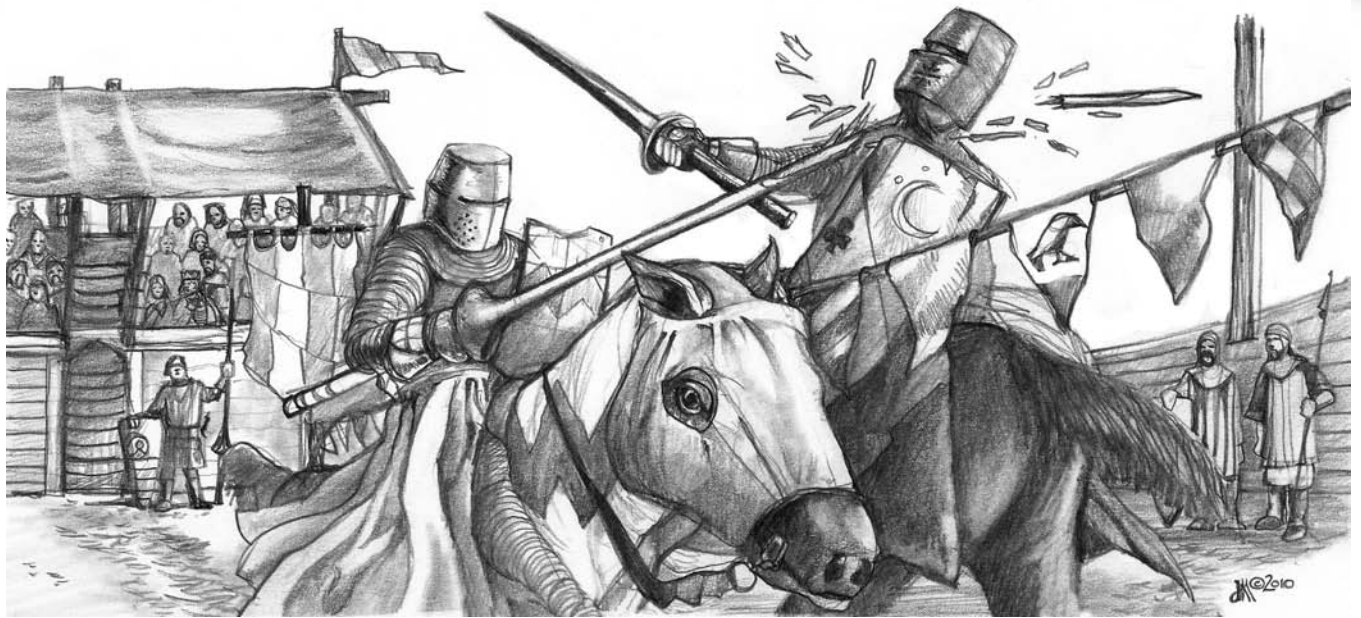
A delayed action can carry over from one round to the next. The opportunity to carry out a delayed action expires on the character's next turn, but of course the character can choose to delay again if he likes.

If more than one character has delayed his action, then the delaying character with the highest Initiative Total has the first option to respond to a given event, the one with the next-highest Initiative Total has the second option, and so on.

If you are using the fast actions option, a character may choose to delay his action, his fast action, or both.

The choice to delay an action does not





change the character's order in the combat sequence in future turns.

**EXAMPLE:** A tavern confrontation between Paul the turb warrior and two ruffians, Alan and Bruce, comes to blows. Paul's player rolls well on Initiative, getting a 10. Alan's Initiative Total is 8 and Bruce's is 7. Paul gets to go first, but is not sure whether one ruffian, or both, will attack him. He only wants to hit the ones who swing at him, so he delays. Alan goes next, but isn't sure about taking on someone as tough as Paul, so he also delays, waiting for Bruce to make the first move. Bruce is more hot-headed, and attacks. Paul withstands the attack. Now all the characters who delayed their actions have a chance to respond, in descending order of Initiative Totals. Paul has the higher Initiative Total of the two characters who delayed, so he has the first choice to respond. He attacks Bruce and lands a hefty blow. Then Alan, who also delayed his action, gets to respond. He attacks Paul and misses. The first round of combat ends. On the next round, Paul's Initiative Total is still 10 and he still goes first. Combat proceeds according to the normal sequence (from highest to lowest Initiative Totals) unless someone decides to delay again.

### OPTION: INTERRUPTING ACTIONS

The combat sequence of *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* can sometimes give the illusion that a character performs his action on his turn, then freezes like a statue while all the other characters take their own turns. The turn-based combat sequence is an important convenience that makes battles playable, but it should not be taken too literally. From the characters' point of view, action on the battlefield is fast, chaotic, and continuous.

Normally, when a character delays an action as described earlier, his delayed action is resolved after the action to which he's responding. This optional rule gives a character a chance to actually interrupt his opponent's action, causing his own action to resolve *before* the event to which he's responding. This is similar to the way a successful Fast-Cast spell resolves before the attack against which the magus is defending.

To interrupt an opponent's action, the character must first delay his own action.

When one or more characters who have delayed their actions want to interrupt someone, each character who's involved — including the character being interrupted — makes an action priority roll (described later). Making this roll is what "uses up" the delayed action (on the part of those who delayed) or the triggering action (on the part of the character being interrupted) regardless of what happens after this point (more information follows).

Whoever has the highest Action Priority Total resolves his action first. If there is a tie, the character with the highest Quickness wins. Characters still tied determine randomly which one acts first.

Resolve all remaining actions in descending order of Action Priority Total. Each character can choose to respond or do nothing, but a character who does nothing no longer has a delayed action to use later, because making the action priority roll "uses up" the action, as described earlier (for an exception, see Option: Defenders as Interceptors, later in this chapter).

**ACTION PRIORITY TOTAL:** Quickness + Ability – Encumbrance + stress die

For the Action Priority Total, each character uses the Ability appropriate to the nature of the action he intends to carry out. If he's attacking, use the Martial Ability appropriate to his weapon. If he's moving, use Athletics; if riding, use Ride; and so on. Magic casting spells use Finesse as the relevant Ability.

Casting a spell to interrupt someone is not the same as Fast Casting (ArM5, page 83); Fast Casting doesn't require the magus to have first delayed his action, but interrupting does. If the magus loses the action priority contest when attempting to interrupt someone, he can still try to Fast Cast if he wishes. (That is, a magus with a delayed action can potentially have two attempts to stop an attack: once by interrupting, and if that fails, once by Fast Casting.)

See Charging on Foot, later in this chapter, for rules on interrupting an opponent who is trying to charge.

Note that it's only possible to interrupt an extended action in the round it is started, but keep in mind that an opponent's extended action can also be foiled by distracting him (see Extended Actions, earlier in this chapter).

**EXAMPLE:** Marla the grog is patrolling a hallway in the covenant when she spots a cloaked intruder. The storyguide calls for initiative rolls. Marla's player rolls a 9 and the intruder's Initiative is 7. Marla draws her sword as a fast action and delays her action, waiting for the intruder to make the next move. The intruder bolts for the exit; Marla attempts to interrupt him and

move to cut off his retreat. The storyguide asks them both to roll Action Priority Totals using Quickness + Athletics – Encumbrance. Marla's player rolls well and gets a 16, the intruder only gets 11. Marla dashes ahead of the intruder and makes it to the door before him. The intruder's action was spent running for the door, even though he was beaten there, so the first round of combat ends. It's round two, and Marla's turn.

**OPTION: FAST CASTING AS INTERRUPTION**

If you like, you can use a variant of the interrupting actions rule, presented earlier, to replace the normal Ease Factor for a Fast Casting speed roll (see ArM5, page 83). Use the normal Fast-Casting procedure (that is, the magus does *not* need to have delayed his action) but use the interrupted opponent's Action Priority Total as the Ease Factor of the Fast Casting speed roll.

The main advantage to this option is that it makes interrupting actions and Fast Casting work in more or less the same way, so they're more logical and easier to remember. It also changes the dynamics of Fast Casting a little, making the outcome less predictable. The likelihood of successfully Fast Casting under this option depends on the opponent's Action Priority Total (which is re-rolled every time a magus tries to interrupt him), not on his Initiative Total (which normally doesn't change over the course of a battle).

# Tactical Movement

The rules in this section allow troupes to handle characters' movement on the battlefield in as much or as little detail as they wish. Exact movement rates often don't matter, but in certain situations, such as when valiant knights charge through a hail of arrows to smite down enemy archers, distance and movement can make a great deal of difference to the story.

## Moving in Combat

Moving is an action. Characters can't move and attack in the same round, unless they are mounted and/or charging (see

Charging on Foot and Mounted Movement, both later in this chapter). Also, note that characters who are engaged in combat (either in melee or in missile combat) must disengage in order to move (see Engaging and Disengaging, below).

A character who chooses to move as his action can choose any of the following rates:

- A walk is rarely used in combat. More often, characters walk when they are not suspecting danger.
- A hurry is the usual pace on the battlefield, equivalent to jogging or marching at double cadence.
- A run is very fast, but tiring. A character may be required to make a Fatigue roll when running; see ArM5, page 178.
- Riding is described under Mounted Movement Rates, later in this chapter.

WALK: 10 + Quickness – Encumbrance paces per round

HURRY: 2 x (10 + Quickness – Encumbrance) paces per round

RUN: 4 x (10 + Quickness – Encumbrance) paces per round

## Movement and Groups

All of the movement rules in this chapter are written in terms of individual characters, but apply equally to groups. Groups of characters move together as a single unit. Their speed is that of the *slowest* member. They use the vanguard's Characteristics and Abilities to resolve any rolls related to movement.

## Obstacles, Barriers, and Movement

Do not worry about terrain unless doing so adds to the excitement of battle, rather than distracting from it.

Difficult terrain significantly slows a character's movement. For simplicity, all difficult terrain slows movement to one-half normal speed (unless the storyguide chooses otherwise). Examples of difficult terrain include rubble, dense undergrowth, knee-deep water, and upward slopes steeper than about 45 degrees. Attack and Defense rolls, and

## Terrain Examples

The following examples cover some common situations and can be used as a guide for other terrain types. Note that some terrain, like ice, can be both difficult and hazardous.

### DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Movement speed halved (round up), extra botch die.

- Dense undergrowth
- Ice
- Rubble
- Slope, upward, 45 degrees or steeper
- Snow (knee-deep or deeper)
- Water (knee-deep or deeper)

### HAZARDS

Extra botch die (or dice), botch potentially more serious.

- Ice
- Mud, slippery
- Precipice
- Rock, loose or crumbly
- Slope, upward or downward, 45 degrees or steeper
- Ship or wagon, moving
- Battlefield littered with bodies, broken weapons, etc.

### OBSTACLES

Requires special action to move across.

ACTION	ACTION TYPE	STRESS ROLL	EASE FACTOR
Force open a normal door	Ext.	Str	9
Force open a reinforced door	Ext.	Str	12
Open a door or window	Std.	none needed	n/a
Pick a lock	5-rd. Ext.	Dex + Legerdemain	12*

\* See *City & Guild*, page 78, for more information.



rolls related to movement, suffer an extra botch die when the character is on difficult terrain. If you are using the advanced group combat rules in this chapter, a group must make a Discipline check when it crosses difficult terrain.

A hazard is a terrain feature that increases the likelihood of accidents. Slippery, crumbling, and moving surfaces (such as the deck of a ship) are the most common sorts of hazards. The edge of a cliff or a narrow bridge would also count as a hazard. Hazards do not slow movement, but they add one botch die (or more, at the storyguide's discretion) to any stress roll a character makes while on them. Furthermore, the effects of a botch are potentially more serious near a hazard. (See ArM5, page 7, for a discussion of botches and their effects.) Some terrain, such as slippery mud, is both difficult terrain and a hazard.

An obstacle is something that a character can't move across, at least, not at a normal movement rate. A fence or a closed door are obstacles. Crossing an obstacle requires some specific effort on the character's part, such as climbing the fence or opening the door. This is usually an action and may or may not require a die roll, depending on the nature of the obstacle. Some examples are given in the sidebar.

