

Secret Societies of Théah: Book Three

Die
*Kreuzritter*TM



*7th Sea*TM

Roleplaying Game

Die Kreuzritter

The Church has a darker side.

In 1411, the Order of the Black Cross was wiped out to a man.

*Loyalty
Charity
Secrecy
Faith*

If *Die Kreuzritter* still existed, this book would include:

- A detailed history and background of the Black Crosses.
- New Synchron artifacts, new monsters, and a secret that could tear the world apart – why did the First Prophet condemn Sorcery?
- New Advantages, a new Swordsman School, and a new form of Sorcery heretofore unseen.

7th Sea

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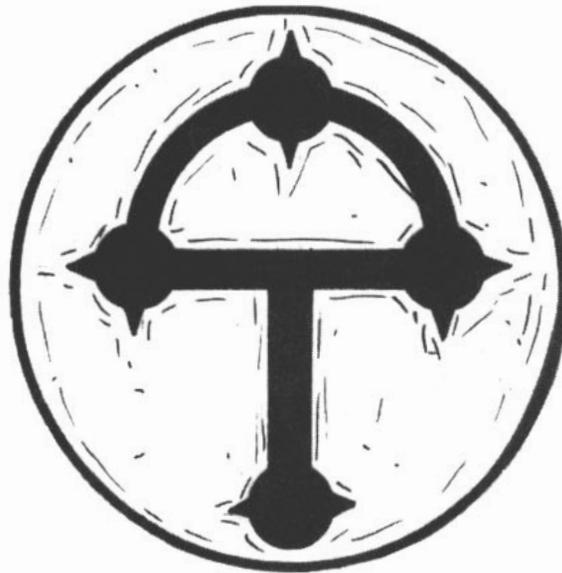
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Alderac Entertainment Group

*Die
Kreuzritter*



The Hierophant's Men

*"We walk the darkness so that Man can live in the light."
– Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl*







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Dave Hargrave – For Arduin.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my great-grandfather, Jim Lawson. He lives up to the tenets of Faith, Charity, and Loyalty better than anyone else I know.

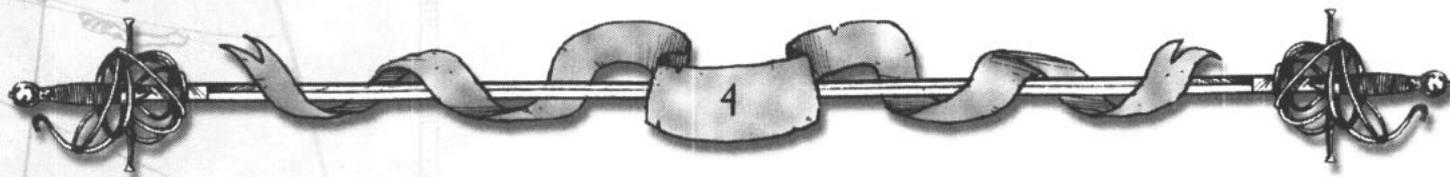




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The End of the Hunt, Part One

The moon hung sullenly above the Black Forest. Its pale silver light pierced the canopy, illuminating a clearing where two men were camping and speaking quietly to one another. The camp itself was set up for easy defense. There was a tent near the fire, a pile of wood to keep the small blaze going throughout the night, and several weapons lying within easy reach. Their horses nickered softly, nervous of the twisted trees that surrounded them.

The leader, a swarthy Castillian, eyed their mounts warily. "The horses smell something, Dieter. Go take a look. *Vamos.*"

The younger man did not argue in spite of his obvious Vendel heritage. Instead he acquiesced with a nod and plucked a burning brand from the fire. Cautiously approaching the horses, he murmured, "Easy, Meg," and rubbed the Eisen mare's side affectionately. She nuzzled up against him, glad for the contact in this evil place. He smiled as she tried to poke her nose into his pouch and got out an apple for her. The mare inhaled it in one bite. There was a rustle in the bushes, and the horses began to tug at their tethers, rolling their eyes in terror. He snatched a pistol from his belt and moved slowly into the darkness. "Francis, there's something in the bushes!"

"Well, quit playing with that horse and check it out," replied the Castillian with a snort of disgust. He wasn't about to move away from the fire just because a rabbit was rustling a bush.

Dieter pushed his way between the trees. Thorny branches ripped at his clammy hands and his chest tightened up, making it hard for him to breathe. Two red dots lit up in front of him and he heard a strange hissing, like a steaming teakettle. Dieter swung his torch around, illuminating a small gray creature that looked like a cross between a lizard and a wolf. It leapt through the air at him and he whipped the torch around. Francis looked up in time to see the blazing branch strike the beast in the side before it fled into the darkness with a howl.

After calming the horses and making his way back to the fire, Dieter collapsed on the warm woolen blanket. "We should've listened to the warnings about this place, Francis."

The older man nodded, pointedly throwing another log on the fire. "Probably. Unfortunately, we couldn't delay our journey long enough to go through it during the day. The hunter was pressing us hard right up to the edge of the forest. I'm not sure what he wanted, but it's nothing good."

Dieter grimaced at the mention of the eerie man who had followed them for so many miles. The man they had come to refer to as "the hunter" had shown himself several times, apparently in jest, and contemptuously ignored their attempts to shake him. "True enough. Still, we might have been better off facing him than the evils in this forest."

Francis laughed mirthlessly. "From what we've seen of him, I doubt it. In any event, we'll keep a watch tonight, and we'll be out of the woods by tomorrow. Get some sleep, and I'll wake you later."

Dieter curled up near the fire and looked up at Francis. "I told you not to rob that bishop. My Uncle Sigmund always said that robbing priests is ill luck."

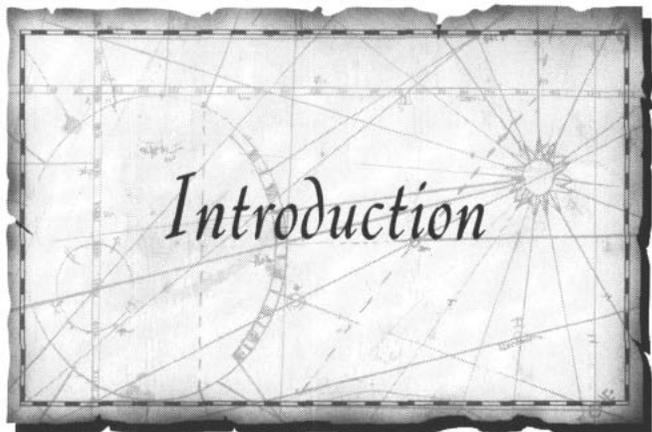
"Nonsense. We got a fine horse and a hefty pouch of guilders from him. Quit your worrying and go to sleep."

Dieter shrugged, unwilling to pursue the argument and wrapped himself in his bedroll. "Good night, Francis."

Settling down for his watch, with his heavy canvas cloak keeping off the night's chill, Francis just grunted.



Introduction



Introduction

There are some questions better left unanswered.

Do you *really* want to know what the shadows conceal? What if the truth was so terrible that you could never bring yourself to walk down a dark alley again? What if merely knowing the truth put you in constant danger for your life? Would it be worth the knowledge? What if this truth allowed you to do a great deal of good for your fellow man? Would you accept the burden then? If so, then you have an inkling of what drives the Black Crosses.

