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An Excerpt from the diaries of the historian Marios Giovanni, in his service to Benito DeGrazzi, third in line for the Silver Mark, obtained from the library of Cavernius covenant

Nearly one thousand warriors rode into the warm and sunny hamlet that beautiful morning, all to break the spirit of rebellion which held the arrogant noble of the valley who felt no need to bow and pay due homage to their just and rightful liege and master, Lord Benito DeGrazzi.

Such a fearsome troop of warriors few had ever seen. Presented in all their glory were DeGrazzi's finest. Sir Vorian, strong of spirit and of arms, renowned for his combat proficiency, was present. Sir Laurent, whose holdings were vast and who had many battles uniting his own lands against his enemies. And above all, Sir Herrik, DeGrazzi's right hand in all circumstances, political and private, an honorable and charitable knight held in the highest esteem by his allies, but greatly feared by the living few who called him enemy. Some whispered privately of his longevity, for it was rumored he was much older than the three decades his appearance belied. All were great warriors with many victories and great conquests to their names. Each had with them their full complement of vassals, landed knights, lesser knights, squires and men at arms. There were arrayed scores of archers, spearmen, and even several siege engineers with their terrible weapons of destruction, which turn great castles into rubble.

[Sidebar: Occultes Serpentis' Commentary]

Oh yes, a most impressive display.

[End Sidebar]

The rustic people of the valley must have heard of the oncoming army, for the villagers had fled their duties and the just wrath of their lord, leaving their hovels and the rest of the small valley abandoned to the might of arms. The three low stone buildings were sealed, with heavy stone boulders wedged over their entryways. Upon seeing this, his lordship flew into a furious state, screaming in righteous anger at the honorless scum who were would abandon their duties. He began giving orders to lay waste to the village and torch the fields where the sheep and other animals had, until just recently, been stabled.

[Sidebar: Occultes Serpentis' Commentary]

Occultes Serpentis' mark: OS

[End Sidebar]

Word from the scouts farther ahead stayed his hand. There were seen soldiers manning the battlements of the gatehouse halfway up the side of the mountain at the end of the valley. Deciding to address the fortification and wayward nobility directly, the troops were redirected to advance on the manor, merely a single gatehouse set back into the very rock of the mountain. A small path, which doubled back on itself several times, was the only approach to the isolated structure. The gray stone of the gatehouse and walls contrasted greatly with the white snow-covered mountain surrounding it and the green valley here beneath it, from which we were just barely able to see a herald and his servant approaching, bearing a coat of arms under a banner of parley. They stopped several hundred paces up the path and waited.

Escorted by Sir Harrek and his squire, the Lord DeGrazzi agreed to speak with the representative from the traitorous estate. They spoke for several minutes peaceably, but after sometime more, the meeting ended with the lord screaming at the emissary, swearing the valley will be his, no matter what other agreements had been made, or it would be destroyed. Each side withdrew; the progress of the herald's long climb back up the path clinging to the side of the mountain gave our lord time to begin preparations for siege.

Two groups of men immediately were prepared, some with ladders, the rest each bore a large pavisse. As the emissaries finally entered the gatehouse above, the two groups started the long trek up the side of the mountain. Somewhere about two hundred paces from their target, a commotion started with in the lead group. Like watching a pile of children, they tumbled back down the path and into the group following them. The cries of pain and anguish echoed through out the canyon. As the soldiers made their way back, dragging their wounded comrades with them, they told of large sections of ice covering the path, making

passage neigh impassable. Not even the experienced pathfinders had seen the ice until it was too late to do anything to prevent the accident.

As the men finished their report to a furious Benito DeGrazzi who paced back and forth the entire time they spoke, a flaming arrow came with note attached, flying as if it were a bird itself, from the citadel above. It landed as all watched, deep in the steed of Sir Herrek, grievously wounding the noble animal. Reading the note sent our lord into a murderous calm, and he gave orders to assemble the war machines and destroy the gatehouse and all with in it. I retrieved the crumpled document from where it was cast on the ground. It gave our Lord one more chance to leave peaceably. There were discussions among the seasoned veterans as to the archer, and it was decided the elevation of the gatehouse above allowed the wind to carry the arrow so far, and that hitting the horse was just blind luck.

[Sidebar: Occultes Serpentis ' Commentary]

Oh, not hardly.

[End Sidebar]

His lordship gave orders to deploy defensively around the siege equipment. It took several hours for the engineers to finish assembling the great machines, and only two test shots were hurled up the side of the mountain before dusk fell over the valley. The guard held vigil all night and when dawn came on the valley it revealed another beautiful sunny day, and the preparations for the attack continued.

Just as the sun broke over the ridge of the mountains, there was a thunderous noise. Everyone looked about to see what was happening, but not until it was too late did we see the great mountains of snow around the valley hurtling down upon us. The wave of snow swept through the valley and destroyed everything it touched. The valorous warriors along with their great machines were scattered amongst trees, boulders, and flows of ice as sharp as knives to be buried alive. I, myself, was saved after several hours of entombment in my icy grave by the heretofore-absent villagers. With broken arm and injured leg, too weak to offer any resistance and thankful for being alive, I was taken in and nursed back to health by the very same villagers we were sent to break.

While I recovered, several noble-looking people questioned me as to my position and my involvement with lord DeGrazzi. I discovered surreptitiously that I was the lone survivor of all the great warriors on the field that disastrous day. Finally I was offered by one of my inquisitors a choice—to remain here in the employment of the lord of this valley as scribe and tutor or I could rejoin my companions. This was a sinister choice, for as I have said before, all others were dead, and if I answered thusly, though they had showed great mercy so far, I had no doubts the person who offered me this choice would not hesitate in the least at dispatching me.

If I had honor left, I might have, nay would have, taken death. But that had been beaten out of me in the time I spent buried under the ice, listening to the cries of the others around me slowly fade away. Had I known of the dreadful life I lead now, no I shall not think of it now for I digress. Of those I serve now I am forbidden to speak, and justly so. None would believe the insane ramblings of this old man anyway, were I to accurately depict the people and events I have seen. All I can say now is I live in terror of my pathetic soul every day. The only thing that gives me slight pleasure is working with the children, but that is a fleeting issue....

[Sidebar: Occultes Serpentis ' Commentary]

As if you would ever see the light of day again, either way, old man.

[End Sidebar]

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[The Covenant]

“We got there just after the attack. Strewn blood, entrails scattered all over the place.... Are you gonna eat that?

— Bardo

At this point the adventure has no real direction other than that which the characters give it. The following chapter gives some suggestions regarding possible events.

The gatehouse at the end of the winding path, seemingly cut right from the stone face of the mountain, is a great gatehouse, thirty paces wide and at least three stories tall. The main entrance is a pair of huge steel and silver embossed oaken doors. A portcullis is raised above them, seemingly anticipating any attack. The ornately crafted doorknockers are made of silver and depict the massive head of a dog, who's eyes are pitch black, faceted obsidian which seemingly judge all who petition for entrance. For those who know, this is a perfect likeness of Octavian's familiar, Rex. Using the knockers announces visitors, who are soon met by a voice requesting information on their identity and their business at this place. Once satisfactory answers have been given, the front doors slowly open and instructions are given to enter, and to close them behind. This leads to another set of doors identical to the first, set seven paces farther ahead of the first. This room is ornately decorated with statuary, carvings of mythical creatures, battles and events of ages past. These cleverly hide, to all but the trained eye, the presence of murder holes and arrow slits. Once the first set of doors is closed the second may be opened. At this point, if the visitors are aggressive, unwanted or unworthy, all between the two sets of doors are deposited in a lake several valleys away from this site. Otherwise, for those who are deemed worthy of admittance, the doors open onto a beautiful interior courtyard in the covenant proper.