Cover is terrain that protects against missile fire and offers opportunities to hide. Cover gives a bonus to Defense against missile weapons. See Battlefield Situations, later in this chapter, for further details.

## Engaging and Disengaging

The following two rules are the essence of Engagement in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*: A character generally is considered engaged in combat whenever he's within range of an enemy who wants to attack him, and can plausibly do so.

Once engaged, the character must disengage in order to move away from his opponent.

The details in this section clarify and elaborate on these definitions, and present some optional embellishments to them. Combat should work just as well if the storyguide just relies on those two rules and her own judgment.



## Engaging in Combat

A character becomes engaged in combat whenever he is close enough to an enemy to attack or be attacked. The precise distance this represents depends on how the character and his enemy are armed.

A character becomes engaged in melee whenever he makes an Attack or Defense roll in melee combat. He can also become engaged by moving within reach of an opponent's weapon, or when an opponent moves within reach of his own. The distance that constitutes being "within reach" is generally about two paces, though it can be a bit longer for characters armed with spears and the like.

Similarly, a character becomes engaged in missile combat whenever he makes an Attack or Defense roll in missile combat, or when he's within an enemy missile's range and line of fire.

Engagement is a game-mechanical artifact, like the sequential nature of a combat round. Like the sequential combat round, engagement should not be interpreted too literally. A character engaged in combat is not rooted to the spot as if by a spell. Rather, he

is fighting for his life and whenever he tries to move away, his opponent tries to block him or head him off. These maneuvers and counter-maneuvers are represented by the disengagement roll.

## EFFECTS OF BEING ENGAGED

A character (or group) engaged in melee combat is busy fighting and can't move away from his (or their) opponent without disengaging first.

A character (or group) engaged in missile combat can still move, but with limits. He (or they) must disengage in order to move to a location where the enemy's line of fire is obstructed; that is, where there is a better Defense bonus due to cover.

When a character who's engaged tries to disengage and fails, then the character's movement stops for the round and he remains engaged with his current opponent(s).

Note that disengaging does not necessarily imply the character leaves combat. One could disengage from one opponent in order to move and engage another.

## ENGAGEMENT AND DEFENDERS

The defenders option (see ArM5, page 173) lets a character or group protect someone else in combat. This prevents anyone from attacking the character being protected.

According to the rules in ArM5, defenders are always effective; an opponent cannot attack the character being protected as long as any of his defenders can lift a sword. Even if they're not engaged, attackers can't outmaneuver the defender to attack the character he's protecting.

The defenders as interceptors option (see Option: Defenders and Interceptors, later in this chapter,) is an alternative to the standard defender rule. This option requires the defender to win an opposed die roll to stop incoming attackers.

### OPTION: NO ENGAGEMENT FOR MISSILE COMBAT

The basic rules for engagement and disengagement apply to both melee and missile combat. In missile combat, a character engages an opponent by "keeping him covered."

As an optional rule, you may use the engagement rules for melee combat only.

### OPTION: NO MISSILES WHILE ENGAGED IN MELEE

As an optional rule, you may disallow characters engaged in melee from making missile attacks.

### OPTION: DEFENDERS AS INTERCEPTORS

The defender rules (see ArM5, page 173) are simple to use, but they can sometimes lead to strange results when few are defending against many. A single defender can hold off one attacker, or twenty, with equal effectiveness. This optional (but more complex) rule is for troupes who dislike that implication of the standard rule. It uses the mechanics of the interrupting actions option (see Option: Interruption Actions, earlier in this chapter) but can be used even if the troupe doesn't want to allow interrupting actions in other contexts.

A character or group may perform an extended action to defend another charac-

ter (or a fixed location such as a doorway). While this extended action is in effect, the defender monitors a two-pace radius around himself. He may attempt to interrupt, using the interrupting actions rule, any enemy who moves into this zone or who makes a melee attack against the character he's defending. If the defender successfully interrupts by winning the action priority roll, that enemy becomes engaged in melee with the defender. If the defender successfully interrupted a melee attack, the attacker must attack the defender instead of the original target, or else forfeit his action entirely.

A defender can also attempt to interrupt missile attacks aimed at the character he's defending. If the interruption attempt succeeds (again, by the defender generating a higher Action Priority Total), the missile attack resolves against the defender instead of the original target. This is a case where the sequential nature of combat should not be taken too literally. Defending against missile attacks has more to do with positioning oneself to spoil an opponent's aim than with throwing one's body into the path of an arrow that's already in flight. Also, the storyguide should disallow the defender from intercepting missile attacks that he couldn't logically block, such as attacks from behind.

Defending is an extended action, so a defender can't attack in the same round. He can, however, use exertion on defense. A defender's usual tactic is to keep defending until all enemies are engaged in melee with the defender, and then start attacking them.

A character being defended can still attack. If he does so, then he becomes engaged with his target and the defender can no longer block attacks from that target. The defender can still prevent additional opponents from attacking his charge, however.

A defender can only protect one other character, and only as long as that character remains within two paces of him. There is no limit to how many enemies a defender can try to interrupt in a round, though sooner or later his luck will run out and an enemy will slip past him.

**EXAMPLE:** *Ignatio the shield grog and Victor the redcap are carrying an urgent message when they are beset by three highwaymen, two armed with short spears and one with a bow. All players roll Initiative and the order in which the characters will act is: first highwayman, Victor, Ignatio, second highwayman (armed with the bow), third highwayman.*

*The first highwayman attacks Victor and hits, inflicting a Light Wound. On Victor's turn, he activates an enchanted item he has (The Invisible Shield) that protects him from metal weapons. Ignatio is un-*

*aware of this item and declares he will act as defender for Victor. The second highwayman shoots an arrow at Victor; Ignatio, as Victor's defender, has an immediate chance to interrupt. Both Ignatio and the highwayman roll for action priority. Ignatio's total is 11 (+1 Quickness + 7 Single Weapon Ability (including specialty) – 2 Encumbrance + 5 stress roll) versus the archer's 8 (0 Quickness + 5 Bows Ability + 3 stress roll). Ignatio interrupts the shot, so the archer's only choice is to shoot Ignatio instead of Victor, or waste his action entirely. He shoots Ignatio and hits, but Ignatio suffers no wound thanks to his impressive Soak score. Now the third highwayman attacks, and Ignatio gets to interrupt him. This time, the highwayman wins the action priority roll, so he slips past Ignatio and attacks Victor. However, his attack misses due to Victor's magical ward.*

*The second round begins. The first highwayman, who attacked Victor last round, tries to do so again. Ignatio is still acting as Victor's defender because being a defender is an extended action, and an extended action lasts until just before the character's next turn. Ignatio interrupts the attack, successfully this time. The first highwayman is now engaged with Ignatio, and has to attack Ignatio or forfeit his action. He swings and misses. Now it's Victor's turn. Victor feels he doesn't need Ignatio's protection any more, so he draws his sword and attacks the third highwayman (becoming engaged with him). Ignatio can no longer defend Victor against that opponent. On Ignatio's turn, Ignatio realizes that he and Victor are each engaged with one opponent, and decides his best option is to stop defending Victor and attack the first highwayman, with whom he's already engaged.*

## Disengaging

Rules for disengaging from combat may be found on page 173 of ArM5. In the context of missile combat, it is useful to think of disengaging as "taking cover."

### ATTEMPTING TO DISENGAGE

Disengaging is a reaction, not an action. A character must disengage whenever he attempts a move action while engaged.

To disengage, a character must generate a Defense Total, and all opponents who attacked him since last round generate Attack Totals (as a reaction). If the character's Defense Total is greater than or equal to the highest Attack Total, the character may move normally. Otherwise, the character's movement stops and he remains engaged. The failed attempt to move still counts as his action for the round, so he can't perform an-



other (except possibly a fast action).

If a character fails to disengage and tries again the following round, he gains a +3 bonus to his Defense Total for his roll to disengage only. This bonus increases by +3 each round until the character escapes or combat ends, so, for instance, a character who tries to disengage for three consecutive rounds has a +6 bonus on the third round. The bonus resets to zero if the character attacks or performs some other action besides movement.

If a character moves along a path that brings him within melee or missile range of an opponent who has a delayed action, that opponent can attack him. (See Option: Interrupting Actions, earlier in this chapter. If you are not using that option, opponents can attack the character automatically if they have delayed their actions.) The moving character becomes engaged at that time, but may immediately attempt to disengage and continue his movement.

## AUTOMATIC DISENGAGEMENT

A character automatically ceases to be engaged in combat when any of the following happens:

- All opponents engaged with him are knocked prone, killed, incapacitated, or otherwise completely disabled.
- No opponents have attacked him since his last turn. Note that this implies that a character who goes first in initiative order can disengage automatically at the start of combat, if he wishes.
- In addition, a character ceases to be engaged in missile combat when:
- The opposing side runs out of ammunition. This may not be immediately obvious to the character, but his next attempt to disengage will automatically succeed.
- The character (or group) moves beyond the extreme range of all opponents' weapons.

## OPTION: RECKLESS DISENGAGEMENT

The requirement that a character disengage from combat assumes that a character's self-preservation impulse always prevents him from turning his back on an opponent in the midst of mortal combat. As an option, the storyguide can allow characters to disregard self-preservation and simply move

away. As a consequence of this reckless act, the character's opponent gets a free attack and the character gets no Defense roll: his Defense Total is 0. Needless to say, this is extremely dangerous in most circumstances, but it may be a sensible thing to do if the character enjoys a magical immunity to his opponents' weapons.

# Attacking and Defending

Attacking and defending are the fundamental activities of combat. This section clarifies the *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* rules for engaging in combat, and presents several new, optional variations on these basic elements of combat.

## Attacking

Attacking, whether in melee or missile combat, is an action.

## CHARGING ON FOOT

Charging is an action that lets a character move and make a melee attack in the same round. The movement must come before the attack. It is also possible to charge and attack with a hand-hurled weapon such as a javelin or throwing axe, but not with a bow, sling, or crossbow.

Charging on foot is like combining movement with exertion on the attack (see *ArM5*, page 173). If on foot, the character must spend a Fatigue level and may move at up to his running speed. (See *Movement Rates*, earlier in this chapter). If the character moves faster than a hurry, he may lose an additional Fatigue level due to running.

On foot, a charging character gains a bonus to his melee Attack roll equal to his Combat Ability. Charging carries no additional benefits or penalties. In particular, there is no penalty to Defense due to charging.

It is less effective to charge across difficult terrain. A character who charges across difficult terrain can still move and attack in the same round, and must still spend a Fatigue level, but does *not* gain the Attack bonus.

## Option: Condensed Notation for Combat Scores

Players may find it convenient to write combat scores in "condensed notation." For each weapon, write two numbers for the Defense score, separated from each other by a slash. The first number is for the weapon only, and the second is for the weapon-shield combination. Label these lines as "weapon/shield" (substituting the names of the specific weapon and shield in question, of course).

It is a good idea to include a separate line on the character sheet that gives the Defense score for the character's shield (without weapons), which is needed against missile attacks.

For example, the standard soldier (see *ArM5*, page 22) has the following condensed notation combat scores:

Axe/Heater Shield: Init +0, Attack +12, Defense +9/+11, Damage +7

Fist: Init -1, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +1

Heater Shield: Defense +11

This may not seem to save much space, but note that it covers all possible weapon/shield combinations, and there is no need to re-calculate combat scores if, for example, a combatant's shield breaks.

See Mounted Combat, later in this chapter, for rules covering charging on horseback.

## OPTION: INTERRUPTING A CHARGE

If you are using the interrupting actions option (see Option: Interruption Actions, earlier in this chapter), a character who is charging on foot uses his Combat Ability as the relevant Ability in his Action Priority Total. The character who is interrupting should use Athletics if he's trying to move out of the way of the charge, or a Combat Ability if he's trying to attack the charging character. One may interrupt a charge using either missile or melee weapons.

If you are not using the interrupting actions rule, you can still use this option. If you do so, a character who wants to interrupt a charge must delay his action, and can then attack in response to the charge.