Centuries ago, they were forced into hiding because of politics and greed. Most of them were killed. Those who survived were furious and driven by revenge. However, in the process of avenging their brothers they discovered something that made their petty vendetta completely irrelevant. In fact, it made their entire lives up to that point irrelevant. What they had discovered could mean the end of humanity if they didn't do something about it.

They knew that they needed power and money to protect mankind, so they turned to the one person they knew who had both in abundance – the Hierophant. In exchange, they had to agree to serve the Church and his personal agenda. Considering the stakes on the table, no bargain was too costly if it would get them the things they needed. No price was too high. No deed was too vile. They couldn't afford to be gentlemen any more.

This book explains the Black Crosses and their secrets. It is broken down into four chapters – one for each of the four

Oaths that the Black Crosses swear when they join the Order.

Loyalty is the first Oath. This chapter explains where the Black Crosses originated and what their goals and motives are. It explains how they conduct themselves and how their organization is structured. It also describes the resources they have at their disposal, such as sanctuaries and skilled laymen scattered across Théah.

Charity is the second Oath. This chapter describes several of the more prominent members of the Order, including a sampling of members of all ranks – from the lowliest acolyte to the Hochmeister himself. It also includes a description of the Order's greatest enemy and two of its greatest allies.

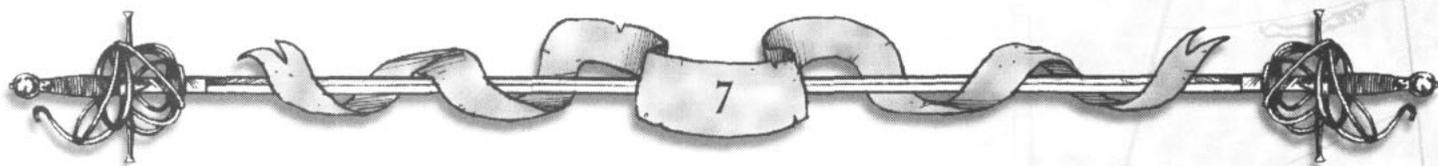
Secrecy is the third Oath. This chapter details new rules for the Black Crosses, including a unique Swordsman School, several Advantages available only to members of the Order, and even their own brand of Sorcery. There are also rules for the various artifacts and tricks that they use while on missions.

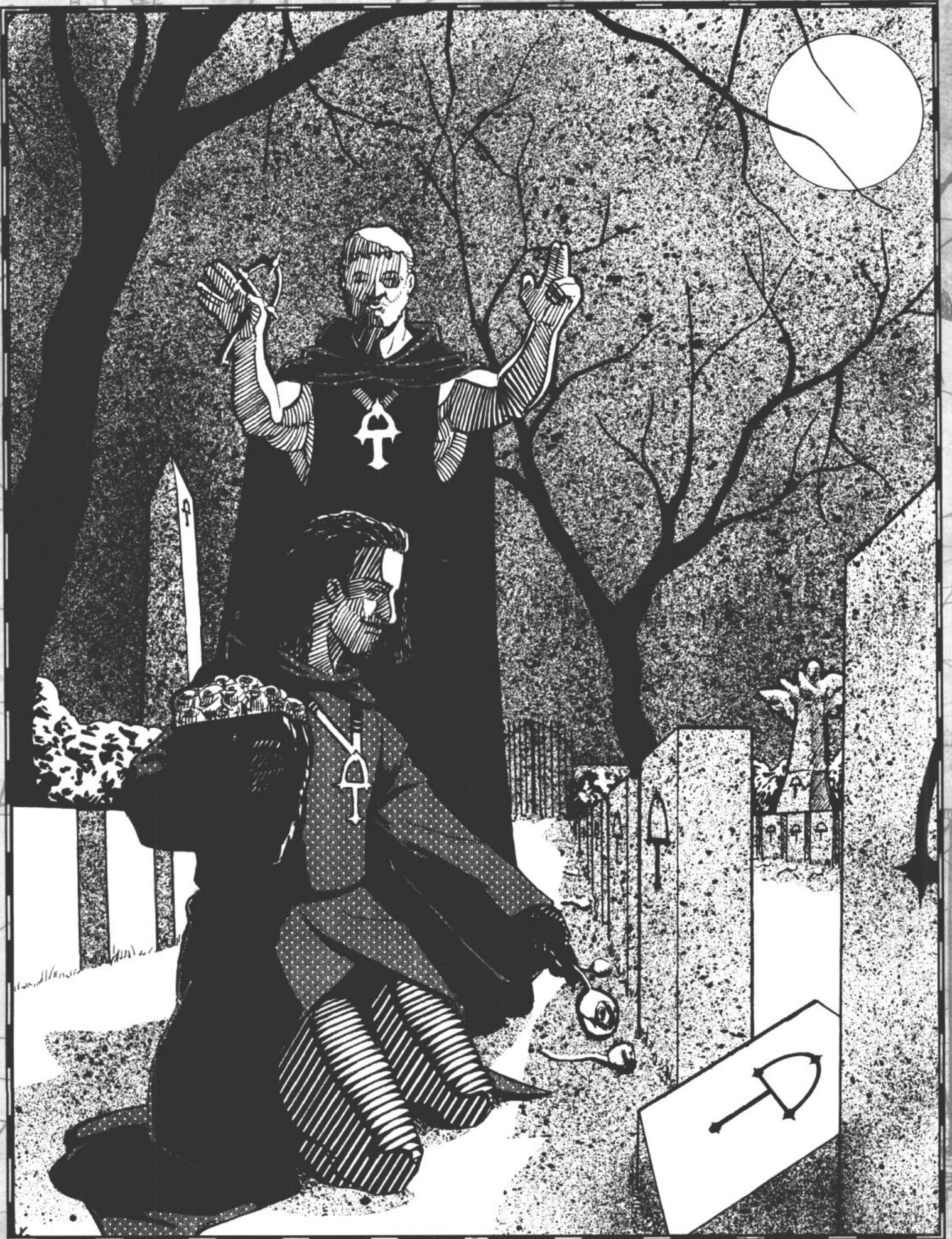
Faith is the fourth and final Oath. This chapter contains hints and tips on how to roleplay a Black Cross. It explains each of the four Oaths in detail, and includes a section for GMs only that reveals the darkest secrets of the NPCs described in Chapter Two (as well as other secrets that affect the Order). It also includes a series of adventure hooks and a sample sanctuary that can be adapted to any GM's campaign. Finally, it describes several monsters and enemies that can be used to challenge the players.

Other secret societies have important agendas, but Die Kreuzritter is one of the few that puts the needs of mankind above its own. It is a dark society centered around a single question –

Why did the First Prophet condemn sorcery?

Will you accept the burden? If so, step into the shadows.







Loyalty

The End of the Hunt, Part Two

The hunter crouched near the edge of the clearing close to the horses. He had spent days befriending the animals while the two men were inside inns or away hunting food. His patience had paid off. They no longer perceived him as a threat. He smiled. This assignment would be no trouble — it was more a political favor for the Bishop of Heilgrund than a quest worthy of his attention. If they hadn't ventured into the Black Forest, it would be a vacation. These robbers were deaf and blind compared to the Order.