The gatehouse is the main entrance to the covenant. It is an impressive structure, though hardly seen under a mass of ice and snow. Entering the gatehouse is simple enough. Getting out is another matter. Without the express permission of either a magus or a guard, an unwelcome visitor would be deposited into a lake several valleys over. This acts much like *Seven League Stride* (ReCo 45—T: Group). The enchantment on the entryway replaced the old gatekeeper and his tradition several years ago. See the sidebar on Carmine on page 12. The sigil Vilarious gave the party will allow them to enter the covenant proper on the third level of a magical regio.

[[Begin Insert: The Regio]]

The site of the covenant is within a regio with three levels. The edges of the three levels are the same (it has a cylinder rather than a cone-shape), which makes traveling between them difficult. The only way to enter the regio levels is through the gatehouse. Long ago, the covenant founders locked the levels of the regio for protection making it very difficult to move between the levels. Since its founding, the covenant used a "gatekeeper" to open a passage between the covenant and the outside realm. Short of having spells to get into each level, the gatekeeper would respond to certain key words and perform the spells for the traveler.

Michael barely remembers the commands to travel to any but the level of the covenant. Long ago, he learned the rituals to access all levels of the regio, though he has never used them himself. This will be part of his tradition that is lost when he dies. Carmine doesn't know enough about it at all. The gatehouse only accesses top level of the regio where the covenant sits. No one alive has visited anything but the covenant level, though Vinitania, and perhaps Laertes, may know of the others from their predecessors.

The first, mundane, level is merely a maze of caverns with little other than a sparse cobweb and a mean-looking spider in a dark cave deep in the mountain.

The middle level is the demesne of the monster which has constructed a massive spider's web in which to keep its victims. The web mirrors the covenant's corridors. See page 17 for details.

The covenant itself lies in the top level of the regio.

[[End Insert]]

[The aura of the covenant]

The entire mountain, including the village and the mundane level of the regio, has level 2 magical aura.

Covenant covenant halls Magical Level 8

Monster's Lair	spider web	Magical Level 5
Mundane Realm	natural caves	Magical Level 2

[Areas of the covenant]

The interior of Cavernius Covenant is vaguely shaped like a snowflake or spider's web. The center is a mass of glacial ice, which allows sunlight to spread throughout much of the covenant. The rear portions of the place have been closed off due to a lack of needed space. The coven folk only visit the very front parts of the covenant on a regular basis .

The large courtyard is unrecognizable as part of a cave with its marble walls and ceiling, magnificent tapestries and prominent statuary which resemble more a king's palace or a cathedral.

The room is brightly lit, as the entire covenant, by small silvered white lamps spaced every five paces or so the lights are seemingly smokeless, though a subtle and pleasing scent of lilacs is detectable in the air. The tapestries depict several different stories, all intended to promote the virtues of loyalty, devotion and honor and several entryways lead farther into the covenant, while one on each side of the great doors leads back into the upper levels of the gatehouse. Following the stairways back into the gatehouse there are a guardroom and barracks, unused but functionally equipped. By several bunks and footlockers lining the walls, several suits of armor, shields, weapons, and other equipment stand ready to be donned by nonexistent guards for the protection of the covenant. From the upper levels of the gatehouse one can see most of the valley and the small village below. The mysteries of the sacred architecture here go unknown to those who live here now, but it allows those in the guardhouse to interact with those on the mundane level of the Regio. Visitors may be spied on or enemies may be attacked without being at direct risk from their retaliations.

Outsiders are not allowed within the council room without the express permission of one of the council members, the solid marble doors simply will not open and it is warded to sound an alarm if tampered with. Once inside, a large and impressively decorated chair resembling a throne sits at the far end of the room, framed by two three-pace long solid marble tables with five chairs behind them each angled towards the corners of the lavishly decorated room. Portraits of past members line the walls and seemingly stare at those who enter in mute judgment. Those with an Order of Hermes Lore (Tremere) roll of 9+ will recognize many prestigious members of that House.

The kitchen area is designed to efficiently feed scores of people at one time, though now only a small part of an auxiliary oven and annex are currently being used by the cook. There are several storerooms, still kept full with many months of rations, just off the main kitchen. Some of these rooms are kept very cold, and store bacon, meat, fish, and venison, while others hold seemingly endless supplies of vegetables, squashes, and both common and exotic spices. Off to one side there may be seen a small bowl of soup, a slice of sausage and bread arranged on a fine plate with a goblet of a mild wine on a fancy tray. These are left for the "spirit" of a kindly boy Margareta feeds. Carmine doesn't mind the small deception as few don't believe the cook actually sees ghosts, at least real ghosts. See page 12 for more on Carmine.

In the living areas, the covenfolk live close to the front of the covenant. The magi tend to occupy the other side of the great hall, near the center of the mountain. In the covenfolk areas are the living quarters visitors use. This is where Clavius set up his living quarters in the most grandiose apartments he could find. This is also where he left his lab and other effects when he finally left (i.e., ran from the howling monster).

[Other reaches of the covenant]

“So, how long are we staying here, again?”

—Lucio, Clavius' apprentice

There are several "closets" and chambers that lead deeper into the mountain, built when the place was much busier. Opening up these areas would greatly expand the size of the place making more than enough room for about ten magi, their apprentices, and over 70 grogs and coven folk. As the passages go deeper into the mountain, the caves are less elegant and more service oriented. In the old days, anyone who was

anybody had a lab towards the front and their lessers were shifted to the rear of the caves.

Now, these areas are used for storage, things that will probably never be looked at again, let alone used. Here may be found rooms filled with things like napkins, barrels of old wine, tools, parts for laboratories, and anything else the storyguide may wish. Cavernius is an old, winter covenant. There could be anything hiding in the farthest reaches. There are many storage rooms with piles of miscellaneous items, lumber, dishes, rock, and such. There may be found some abandoned labs, perhaps with someone still using them. There is an area with old prisoner cells and oubliettes. Any number of oddities might be found here.

Beyond a set of dusty but ornate doors, a wide sweeping corridor of deep blue and green leads deeper into the mountain. In one area a strange sort of statue may be found. From its high ceiling a massive lifelike sculpture of a whale is suspended, positioned just as if it were swimming through the oceans, though layers of dust belie its current fate. A closer inspection reveals that this is not a statue or sculpture, but the preserved carcass of a true whale, saved from the ravages of time by unknown but powerful forces. The ceiling of the corridor is painted a multi-colored ocean pattern, the perfect backdrop for such a display.

In other areas something a bit more strange might be discovered. Those of an extremely observant nature may see a pattern in the mosaic of the ceiling. The size of the image is so immense that only pieces of a creature may be initially visible, an eye here, a claw there, for instance, slowly revealing the form of giant, mythical creature, spanning the entire length of the corridor, floor to ceiling known as Jormungandr to the Norse. As large as the whale is, this creature dwarfs it as a mountain to a flea.

Long forgotten by almost everyone are the subterranean tunnels connecting the covenant with the village. The tunnels and passages in the deep part of the mountain hide a room from which, given the proper passwords, allow easy access to the village below the covenant. See Chapter 3, page 10 for more details.