### OPTION: READY MISSILES

This optional rule works with the fast actions option (see Option: Fast Actions, earlier in this chapter). A character armed with any type of bow or crossbow, but not with a sling or hand-thrown weapon, who has the weapon drawn and an arrow or bolt on the string, is considered to have a missile “ready.” He can shoot as a fast action instead of an ordinary action. He may then perform another action in the same round, even, in the case of a bow, shooting a second arrow.

An archer can pull an arrow from his quiver, aim, and shoot, all in a single action. However, if the archer prefers, he can nock an arrow and draw the bow as an action, and delay a fast action to shoot.

A crossbowman loads his weapon as part of the extended action of spanning it, so always begins the next round with the weapon ready. A common tactic for crossbowmen is to span the weapon behind a pavise (a large, free-standing shield) or other cover, pop up, shoot, and quickly duck back behind the cover to span the weapon again. (An archer could use the same tactic, at the cost of halving his rate of fire). The only way the crossbowman would be exposed to enemy mis-

siles is if an enemy had delayed an action, then attacked in response to the crossbowman leaving cover. Needless to say, characters with experience fighting crossbowmen do exactly that.

### OPTION: CONSTRICTION ATTACKS

Medieval bestiaries speak of dragons strangling elephants with their tails or coils. Other fantastic beasts, such as the kraken, are also capable of constriction attacks.

A creature can only constrict a victim whose Size is less than its own. Constriction is based on the grappling rules (see Non-Lethal Combat on ArM5, page 174 or Option: Non-Lethal Combat, later in this chapter). The Attack Total is computed using the Brawl skill, and a constriction attack has the following weapon statistics: Initiative 0, Attack +3, Defense 0, Damage n/a.

As long as a grappling creature maintains the grapple, its opponent is considered deprived of air (see ArM5, page 180). The victim must make a Stamina check every thirty seconds, that is, every five rounds, or suffer the normal effects of deprivation. Constriction is a slow way to slay an opponent.

Once a creature has successfully grappled an opponent (and begun constricting), on subsequent rounds the creature can continue constricting while also attacking with other weapons, such as its claws or bite. These attacks may be directed against the grappled victim or another opponent.

## Defending

Defending against an attack (that is, generating a Defense Total) is a reaction, not an action. A character who comes under attack nearly always gets a Defense roll, even if he doesn't see the attack coming (though he would suffer major penalties to his Defense Total in that case). There is no limit to the number of Defense rolls a player may make for his character in one round.

### DEFENSE WHEN UNARMED

Completely unarmed characters use the Defense Total based on their Brawl Ability. Characters equipped with a shield, but no weapon, use the Defense Total based on their Single Weapon Ability.

### HELPLESS CHARACTERS

The only time a character doesn't get a Defense roll is when he's totally helpless — unconscious, securely bound to a chair, magically paralyzed like a statue, and so on. In these cases, if any opponent should be so ignoble as to attack the character, treat his Defense Total as  $-10$  (note that this Defense Total is a fixed number; there is no die roll).

### OPTION: DICELESS DEFENSE

To make combat flow quicker and reduce the amount of arithmetic involved, you can replace the stress die in characters' Defense Totals with a constant value of 6. That is, characters don't roll Defense; Defense simply becomes something akin to an Ease Factor for the Attack roll.

This option takes some of the variability out of combat. It eliminates the possibility of a Defense botch, but it also eliminates the possibility of a very high Defense roll warding off an otherwise unavoidable attack. It tends to make characters with powerful combat scores a bit more powerful with respect to



weak combatants, because the weaker fighters normally rely on luck in order to win.

The storyguide should feel free to apply this option selectively, for example, only to non-player characters instead of player characters, or only to "cannon fodder" opponents and not to the main villains of the saga.

### OPTION: NO DEFENSE FOR MISSILE WEAPONS

All weapons in the missile weapon table have a Defense modifier of 0, but a character with a bow or sling in hand uses the Combat Ability for that weapon when rolling a Defense Total.

This raises the question of whether skill at archery (for example) necessarily makes a character better at dodging arrows or sword thrusts. Some players may feel that it doesn't make much sense to apply an Ability for missile weapons to Defense rolls, particularly against melee attacks.

If that's a problem in your saga, you can simply rule that missile weapons and their relevant Abilities cannot be used to generate a Defense Total. A character holding a bow, crossbow, sling, knife, or stone uses the Brawl Ability for defense. A character holding a javelin or throwing axe, which are usable in melee, uses the Single Weapon Ability (and the appropriate weapon's Defense modifier) for defense.

### OPTION: EVASION

The combat rules don't draw a distinction between avoiding an attack by blocking it as opposed to nimbly dodging out of the way. Both forms of defense are covered by the Defense score. This optional rule separates defense based on blocking and parrying from defense based on dodging; the latter is covered by a new combat score called Evasion.

The idea behind this optional rule is to give players and storyguides new options and more flexibility in roleplaying combat. The storyguide might rule that Defense is completely ineffective against certain attacks, such as the touch of an insubstantial spirit or the tree-sized club of a giant. Logically, it should be easy to hit a huge dragon with an arrow (because it has a poor Evasion Total), but very hard to get inside its guard to hit it with a sword (because it has a good Defense Total). The evasion rule also gives players a new option to create characters

who are quick, light skirmishers (such as Aragonese *almogavars*) as an alternative to heavily armored (and heavily encumbered) warriors.

This optional rule overrules the statement on page 172 of *ArM5* that "Combat Ability... represents ability to dodge as well as to defend with weapons." Dodging and avoidance are represented by an Evasion Total, which represents the ability to dodge, and Combat Ability (under this option) represents only the ability to block and parry. Evasion can be used in place of a Defense Total against any attack. Size and Encumbrance are important factors in the Evasion Total, as opposed to the Defense Total where Size and Encumbrance are irrelevant.

The Defense Total, representing defense with weapons, becomes usable *only* against melee attacks under this option. In fact, Defense might not even be usable against all melee attacks, trying to parry the huge club of a thirty-foot-tall giant or the horn of a charging rhinoceros with a sword or shield doesn't seem reasonable. The storyguide may rule that powerful attacks like these can't be defended against with weapons, and must be dodged using Evasion.

Evasion, on the other hand, can be used against any attack. The main disadvantage to using Evasion is that it's hard to get a high Evasion Total while wearing heavy armor. Another disadvantage is that the storyguide can rule that a character can't use Evasion when his mobility is restricted, for example, when held fast by *Hands of the Grasping Earth*.

Shields may be combined with Evasion under certain circumstances. A shield helps with Evasion rolls to avoid incoming arrows, but not against rolls to avoid being stepped on by a dragon.

**EVASION TOTAL ON FOOT: Quickness + Brawl - Size - Encumbrance + Shield Defense Modifier + stress die**

**EVASION TOTAL WHILE MOUNTED: Quickness + Ride - Size - Encumbrance + Shield Defense Modifier + stress die**

You can use Evasion with the diceless defense option (see Option: Diceless Defense, earlier in this chapter); just replace the stress die in the Evasion Total with a constant value of 6.

### OPTION: LASTING CONSEQUENCES OF SERIOUS DAMAGE

This optional rule was originally printed in *Art & Academe*, page 43.

An Incapacitating Wound is a significant punishment to the body, and might result in loss of the afflicted limb, or the acquisition of other Flaws. Troupes who want to add a level of extra peril can simulate such crushing wounds in the following manner.

Whenever an Incapacitating Wound is dealt, the player should immediately make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 6. If this roll fails, then there is a lasting complication to the wound that the character has suffered in the form of a Minor Flaw. See Surgical Intervention on *Art & Academe*, page 62 or Mitigating Deadly Wounds, later in this chapter, for examples.

Of course, a character who avoids the loss of a limb from the injury itself may face losing it through surgical intervention if the wound worsens (see *Art & Academe*, page 62).

### OPTION: MITIGATING DEADLY WOUNDS

Bad things can happen to characters in combat — especially to grogs. Death is often one unlucky die roll away. Defense botches are particularly deadly (see *ArM5*, page 171). If there is a fair amount of combat in your saga, you may find the risk of losing a beloved character (or despised villain) is greater than your troupe wants to accept.

Once in a while, it's all right for the storyguide to alter the outcomes of a die roll, especially if doing so helps the story. The most important rule in the game appears on *ArM5*, page 6: "In the last analysis, *Ars Magica* is a game. If you have fun with it, you are doing it right."

In that spirit, the storyguide can choose to reduce a Major Wound suffered by a character, and instead give him a less serious wound and a new Flaw representing some permanent maiming or disability. For example, the storyguide might replace an Incapacitating wound with a Heavy Wound and the Flaw Missing Hand.

Defense botches are a good time to exercise this option. The storyguide might choose to use this option only for companions or magi, or only for the main character(s) in a given story, or no more once per character. It's important to treat all the players' characters fairly, so if you use this option to save one character but not another, be pre-

pared to explain why. Better yet, discuss this option with your troupe and agree ahead of time how you'll use it in your saga.

As a rule of thumb, an Incapacitating Wound can be reduced to a Heavy Wound plus a Minor Flaw, while a Fatal Wound can be reduced to either an Incapacitating Wound plus a Minor Flaw, or a Heavy Wound plus a Major Flaw. The storyguide should feel free to vary from that guideline as her judgment and the needs of the story dictate.

Appropriate Flaws to apply with this option include:

#### MINOR FLAWS

- Afflicted Tongue
- Disfigured
- Fragile Constitution
- Hobbled (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 136)
- Lamé
- Missing Ear
- Missing Eye
- Missing Hand
- Palsied Hands

#### MAJOR FLAWS

- Blind
- Crippled
- Enfeebled
- Mute
- No Hands

## Mounted Combat

This section expands on the brief treatment of mounted combat in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*.

Fighting from horseback is the dominant model throughout Mythic Europe. A mounted warrior enjoys the following benefits:

- A mounted character gains a situational bonus to both Defense and melee Attacks equal to his Ride skill or +3, whichever is less. The Attack bonus applies to melee attacks only. Note that this bonus applies regardless of whether the mounted character's opponent is mounted or on foot.
- A mounted character's steed gets to perform an action each round. For simplicity, this happens on the rider's turn in the combat sequence (which is easi-

## Suggestions for Combat Botches

The following are some suggested effects for combat botches, listed in roughly increasing order of severity.

- Damage your weapon; make a stress check (see *The Clash of Weapons*, later in this chapter, or *City & Guild*, page 77).
- Become disoriented; miss your next turn.
- Stumble; -3 to Defense rolls until your next turn.
- Horse panics (if mounted).
- Shield breaks.
- Drop your weapon or break a bowstring.
- Collide with an ally; both suffer -3 to Defense until next turn.
- Fall prone.
- Weapon breaks.
- Fall from horse (if mounted).
- Twist an ankle; take a Light Wound and you cannot run or charge until it's healed.
- Horse falls (if mounted).
- Strike an ally.

er than keeping track of a separate turn for the horse). Typically, a rider uses his action to attack and the horse uses its action to move. The rider decides which action comes first. Note that a mounted character must still disengage from combat in order to move away from an opponent.

- Only a mounted character can properly wield a lance. For a dismounted fighter, a lance functions as a long spear, which is less effective.
- A mounted charge has special benefits over a charge on foot: the horse, not the rider, expends a Fatigue level, and there are optional rules for unhorsing or knocking down the target. (See *Charging on Horseback* and *Option: Shock of the Charge*, both later in this chapter).
- A rider can usually perform extended actions while his horse is moving, though doing so typically requires a Dexterity + Ride roll against an Ease Factor that depends on the horse's gait (see *Effects of Mounted Movement*, later in this chapter).

## Untrained Mounts

The benefits of being mounted described in the previous section assume the character's steed is trained for battle. Most horses in Mythic Europe are trained only for riding, not combat.

The rider of an untrained mount does not gain the situational bonus for mounted combat because the horse doesn't know how to respond to important signals and commands.

An untrained horse automatically panics whenever it is engaged in melee. See *Controlling a Panicked Horse*, later in this chapter.