His mother had, in the Eisen tradition, taught him to fear the creatures of the Black Forest at an early age. Even with his training, it had taken a great deal of will to enter its dark canopy. Thus preserve him from childhood fears — he half expected the Schattenmann to step out of the shadows with its awful shears and leave his body stacked neatly by the clearing like a cord of firewood.

He felt something climb its way up his back. The hunter closed his eyes and very slowly lowered his head as he fought down the urge to flinch. The thing clambered up between his shoulders and perched there. It was so close to his head that he could hear its long raspy tongue whisking in and out of its mouth as it tasted the air like a snake, and he gave silent thanks to Master Kazi's ointment which he had applied before entering the forest. It concealed his scent, effectively making him invisible to many animals as long as he didn't move suddenly while in their line of sight. The horses nearby nickered, and he heard the Castillian speak quietly.

"The horses smell something, Dieter. Go take a look. *Vamos.*"

There was a rustle in the camp, then footsteps began to approach his hiding place. He began to sweat and hoped that the ointment wouldn't wash off. Moments passed as he heard the younger man tending to his horse, and then the beast on his shoulders shifted and rustled a nearby bush. The horses began to panic as they caught the creature's scent. He cursed silently to himself.

"Francis, there's something in the bushes!"

He fought to remain still as the Castillian replied, "Well, quit playing with that horse and check it out."

Footsteps approached his position and he felt the heat of torchlight on his back. As the light fell upon it, the creature on his shoulder began to hiss loudly. It seemed impossible that Dieter had not spotted him even if he was distracted. After a moment, he felt the little horror leap from his back. There was a meaty thud, a howl of pain, and a rustling in the bushes as the beast ran off into the woods. He listened as Dieter walked away, still unaware of his presence. Cautiously opening his eyes, he slowly wiped away a drop of sweat that was threatening to fall on the dead leaves beneath him.

He smiled grimly to himself. He had made no sound, just as Kazi had taught him, and he felt a flush of pride at the thought. Even the little savage would be proud of him, though he would never offer a word of praise. Hailing from a little-known island off the southwestern shores of Théah, Kazi believed that a spoken compliment was an insult — an admission to a lack of faith in another man's abilities.

The hunter looked up, squinting to preserve his night vision from the fire. The two men had talked for a while longer, rehashing the robbery of the Bishop as usual, and now the young Vendel was going to sleep. After the close call with the kobold, he knew that it was time to end this game.

Drawing his two pistols, he brought them to bear on the Castillian's chest and squeezed the triggers...



Loyalty



Public Face

Any player may read this section. It contains information that is generally known about the Black Crosses and their destruction. In other words, this is what every Théan knows or could know if he stopped someone on the street and asked them about the Black Crosses.

The Hospital of the First Witness

The Black Crosses had their humble origins in the year 308 AV, at the city of Zafara in the Crescent Empire. Originally founded by an Eisen Crusader and his wife, the Black Crosses were nothing more than a few healers tending to wounds beneath a ship's sail that was used as a makeshift shelter from the sun. Thanks to donations from their grateful patients, when the Crusaders took the city the shelter was rebuilt as a more permanent hospital – the Hospital of the First Witness in Zafara.

Over time, the hospital became known for its good works. The healers treated everyone who came to them for aid, Crusader and Crescent alike. Word spread far and wide of the charitable hospital until even the Crescents knew its name; they have never attacked it to this day.

Within a few years, the city asked the hospital to expand its duties to include an order of peacekeepers, so a constabulary force was created that successfully kept peace in Zafara for many years.

Eventually, the Hierophant decided to honor these men by recognizing them as a holy order of knights – Die Kreuzritter (dee KROYTS-rit-ter; The Knights of the Cross). In 347 AV, by decree of the Hieros Council, they were first granted the right to wear their distinctive black crosses and a Hochmeister (Headmaster) was selected to lead them. Much of their history from this point was entangled in complicated Church politics, but later Hochmeisters said that they always drew comfort from their origins at that makeshift hospital in the Crescent Empire.

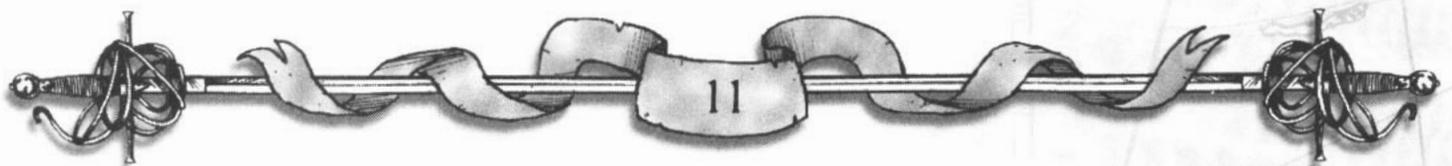
The Rise and Fall of Die Kreuzritter

During the crusades, the Order gained a great deal of land and money from grateful patients and pious noblemen. They built monasteries to expand the Order's influence over Théah, and maintained dozens of hospitals with the Order's money. The Knights served as part of the Church's army and helped to maintain the power of the Hieros Council. Scandals over missing funds and misuse or illegal sale of lands were not uncommon during these days and the Order gradually became mired in power grabs and other, less savory, political struggles. Even as they lost their way spiritually, however, the Order flourished materially. At their height in the 14th and 15th centuries, the order known informally as the Black Crosses was worth over 6 million Vodacce Senators (2 million guilders) and leased huge portions of Eisen from the Emperor of the Holy Republic.

Unfortunately, this Emperor, Arvid I, coveted the Black Crosses' immense wealth, and used his leverage over the spineless Hierophant Logan III to have them excommunicated. Descending on the Black Crosses' headquarters in the town of Tannen, Arvid met the collected military forces of Die Kreuzritter on the battlefield. His army outnumbered them ten to one.

The Battle at Tannen

The Black Crosses stood bravely on the field that foggy morning in 1411. Leading the Knights was Hochmeister Kurgen, a man remembered and respected among the