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[The Mausoleum]

Deep within the most remote of the sections still occupied by the coven folk of Cavernius there is a small, sculpted, marbled staircase slowly spiraling down towards the lower reaches of the mountain. The stairway is clean and polished; frescos and bas-reliefs depicting valorous warriors and stately nobles adorn the walls. Eventually the stairway leads into a small but similarly decorated antechamber. Across the room there is a large set of gilt and ornately carved double doors. Above the doorway, there is an inscription in Latin: Always remember these, our sons and daughters, and everything they have given to us. Beyond the doors is a high-arched room with an intricately carved, functional looking, solid stone bed that even includes a pillow. Two archways on either side of the bed lead into the crypts of the covenant. Above the doorway leading back towards the antechamber there is a statuette of Christ Ascending, though a Per + Order of Hermes lore of 12+ shows strong similarities to depictions of the House founder, Tremere. Beyond each low archway, the tunnels of the crypts weave their way throughout, crisscrossing erratically. Alcoves are spaced evenly on both sides of the corridor holding the remains of Cavernius' past members and coven folk. The interred range in various stages of decomposition from mostly dust to the most recently deceased, who look as if they may only be sleeping. There may well be over two hundred lying in state herein, with room for nearly half as many more, but counting is difficult because within the catacombs each twisting and turning passage looks identical, each finally connecting back upon themselves.

The statue over the doorway in the mausoleum is actually a magic item designed to harvest the vis out of any spirits bound within. The corpse is placed upon the stone bed, where any spirit or ghost is summoned back peacefully into the body, and over the course of an evening, is laid to rest. The vis is then collected into a small decanter on the side of the bed.

[[End Insert]]

[Somebody shows up to certámen Vinitania]

“Gimme my sigil, you insane bitch.”

— Sobek, House Tremere

Sobek of House Tremere arrives during the season. There is a ruckus in the village similar to that the

characters received on arrival. If they are not in the village, the Seneschal will greet the stranger. Sobek seeks a meeting with Vinitania. At that point the characters are called.

Sobek is irritated that he cannot see Vinitania immediately. He has business to attend to and does not want to “waste his time with underlings.” If pressed, he will say he is here to reclaim his sigil. There isn’t much the characters can say to deny him his visit. If they do, he challenges them to certámen immediately. If they refuse, he will leave very angry. He will return at the end of the season with friends looking for a fight. Use Amadeus’ statistics on see Appendix 1, page 42 to simulate Sobek’s if the characters actually tangle with him.

If the characters allow him in to see Vinitania, she will move to the Secret Senate scene for certámen. Care should be taken as to who is present in the room at the time as she may enact certámen the wrong person due to her disability, leaving Sobek to fluster and spout in a rage. Barring the storyguide’s evil nature, she will beat him rather swiftly and leave him unconscious on the floor, only to address him as Anthony in the next scene....

[Meet the Snow Snake]

“So, you say you’re here to help?”
— Occultes Serpentis

Once the characters have been in the covenant a brief while, they will be verbally accosted by a small lump of white fur. After introductions, Occultes Serpentis will uncoil herself. She is a furred snow-snake, a very rare magical animal only found in the Alps and in the far northern climes of Ultima Thule. She is Vinitania’s familiar, and as such is very intelligent and can speak very well if she wishes to. She will follow the party about, making snide remarks about their abilities and achievements. While she recognizes that the characters are there to help, she will take every opportunity to belittle them since she doesn’t think they will have any effect on the problems this covenant faces. She doesn’t trust that they will do what they say, and even if they do, she suspects their ulterior motives.

Use Occultes Serpentis to give the characters a harangue. It’s possible that she could be used as a resource, she knows a lot about the covenant, but don’t let that happen too easily. Occultes Serpentis is here to keep the characters honest.

[[Begin Insert]]

[The “Incident”]

Occultes Serpentis is a brilliant theoretician with regards to Mentem magics. As such, she has written a few books using magical writing quills. She had corresponded with a few magi until “The Incident.” At one point she was corresponding with Chalchis, who stole her ideas and claimed them as his own. While this was more or less acceptable in the middle ages, nevertheless Occultes Serpentis became enraged. When Chalchis released his “discovery” he was challenged by Octavian at Tribunal. Octavian was a friend to Occultes Serpentis and Vinitania really didn’t care about it enough to bring up the issue. Chalchis freely admitted, albeit jokingly, that the initial ideas were from Occultes Serpentis. Merely the presentation was his. The fact that years of research was unacknowledged went... unacknowledged by all, even Vinitania. The results were lauded, not the hard work. During this episode Occultes Serpentis came away with the idea that Vinitania does not care about her as anything other than a “resource.” She did not back her up, thereby letting everyone assume her opponent, Chalchis was correct. Her accomplishment garnered no recognition, her efforts minimized.

Chalchis countercharged the ice snake with impersonating a magus and wasting his time. The magus never denied he stole the idea from the snake as his own; he won his case at tribunal because the snake wasn’t a magus so in her mind she doesn’t count. Occultes Serpentis’ charge of stealing the material went no where. Chalchis’ charge netted him a single pawn a vis for his trouble and a severe loss of reputation for *his* work.

The accomplishment in question can be found in the library or in tribunal records. It takes the form of a Libri Quaestionum exposing the similarities and differences between Animál and Mentem in an amazingly clear and concise fashion. Its Target Level Me 7/An 3 and its Quality is 14 in the area of both Animál and

Mentem. Someone may read this twice, once for each Form. Chalchis took this research and wrote it up in his hand then called it his own—that's what got Occultes Serpentis so mad.

[[End Insert]]

[Meeting the Queen]

“I really know nothing of this Anthony guy. But who in his right mind would have *her* as a mother-in-law?”

— Clavius

Off the main courtyard, there is the great hall, where the lady Vinitania is receiving her visitors. She can be often found discoursing to herself about many sundry items. When the characters first meet her, she is having a counsel session with no one there except her familiar, the ice snake, whom she is acting like she is talking to and petting, but isn't. Occultes Serpentis sits coiled in the corner, sulking away from the tragic scene. Occultes Serpentis is really pissed off that Vinitania is delusional. She insults Vinitania constantly, who, of course, ignores her.

Vinitania is the leader of the covenant and holder of some sigils, including her own. She is the stereotypical, proud Tremere. She knows how to delegate and is somewhat conceited, though she is very concerned for the well being of all who are in her care.

Typically, she is in the main hall, but she can be found anywhere in the covenant. If the characters camp out in the library, for example, she can arrive and involve them in a scene.

Vinitania sits on her throne in the great hall. Two guards are present. They don't say much except to act out their parts. They announce visitors and keep the peace. As each character enters the room, the newcomers take on a persona in her delirious play. Each time the characters enter the room, they will be assigned anew. If the scene changes while the characters are present, they will all be assigned new personae.

Vinitania always takes on the persona of the Queen Maithilde. She will act out scenes from a complete play. When it comes time for the character to say his or her part, no matter what he says, no matter if he says anything or not, the “Queen” will “hear” what was supposed to have been said. At other times, what the character says will be “heard” by her but will obviously be out of context. She will react appropriately.

For example: The queen is interrogating some pirate scum who has been ravaging her coastal towns. When asked, “Who are you to take what is not rightfully yours?” The character “playing” the pirate says, “I am Aserolede of Jerbiton! How dare you treat a guest in your covenant in such a way?” The queen will hear the proper line as “I am the dread pirate Roberts and I am liberating the people from your tyranny!” If, when the queen is later giving the captain of the guard orders, the “pirate” speaks up “Hey! I'm standing here. Don't ignore me!” She may extemporize with something like “Yes, we'll get back to you sir pirate.” If the character tries to jump in with “Hey I'm a Jerbiton visiting you. You can't torture me!” She'll come back with something like “Oh, don't tempt me with your lies. Do you think me a fool?” Nevertheless, conversing with Vinitania in her state is dangerous, especially since one can hardly ever tell what scene she is in. Those that hang around long enough can start to identify which scenes are which based on experience. It may be possible to hide in the room next door, waiting for an opportune moment to jump in and speak with her in a civil manner (hoping to be assigned to a suitable persona, of course). Nevertheless, one can only really “speak” as the persona assigned with the lines expected of that persona. To speak otherwise, only prompts the queen to scold and chastise the personae for not acting properly, or to inquire whether the persona is sick, or whatever is appropriate.