## Mounted Movement

A horse has four gaits, which are listed on the *Mounted Movement Rates* table. The horse can use any gait on a given round; there is no need to "build up speed" between being stationary one round and galloping the next.

## Charging on Horseback

A mounted charge is similar to a charge on foot: the character can move and then attack in the same round, and gains a bonus to the Attack roll equal to the character's Combat Ability (in addition to the normal situational bonus for mounted combat, equal to the lesser of Ride Ability or +3). Of course, since a horse is faster than a human, a mounted charge can travel a greater distance than an infantry charge. Furthermore, it is the horse, not the rider, who expends a Fatigue level. If you are using the shock of the charge optional rule, the charge's target may be knocked sprawling by the impact.

A rider cannot use exertion in the same round he charges; the whole point of a mounted charge is to take advantage of the horse's strength and mass, not the rider's. However, since a rider can always move and attack in the same round (unless engaged), it's possible to move on horseback and use exertion on either Attack or Defense. This can grant the same combat bonus as a charge (if the rider exerts on his Attack roll) but the horse doesn't have to spend a Fatigue level and the shock of the charge option doesn't come into play.



## Mounted Movement Rates

Horses have four gaits, each of which has a different movement rate.

GAIT	-3 OR LESS	-2 TO -1	0	+1 TO +2	+3 TO +4	+5
Walk/Amble	7	8	10	12	15	18
Trot	12	15	20	25	30	35
Canter	20	25	30	35	45	50
Gallop	30	40	50	60	70	80

### EFFECTS OF MOUNTED MOVEMENT

A horse's gait affects a rider's ability to shoot missiles from horseback, the amount of damage taken for falling off the horse, the Ease Factor for the Dexterity + Ride roll needed to carry out extended actions, and, optionally, his Defense score against ranged attacks.

A horse must make a Fatigue test every round it moves at a gallop.

GAIT	PENALTY TO MISSILE ATTACKS	FALLING DAMAGE	EXTENDED ACTION EASE FACTOR	DEFENSIVE BONUS (OPTIONAL)
None (stationary)	0	Horse's Size* + stress die	0	0
Walk/Amble or Trot	-1	(Horse's Size + 2)* + stress die	6	+1
Canter	-3	(Horse's Size + 4)* + stress die	9	+3
Gallop -6	-6	(Horse's Size + 6)* + stress die	12	+6

\* The bonus (but not the die result) is doubled if the character falls on a hard surface, and halved if he lands on a soft surface like plowed earth.

Like a foot charge, a mounted charge can't cross difficult terrain and still get the Attack bonus. However, a rider can move normally (i.e., without charging) and exert on Attack.

### OPTION: SHOCK OF THE CHARGE

The impact of a half-ton of horse and rider charging furiously at a speed over twenty miles an hour is high irresistible on the battlefield. With this optional rule, any time a mounted charge hits a target smaller than the horse, that target may be knocked prone by the terrific force of the blow, in addition to any wounds caused by the blow itself.

If a mounted attack simply misses, or if the target resists the attack due to magical protection (as by a warding spell, or Parma

Magica against a magical lance), then no collision takes place and the target isn't in jeopardy of being knocked down.

When the mounted charge hits, the target must roll a reaction to remain upright:

**RESIST CHARGE WHILE MOUNTED:**  
**Dexterity + Ride + saddle modifier + stress die vs. Damage Total (before Soak) + Size of attacker's horse**

A rider with a cantled saddle, as used in tournaments or warfare, gains a +3 bonus to this roll. A rider without stirrups suffers a -3 penalty.

**RESIST CHARGE WHILE ON FOOT:**  
**Str + Size + Combat Ability + stress die vs. Damage Total (before Soak) + Size of attacker's horse**

If the roll fails, the target falls from his horse or is knocked down. He lands prone, and may take additional damage from the fall (see Falling from Horseback, later in this chapter).

### SHOOTING MISSILES FROM HORSEBACK

Knights and sergeants from England or France rarely attempt to shoot bows or throw javelins from horseback, but elsewhere in Mythic Europe, mounted archers — Moors, Byzantine *kataphraktoi*, Hungarian *szekeley*, Levantine turcoples, and Mongols — are commonplace. In Iberia in the early Middle Ages, both Moorish and Christian cavalry armed themselves with javelins. Mounted crossbowmen also appeared in historical Europe, but weren't common until the late 14th century.

Missile cavalry can be effective, but even the most skilled horse archers are less accurate than their infantry counterparts. Shooting missiles from a moving horse always incurs an Attack penalty, which gets worse the faster the horse's gait (see Mounted Movement Rates, earlier in this chapter). However, because of a horseman's ability to move and attack in the same round, a mounted archer can gallop to close range before shooting, then wheel and ride away the following round. Mounted on a swift horse, a rider can usually get the same or better Attack Total by galloping up close to his target than if he had stood still and shot from long range.

Characters with missile weapons get the normal situational Defense bonuses for mounted combat (i.e., equal to their Ride skill, or +3, whichever is less) due to their mobility. The Attack bonus for mounted combat does not apply to missile attacks.

### ACTIONS TAKEN BY HORSES

A trained warhorse can attack opponents in melee. The horse does not roll Initiative on its own; it acts on the rider's turn. (The rider decides whether he, or his horse, completes its action first.) If the rider dismounts or is forcibly removed from the saddle, the horse begins acting independently. The player or storyguide should roll Initiative for it at that point.

Like a human character, a warhorse gets one action per turn. Therefore, it can either move or attack, but not both. Carrying a rider in a mounted charge counts as the horse's

action, the horse can't also attack in the same round. Once its rider has come to blows with the enemy, the horse can fight independently of its rider, using the full repertoire of combat tactics (including, for example, exertion and non-lethal attacks). Horses who have a Confidence Score can use Confidence Points in combat; the rider's player decides when to do so.

Normally, a rider chooses whether to resolve his own action or the horse's action first. But in Mythic Europe, a supernatural horse can potentially have a higher Intelligence score than the rider! In that case, it's the horse who gets to decide whose action comes first and when to use Confidence Points.

## Attacking Horses

With his height advantage and (usually) heavy armor, a mounted warrior enjoys a stronger defensive position than most. The same cannot be said for his horse: the source of a knight's greatest strength is also, frequently, his greatest vulnerability.

Knights and nobles throughout Mythic Europe consider it ignoble and disgraceful to attack an opponent's horse. Doing so in a tournament certainly harms a noble's Reputation; it also deprives him of a valuable prize. In all-out warfare, on the other hand, Reputation and booty frequently take second place to survival. The commoners who make up the vast majority of infantry have no illusions of chivalry, and do not hesitate to attack the horse first and the rider second.

## WOUNDING HORSES

A horse has a relatively low Defense score, at least compared to a knight or trained serjeant. Warriors rarely outfit their horses with heavy armor (the scale armored horses of Byzantine *kataphrakttoi* are the exception that proves the rule), though armored horses became more common in the late middle ages of historical Europe. With only moderate Defense and Soak scores, a horse is often a much easier target than the knight who rides it.

When a horse suffers a wound, the effects on the rider vary depending on the severity of the wound:

- **LIGHT WOUND:** No effect on the rider; the horse's Wound Penalties don't hinder

the rider's attacks.

- **MEDIUM WOUND:** The horse may panic; the rider must make a Presence + Ride roll vs. Ease Factor 9 to control it.
- **HEAVY WOUND:** The horse rears or stumbles; the rider must make a Dexterity + Ride roll vs. Ease Factor 9 or fall from the saddle. The horse stops moving immediately and cannot charge or move faster than a trot. This aborts a charge, if one was in progress. Furthermore, the horse may panic; the rider must make a Presence + Ride roll vs. Ease Factor 9 to control it. A horse that sustains a Heavy Wound is usually euthanized after the battle.
- **INCAPACITATING OR FATAL WOUND:** The horse falls instantly; the rider is in peril of falling with it. See Being Pinned Under a Horse, later in this chapter.

## CONTROLLING A PANICKED HORSE

Horses untrained for battle panic whenever they are engaged in melee. Any horse panics when it suffers a Medium or Heavy Wound, or when faced with terrors such as magic on the battlefield or a fell being of supernatural power (at the storyguide's discretion).

**MAINTAIN OR REGAIN CONTROL OF PANICKED HORSE:** Presence + Ride vs. Ease Factor 6 – horse's total Wound Penalties

A rider may roll once as a reaction the moment his horse panics. If that roll fails, the rider may make another attempt as an action, and may keep trying until he succeeds. Once controlled, the horse remains under con-

trol until something new causes it to panic again.

A panicked horse usually attempts to disengage from combat and gallop to safety, but there is one important exception. The natural instinct of a wounded or frightened horse is to surge *forward* as fast as possible. If a horse is injured in mid-charge (such as by an opponent's delayed action under an optional rule) and panics, its rider can complete the charge normally. The horse is still panicked, and behaves accordingly starting on the following round.

Except in the case of a mounted charge, the rider of a panicked horse can't attack or take any action except to try to regain control, or leap out of the saddle. He may also voluntarily fall off the horse as a reaction, but takes damage as usual from the fall.

## OPTION: DEFENSIVE BONUS FOR MOVING HORSES

Because horses are so swift, the storyguide may wish to make them a bit harder to hit with missiles when they are moving. The Mounted Movement Rates table lists an optional defensive bonus based on the horse's gait. If you are using the evasion optional rule, this bonus applies to the Evasion score of both horse and rider. Otherwise, it applies to their Defense scores against missile attacks.

## Mounting and Dismounting

Mounting or dismounting a horse in the usual way is an action, but does not require a die roll.

## LEAPING FROM THE SADDLE

A character may attempt to leap from the saddle as a reaction if his horse panics, falls, or is slain.

**LEAP FROM THE SADDLE:** Dexterity + Athletics – Encumbrance + stress die vs. Ease Factor 9

If the roll fails the character remains in the saddle, possibly falling along with his horse. If it succeeds the character lands nimbly on his feet, ready to continue fighting.

### Story Seed: The Wounded Steed

A knight and his men arrive at the covenant looking for a learned man to heal his horse, wounded in battle weeks previously. On investigating the wound, which stubbornly refuses to heal, the magi find that it was magically inflicted and cannot heal until the next full moon. What's more, the knights carry the bag of a redcap known to the covenant. How did the horse pick up its injury and how have the knights come to possess the redcap's bag?



If you are using the fast actions optional rule, you may allow characters to leap from the saddle voluntarily as a fast action. Failure in this case means the character lands badly; this is the same as falling from the saddle (see *Falling from Horseback*, later in this chapter). A botch indicates some mishap such as an especially bad fall (extra damage), or falling with the rider's foot still caught in the stirrup.

### OPTION: VAULTING INTO THE SADDLE

If you are using the fast actions optional rule, you may allow characters vault into the saddle as a fast action. If the rider did not move before vaulting into the saddle, he may then ride in the same round. If the attempt fails, the character remains standing behind his horse.

**VAULT INTO THE SADDLE:** Strength + Athletics – Encumbrance + stress die vs. Ease Factor 6



## Falling from Horseback

When a character falls from horseback, he takes falling damage (see *ArM5*, page 181). The amount of damage depends on the horse's gait; see *Mounted Movement Rates*, earlier in this chapter.

Any time a rider falls from his horse, he lands prone. Standing up is an action.

### BEING PINNED UNDER A HORSE

If a horse is Incapacitated, killed, or knocked prone or unconscious, the rider risks having the horse fall on top of him.

To avoid this, the rider may attempt to leap from the saddle as a reaction. If this fails, the character takes falling damage and must make a Quickness + Ride – Encumbrance + stress die roll vs. Ease Factor 6. If that also fails, the horse lands on the rider, inflicting stress die + horse's Size + 6 damage. The character is also pinned under the horse, requiring another character to make a Strength roll vs. Ease Factor (6 + (horse's Size)) to pull him out.

## Battlefield Situations

Conditions on the battlefield are ever-changing. Characters in an *Ars Magica* story might take cover against arrows, defend a crenelated wall, or fight a desperate melee in the darkness of an underground catacomb. This section provides suggestions and guidelines for how to make these dramatic situations affect the outcome of battle.