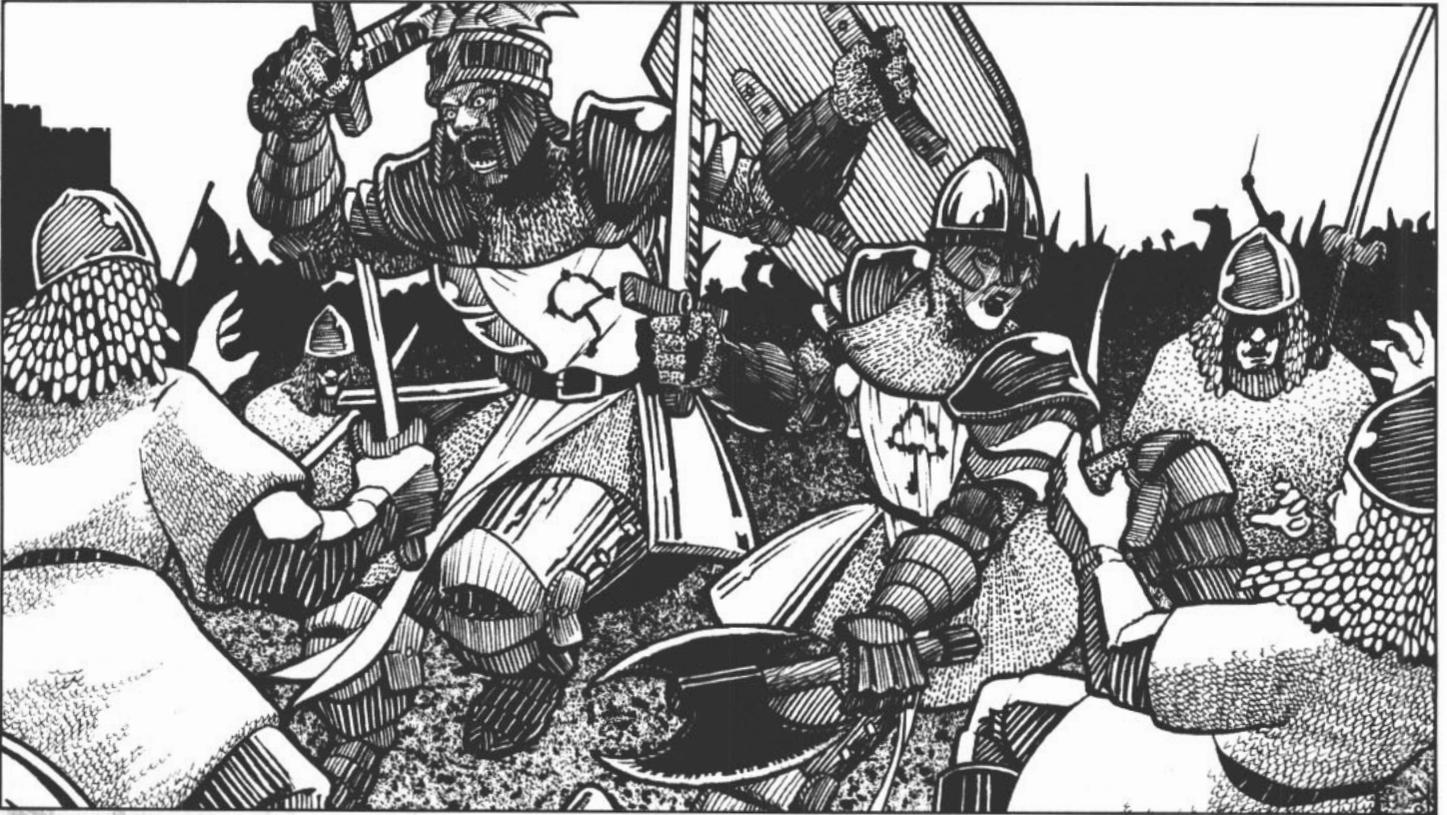
Church ever since. The famous speech he made to his men that morning survived through one of the Emperor's men — a soldier named Jirl — who wrote it down in his journal. His account of the battle and Kurgen's famous speech can be found in the library at Vaticine City and is excerpted here:

"The valor shown by the Black Crosses today was nothing short of miraculous. Not one of them broke and ran from the knights' charge, even though it decimated their lines terribly. Each of them brought down three of our men in exchange for their own lives; one man I saw slew six opponents in spite of the broken lance protruding through his stomach. Fortunately, I was not among those forced to face the Knights in battle, for I would have felt shamed killing such brave men. Their leader, the famous Hochmeister Kurgen, gave a speech before the battle that greatly inspired me. I will remember what I can and transcribe it in this journal, so that it will not be lost to the memory of man.

"Kurgen and his men rode up on their steeds, then he dismounted and removed the tackle from his animal. Slapping the horse on the rear, he watched it gallop away and said, 'Free the horses, men. Give them a chance to avoid the Emperor's grasp, even if we cannot.' The Knights all dismounted and followed his example, and as our commander watched the horses run into the woods, he cursed angrily, for he knew they were valuable animals and it would take many hours to catch them all. In spite of the work it would surely mean for me, I had to smile at the Knights' audacity.

"Then the Hochmeister stepped up on a stump, his advanced years falling away as he gave the last speech of his life. I suspect that he intended it as much for our ears as for theirs:

"I know this is a terrible thing I have asked of you today. No man wants to die, and nothing in the world can change that. However, something is at stake here that is bigger than our lives. Today we fight for our very souls, and the soul of





our Order. For we stand here accused of heresy. We, who have devoted our lives to the Church. We, who have spent so many hours comforting the sick and dying. We find ourselves excommunicated by the Hierophant's order and our souls damned to the Abyss. This is the reward for our long years of service.

“But let us not waste our last moments in bitter recriminations. We know who has wronged us, and we know that Theus will make him pay for his crimes. This day, let us instead focus on the things that Theus has permitted us to accomplish. We have been men of honor and valor all of our lives. Let it never be said of us that we failed in this last hour. More than any other time in our lives, we will be remembered for what we do here today, on this field. The accusations they have cast at our feet will fade and be forgotten, just as the men who made them, but the deeds performed here today will live forever in the hearts of men.

“Today we may die, but we will die like men. Let us pray.”

“With that, the entire Order of Knights knelt as one, and as we watched, the sun pierced through the fog of the morning and shone on them. I cannot ever remember being so filled with awe as I was at that moment.”

Although the Black Crosses fought bravely that day, the outcome of the battle was never in question, and the Order of Die Kreuzritter was wiped from Théah forever.

Angry at the losses his army took in the battle, Arvid had the Black Crosses carelessly buried in a mass grave, and only upon his death several years later did Logan III attempt to make up for his misdeeds by pardoning the Order and having their bodies reburied in proper graves near Tannen. When the workers dug up the bodies, they were astonished to find that not a single corpse had been looted by the Emperor's men after the battle. Each was buried with his full arms, and the Hochmeister wore a priceless jeweled cross. Apparently the soldiers had been afraid to disturb the remains of the Knights, for fear that the Black Crosses' condemned spirits would haunt them to their own graves.



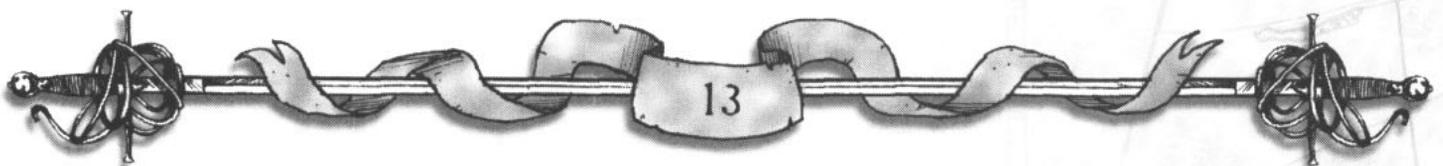
A Friendly Spoiler Warning

This section details the truth of Die Kreuzritter. If you aren't a GM or aren't playing a member of the Black Crosses, you should stop reading now. Secrets that could shake the very foundations of Théah are found herein.

You have been warned.

History

Everything detailed in the Public Face is true, except for one key fact. The Black Crosses were not wiped out at the Battle of Tannen. Hierophant Logan III sent the Hochmeister a letter warning him of the Emperor's plans to discredit and destroy the Order. Publicly, the Hierophant could do nothing to help the Black Crosses. The Emperor had too great a stranglehold on the Church. Privately, he offered them sanctuary. A token force would have to stay behind to be destroyed if the deception was going to work, and those who survived would have to change their names



and abandon their old lives, but the Black Crosses would survive.