Challenging the Queen to certámen will effect a strange sort of ritual out of the Queen, but the end result will still be certámen, since Vinitania only knows certámen. Keep in mind that the Queen Maithilde is supposed to be magus of Mercury. They did not have certámen in those times, that being a magical discipline developed by Bonisagus and Tremere in the eighth century. They did however have a method for magical dueling. She always chooses Mentem when challenged. Challenging her to certámen will cause her to immediately jump to the Secret Senate scene and start the duel.

[The Play]

Vinitania is stuck in a drama dredged from her subconscious. It mixes bits of history, intrigue from her past, and fantasy. All of this is interwoven with a desire to create and/or save the “King.” In Vinitania’s “play” the Huns threaten ancient Rome. Valens sits as Emperor of the East in 375 AD. A Secret Senate of magi is divided on what to do about “the Huns” (including the Goths and other barbarians). Whether these magi are of the Cult of Mercury is unclear.

Valentinian has just died, only his younger brother (Valens) holds the East. A new Emperor must be had. In this play, the Emperor is never called such, but rather is titled “The King” for unknown reasons.

Vinitania, as the Queen Maithilde, is on the side of finding a new king to battle the Huns. To allow the Huns to treat will lose her much political power in the Secret Senate.

Given all this, it is important, therefore, for some, to have a king. Otherwise, say others, the Huns must be dealt with as the new power of Rome. As the argument sways back and forth, so too does political power.

Following are some scenes that can be used to interact with the characters. The storyguide can mix and match these without completing any scene, or even construct new scenes.

[The Battle Scene]

Valentinian dies. A large battle is underway. The Queen cries over his body. Men fight bravely around them. Dialogue is minimal, limited to Vinitania’s brief monologue about the loss of a great man, et cetera. This is the only scene where the guards take action in the play. This is also the only scene where the characters take an *active* part in her drama. They act as the Queen’s guards and surround her. Any in the room must run to her defense. Those who do not are branded Huns and thus the enemy. Huns are attacked by the Queen and all those on her side. It is up to the storyguide to determine if “Hun” characters are the target of the Queen’s magic. If so, they character may well be dead soon. The guards may try to save “Huns” by fighting them. They try to convince the Queen that they are handling the mob without need of her help. In doing so, they push people out of her presence, though the Queen has been known to chase Huns across the covenant. The best defense in this scene is to leave her presence prior to the fight.

[The Secret Senate]

Vinitania gives a midlength discourse on the merits of her plan. In brief, young Anthony of a noble family must wed Valentinian’s daughter, Cecillia, who is in the Queen’s charge. With this alliance, Anthony’s reign should be strong. He is a capable autocrat and will be a strong leader in the trying times to come.

She fends off arguments that the Huns are too strong to fight with counterarguments that they are too strong to treat with.

She cannot defend the charge that Anthony does not wish to marry or become King—she promises to persuade him without breaking the pact. Apparently the Senate has some sort of non-interference pact, but the details are sketchy. After much argument, legal wrangling, and a vote on the legality of the Pact in this instance s he is given a week to get his consent.

The attack of the Huns on the Roman Empire loosely mirrors the assault of the Mongols in the 1220’s. The Huns were from central Asia and pushed the other “barbarian” tribes into Europe. The Huns, too, had a fierce reputation and were feared in equal portion to the fear the Mongols inspired in Mythic Europe.

That Vinitania is having this “vision” may purport to show some divinatory power on her part, or possibly that some other power is at work.

[A Walk in the Garden]

The Queen and Anthony walk in the garden. She notices various pieces of topiary bushes and statues and remarks that Anthony could have it all. Anthony mentions that he has no way to become King so it hasn’t entered his plans for the future.

She mentions Cecillia, the King's daughter and that Anthony might marry her to become King. They discuss politics while enjoying the sites within the garden. Food and entertainment are there as well, poetry, a short play, et cetera.

[The Meeting]

The Queen throws a dinner. Many guests are in attendance. Anthony is introduced to Cecillia who takes a dislike to him for his "boorish manner." She seems to be on to the Queen's plan and doesn't like it. She resists Anthony's efforts to win her heart. Anthony is disheartened but still encouraged by Vinitania.

There is entertainment and conversation among the guests.

[Breakfast]

Cecillia and the Queen argue over events. She explains matters which Cecillia denounces as being too heavyhanded. Cecillia does not like to be used.

She explains the politics and that without this plan, Cecillia will be put to death for fear of future claimants to the crown. Cecillia dislikes the necessities of this life—she prefers creating art and living the life of the king's daughter—but concedes the Queen's vision is better than death.

[Wooing]

Vinitania narrates a scene wherein Anthony does his best to win over Cecillia and she, in turn, does her best to hide her distaste for him. Anthony presents her with gifts and kind words. He composes a poem dedicated to her beauty. Cecillia responds neutrally, but not unkindly, to his advances. Gradually her response warms until she accepts his offer of marriage.

[The Party]

Many guests and much entertainment ensue. The party arrives at the gates and is announced as dignitaries from far and wide.

Vinitania gives a soliloquy on the greatness of Anthony and Cecillia's union, on how together they will bring Rome back to its glory, and how Anthony shall wield the legions against the Huns.

Anthony gives a speech extolling Cecillia's virtues. Cecillia speaks briefly that she misses her father greatly, but is glad his legacy will live on through Anthony.

[[Begin Insert: The Spell on Vinitania]]

Raw vis is "magic in a physical form (ArM4 p77)". Himinis the Mad made an item that used vis as the physical form. He found a way to infuse vis itself as a magical item. Then using the vis would be the triggering mechanism for the magic item. Chalchis found this in some of his parens' materials and somehow figured out how it works and avoided accidentally using it on himself. In this way, Chalchis had found a trap for his foes. However, the breakthrough was never described sufficiently for him to use properly. Instead, he cast a *Watching Ward* on some vis and sent it over to his enemy. He now had some vis with a spell that has trapped Vinitania. This vis was delivered to the covenant via Philippe the historian. The historian used to work for Count Orsini (See Appendix 1, page 30). The trigger was using the vis. Philippe is the person who brought the tainted vis to the covenant, about five years ago. The fact that Octavian died about the same time has nothing to do with the tainted vis. That is truly a coincidence.

Outer Connection to the Inner Self Ritual CrMe (Vi) 70

R: Arc D: Permanent T: Ind

This spell implants a daemon in the target's microcosm. This daemon causes the victim to go insane. The outward manifestation of this insanity is encapsulated scenes from within the victim's mind in the form of a story or play. The story will be something important to the victim, like protecting a loved one or destroying an enemy—whatever the daemon can pull from the surrounding landscape in the target's microcosm. For

the victim, reality and images from the victim's mind often will be so intertwined that they cannot be separated.

Design: Weight of a Thousand Hells CrMe 25, Arc +25, Until +20
[[End Insert]]

[The laboratories]

"You're gonna wanna watch yer step in there."
— Michael, the retired gatekeeper.