These rules are meant to add a greater tactical dimension to combat. Do not feel obliged to use them if your troupe is uninterested in such things. They do make combat more complex and potentially more time-consuming to play. They are best applied with imagination and dramatic flair. Ideally, players should visualize the battlefield and come up with creative ways for their characters to gain an advantage.

## General Situational Modifiers

Most battlefield situations boil down to a bonus to Attack or Defense rolls (or both). The bonus may apply only to a limited subset of rolls: for example, a bonus to Defense against missile attacks, or a bonus to Attack rolls with one-handed melee weapons.

Storyguides can assign any numeric value to a situational modifier, but it is often easiest to simply choose between +1, +3, and +6. A +1 modifier is a slight but significant edge, like defending a hilltop in melee. A +3 modifier is more substantial, like fighting from horseback. A +6 bonus is very significant, like attacking a prone character in melee. Only a few situations call for a bonus higher than +6.

Situational modifiers are best expressed as bonuses or penalties that apply to the character in the unusual situation. It is clearer to say "a character in a tree gets a +3 bonus to Defense" than to say "enemies attacking a character in a tree get a –3 penalty to Attack," even though the two statements are mathematically equivalent.

## Specific Situations

It would be impossible to enumerate every possible combat situation that could arise from the imaginations of players and storyguides. Instead, players should handle unforeseen situations by analogy with these examples.

### COVER

Strictly speaking, cover refers to shelter that is sturdy enough to actually stop incoming attacks. (Material that merely hides the character from view, such as foliage or a tapestry, is called concealment in these rules. See Concealment, Darkness, and Invisibility, later in this chapter.)

The Defense bonus from cover applies against both missile and melee attacks.

If a character has both cover and concealment, only the highest Defense bonus applies.

AMOUNT OF COVER	DEFENSE BONUS	EXAMPLE
One-quarter	+3	Standing behind a slender tree
One-half	+6	Standing behind a corner or in an open doorway
Three-quarters	+9	Standing behind a chest-high wall
Near total	+12	Standing behind a loophole or a door that is ajar

### CONCEALMENT, DARKNESS, AND INVISIBILITY

Armies in Mythic Europe usually avoid fighting in darkness or fog. Such conditions make it nearly impossible to command an army (at least, through non-magical means). In an *Ars Magica* story, of course, characters may find themselves battling diabolists in the gloom of an underground temple or ambushing intruders amid a magically created fog.

Whenever a character is difficult to see, whether that difficulty arises from darkness, a screen of foliage, or magical invisibility,

he gains a bonus to Defense (or Evasion). If he can attack in melee without becoming clearly visible, he also gains an Attack bonus — it's hard to defend against an attack one doesn't see coming. The extent of the bonus depends on how well concealed the character is.

CONCEALMENT	EXAMPLES	MELEE ATTACK BONUS	DEFENSE BONUS
Light	Fog, shadows, moonlight, underbrush, half of body concealed	+1	+3
Medium	Smoke, faint moonlight, dense foliage, three-quarters of body concealed	+3	+6
Heavy	Typical dark night	+6	+9
Total	Lightless underground cave	+9	+9

These bonuses and penalties apply to both the attacker and the defender.

*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, pages 32–33, gives detailed rules for using invisibility in combat, which are compatible with these rules and go into more detail about how to detect and attack invisible opponents.

Also, characters who can't clearly see their allies or surroundings suffer extra botch dice to Attack and Defense. A single extra botch die would be appropriate on a foggy, but otherwise open, battlefield, while as many as four or five botch dice could be called for in a chaotic nighttime melee in a forest. Darkness tends to make difficult or hazardous terrain disproportionately worse; rocky ground that adds one botch die in daylight might add three in the dark. This is one of the reasons the mundanes of Mythic Europe avoid fighting at night.

### HIGHER GROUND

When a character is fighting from an elevated position, whether he is atop a castle rampart or a tavern staircase, he enjoys an advantage that often translates to a +1 bonus to Attack and Defense in both melee and missile combat against opponents lower than himself.

Mounted characters do not normally qualify for this bonus, because height advantage is already accounted for in the usual bonus for mounted combat (see *ArM5*, page 174). However, a horseman charging down a steep embankment would qualify for the higher-ground bonus.

## Light Sources and Range of Visibility

How well a character can see an opponent, and at what distance, can make a difference for missile combat. Poor visibility grants increasing levels of concealment to characters at greater distances. At the storyguide's discretion, a Perception roll of 9+ can sometimes reduce (by one step) the level of concealment due to poor visibility.

The table below gives the longest range in paces at which a given level of concealment applies. For example, in moonlight a character would have medium concealment at a range of twenty paces, and heavy concealment between 21 and 50 paces (though the storyguide shouldn't feel compelled to calculate distances to the exact pace!).

CONDITIONS	NONE	LIGHT	MEDIUM	HEAVY	TOTAL
Moonlight	n/a	0	20	50	100
Torchlight	3	5	10	15	25
Heavy Rain	10	20	30	50	100
Fog	n/a	0	20	40	80
Heavy Smoke or Fog	n/a	0	2	4	10



## FIGHTING INDOORS AND IN NARROW SPACES

Normally, up to six opponents can surround and attack a single defender (see the group combat rules on ArM5, page 172; the maximum size for a group is six and a group may attack a single character). Walls and similar obstacles can reduce this number.

There are no specific bonuses for fighting indoors, but indoor battlefields commonly have interesting features:

- A character with his back to a wall can be attacked only by four opponents at once.
- A character defending a corridor or doorway can be attacked by only two opponents from each direction (for a total of up to four opponents).
- Doorways can provide cover and doors can become obstacles.
- Characters can jump onto furniture for a height advantage or duck behind it for cover.
- Tapestries provide concealment.
- Low ceilings and confined spaces make it difficult to wield spears and other large weapons (-1 to -3 penalty to Attack and Defense, depending on space).

## Option: Non-Lethal Combat

"Non-lethal combat" is a bit of a misnomer. The rules in this section cover attacks that are non-lethal only in the sense that their primary intent is something other than to wound or kill the opponent. As is always the case in *Ars Magica* combat, the risk of a Defense botch or excessively high Attack roll means death or serious injury can still result from a supposedly "non-lethal" attack.

This section is an optional replacement for the non-lethal combat rules on ArM5, pages 174-175. It makes two significant changes to non-lethal combat: there are a greater variety of non-lethal attacks and maneuvers possible, and unarmed attacks (scuffling) no longer cause Fatigue loss.

The reasons these rules replace Fatigue loss from scuffling combat with a new mechanic is that, in the standard ArM5 scuffling rules, depleting an opponent's Fatigue levels can be quicker and easier than inflict-

ing serious wounds with weapons. In ArM5, creatures can sustain an unlimited number of wounds and still fight (at least until the end of the battle, after which a wounded character's activities become restricted as described on ArM5, page 178). Contrariwise, all creatures have a fairly limited reserve of Fatigue levels and are helpless once those are depleted. The loss of a single Fatigue level is therefore potentially more serious than a single Light Wound. Against magi, knights who are already tired, or creatures who are hard to seriously injure (due to large Size, high Soak, or both), the standard ArM5 scuffling rules make it much faster to wear an opponent down by causing Fatigue loss than by inflicting wounds. This chapter fixes that problem and ensures that bare-knuckled punches are always less effective than the blows of a mace.

## Non-Lethal Damage: Bruises

Instead of inflicting loss of Fatigue levels, or wounds as regular weapons do, non-lethal attacks such as punches and kicks inflict Bruises. Bruises are like wounds, but less serious. They cause Bruise Penalties that work just like Wound Penalties, but it is much faster and easier to recover from a Bruise than from a wound.

The word "Bruise" doesn't mean the character literally suffers a bruise to the flesh, though that can be a result. The term is meant to suggest trauma that, while certainly painful and debilitating, is less life-threatening than typical wounds. However, a very severe Bruise can cause a character to be Incapacitated and even eventually die.

Calculate Damage from a non-lethal at-

tack as usual, by subtracting the target's Soak score from the Damage Total. Consult the Damage Table on ArM5, page 171, but instead of suffering a wound, the target suffers a Bruise of the same level of severity.

The Bruise Table shows the penalties for each category of Bruise, and its recovery statistics. The most severe categories of Bruises leave regular wounds behind after the character recovers from the Bruise itself.

## RECOVERING FROM BRUISES

A character can recover from Bruises in a relatively short time. The character must be at rest in order to recover.

After resting for the required Recovery Period, make a Recovery roll for each Bruise the character has. Use exactly the same Recovery Total as for wounds (see ArM5, page 179):

RECOVERY TOTAL: Stamina +  
Medic's Medicine or Chirurgy  
score + magical aid + stress die

If the Recovery Total equals or exceeds the Improvement Ease Factor for the Bruise, the Bruise improves to the next category. Heavy and worse Bruises leave residual wounds behind. The wound takes effect only *after* the Bruise improves for the first time; apply its Wound Penalty only then. Note that a single Bruise only leaves a single wound; an Incapacitating Bruise does not leave a Medium Wound when it heals to being a Heavy Bruise, and then a Light Wound when it heals to being a Medium Bruise; rather, the character is left with a single Medium Wound.

For purposes of Ritual magical healing, a Bruise is considered equivalent to the residual wound it would leave. Both the Bruise and the residual wound are healed by the same

BRUISE LEVEL	PENALTY	RECOVERY INTERVAL	IMPROVEMENT EASE FACTOR	RESIDUAL WOUND
Light	1	Quarter Hour	10	None
Medium	3	One Hour	12	None
Heavy	5	Two Hours	15	Light Wound
Incapacitating	Unconscious	Two Hours	15	Medium Wound
Fatal	Unconscious	Two Hours	15	Incapacitating



## Your Arms are Too Short to Box with that Giant

*Realms of Power: Magic* proposes, on page 85, a different way to represent the unlikelihood of defeating a fifty-foot dragon by means of fisticuffs. The rules in that book are less a wholesale change to unarmed combat than the material presented here, and they are compatible with the scuffling rules in ArM5.

The *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* combat rules are oriented toward characters of human size. Some special considerations apply to combat between humans and giants (or other very large creatures). As noted on ArM5, page 192, a 3-point difference in Size is approximately a tenfold difference in mass. This weight advantage gives giants an advantage in certain combat

situations. For instance, it does not seem plausible that a 175-pound man should have an easy time grappling and pinning a 1,750-pound giant!

The storyguide can simply rule that attempting to punch, grapple, or disarm a giant is completely ineffective. For a more complicated, but less arbitrary, approach, use the following rule of thumb: a giant gains a special bonus equal to double the difference between its Size and a smaller opponent's Size, which is applied to Defense rolls against scuffling and grappling, Defense rolls against being disarmed, and so on. This bonus does not apply against regular attacks with melee or missile weapons, however.

## Weapons and Bruises

Characters may use weapons to inflict Bruises rather than wounds, but suffer a -3 penalty to their Attack Total when they do

so, due to the awkwardness of striking with the flat of the blade or the butt of the spear.

As an option, your troupe may wish to allow bludgeons, clubs, staves, improvised weapons (such as bottles and chairs), and cudgels (but not maces and hammers) to deal Bruises without an Attack penalty.

Wooden practice swords, brittle tournament lances, and the like also inflict Bruises instead of wounds, with no Attack penalty.

## Special Effects

Sometimes the best way to defeat an enemy is not to wound him, but to disarm him or drag him off his horse. Resolve such indirect forms of attack by making a regular Attack roll, opposed by a reaction (usually Defense) from the target. Each maneuver requires a certain Attack Advantage in order to succeed. If the attacker achieves or exceeds the required Attack Advantage, the maneuver succeeds. In special maneuvers, either character can use exertion on either attack or defense as usual.

In many cases, the defender has a choice of what Characteristics and Abilities to use to thwart the maneuver, representing, for example, the choice between using brute force or agility to escape an opponent's grip. Some maneuvers are harder than others; the inherent difficulty of the maneuver is represented by the Attack Advantage required. See the table on the facing page.