The most famous Knights, Hochmeister Kurgen among them, decided to stay behind as part of the sacrificial army. The Emperor knew these Knights by sight, and if they weren't present at the battle, he'd know something was wrong. This stripped the Order of its most senior Knights, so Kurgen put a young Knight named Judith Losch in charge.

On the day of the battle, Judith assigned a single observer to watch from a nearby hill without being seen. The young man, an Avalon named Edward Vanguard, clutched his cross through the battle so tightly that his hands began to bleed. The Emperor's cavalry overran the Knights' line, yet somehow they managed to hold their ground and fight on. Edward watched as each Knight died, and recorded their deeds carefully before rejoining his brethren. Later, his tear-stained notes became the basis of the first Journal of the Black Crosses, which has since catalogued the history of the Order for over two hundred years.

The First Sanctuary

The other Knights, led by Judith, fled the country under the cover of darkness. Before they set out, they gilded their crosses and burned their tabards to disguise themselves. They pretended to be a mercenary warband on their way to Castille. Theus smiled upon them – the deception worked and they reached Castille without incident. Once there, they requested an audience with the Hierophant. Only Judith was permitted entry, and the details of that meeting have never been recorded or repeated. When she emerged from the chamber, she addressed the men. “The Hierophant has seen fit to bestow a monastery upon us where we may live out our lives in peace. Although he has saved our lives, he cannot save the Order.”

These words burst the dam of emotions that the Knights had been holding back, and they began cursing, shouting, and crying all at once. Judith struggled to make herself

heard. “Calm down! We'll just have to bide our time, that's all. Arvid can't live forever.”

The most respected Knights remaining in the Order – three brothers named Philip, Joseph, and Antoine – looked at each other and tore the crosses from their necks before throwing them to the ground. Philip spoke, “Our brothers didn't sacrifice their lives so that we could ‘bide our time!’” Turning, the three Knights began to leave, and a trail of others moved to follow them.

Judith's voice cut through the room. “That's right, I forgot. They gave their lives so that you could all quit the moment things didn't go your way. My apologies. I mistook you for Knights of the Black Cross.”

The departing Knights paused for a moment, and Edward stepped into their path, raising his journal in front of him. “You know what this book contains, what it represents. It is the memory of our brothers. If you walk out now, you spit on their memory. I won't allow you to do this unless you can prove to me it's truly what you want.”

Philip looked at the battered, tear-stained sheaf of pages for a moment and then spat on it. “Let's go,” he said, turning to his brothers. They did not follow. Questioningly, he looked back at them. “Joseph? Antoine?” Mutely, they shook their heads, staring at their feet. “Fine. I'll kill Arvid myself. You stay here and ‘bide your time.’” Angrily, he stalked out the door.

Several weeks later, Philip spent his last screaming breaths on the Emperor's rack. Though enraged at his brethren's cowardice and failure to support him, not a word of their survival passed his bloodstained lips. He remained true to his vows to the end.

The Wall of Honor

Upon receiving word of his death, Judith gathered the Knights in the basement of their new monastery in Altamira. Drawing her knife, she etched Philip's name into the stone wall. “This is the Wall of Honor. Philip could have betrayed us all with a word, but he chose to die with our



secret unspoken. Although he allowed his anger to control him, he was still one of us, and his loyalty cannot be questioned.”

Antoine spoke, “Thank you, Hochmeister. My brother and I appreciate this, but will we be writing the names of the others here?”

Judith thought for a moment, “No. They have Tannen, and an immortality that few men could ever aspire to. All we have is each other. This honor is just for us.” She then turned and drove her knife into a crack between two stones and hung her cross from it. “May Theus receive you and hold you near, Philip.” The two brothers then removed their crosses and hung them from the knife as well.

Antoine looked at Judith. “I want him when the time is right. The Emperor’s life is mine.”

She nodded grimly, “You will have him, Brother. His life is yours.”



The City of Shadows

Two years passed as the Knights worked to repair and expand their home, waiting for their chance at revenge. Then one day, while digging a new cellar, Brother Joseph’s pick-axe broke through into a dark cavern. The Knights gathered around, curious to see what he had discovered. At Judith’s command, they lowered a torch on a rope, and the Black Crosses were stunned by what the light revealed...

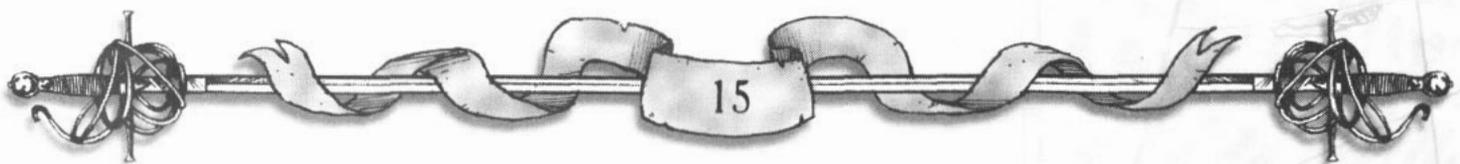
A vast city, seemingly sculpted of ice or crystal, lay partially beneath their monastery. The twisted buildings brought to mind a landscape of spiraling horns growing out of the ground. As they stared in awe, a ray of sunlight seeped past them into the cavern beneath, where it shone upon one of the crystalline buildings. Where the light struck, the building melted away into nothingness with a hiss.

“Close that shutter!” snapped Judith. One of the Knights leapt to obey her, preventing further destruction of the underground city. Judith smiled, eager for some action after the enforced inactivity their fugitive status imposed. “Tie off that rope. We’re going exploring.”

Several of the Knights descended the rope into the alien metropolis, and torches were thrown down to them. At first Judith tried to keep them together, but they were like colts in a spring meadow, trying to look at everything at once. One of the Knights – the Journals fail to name him – stumbled across a cauldron filled with shadows. Braver than most, he reached into it and felt around. He came up with a ring and a glove, which he brought to the Hochmeister.

The Black Ring and the Dark Paths

After chastising the Knight for his thoughtless action, Judith studied the ring and after a moment, slipped it on her finger, contrary to her own admonition. She yelped in pain as the ring burned into her skin and quickly pulled it back off, only to find that it had left a black band around her finger where she had worn it. Suddenly less enthusiastic about the ruins, she told the Knight to put the ring and glove back where he had found them, and ordered everyone back to the monastery.





It wasn't until several days later that Judith noticed anything odd. As she was preparing for bed, she stretched her arms out over her head, and the candle behind her cast her shadow on the wall right in front of her. Curiously she looked at the shadow of her hand and saw that it was missing a piece — right where the black band was. Judith reached out to touch her shadow absently, only to have her hand pass into the wall. Her fingers felt as though they'd been plunged into cold water. Quickly, she tried to jerk her hand back out, but she felt herself being pulled in. She picked up her sword just as she was pulled into her shadow, wearing nothing more than a nightshirt.

She found herself in a strange surreal landscape — an alien realm which the Knights have since dubbed the Dark Paths. No one knows exactly what she saw on that first trip into the Dark Paths and she never spoke of the experience, but the sights that greeted her were probably similar to what later Knights have seen. She probably stood atop a black mountain which had the same geographic features as the one she had left, but with no sign of the monastery or any other man-made structures. Instead, shadows hung in the air around her. Some were motionless, others swayed to an unfeeling wind, and still others flitted around like living things. A great white film stretched across the sky, and it is believed that she saw an enormous monstrosity of some sort press itself against this barrier from the outside.