[Clavius' "lab"]

Upon arrival Clavius moved into the most comfortable rooms available to him, the deceased autocrat's rooms. He had his apprentice Lucio start to set up his things in preparation for an extended stay, especially since one of his grogs was taken by the monster almost right after his arrival. While Clavius was speaking with Aldino the librarian in an attempt to pilfer anything possible, the monster snatched Lucio and two other grogs. Clavius' lab is still in a state of disarray. When he left, he didn't pack much; he simply grabbed only the most important things to him and scuttled off down the mountain. A lot of the autocrat's things are simply piled in the corners out of the way. It will be difficult to find important records and paperwork related to the covenant due to the manner in which Lucio "filed them away."

[Vinitania's sanctum]

Vinitania's sanctum is a study in order and discipline. It is situated near the core of the glacial ice at the center of the mountain. She keeps everything neat and tidy, though her system may seem obscure. There are gilded tools and ice predominates the décor. Paintings of the local landscape hang on the walls and lasting ice sculptures of ancient heroes and important people are displayed. She has a sleeping chamber to the side of the lab proper.

Despite this, one table is a mess. Broken glass and charred bits of unknown substances dominate the middle of the main workbench. This is the remains of the vis experiment that Chalchis planted for her. It has long since burned over and destroyed the middle of the ornate table. The remains of the vis and the *Watching Ward* upon it have long since been destroyed, though powerful InVi spells may give some clue as to what actually happened. When she first started studying the vis, a ghostly image of a wolf's head came up and swallowed her head. For those using *Eyes of the Past*, a Per + Alertness roll of 9+ will make out a sigil—mixed in with the sound of Vinitania's chair falling over is the sound of a wolf's teeth gnashing on bone. She immediately started thrashing around in agony, and quickly started screaming to "Save the King!" Note that Chalchis' sigil is that of a wolf.

[Vilarious' sanctum]

Vilarious' sanctum is Spartan and hardly used, except for sleeping. He hasn't had time for much lab work lately; not since the loss of Dominica has he been in here for much more than a day or so. Since he spends most of his time running about gathering vis, or scaring up votes, or politicking for the good of the covenant, he really doesn't spend much time here or even have time for lab work. The main piece of lab work here is a loose set of unbound papers in which he keeps notes on strengths, weakness, and favors owed for various magi and covenants in and around the tribunal.

Vilarious' lab looks like it used to be really organized but for some reason, lately, everything is really messy. There is an underlying order to things, but except that, for example, all the vis study equipment is generally over there, or all the spell writing paraphernalia is over there, there is stuff everywhere. It is almost as if he starts a project, finishes it, and then doesn't clean up.

[Laertes' sanctum]

The lab of Laertes, who now resides down in the village below, is similar to Octavian's, but the oak door which would be clearly identified by Hermetic symbols designating it as a sanctum is noticeably absent. Further inside, chairs and tables are intermittently arranged around the room. Texts and maps are scattered

upon the tables, the charts and canvases on the walls in various stages of use. There are supplies for several scribes and scholars stored in the cupboards. Adjacent to the lab is a small amphitheater, used for teaching many pupils at once. Laertes is especially adept at this. The covenant actually makes a decent income from his efforts at preparing apprentices for their mental rigors to come.

[Dominica's sanctum]

This lab has been cleaned and restored only a few years ago and is ready for someone to move in and make it their own. It was going to be for Dominica, who was nearing her gauntlet. There are a few items of hers in here; some lab notes can be found within a chest of clothes, along with assorted other personal belongings. With some cleaning of dust and cobwebs, a working, if Spartan, lab could be assembled in a very short amount of time. The lab notes are copies of items found that can be found in the library, on the summation of the origin of the disappearances, and a general disclaimer, left out of the library copy, which distinctly shows there is no immediate proof to her theory that Hesperus covenant is responsible for the disappearances. She goes so far as to contradict her previous conclusions, though she shows no mention as to why. This document is not complete; the penmanship of Dominica on this clearly defines it as being a draft work, not a finished product. A tome with various spells, including *Eyes of the Past*, and some vim spells for detecting Arcane Connections can be found in a pile of papers.

[Octavian's sanctum]

The laboratory is kept in pristine condition by Occultes Serpentis, who uses it for her workshop. She feels comfortable here, remembering her friend. The magic quill she uses is here as well as some poetry notes expressing sorrow, loss, and isolation written by the ice snake. Several works on regiones and Vim are kept with the notes of the project the Bonisagus was working on before his death.

The lab of Octavian is in one of the foremost parts of the covenant. After a small entry and moderately decorated lounge, a large symbol engraved on the basalt stone door still shows this as a Hermetic lab, and those who enter do so at their own risk. Many vials and containers are arranged on shelves about the lab proper. Several texts, along with scores of notes, are arranged on one of several workbenches that dominate the room. On closer inspection there can be seen signs of recent activity; fresh ink and clean parchments, and there are several texts obviously missing from the collection. These are Occultes Serpentis' writing materials. She often comes in here to write and gather her thoughts, as she often did when Octavian was alive. In one corner on the floor by a large fireplace and mantle, there can be seen a silver bowl; the water long since gone, a tarnished gold-trimmed plate and a large thick rug with some tan dog hair still matted in its weave. Other tables contain an iron pedestal, golden scales, and a myriad of other highly delicate and intricate laboratory devices. In the corner, there is still a burner on, perpetually boiling some strange liquid. The lab notes next to it seem unfinished, expecting some future reaction at some astronomical event, left to the storyguide's whim.

[Altresecus]

"I have a motto: 'Don't just build on the past. Build to the future.'"
— Octavian

Octavian's apprentices were trained as generalists (admittedly with a strong Corpus influence). He believed that each should choose his own path to serving the Order—research is best done by those who have a fire for the subject matter. You lose twice when creating "the Order's best Corpus master". First: when the Order could have had an even better Corpus master, and secondly: the Order could have had a magus specializing in whatever he really wanted to do. Octavian has turned out a total of three apprentices (he only just started with Carmine). Only one is still alive. One died in a wizard war over vis rights with a party totally unrelated to anything here and the other died in a goat stampede in the Pyrenees right after being turned out on the way home from tribunal.

The remaining apprentice is now a fully-grown magus. When he found out about his pater's death he came and claimed some items. He gave everything else to Cavernius covenant. If pressed, either through certamen or an eloquent speech to the effect that the party is investigating how Octavian died and the covenant he was staying at is being plagued by deaths, Altresecus will state that he took some sentimental

bric-a-brac, essentially some experimental stuff he wrote as an apprentice, and some odd lab equipment that is very hard to find.

If Octavian's own work is studied, it will be obvious that there is something missing because he will reference "obvious" work that isn't there and make conclusions based on data unavailable. All this is in the stuff Altresecus has taken. If this point is pressed to him, he'll say that he was doing the field research for the older Bonisagus' regio research. Altresecus is a Seeker and he didn't want anyone else to know about the various sites he has researched. Octavian isn't that kind of researcher so he had his former apprentice so the "hard" work.

The two used a particular redcap, Philburt, to do all their messaging. This redcap could be located either through Vilarious or through the redcap network itself, a very tedious and indirect method since no one will tell anyone else anything about personal recap information.

If they chase Altresecus down, he will meet them in a public place—a covenant friendly to him—Coeris. He is considered a friend of the House since his pater lived at Cavernius covenant and he is helping the House to some extent. He can get a meeting place there somewhat easily. A nice scene could have them meet at the certámen circles the Tremere use for training.