The general idea of opposed die rolls is a good way to resolve situations in your game that the rules can't anticipate.

A trip or throw causes the defender to fall prone while the attacker remains standing. The defender takes no damage unless he botches his reaction (in which case a Light Wound is appropriate). Getting up is an action.

A grapple inflicts no damage, but holds the defender so he can't escape and his actions are hindered. The defender is caught in a hold or lock that lasts until the start of the attacker's next turn. After that, the attacker must succeed at a new grapple to maintain the hold. The grappled defender suffers a -6 penalty on all attacks and most reactions, including Defense and Evasion, and can't perform spellcasting gestures. He can escape by succeeding at a grapple of his own, or by inflicting any level of wound or Bruise on the character who's holding him. It is possible to grapple while prone.

A pin can hold the target to either the ground or to a wall or vertical surface (such

Ritual. For example, *Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* could instantly heal a Heavy Bruise, leaving neither Bruise nor wound behind.



## Example Maneuvers Table

EXAMPLE MANEUVER	ATTACK TOTAL	DEFENSE CHOICES	ADVANTAGE REQUIRED
Trip or Throw	Brawl Attack	Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Dex + Brawl + Size	3
Grapple	Brawl Attack	Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Str + Brawl + Size	1
Pin	Brawl Attack	Brawl, Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Str + Brawl + Size	6
Tackle	Brawl Attack	Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Dex + Brawl + Size	1
Disarm	Any Attack	Defense or Evasion	9
Grab Worn Item	Brawl Attack	Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Str + Brawl + Size	6
Unseat Rider	Brawl or Weapon Attack	Defense, Evasion, or stress die + Dex + Ride	6
Wrest Weapon	Brawl Attack	Defense, Evasion, or Melee Attack	12

as a large tree). To pin a target to the ground, he must be prone first, and while the attacker may be standing initially, he also becomes prone during the pin attempt (regardless of whether it succeeds or fails). If the pin succeeds, the defender is helpless and cannot perform any actions (except casting spells or activating enchanted items, provided they do not require gestures). The pin lasts until the attacker's next action, when he must succeed at a new pin to keep the defender immobilized.

A tackle causes the attacker and his opponent to fall prone. No damage results. If the tackle fails, both characters remain standing, but if the attacker botches, he falls. Getting up is an action.

A successful disarm causes the opponent's weapon to fall to the ground. To retrieve it, the disarmed defender must use an action *and* successfully disengage.

Anyone can try to unseat a rider by grabbing his leg and dragging him bodily from the saddle; polearms and halberds can also be used to unseat a rider. If successful, the rider lands prone and takes damage from the fall (see *Falling from Horseback*, earlier in this chapter).

The wrest weapon action leaves the attacker holding his opponent's weapon. This can also be used for grabbing other items, like a wizard's staff.

## Advanced Group Combat

The rules in this section expand the group combat rules in ArM5 to add a bit more tactical depth. Feel free to use group combat when it makes sense, or have characters fight independently whenever drama or troupe preference dictates.

### Accelerated Group Training

Any group can learn to fight together by spending a season practicing together. A good leader can shorten this training time, either in an emergency (to prepare for an upcoming adventure or battle) or in order to train more than one group in a single season.

**SHORTEN TRAINING TIME:** Communication + Leadership + stress die

The Ease Factor depends on the amount of training time available. If the roll fails, then

## Story Seed: Big Angus and the Prize

The task was simple: guard the money while the magi took the merchant aside to negotiate prices. But after some confusion with a band of acrobats, one thing led to another and now the money has gone missing. But there's hope. The grogs can win the amount they lost by defeating Big Angus the prize fighter in bare-knuckle fight. The townfolk say it can't be done, but that's only because no one has ever beaten Big Angus before. Is there more to Big Angus than meets the eye? And what do the grogs do when they find out that the prize money has gone missing? On whom do the grogs vent their frustrations — the fight organizers, or the acrobats who started the whole misadventure?

the group cannot become a trained group until the end of the season. If it botches, then the season's training is wasted. Some Virtues, such as Inspirational, may provide a bonus if the storyguide sees fit; the Difficult Underlings Flaw most likely provides a penalty.

TRAINING TIME	EASE FACTOR
Two Months	6
Six Weeks	9
One Month	12
Fortnight	15
One Week	18

The characters being trained still gain experience only at the end of the season (i.e., there is no experience point bonus for participating in accelerated training). When the training period is complete, they can function as a trained group (see ArM5, page 173).

### The Leader's Actions

Issuing orders to command a group in combat is usually a fast action. (If you are not using the fast actions option, then the group leader can make one command-related die roll per round for free.) The leader acts at the same point in the combat sequence as the rest of the group. In cases where it matters whether the group acts first or the leader

## Story Seed: The Greatest Weapon

While practicing on the training field just outside the covenant enclosure, the turb becomes the target for some faerie sport. Whisked from their covenant by a court of faerie knights, the grogs are confronted by martial challenges, one by one, and told by their tormentors that they may use their best weapon in each fight. How long until the grogs discover that teamwork may be their greatest weapon?

ters whether the group acts first or the leader makes the Leadership roll first, the leader gets to decide the order in which the dice are rolled.

If the leader (or any member of the group, for that matter) wants to remain in the group but do something other than attack, that's permissible. Simply don't count that individual as part of the group when calculating the group's combat bonus or resolving Damage. For example, if a group of two grogs plus a leader is fighting, and the leader chooses to spend his action doing something other than attacking (say, casting a spell), then the group's combat bonus is capped at +x (instead of +y), and when the group hits, it inflicts Damage two times, rather than three times.

## Morale and Discipline

These optional rules moderately weaken the effectiveness of groups while making the role of the leader more important. A leader becomes significant even in an untrained group.

Effective group tactics require both discipline and morale. In battle, both of these

are tested.

### DISCIPLINE

A Discipline roll is required whenever a group is tempted to break formation, either because they are executing a tricky maneuver or because the enemy seems vulnerable (tempting the group's members to pursue them). Making a Discipline roll is a reaction, not an action. If a Discipline roll fails, the group temporarily becomes disordered (see Disordered Groups, later in this chapter).

**GROUP DISCIPLINE:** leader's Presence + leader's Leadership + stress die

If everyone in the group has a positive Loyal Personality Trait, the group gains an additional bonus equal to the lowest Loyal score among the members.

### Example Discipline Ease Factors

EVENT	EASE FACTOR
Group moves across difficult terrain	3
Group runs (without charging)	6
Enemy disengages (without routing)	6
Enemy routs	9
Group disengages	9
Group changes between melee and missile combat	6

### MORALE

All groups need to make Morale rolls when bad things happen on the battlefield. Morale rolls are reactions, not actions. A

group that fails a Morale check becomes disordered. If the group is already disordered and then fails a Morale check, it routs.

**GROUP MORALE:** leader's Presence + leader's Leadership + stress die

If everyone in the group has a positive Brave Personality Trait, the group gains a bonus to the Morale roll equal to the lowest Brave score in the group.

### Example Morale Ease Factors

EVENT	EASE FACTOR
Taking wounds from missile fire when having no missiles of its own	6
Charged by an approximately equal force	6
Charged by an obviously superior force	9
Ambushed or attacked from the rear	9
All members of the group reach Wound Penalty of -3 or worse	9
The vanguard or leader killed, Incapacitated, or disabled by magic	9

### DISORDERED GROUPS

A group that fails a Discipline or Morale check becomes disordered. This is a bad state of affairs that leaves the group vulnerable in combat.

A trained group that is disordered functions as an untrained group. If it fails a second Discipline check, it functions like a disordered untrained group.

An untrained group that is disordered can't attack effectively. Only half of its at-



tacks (round up) can hit, and the others automatically miss. That is, instead of inflicting damage once per member of the group, it only inflicts damage half that many times.

If a group that is disordered fails a Morale check (but not a Discipline check), it becomes routed.

### ROUTED GROUPS

A routed group has lost its will to fight and attempts to disengage from all opponents and flee to safety. Once disengaged from the enemy, it's not uncommon for the members of a routed group to scatter.

A group can become routed if it is already disordered and then fails a Morale check.

### RALLYING A GROUP

If a group becomes disordered or routed, the leader may attempt to rally it as an action. Rallying improves a routed group to being merely disordered, or restores a disordered group to normal status.

**RALLY A GROUP:** Presence + Leadership + stress die

The Ease Factor to rally a group depends on whether the group is engaged in combat and how many casualties it has taken. A casualty is a member of the group who has a Medium Wound or worse, or is unconscious or unable to fight due to magical effects.

SITUATION	RALLY EASE FACTOR
Not engaged in combat	3
Taking enemy missile fire	6
Engaged in melee	9
Routed and being hotly pursued	12
Group has sustained casualties	+1 to Ease Factor
Group has sustained 50% casualties or more	+3 to Ease Factor

### GROUPS WITH NO LEADER

Ordinarily, a group that loses its vanguard or leader splits into individuals (see ArM5, page 173). Under these optional rules, a group that loses its vanguard or leader can still fight, though it is likely to become disordered.

A group with no vanguard can't attack, but uses the Defense score of its best member. The leader of a group can designate a new vanguard in the middle of battle, as a fast action. If successful, this takes effect immediately, and the group's future rolls are based on the new vanguard's statistics. The leader can automatically choose a new vanguard (no roll required) if the group spends a round without attacking or defending.

**REPLACE A VANGUARD IN COMBAT:** leader's Presence + leader's Leadership + stress die vs. Ease Factor 9

A group with no leader automatically fails any Morale or Discipline check. A new leader can assume command automatically if the group spends a round without fighting (i.e., without making any Attack or Defense rolls). Alternatively, a member of the group may assume command in combat as a fast action.

**Assume Leadership in Combat:** Presence + Leadership + stress die vs. Ease Factor 9

If more than one character succeeds at this roll in the same round, the one with the highest total becomes the leader.

# Arms & Armor

This supplement includes updated rules for crossbows, statistics for late medieval arms and armor, expanded rules for armor, and a few new optional weapons rules. In addition, it reprints some weapon-related rules from other ArM5 supplements (*City & Guild* and *Ancient Magic*) for ease of reference, and includes consolidated melee and missile weapon tables that list all the weapons from this previous ArM5 books all in one place.

Arms and armor are the tools of the warrior's trade. Even nobles who do not personally fight have an interest in the equipping of their knights, sergeants, and men-at-arms.

## Equipment Availability

It may be useful to troupes to know approximately where and when, in historical Europe, certain weapons and armor were in use, especially if they want to set their saga earlier or later in Mythic Europe's history. As just one more example of how this information may be useful, the storyguide may sometimes want to outfit a ghost, faerie, or other character in equipment from a bygone age.

- The ancient period, for this purpose, includes anything up until the collapse of the Western Roman Empire around 480 a.d.
- The early medieval period spans the sixth through tenth centuries.
- The high period begins in the 11th century and lasts until the end of the 13th.
- The late medieval period starts at the beginning of the 14th century.

- A few weapons have regional availability. Historically, they were common only in certain geographic areas; see Notes on Weapons for an explanation of each case.

We give statistics for late-medieval equipment for players who are interested in them. If your saga starts in 1220, magi, with their Longevity Rituals, can easily live into the 14th century. Even if they do, there is no reason why the history of Mythic Europe needs to parallel that of the real world. You may prefer to keep your saga in the high Middle Ages forever.

## Quality of Arms and Armor

*City & Guild* gives rules by which craftsmen can make goods of shoddy, standard, superior, or excellent quality (see *City & Guild*, pages 67–69). For convenience, those rules are summarized here:

Shoddy items break easily; they are destroyed after failing a single stress check (see *The Clash of Weapons*, below, or *City & Guild*, page 77).

Superior armor grants +1 to Protection. (A superior helmet's bonus applies only to attacks against the head.) Superior weapons have a +1 bonus to Attack, and superior shields grant +1 to Defense.

Excellent quality items grant a bonus of +2, +3, or even higher (see *City & Guild*, page 69). For weapons, the bonus applies to *both* Attack and Defense rolls.