She fled the horrible vision screaming and burst out of a shadow in the dining room covered in sweat. A Knight named Gerald sat nearby catching a late dinner, when she appeared out of nowhere. She managed to gasp out, "I've got to tell Logan," before collapsing into a feverish sleep.

She remained in the grip of her fever for four days, muttering incoherently and sometimes screaming and clawing at her sheets. At dawn on the fourth day her fever broke, and Judith sat up in bed, surprising Gerald, who had remained by her side since her sudden appearance. Showing no lasting effects from her illness, she climbed out of bed, got dressed, and made for the stables, with her concerned "nursemaid" following behind her.

Gerald wanted to alert the other Black Crosses that she was better, but Judith instead ordered him to saddle two of the fastest horses. They were going to see the Hierophant again...

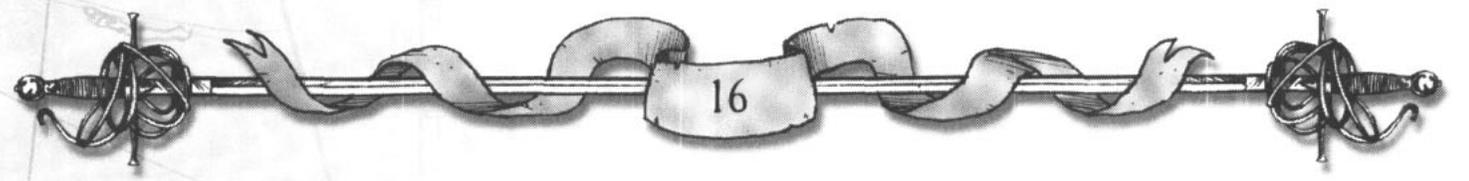
The First Stranger

Arriving as they did — two unknown warriors with no proof of their identity — Judith and Gerald were detained at the gate of the Hierophant's estate. Finally begging a piece of paper and some charcoal, Judith drew a black cross on the paper and had it sent to the Hierophant. A few minutes later, they were admitted, and ushered into Logan's presence.

Judith walked right up to him without observing any of the usual protocols and began speaking to the Hierophant in hushed tones. Logan stared at her in increasing confusion, obviously concerned that her long exile had driven her insane. As for Judith, she kept glancing at one of the Hierophant's advisors — a woman named Oriana Villazio. Gradually, Judith stopped speaking and simply stared at the advisor, squinting her eyes and turning her head from side to side. Then her eyes widened, she drew her sword and, before anyone could stop her, plunged it into Oriana's chest. The Hierophant's guards were on her in an instant, but Gerald was faster, parrying the attacks of three men at once but losing ground quickly. Then Judith stepped on the dead woman's hand, crushing a ring that she had been wearing, and the fight came to an abrupt halt.

The air around the corpse shimmered for a moment, and then Oriana's true form was revealed. The creature resembled an enormous, upright grasshopper. Obviously Oriana Villazio wasn't human and never had been. After a moment of shocked silence, Logan managed to speak. "Let us speak in private, Hochmeister Losch. Guards, take that... thing and place it in the catacombs."

The two then closeted themselves together in the Hierophant's private quarters for over an hour. When they reemerged, the fate of the Black Crosses had changed forever.





The Pact

Judith knew that there was a barrier protecting the world from something – she had seen it in the realm beyond the Shadow. She also knew that something was trying to break through. Most importantly, she knew that at least one creature had already succeeded, and had managed to become a trusted advisor to one of the most powerful men in the world. It was obvious that mankind was under attack, and a counterattack was needed. So she cut a deal with Logan.

The Black Crosses would protect the Hierophant against both human and inhuman foes, and the Church would provide them with whatever they needed to fight these “strangers.” The Order would answer only to the Hierophant himself, and had the power to seal off dangerous areas and venture into places forbidden to most people. Die Kreuzritter was reborn, this time as a secret organization dedicated to fighting the enemies of humanity.

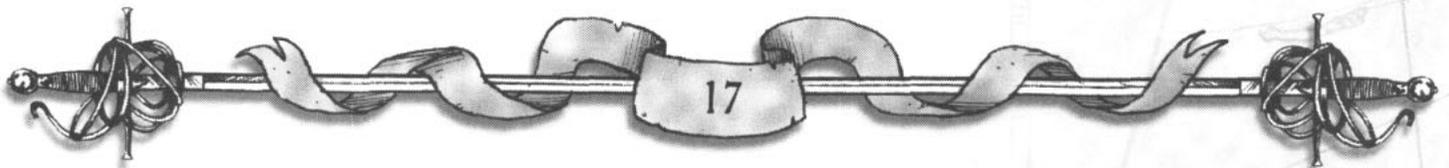
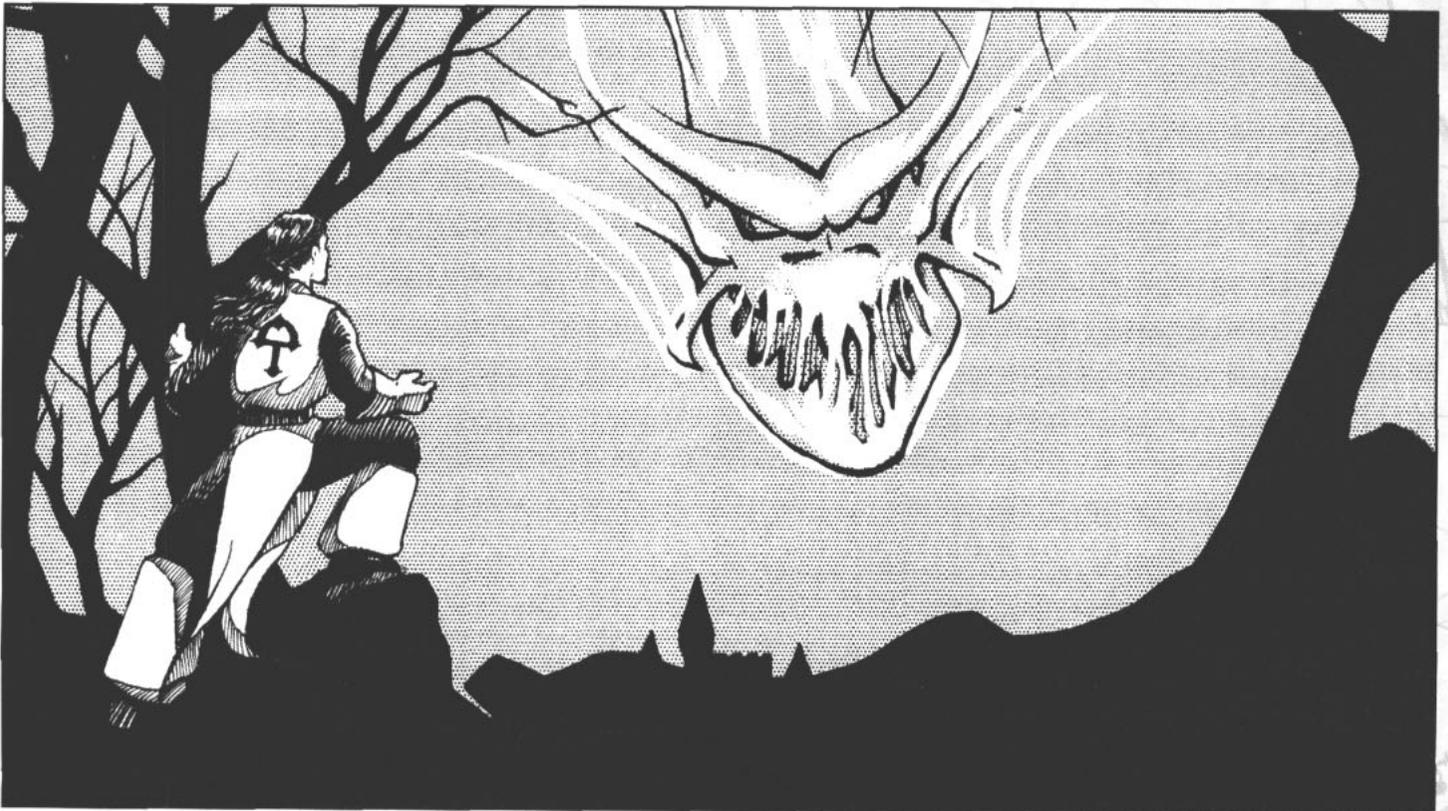
Taking the creature’s corpse with them, Hochmeister Losch and Gerald returned to the Altamira monastery.