[Carmine—The Hiding Apprentice]

Carmine was going to be the gatekeeper but Octavian decided that wasting a potential apprentice on such a trivial position would be a tragedy. He agreed to take on the boy as an apprentice and replace the current "archaic" system with a magical gate. Standard procedure for this covenant is for all apprentices to be trained in the basics by Laertes, who trains all apprentices in the basics of Latin, Hermes Lore, and other such basic subjects. One day, after these attacks had been occurring for some time, Carmine was looking for something with his bodyguards (everyone had bodyguards by that time) and he was attacked by the monster. In the darkness, the howl of the beast and the sudden darkness caused the guards to accidentally attack each other, leaving blood all over. One of them fell down a lost stairway to his death. It is a testament to the spotty investigations thus far that no one has found his body. The monster grabbed the other. Carmine hid in a secret area and has not come out. His few forays back into the covenant he has found very few people. Vinitania once told him to get her a meal, but Carmine didn't believe she knew him. Everyone in the village believes him dead so he doesn't feel he can go there. No one is looking for him. The cook knows someone is still hiding in the covenant. That's why she leaves out the extra food in the kitchen each day. She's not sure who it is, but figures it's a ghost of someone lost from the covenant. It washes the dishes so it can't be all bad, she figures.

He has strong Perdo and Muto Imáginemabilities. He has gone somewhat feral in fear of the monster. Rex warned him when it attacked, and he fled through to a hiding place he had found, leading back into the bowels of the covenant.

[Corbin—The Dead Grog]

Corbin was one of the grogs guarding Carmine. When the monster's attack occurred, during the confused scuffle he rushed to help save Carmine. During his headlong rush he was injured, and then he fell down some stairs and died. He might be found if the characters are poking around some hidden area. He can then be heard screaming for help by someone with Magic Sensitivity or Second Sight. He thinks he's only hurt and is waiting for someone to come help him. He doesn't know he's dead and is still trying to protect Carmine. He is found hobbling around looking for his charge. If the characters save Carmine, Corbin's mission will be complete and he can rest eternally.

[Aldino—The Librarian]

The librarian is old and withered. He rarely leaves the library, for when he does, his many afflictions catch up with him. While he remains in the library, he ages, but is immune to its effect (including death) as long as he doesn't leave. Lately, he is always in the library; he doesn't even come out for food or emergencies. His meals are brought to him by the cook.

He is persistent at what he does. He knows the contents of every book under his care, though it may have

been a very long time since he's looked at it. He has an immense personal knowledge of many things—he knows many things without having to look them up. In depth investigation requires study, but common Church Lore or Hermetic Lore type questions come readily to his mind.

He doesn't waste any movements, but he appears to bumble and dodder. His bushy eyebrows and drooping beard give him the appearance of an old fool, though he is very bright and perceptive. He does not like to be used as a tool—he is a person and likes to be talked with. If treated rudely, he will act old and forgetful. He can be very helpful, sometimes overly so, to those he likes. He can be almost maliciously obstructive to those he doesn't like.

The librarian can live practically forever, as long as he doesn't leave the library. He will not feel the effects of age as long as he doesn't leave the library—he rolls on the Aging chart every year, but the effects won't occur until he leaves the room. Octavian was studying this, trying to replicate it. The effect was originally part of the library's enchantments to keep the books unaging. The effect on the librarian was simply a beneficial side effect. This will not allow anyone who resides in the library to live forever, rather, only those who swear the librarian's Oath will gain this benefit. Of course, every 200 years or so, the librarian has traditionally run screaming out of the library, seeking death rather than staying in the same room another day.

If the librarian's wards are breached (the door is knocked down or the walls are marred) he dies of old age while working in his library. It may take some weeks to get a party together to get him out as few of the covenfolk, even the grogs, want to delve that far into the covenant.

[Investigation in the Library]

“I've removed what is mine. The balance I leave to your care.”
— Altresecus

At the meeting point of two corridors, within a vaulted chamber, there is a perfectly preserved body of a huge elephant, unlike anything seen before. This immaculate creature stands as if rampaging, massive tusks thrusting into the air some six paces high, its great foreleg poised to crush any foolish enough to stand before it into a formless pulp. Unlike the elephants from Africa or the East, this one is much larger and has long matted fur, which seems suited for extremely cold conditions. It stands on a sculpted marble base just less than one pace tall, with an inscription that reads in Latin: *Knowledge is Power*. Just across from the behemoth is the doorway to the covenant's library, and leads perhaps to the secret of this great beast's preservation.

Within the library are several tables and shelves containing many books, scrolls, and tablets. The storyguide may include any number of books for the characters to find, read, and study. This is an extensive, old library.

The library has various spells and magics worked into it. There are the standard spells to keep pests out. There are preservation spells on the shelves and tables.

The monster hasn't been in the library—the librarian is usually so calm, it doesn't see in here often. If the characters blow up over something in the library, think about having the monster “find” the library and the librarian soon after. This will seriously hamper their investigation, though they could still talk to Occultes Serpentis, but will also increase the paranoia. This will be a red herring of sorts, especially if the monster is simply an animal who happened upon the scene due to the characters inability to keep calm.

The librarian doesn't leave the library—he has a nest of sorts in the back. The cook comes up and leaves food for him and Vinitania (and Carmine) every day. If for some reason he leaves the library, he will be agitated and not calm. He remembers the days when more of the covenant was open. The characters may find out about the closed off areas of the covenant by having the librarian direct them to the last magus' lab who signed for some book they want. He doesn't know when, or how, the covenant has been closed up. He still believes various long dead magi are still in their labs.

Books in the library may give clues to presence of the regio, which overlaps the covenant's aura. That there is a regio might be deduced by Octavian's research. After all, what would he be doing working on regio research without a Regio....

Information may be found here about the Incident, see page 6. The tribunal records here also contain many accusations from both sides of the long running feud between the two covenants. Several works on Mentem may be found, some written by the ice snake. There is a large series on Vim and theoretical regiones information by Octavian and others. Octavian's notes are obviously missing some elements as volumes two through six of his eight volume masterpiece are missing. Also works on Aura m and Ignem, several older works on Terram, and some minor, but high quality works on Aquam can also be found. There are many histories of the Order, including some on the Díedne and the Schism War, that were hidden away scattered through other texts. Also within these documents there are clues to several incidents of espionage from and against the enemy covenant, though there is nothing that could be used to bring charges against either party.

The characters will probably want to use the covenant's library to find out more about the history of this place and its enemies. If they are not familiar with this tribunal, they may also wish to learn about its customs and rulings. Unless the characters want to spend an entire season researching trivial points of information, they can ask the librarian for help. This sort of "research" is really just an extended question and answer session. Any other type of research requires a season's time as usual and probably won't net the character's anything useful with respect to the problems at hand.

The "researcher" must have an Area Lore (Cavernius covenant library) skill with the library being researched. In lieu of actually having such a score, which the characters probably do not have, they may use the services of someone who does. To research like this, one must first find a book relevant to the question. Generally, only yes or no questions with no answer longer than a page should be allowed. Answers should generally incite more questions. Roll Speak Latin + Com of 6+. This is to tell the character with the Area Lore (Cavernius covenant library) skill accurately what the character wants to look up. Add or subtract up to +/- 3 depending on how much the librarian likes the character(s). If they treat him badly then he will do his best to not help them.

Once the idea is communicated, roll the librarian's Area Lore (Cavernius covenant library) + Int to find the topic. Use the following chart to get a difficulty based on the uniqueness of the question. This simulates his ability to find what the character wants. Most questions will probably be in the esoteric category as others he should be able to know off the top of his head. Each question takes about a day to find because he hasn't read these specific dusty, old tomes recently.