## New Weapon Rules

For clarity, weapons are categorized as crushing, piercing, or slashing, according to the type of injuries they cause (see *Art & Academe*, pages 43–44). This has no effect on their Damage or other statistics, but can be useful in deciding how the weapon interacts with magical effects or other rules. For example, the spell *Edge of the Razor* (ArM5, page 154) only works on "edged or pointed" weapons.

## Primitive and Blunted Weapons

Stone weapons do less damage than metal ones. Subtract 2 from their Damage modifiers, to a minimum Damage modifier of +1. Statistics for several stone weapons are given on page 95 of *Ancient Magic*.

Slashing and piercing weapons may be blunted to reduce injury in tournaments. Subtract 3 from the Damage modifier of a blunted weapon. This can reduce the Damage modifier below zero.

## Option: Try Using the Other End

Several weapons, such as swords, can deal two categories of damage. The wielder may normally choose to deal either sort of damage, as he chooses.

As an optional rule, the order in which damage categories are listed on the Weapon Table becomes significant. The first category is the weapon's normal mode of use. Apply a



## Melee Weapon Table

ITEM	ABILITY	INIT	ATK	DFN	DAM	STR	LOAD	COST	AVAIL	TYPES	DAMAGE LEVELS	NOTES
Unarmed	Brawl	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	All	C	n/a	
Kick	Brawl	-1	0	-1	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	All	C	n/a	
Gauntlet	Brawl	0	0	1	2	-3	0	Inexp.	All	C	2	
Bludgeon	Brawl	0	2	0	2	-2	1	Inexp.	All	C	1	
Dagger	Brawl	0	2	0	3	-3	0	Inexp.	All	P,S	2	
Knife	Brawl	0	1	0	2	-6	0	Inexp.	All	P,S	2	
Axe	Single	1	4	0	6	0	1	Std.	All	S	2	
Club	Single	1	2	1	3	-2	1	Inexp.	All	C	1	
Dueling Stick, Short	Single	2	4	1	2	-2	1	Inexp.	Ancient	C	2	<i>Ancient Magic</i> , page 95
Falchion	Single	1	4	1	4	0	1	Std.	Late	S	2	
Hatchet	Single	0	3	0	4	-2	1	Inexp.	All	S	2	
Lance	Single	2	4	0	5	0	2	Std.	High	P	1	
Mace	Single	1	3	0	8	0	2	Std.	All	C	2	
Mace and Chain	Single	2	3	0	7	0	2	Std.	Early	C	2	
Net*	Single	-1	2	2	0	-1	3	Std.	Ancient	S	2	<i>Guardians of the Forest</i> , page 134
Spear	Single	2	2	0	5	-1	1	Inexp.	All	P	1	
Sword, Short	Single	1	3	1	5	-1	1	Std.	All	P,S	2	
Sword, Long**	Single	2	4	1	6	0	1	Exp.	All	S,P	2	
Shield, Buckler	Single	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	-2	1	Std.	High	n/a	2	
Shield, Round	Single	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	-1	2	Inexp.	All	n/a	1	
Shield, Heater	Single	n/a	n/a	3	n/a	0	2	Std.	High	n/a	2	
Shield, Infantry	Single	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	0	3	Std.	Ancient	n/a	2	New
T Trident	Single	3	3	3	5	1	3	Exp.	Ancient	P	2	<i>Guardians of the Forest</i> , page 134
Whip*	Single	2	1	1	-3	-2	2	Inexp.	All	C, S	1	New
Cudgel	Great	1	4	1	7	1	2	Inexp.	All	C	2	
Farm Implement	Great	1	3	1	5	0	2	Inexp.	All	P,S	1	
Flail	Great	1	3	1	8	0	2	Inexp.	All	C	2	
Halberd***	Great	2	4	1	10	1	2	Std.	Late	S, P	2	
Pole Arm***	Great	3	4	1	8	0	2	Std.	High	S,P	2	
Pole Axe	Great	1	5	0	11	1	2	Std.	All	S	2	
Spear, Long	Great	3	3	1	7	0	3	Inexp.	All	P	1	Includes boar spear, <i>Lion &amp; Lily</i> , page 120
Sword, Great	Great	2	5	2	9	1	2	Exp.	Late	S,P	2	
Staff	Great	2	3	3	2	-1	2	Inexp.	Early	C	2	
Warhammer	Great	0	6	0	12	2	3	Inexp.	All	C	2	

\* A net or whip may be used to trip, grapple, or disarm using wielder's Single Weapon + Weapon Attack Bonus in lieu of Brawl.

\*\* There are several variations on the long sword, including the late Roman spatha (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 127) and the Mongol saber (*Ancient Magic*, page 17).

\*\*\* A halberd or pole arm may be used to unseat a rider.

## Missile Weapon Table

ITEM	ABILITY	INIT	ATK	DEF	DAM	RANGE	STR	LOAD	COST	AVAIL	TYPES	DAMAGE LEVELS	NOTES
Axe, Throwing	Thrown	0	0	2	6	5	0	1	Std.	All	S	2	
Javelin	Thrown	0	2	0	5	10	0	1	Std.	All	P	2	
Knife	Thrown	0	1	0	2	5	-2	0	Inexp.	All	P	2	
Sling	Thrown	-3	1	0	4	20	-3	0	Inexp.	All	P	1	
Rock, sharpened	Thrown	0	0	1	3	5	-1	1	Inexp.	Ancient	C, S	1	Ancient Magic, page 17
Stone	Thrown	0	1	0	2	5	-1	1	Inexp.	All	C	n/a	
Bow	Bow	-1	3	0	6	15	-1	1	Std.	All	P	2	
Bow, Composite	Bow	-2	4	0	7	30	2	2	Exp.	All	P	2	Ancient Magic, page 17
Bow, Horse	Bow	-2	5	0	8	15	2	2	Exp.	All	P	2	Ancient Magic, page 17
Bow, Long	Bow	-2	4	0	8	30	2	2	Exp.	Late	P	2	
Crossbow	Crossbow	5	5	0	8*	25	1	2	Exp.	High	P	2	Replaces Covenants page 18
Arbalest	Crossbow	5	5	0	10*	30	-1	3	Exp.	High	P	2	New
Arbalest, heavy	Crossbow	5	5	0	12*	35	1	2	Exp.	Late	P	2	New

-1 Attack penalty if it is used to deal its other damage type, due to awkwardness.

## Option: The Clash of Weapons

In battle, weapons sometimes break. In the standard ArM5 rules, this only happens on a botch. The following optional rules adds more tension and chaos, but also complexity.

Check for weapon breakage whenever the attacker's melee Attack Total exactly equals the defender's Defense Total. (Remember that in ArM5, this counts as a miss.)

To determine whose weapon might break, roll Strength + Weapon Ability + a simple die for each character. Whoever rolls lower must then roll to see if his weapon breaks. If the defender must roll for breakage, he may choose to roll for either his weapon or his

shield. This roll for weapon breakage is similar to a stress check for equipment (see *City & Guild*, page 77), but the Ease Factor is lower because weapons are generally designed to withstand combat use.

**WEAPON BREAKAGE:** stress die + Weapon Ability vs. Ease Factor 9

If the check fails, the item loses a damage level. Most weapons and shields have two damage levels. They break when the last damage level is lost (but function normally until then). Some weapons, notably spears and lances, are particularly fragile, and have only one damage level.

For improvised weapons, such as hand tools or kitchen knives pressed into use as weapons, the Ease Factor of the breakage check is much higher: 15.

*City & Guild* discusses equipment damage in greater detail (see *City & Guild*, page 77).

## Using Crossbows

Crossbows were introduced in *Covenants* (see *Covenants*, page 18). These rules replace the rules in that earlier supplement.

Crossbows are easy to use. The usual three extra botch dice for untrained Ability use do not apply to crossbows.

The user's Strength does not add to Damage for crossbows. Use the Damage value given in the Missile Weapons Table directly, without adding anything.

Spanning a crossbow is an Extended Action. The number of rounds required depends on the type of spanning mechanism (see Notes on Weapons, later in this chapter).

If you are using the Ready Missiles option, shooting a loaded crossbow is a fast action rather than an action. This enables the crossbowman to shoot and then take cover, or to shoot and immediately begin reloading his weapon.



## Missile Weapon Descriptions

**ARBALEST:** An arbalest is crossbow that requires a mechanical device to span. Some arbalests can be spanned in a four-round Extended Action using a windlass. A few are spanned with block-and-tackle, which is usually slower, requiring a (6–Str)-round Extended Action. If the spanning process is interrupted, the character may later resume it at the point where he left off.

**ARBALEST, HEAVY:** A powerful, late-medieval arbalest with a steel bow. A heavy arbalest is spanned with a built-in mechanical device called a cranequin. This is a six-round Extended Action. If the spanning process is interrupted, the character may resume it at the point where he left off.

**CROSSBOW:** To span a crossbow with a belt hook (the usual method) is a three-round Extended Action. A character with Str +3 or greater can span it by hand as a one-round Extended Action. In the late-medieval period, a built-in lever called a goat's foot allows a crossbowman to span his weapon as a two-round Extended Action.

**Bow:** This is a new, concise name for a short bow (see ArM5, page 177)

**Bow, COMPOSITE:** This weapon is used by Saracens, Moors, and Asiatic nomads (Turks and Mongols or, in the early Middle Ages, Huns and Magyars). See also *Ancient Magic*, page 17.

**Bow, HORSE:** A compact composite bow, suitable for use from horseback. See *Mounted Archery*, later; see also *Ancient Magic*, page 17.

**Bow, LONG:** Historically, longbows were confined to Wales for most of the high Middle Ages. They became the signature English weapon after 1283.

## Melee Weapon Descriptions

**FALCHION:** A heavy, one-handed, machete-like weapon used by common soldiers.

**HALBERD:** Similar to a pole axe with a steel spike on top and, usually, a hook for dragging a rider off his horse.

**NET:** A net may be used to make trip, grapple, or disarm attempts, or unseat a rider. It is otherwise a rather ineffective weapon.

**ROCK, SHARPENED:** A very primitive weapon, sometimes used by faeries and the like. See *Ancient Magic*, page 95.

**SHIELD, INFANTRY:** A large shield that can only be used on foot, usually oval or rectangular in shape. The convex, rectangular scutum of the Roman legionary is an infantry shield.

**SWORD, BASTARD:** A large, late-medieval sword suitable for one-handed or two-handed use. If used two-handed, treat it as a great sword. If used one handed, its Str and Load remain at +1 and 1, respectively, but all its other statistics are those of a long sword.

**WHIP:** A whip is not a very good weapon, but it may be used to make trip, grapple, or disarm attempts, or to unseat a rider.

## Expanded Armor Rules

The *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* rulebook provides the statistics for several generic types of armor (see ArM5, page 176). This section expands on those rules to incorporate a wider variety of historical armor types, and gives rules for constructing armor out of layers of different material.

## Armor Materials

The following categories expand and supersede those described on page 176 of ArM5. Note that the statistics for these armor materials are fully compatible with those in ArM5. These new categories simply cover a broader variety of historical armor materials.

### INEXPENSIVE MATERIALS

- Padded armor is usually made of woolen or linen fabric quilted into dense layers. Other forms include heavy felt, suede, or leather stuffed with horsehair, and thick furs such as bearskin.
- Boiled leather is very tough, but stiff. Also use these statistics for similar, semi-resilient materials like rawhide, or even faerie armor made of tree bark.

### STANDARD MATERIALS

- Reinforced armor is leather or padded material strengthened by many small, hard plates or rings. These reinforcements are usually metal, but horn, bone,

## Weapon Table Key

The melee and missile weapons tables list the following statistics:

**ABILITY** refers to the Ability used to calculate combat scores while using that weapon. Characters with no score in a weapon Ability can use the weapon untrained; treat their relevant Ability as zero, and add three extra botch dice unless the weapon is a crossbow.