The Assassins

Upon arriving home, Judith spoke to the Knights of their new mission. She showed them the creature’s corpse and told them of the deal she had made with the Hierophant. She explained that she had unmasked the creature by examining its shadow carefully. Out of the corner of her eye, it had revealed its true form.

After a brief discussion, she sent two men to guard the Hierophant and began to organize the other Knights for a return trip to the underground city. They were going to need weapons for their fight – weapons more powerful than mere swords.

The Knights first investigated the cauldron of shadows that they had found on their previous trip. When Judith reached





into it, the cauldron disgorged not only the ring and glove, but also four shapeless cloaks that seemed to be made of shadows.

Gerald, the Knight who had accompanied Judith on her trip to the Vaticine, asked to be allowed to test the artifacts. First he tried the ring, with no result. Next he put on the glove, only to immediately yelp in pain as a thin blade of shadows projected itself from the center of his palm. After a moment the blade receded into his hand, and he pulled off the glove, revealing a black spot where the blade had emerged. After a bit of practice, he found that he could turn the blade on and off at will, and that it could damage only living creatures. Even then, it left no wounds behind.

It was Gerald who later assassinated Emperor Arvid in his sleep. Thanks to the unique properties of the “nightblade” at the Knight’s command, everyone assumed that Arvid died of natural causes. Once this was done, the Knights at Tannen were reburied properly, but the Order chose to remain hidden so that they could better accomplish their new duties.

Gerald’s ability proved incredibly useful, and fighting techniques were devised to allow Black Crosses to take better advantage of their ability to surprise others. Later they learned that the glove recharged every year, and Assassins became more prevalent in the Order, gradually becoming an accepted part of Kreuzritter life.

The Phantom Guards

After Gerald tried on the glove, one Knight insisted on trying one of the cloaks. He vanished the moment he raised the cloak’s hood and reappeared just as suddenly, looking shaken. The cloak had taken him to the Dark Paths, but unlike when Judith had used the gift bestowed by the ring, he didn’t feel the terrible cold of the place, and he found that he could cover great distances there simply by imagining where he wanted to go.

The ring’s ability to recharge every year wasn’t discovered for quite some time afterwards. Until then, the cloaks were the only reliable way the Knights had to enter the Dark

Paths. During this time, the Knights discovered the cloaks’ limited lifespan away from the cauldron. The cloaks had to be re-immersed in the cauldron once every 24 hours, or they would dissolve into nothing. This knowledge cost them one of the four precious garments to acquire. Eventually, Knights who could enter the Dark Paths became more common and were organized into an elite group known as the Phantom Guards.

The Vigilants

After exploring the rest of the underground city, Judith assigned several Knights to watch over it and to destroy it if an outsider ever threatened to capture the city. She cautioned them to “keep a vigilant watch over the ruins”, thus coining the name of the future sect – the Vigilants.

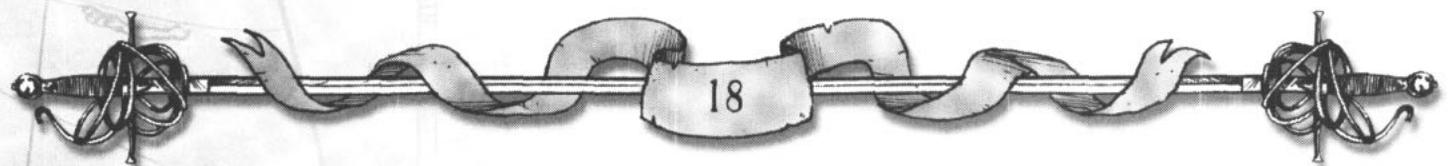
These Knights would later become lonesome hunters, seeking out Surneth ruins of enormous power and destroying them. Those who broke the rules or disobeyed orders were sent to remote parts of Théah to guard particularly troublesome ruins for years at a time.



The Porté Connection

It was during the latter period of the 15th century that the Black Crosses learned the terrible secret about Porté sorcery. One of the Knights, making his way through the Dark Paths, witnessed a hole tearing itself into the barrier in the sky. The edges of the tear were torn and bleeding, like the portals used by Montaigne Porté sorcerers. Worse, the hole did not completely heal itself afterward, but left a tiny wound in the barrier.

Over time, tears such as that could be enlarged to allow creatures such as the Hierophant’s “advisor” through the barrier. With the aid of a friendly Porté mage, the Knights experimented and discovered that Porté was indeed the cause of these rips. However, they could do nothing about it except patrol the Dark Paths, killing any Strangers that





broke through. There were simply too many Porté mages in hiding to kill them all, and the Knights were leery of such an ethically suspect undertaking. It didn't seem right to kill a child, for instance, simply because he had the potential to damage the barrier years down the road. The Knights would study the barrier as best they could, and until then the Phantom Guard would just have to remain alert.

The Objectionists

The Order continued in this manner for over a hundred years – ignoring the outside world and waging a private war against the Strangers and the enemies of the Church. However, in 1517, Matthias Lieber split the Vaticine Church in two with his Objectionist movement, and the Hierophant had him arrested. On the night before his execution, he was smuggled out of Vaticine City in a daring rescue orchestrated by the Emperor of Eisen. Once safely out of harm's way, he continued criticizing the Vaticine Church and eventually published his findings in a text called *Lieber's Book* – the basis of the Objectionist movement.

Outraged by Lieber's escape but unwilling to risk the Emperor's wrath, the Hierophant ordered die Kreuzritter

to assassinate the upstart heretic before he could do any more damage. For the first time since the pact was made, the Black Crosses disobeyed a Hierophant's order. The Hochmeister of the time, Giulio Faltoni, met with the Hierophant and told him in no uncertain terms that the

Order would not interfere with Lieber, pact or no. Matthias' translation of the Book of the Prophets into Eisen was a godsend for die Kreuzritter. It would help spread their sentiments on Porté and other forms of sorcery in a way the Vaticine Church had never managed before.