If the librarian doesn't like the person asking for data, he will not lie to the character or hide information. He will simply give the character information that is increasingly tangential to what they are looking for. So if, in your estimation, he has a Personality Trait of Dislike Your Character of +2, he will give information that has a pretty thin connection with what he thinks the character is looking for. In the above example, when asked for information on the Hesperus covenant, he may produce prodigious amounts of information based on tribunal records 100 years out of date. Whereas, if he likes the character, he may well simply tell them off the top of his head that which is, in your estimation, common knowledge.

	Mundane	Esoteric
Common	3+	6+
Uncommon	6+	9+
Obscure	9+	12+

If the players want to know anything about the following items, add or subtract the bonus noted next to the item to the player's roll.

The incident in specific (tribunal notes) +6
Regio in specific (lab notes) (Octavian's notes are missing) -3
Hesperus covenant in general +3

Cavernius covenant defenses (impossible unless given permission by Vinitania) (indirect info –9)

This process equates to 90 questions a season. If this is too many questions for your campaign, the librarian may have other projects to take up his time, perhaps a mission from Vinitania. Note that Occultes Serpentis knows about 90% of the local lore, which is probably most of what the characters want anyway.

[The Council Chamber]

“Magna nominis umbra. Under the shadow of a great name.”

— Inscribed above the council chamber door.

The council chamber is situated near the back of the covenant. Attached fluted columns adorn the walls. The marble floor gleams through the transparent glass table. Seven similar chairs circle the table. There is a long bench to either side of the doorway for those lucky enough to accompany those sitting at the table. The ceiling has the same glacial ice as the central chamber illuminating the council. A diorama of the surrounding area is seated into the back wall. Where the covenant would be is a grand temple. Tiny gold filigreed text indicates the temple is dedicated to Mercury.

[The covenant's vis stores]

In general, members of the covenant do not have personal stores of vis. The council must vote unanimously to hand out vis, unless it is for an emergency affecting the covenant. These emergencies generally never include those visiting the covenant.

The council consists of either all current members of the covenant (Vinitania, Laertes, and Vilarious) or by rule of the Archon. As Archon, Vinitania may make decisions affecting the covenant on her own without the express permission of the covenant council—in essence, she is the covenant council. She holds council with the others as a sign of good faith and good leadership.

These rules have not been modified due to her state. The covenant's charter states that only the Archon or the council may determine the status of a member of the covenant.

In case the characters really want to get into the covenant's vis stores, they face opening the covenant's vis storage locker, a three-foot square temple to Mercury in the council chamber. The temple is set on a pedestal in the back of the council chamber amid a diorama depicting a hillside village and a temple.

Upon becoming Archon, Vinitania underwent a ritual that aspected her gift to that of being the Archon—she took a binding oath that the council chamber recognizes. Only the Archon may open the temple without problems.

If the characters really want in, the vis chamber is located in a pocket regio created through Sacred Architecture. The regio has been sealed and compacted into this temple. Note that the temple has a number of defenses. Any magus casting spells upon the temple must face the following effects:

- *The Sorcerer's Fork* MuVi 50. Any spell cast on the temple is split in half and each spell has half the effectiveness.
- *Aegis of the Temple* ReVi 50: As *Aegis of the Hearth* but specifically for the temple.
- *The Enigma's Gift* CrVi 35: All in the room go into Twilight. The spell is resisted by Parma Magica as normal. The aura in the council chamber is +8. Penetration for this effect is 43.
- The temple is made of stone and might be bashed open except for *Ward of Weapons Unseen* ReTe, He, An 30.
- A *Disenchant* spell must overcome the above and the highest level of effect within the temple, a level 90 Vim effect that keeps the regio bound.

If the characters actually get into the vis storage the regio will probably expand into its original size, 150 paces in diameter. This will throw its contents all over and cause a large magical effect to spread through the covenant. Players will need to resist a level 90 Vim effect or be thrown into Twilight as the regio

expands through them into its normal area. Those already in Twilight will need to roll again. The aura is +6 in the expanding regio level.

After all that, the storyguide will need to decide how much vis to give the characters. The covenant has about 100 pawns of various types of vis. Also, whatever is in there is probably now spread out over a 150 pace diameter regio restored to its original size.

[The Oath]

“...and I so swear.”
— Philippe

This is a typically Tremere type of ritual. Grog and covenfolk each swear oaths upon coming of age or joining the covenant. Each ceremony uses vis gained from inception, see *The Mysteries*, page 77. The astrologer does the inceptions—he’s a non-Hermetic hedge wizard-type who knows how to do inceptions. It is cast only on auspicious days. The ritual causes the Oath-taker to be stalwart and loyal. It doesn’t leave much room for free thought other than that which is necessary for the Oath-taker’s duties. For example, grogs are only allowed free thought in where to apply them best to the covenant’s defense. For certain covenfolk, the Oath is a little less stringent, but nevertheless obvious to those from outside the area. The oath the magi of the covenant undertake is the least stringent of all. It merely allows the covenant to recognize them and their “station.” It is more of an attunement, like a talisman, than the Oath the covenfolk take. The Oath contributes to the reception the party receives upon first arriving at the village.

This spell is a legacy of the Cult of Mercury. The covenant’s astrologer coordinates the ritual wherein the entire village acts as if they were ancient priests of Mercury. While none in the village is a Hermetic magus, together they gather on the village green and on these special days are able to “cast” this spell. For the villagers, becoming a covenfolk or grog is a very important thing—it’s very prestigious to have members of the family working directly for the covenant. When the inductee takes The Oath, the entire village is there celebrating the elevation of one of their number into the hallowed ranks of covenfolk.

While not a Hermetic spell per se, its equivalent is given below for comparative purposes.

The Oath Ritual ReMe 50

R: Eye D: Perm T: Ind

The Oath focuses the target to do their best at the office chosen for them, in the service of the covenant of Cavernius.

Design: Give one person one complex command (30), Perm +20.

[Other levels of the regio]

“St. Niacrinus bestowed his blessing on all creatures great and small.”
— Luther

The regio level below the covenant is the monster’s lair. The level is a large open area, approximately 150 yards across, with a spider’s web bisecting it, cutting the room horizontally. The room is oval, somewhat like an egg on end. The center is buoyed by a column of webbing reaching from the ceiling through the center of the web to the floor.

The web is vaguely sticky, like tacky paint, or blood. Anchored to the walls, the web does not completely circumnavigate the room so walking up and down the strands may be necessary to go completely around the edge. There are no natural exits from this room and it is utterly, naturally, dark here. The air is stale and rank.

The remains of all victims may be found here, some are scattered about the web, but most may be found near the center glob of webbing. Only three are alive (plus any the characters may have recently lost). Clavius’ apprentice and his grogs are near death and have not eaten for up to three months. The webbing protects its prey like a cocoon, also preserving them unnaturally. See The Monster below.

If the party enters this level with large amounts of grogs or magic, the monster will wisely move to the mundane level. A Per + Alertness Roll of 15+ will be necessary to notice this. If the group is not near the center it will return to grab two or three of the freshest kills for later consumption. If possible, it will also try to take a few of the isolated characters also.

The monster's webbing, in small amounts, will cut arcane connections. In such large amounts as are present on this level of the regio, all spell Casting Totals are reduced by 15.