**INIT** is the weapon's Weapon Initiative Modifier.

**ATK** is the weapon's Weapon Attack Modifier.

**DEFN** is the weapon's Weapon Defense Modifier.

**DAM** is the weapon's Damage Modifier.

**RANGE** is the range increment for the missile weapon, in paces.

**STR** is the minimum Strength required to use the weapon effectively.

**LOAD** is the Load of the weapon; see Encumbrance on ArM5, page 178.

**COST** states how expensive the weapon is. Most characters can afford Standard or Inexpensive equipment, but this can be affected by their Virtues and Flaws.

**AVAIL** gives the time period (or geographic region) in which the weapon first came into widespread use. See *Equipment Availability*, later.

**TYPES** lists the type(s) of damage the weapon inflicts: Crushing, Piercing, or Slashing.

**DAMAGE LEVELS** indicate how many damage levels the weapon can sustain before it breaks. This only pertains when using the optional *Clash of Weapons* rule, earlier.

and whalebone are sometimes used.

- Rigid scale includes any sort of non-metallic scale or lamellar armor. Armor of boiled-leather scales is worn throughout Mythic Europe; horn and whalebone are sometimes used as well.
- Metal scale includes all kinds of metal lamellar. Brigandine is essentially a late-period type of metal scale.

### EXPENSIVE MATERIALS

- Mail is the term characters in Mythic Europe would use for chain mail. Mail shirts and hauberks are available in the

## Expanded Armor Table

Add together the Protection and Load of the body armor, helmet, and any surcoat worn. Retain fractions until the end of the calculation and then round up to the next whole number.

### BODY ARMORS

ARMOR	CUIRASS/JERKIN		HAUBERGEON		HAUBERK		FULL*	
	PROT	LOAD	PROT	LOAD	PROT	LOAD	PROT	LOAD
Padded	+1	1.5	+1	1.5	+1	1.5	+1	1.5
Boiled Leather	+2	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	+3	4.5
Reinforced	+2	2	+2.5	2.5	+3	3	+3.5	3.5
Rigid Scale	+2	2	+2.5	2.5	+3.5	3.5	+4.5	4.5
Metal Scale	+3	3	+4	4	+5	5	+6	6
Mail	+3	1.5	+4	2	+5	2.5	+7	3.5
Plate	+3	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	+12	6
Plate and Mail	+4	2	+6	3	+8	4	+10	5

\* Greaves are already included in the full armor listed; don't add them again.

### SURCOATS AND GREAVES

SURCOAT AND GREAVES	PROT	LOAD	COST
Gambeson	+1	1.5	Inexpensive
Coat of Plates	+2	2	Expensive
Boiled-leather greaves*	+1	+1	Inexpensive
Plate jambes*	+1	1	Expensive
Plate-and-mail jambes*	+2	0.5	Expensive

\* Greaves and jambes are already included in the full armor listed; don't add them again.

### HELMETS

HELMET	PROT	LOAD	PERCEPTION PENALTY	COST
Cap, Iron	0	0	0	Inexpensive
Coif/Camail	+0.5	0	0	Expensive
Helmet, Open	+1	1	-1	Standard
Helm	+2	2	-3	Expensive
Bascinet	+2	1	-1	Expensive (late medieval only)



ancient period; full mail is an invention of the early Middle Ages.

- Plate armor is made of solid pieces of metal. The ancient Greeks and Romans had plate cuirasses and greaves, but by the early Middle Ages, all-plate harness fell out of use. The full plate listed on the Expanded Armor Table is late-medieval, Gothic style plate (c. 1400) and has a different Protection-to-Load ratio than its ancient counterpart. The complex armor design rules do not cover 15th-century full plate.
- Plate and mail is a combination of mail strengthened with various metal plates. It gives better overall protection than the ancient, all-plate harness. Historically, a few medieval examples of breastplates (worn over mail) re-appeared by 1200, but they were not common until about 1300. Plate jambes were added around 1320, and full plate appeared around 1360.

## Armor Outfittings

These rules separate armor into three components, each with separate statistics that are added together with the others. These components are the armor itself, any protective surcoat or greaves worn with them, and the helmet.

The Expanded Armor Table lists common pieces of armor worn in Mythic Europe. It is compatible with the ArM5 Armor Table (see ArM5, page 176) in the sense that partial and full armors can be constructed from the components listed here, and the statistics come out the same provided one makes certain assumptions about the helmet and surcoat included with the various armors described in ArM5.

The Expanded Armor Table shows the three most common sorts of armor outfits used in Mythic Europe in 1220. See the Glossary of Armor Terms, later, for descriptions of the jerkin, cuirass, haubergeon, and hauberk. Full armor protects all four limbs as well as the torso and loins.

Some combinations of material and outfits have entries of "n/a" in the Expanded Armor Table because it's not possible to make a sleeved garment out of rigid materials (boiled leather or plate). Also, some materials have the same statistics (Protection and Load) for different types of garments. This is because armor's Protection value has more to do with how well the vital areas are protected than with how well the extremities

are protected. See Complex Armor Design, later, for further explanation.

## Option: Penalty for Fighting Without a Helmet

As one can see from the Expanded Armor Table, helmets don't add much to the Protection of a warrior's armor. In fact, iron caps and mail coifs don't add appreciably to Protection at all! The reason for this is that a warrior's armor is only as strong as its weakest point, and if the head is well-protected by a stout iron helmet, enemies concentrate their attacks on the less-protected body instead.

The converse also holds true: if a character's body is well-protected but his head is bare, a sensible foe concentrates his attacks there. To reflect this danger, add an extra botch die to melee Defense (and Evasion) rolls for any character so foolish as to fight without head protection.

## Glossary of Armor Terms

**AILETTES:** Flat plates of boiled leather worn to protect the collarbone and shoulder.

**AKETON:** The padded jacket worn under a mail hauberk; see also gambeson.

**BASCINET:** A late medieval helmet that fits the contours of the head and neck. Usually equipped with a movable visor.

**BRIGANDINE:** Late medieval armor made of small, overlapping metal plates riveted to an outer layer of canvas or leather. It is rather like an inside-out version of scale armor.

**CAP-A-PIE:** Literally "head to foot," the term characters would use for full armor.

**CAP, IRON:** A helmet that protects mainly the crown of the head, leaving the face exposed.

**CAMAIL:** A mail hood that covers the head, forehead, and lower face.

**CHAPEL DE FER:** French term for a kettle hat.

**CHAUSSES:** Leggings made of mail.

**COAT OF PLATES:** A lamellar cuirass, historically worn over mail between about 1250 and 1300 AD. Use the statistics for a metal scale cuirass.

**COIF:** An open-faced mail hood.

**CUIRRASS:** A breastplate and backplate;

the most basic sort of rigid body armor.

**CUIRBOULLI:** A form of boiled leather made by boiling in oil rather than water.

**FAULD:** Lamellar hip protection, worn with late-medieval plate armor.

**GAMBESON:** A garment made of padded material. It could be a short tunic, a sleeveless surcoat, or a long-sleeved hauberk which could be worn over, under, or instead of another armor. Indeed, it's not uncommon for knights to wear a light gambeson (also called an aketon or arming jacket) under their mail, and a heavier one over it.

**GAUNTLET:** Armor for the hands.

**GORGET:** A stiff collar of boiled leather (or, in the late Middle Ages, iron) that protects the throat and neck.

**GREAVES:** Plate or boiled-leather armor for the lower legs.

**HAUBERK:** A knee-length, long-sleeved coat of flexible armor. It protects the body, arms, and upper legs.

**HAUBERGEON:** A short-sleeved armored tunic, covering the torso and shoulders only.

**HELMET, OPEN:** A helmet protects the sides and rear of the head, but leaves the face at least half exposed.

**HELM:** A high-medieval piece of headgear that completely encases the head and neck in plates of iron.

**JACK:** A brigandine jerkin, common in the late medieval period. Also leather jack.

**JAMBES:** Plate armor covering the legs.

**JERKIN:** A short, sleeveless jacket.

**KETTLE HAT:** A bowl-shaped iron cap with a wide metal brim. Popular with the common soldiers of the high and late Middle Ages.

**LAMELLAR:** Overlapping plates fastened to each other rather than to a piece of backing material. The plates can be small, similar to those in scale armor, or larger, as in a lorica segmentata.

**LORICA HAMATA:** Roman name for a mail haubergeon.

**LORICA SEGMENTATA:** A lamellar cuirass used in Imperial Rome, with horizontal strips of metal encircling the torso, overlapping like the plates of a lobster's tail.

**POLEYNs:** Knee protectors made of iron or boiled leather.

**RING ARMOR:** Early medieval armor of leather reinforced by non-overlapping metal rings.

**SABATON:** Armor for the feet.

**SALLET:** A late medieval, rounded helmet with a visor.

**SCALE ARMOR:** Small plates fastened to a layer of backing material. The plates overlap vertically, like the scales of a fish.

**VAMBRACES:** Armor for the arms.

## Option: Complex Armor Design

These optional rules allow players to create their own armor from any combination of materials, and calculate its Protection and Load. The Expanded Armor Table is sufficient to outfit most grogs, knights, and other characters, but these rules might prove useful for creating exotic armor for faeries and the like, or for reproducing a specific, historical armor.

First, make a list of all the materials that comprise the armor. Decide which parts of the body are covered by each material. Add up the corresponding Protection values for all the areas covered by that material. Some materials on some parts of the body correspond to a Protection of zero. Once you have the Protection total for all pieces of that material, multiply it by the Load Factor for that material and retain any fraction to get the total Load of that material. Continue this process for all the other materials worn. Finally, add up all the Protection and Load values for the different materials and

TYPE	TORSO	HIPS AND THIGHS	SHINS	UPPER ARMS	FORE-ARMS	LOAD FACTOR
Padded	1	0	0	0	0	1.5
Boiled leather	2	0.5	0.5	0	0	1.5
Reinforced	2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	1
Rigid scale	2	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Metal scale	3	1	0.5	1	0.5	1
Mail	3	1	1	1	1	0.5
Plate	3	1	1	0.5	0.5	1
Plate and mail	4	2	1	2	1	0.5

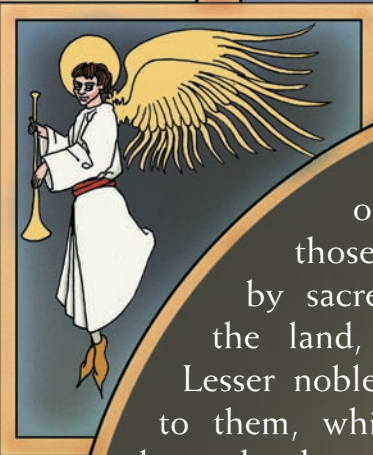
round up to the next whole number.

The reason some entries on the table are zero is that some parts of the body are more vulnerable than others. Covering the torso, for example, makes a relatively big difference to overall Protection, compared to covering the forearms. It's not that wearing padding

on the forearm doesn't help the forearm, it's that wearing padding on the forearm doesn't help very much in comparison to putting padding on the torso. Non-vital areas need a lot of armor to get a point of Protection, while the same armor over a vital spot would correspond to several points of Protection.

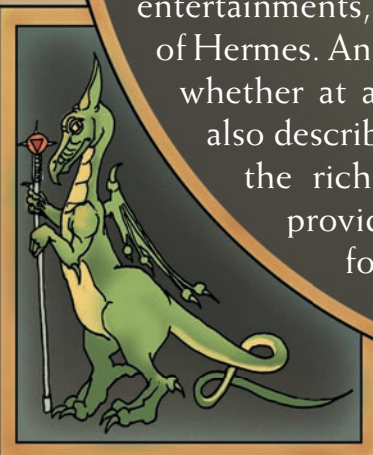


# Ars Magica



The undisputed rulers of Mythic Europe are the nobility — those high-born who are bound together by sacred vows of loyalty, are supported by the land, and provide support to the Church. Lesser nobles compete for the favor of those superior to them, while great nobles seek the loyalty of those beneath them. When not distracted by the politics of landholding and of war, they hunt the mundane and magical beasts of the forests and host extravagant feasts. For the nobles of Mythic Europe are first and foremost knights in shining armor.

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## Lords of Men



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