[The Monster]

The monster cannot normally move between regio levels. However, the monster can follow its webbing through certain places that its webs have created a "door" of sorts. The monster accidentally found its way through these areas close to five years ago. While it knows of and uses the holes in the regio, the monster does not realize its webbing cuts through the regio. The monster has a dozen or so places it can get into the covenant from the other levels of regio. There are places in the covenant that the monster cannot get into directly from another level of regio and are therefore relatively safe from immediate attack. For example, Carmine hides in an area that the monster has no access to. However, here isn't much to keep the monster from coming through a door and moving around the covenant, except the loss of the element of surprise. This would only happen if there were very few people left in the covenant since the monster is pretty cunning and realizes its advantage.

The creature can open a door in the regio where it creates thick darkness, reach out and physically grab a victim, drag it in, kill it, or wrap it and save it for later. It can perceive what is happening on the other side of the regio boundaries. It judges prey avoiding those with strong magic and preferring those with strong emotion. Its webs cut arcane connections, but also preserve its prey, sometimes for months. Its victims fall into a hibernation of sorts. The monster doesn't have to eat too often so it stores its food in webbing until it's ready to eat. It's also storing up food because babies are coming....

When the monster is hunting, it will seek prey with the following characteristics: solitary non-magical persons first, then non-magical persons in a group. It tries to stay away from magical persons, but if necessary it will take solitary, preferably weakly magical persons before weakly magical persons in a group. It actively avoids persons with strong magic. The storyguide can decide what exactly a "person with strong magic" is, but any full magus should be considered to have strong magic.

The monster attacks with ripping claws and poison, somewhat like a trap door spider. The monster will create darkness around its intended victim. It will then bite and grab the prey and draw it into another level of the regio.

It dislikes Rex, it sees him but cannot hurt the dog because he's immaterial. This acts much like the Haunted Flaw for the monster.

[Rex]

Octavian's familiar, Rex is a ghost who feels he didn't protect his master. So he wanders the halls in the afterlife trying to protect anyone he can find from the monster. The Guernican's apprentice, Lucio, is still alive so Rex tries to protect him from the monster. He plays a vicious game where the monster hunts, and Rex follows it to save more people from being its prey, but also trying to get back to the monster's lair before it gets back to eat those there.

His only real power is to howl such that the living can hear him. Most of the covenant hears him. This frustrates the monster as it can't affect Rex. Magi may speak with Rex via InMe spells and may put him to rest with PeMe spells as well. Rex knows almost anything there is to know about Octavian and the research he was doing. Rex does not know why he is a ghost or where Octavian rests. Rex died very shortly after Octavian passed into final twilight, though why Rex still exists as a ghost is unknown to him. If Rex feels that everyone in the covenant is safe, he will finally feel able to "sleep" and will pass from this world completely. The meaning of "safe" is subjective, though we suggest that once the monster is dead, Rex will lie down in the corner near the fire in the main hall and go to sleep, fading from existence.

If the party uses magic to force Rex to stay in this world, either against his instincts or after he has fulfilled his ghostly onus, he will not be very helpful to them as he will look for ways to “sleep the final sleep.” Rex tries to protect those the monster captures, in addition to trying to keep the monster from capturing it. While the monster can see Rex's high emotion, it cannot affect the spirit realm. Whenever the monster attacks someone, Rex howls to warn them to leave. Anyone who can speak with dogs can hear the obvious warning, “Look Out! Get out of here!” The dog uses his powers to protect the webbed up victims. He believes that if he leaves the monster will eat them so he tries not to leave them alone. He only leaves when the monster goes out hunting so as to warn its victims. This is why the dog isn't seen more often and why Occultes Serpentis hasn't seen it. Many, if not all, of the covenfolk believe a large beast is loose in the covenant that eats people in one big bite. That's why only blood and not much else is left after the attacks.

[Cavernius covenant statistics]



Symbol: A Silver Griffon Rampant over a Key on an Azure field.

Season: Winter

Founded: 905

Members:
Vinitania, House Tremere
Vilarious, House Tremere
Laertes, House Tremere

Site: +3 (+8, -1)

Access Quality: The fare for the coven folk in general, is the quality as that of a wealthy merchant, though the magi often eat as well as any royalty (+6)

Access Distance: 40% on site, 40% within a half-day's travel, 0% within 2 days, and 20% within one week (+0)

Seclusion: During the milder seasons they receive visitors once every 4 weeks or so (+2)

Environment: These mountains are very cold and hazardous in the winter (-1)

Buildings: +1 (+3, -1)

Size: There is the potential for 10 magi (+2), 20 specialists (+0), and 50 grogs (+0)

Impressive Structure: Gatehouse (one free)

Quality: Average (+1)

Repair: The areas in use are average, but with all but the most essential elements of the covenant boarded up and abandoned, most of the covenant is in neglected disrepair, (-1)

Defenses: +1 (+5, -4)

Site: Unapproachable from the west where the mountain is, the north and south approach through trails look down into the canyon below with the village, and in turn, the village sits on a gradual slope with a road to the east (+4, -2, -2, +1)

Elaborate Defense Structure: The gatehouse is heavily fortified (one free)

Extent: Gatehouse (one free)

Repair: Average (0)

Stores: +2 (+8, -3)

Vis: 100 pawns in stock, with all Techniques and Forms present (0)

Supplies: 2,500 pounds silver worth of assorted inventory acquired throughout the years, stored and forgotten in various areas of the covenant, both used and unused (+5)

Reputations: Known as reliable throughout the tribunal (+3); Reputed to be a tool for house Tremere (-3)

Relations: -8 (+12, -51)

Allies: House Tremere briefly (+9), all general enemies of House Tremere briefly (-7)

Enemies: Hesperus covenant (-3) for about one-quarter of its time (-6); the monster (-3) for nearly all its time (-26)

Contacts: Valerious has assisted several members of the Order belonging to various covenants acquire unspecified research components and laboratory equipment (+3); Luther, the traveling priest, inadvertently compromises the covenant's information network with his affection for them (-2); Philippe, the historian is a spy for the Hesperus covenant, though he has not offered over anything but general knowledge to his patron (-2).

Improvement: -3 (+4, -10)

Income: No surplus income (0)

Vis Supply: 50 pawns per year (+4)

Inhabitants: Only 3 magi in residence (-7), less than 10 specialists (-1), less than 10 grogs (-2)

Library: +4 (+12, +0)

Spells: 3,000 levels of spells available (+5)

Hermetic Books: There are 900 points of Hermetic books, mostly authorities, summa and tractatus representing at least something for each Art (+5)

Mundane Books: 420 points of mundane books (+2)

Mystical Attributes: +2 (+5, +0)

Aura: Level 5 (+3)

Magical Items: Unusable currently, the secrets of *silver sphere* (avalanche) are only known to Vinitania and will be lost if she is lost, so are uncounted here. The gatehouse enchantments (+1) along with many dangerous or innocuous items of astounding or dubious use, potentially misused, may be found throughout the area (0). One, for example, is a magical keystone over the covenant mausoleum that rips a corpse's spirit from it. The covenant gathers vis from it at irregular intervals.

Laboratories: All laboratories are of standard quality, except Octavian's, which may be exceptional to the right person, but currently it is effectively unused (+1)

Total scores [+47, -70]

Nota Bene:

These statistics depict a covenant on the verge of sliding from an obscure winter into oblivion. Human interaction is slowly (well, pretty quickly lately) being removed from the areas behind the gatehouse. This is most apparent with the issue of the recently retired gatekeeper. Currently, the village has superseded the covenant in providing the essentials of living, and if this pattern cannot be reversed, the site and defenses of the mountain may well be forgotten.