The Hierophant turned purple with rage as Hochmeister Faltoni ordered *him* to leave Lieber alone. He began to shout at the leader of the Black Crosses, cursing him and demanding that he carry out the assassination order. Then Giulio snapped his fingers and the Hierophant's own guards stepped forward and held the pontiff firm.

"I wish you had been more reasonable," said Faltoni, and drove his nightblade into the Hierophant's knee. From that day on he had to walk with a cane, and his confidence was shattered.

He lived in mortal fear of his own guards, and eventually simply wasted away and died. This tale is often told to new Hochmeisters to remind them that their true loyalty lies not with the Church, but with humanity.

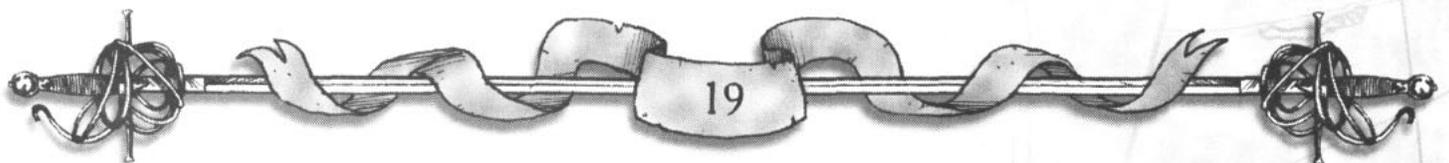
Sorcery and die Kreuzritter

When it comes to sorcery, the Knights are seeming hypocrites: they condemn its use, yet many members practice it in order to further die Kreuzritter's goals. How do they justify such a discrepancy?

The Knights still aren't entirely certain how sorcery affects the Barrier. They know that Porté tears holes in it and they suspect that other schools of sorcery weaken it as well (although they don't know how exactly, or even if they do), but also know it takes widespread sorcerous activity to cause real damage. One Porté mage alone can't bring the Barrier crashing down, but a nation of Porté mages... that's reason to worry. Wiping out individual sorcerers just because they practice magic is a waste of the Order's resources. They need to lessen sorcery as a *whole* to do any real good.

In that light, it becomes easier to make use of individual sorcerers to serve their ends. Sorcerers within the order realize the destructive nature of their power and use it only when they believe it's absolutely necessary. On the other hand, magic is still powerful, and it is foolish to ignore that power in the face of such overwhelming horror as the Strangers. The Knights must use every weapon they can against their unholy foes. If a few sorcerers mean the difference between victory and defeat, then they will use them. Pragmatism must sometimes come before ethics.

More on the Knights' philosophy can be found in the "Religion" section on page 32.





Recent Events

The War of the Cross

When the War of the Cross erupted in 1636, the new Hochmeister decided not to interfere in the proceedings. He didn't want Objectionism in Eisen snuffed out, nor did he wish to weaken the Vaticines any further. Moreover, the War risked exposing the Order to the outside world and the Hochmeister wouldn't allow that. So the Black Crosses did nothing, preserving their secrecy at the cost of untold thousands of lives.

Then in 1648, a Knight by the name of Helene Neuber stumbled across a ghoul carrying a half-starved boy back to its lair to feed upon. Outraged beyond her endurance, she killed the ghoul, and took the child to the nearest sanctuary so he could be nursed back to health. When Helene arrived, however, she received a nasty shock. The senior Knight ordered the child killed to preserve the Order's secrecy.

The Life of a Child

Helene refused to let the Knights harm the boy, and demanded that the case be tried before the Hochmeister. In the meantime, she nursed him back to health. She figured that the Black Crosses would have more difficulty condemning a healthy, bright-eyed child to death.

She was wrong. The Hochmeister sentenced the boy to die. Climbing up on a desk, Helene pulled off her tabard and threw it to the ground in disgust.

"I have died for this Order," she snarled. "I watched my fiancé — the one person in the world I swore I would never hurt — weep on his hands and knees as they lowered my coffin into the ground. I gave up my life because I believed I would make the world a better place by serving the Black Cross." Indicating the boy, who was playing with a tin soldier, Helene looked the Hochmeister in the eye. "How is killing this child going to make the world better? Will it be

a happier or a safer place? I want to understand the reasoning behind your decision."

Clearing his throat, the Hochmeister tried to explain himself. "Are you saying, Sister, that this child's life is more important than the Oath of Secrecy that we have all sworn to uphold? Is this child more important than our duty to humanity? What of the needs of the many over the needs of the few?"

"The Oaths are just words," she replied. "Important words; worthwhile words, to be sure. They serve as the basis for how our Order protects itself. However, in the end, they're only words. They will never play in the the sun, never grow up, never raise a family of their own. We all know why we swore the Oaths, and we all know why we joined the Order. Raise your hands, please, anyone who joined so that they could murder children."

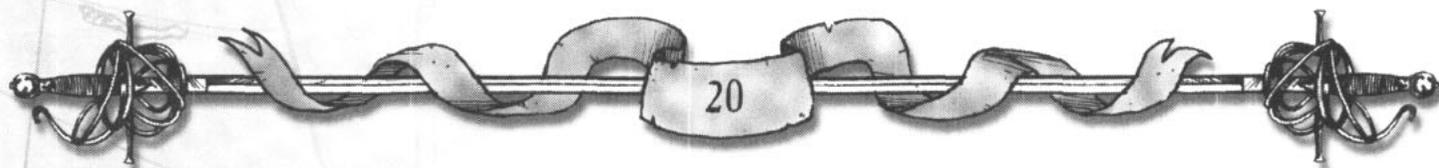
No one moved.

"You spoke of our duty to humanity, Hochmeister — of the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few. How many lives will we save by killing the boy? Do you know? Possibly none. We know that one life will certainly be lost in the process. Perhaps sparing the boy would save more lives in the long run? Maybe he will prove to be the key to our victory against the Strangers, and we will all get to go home to our families and sleep in our own beds once again.

"I cannot see the future, but I predict that if you kill this boy, he's going to stay dead. There will be no chance to undo your mistake — none of our artifacts will allow us to bring the dead back to life or turn back the hands of the clock. Therefore, I ask you to reconsider your decision, before it's too late."

Silence reigned in the room for several agonizing minutes before the Hochmeister spoke. "Sister, your argument asks me to ignore my responsibilities to the Order and place us all at risk for the sake of one life. I cannot ask the Knights to place themselves in danger just so one boy may live."

At that, one of the newest Knights, seated far to the back of the room, stood up and shouted, "Let the boy live. I'll take





Loyalty

my chances!” His statement was followed by a roar of approval from the gathered Knights.

In the end, the Hochmeister had to give in. The boy went to a foster family in Freiburg, and has had no contact with the Black Crosses since that day. Indeed, he barely remembers the experience, shrugging it off as a strange dream. The boy has grown into a strong, good man and is currently the Captain of the Watch in Freiburg. The Order still keeps an eye on him, though. He’s being considered for recruitment.

The Town Guardians

That episode led many Knights to reconsider whether they were actually helping their fellow man by remaining cloistered in the Order, fighting a stalemate war against the Strangers. The Black Crosses who decided to take a more active hand in the world therefore created the Town Guardians. These Knights live among the rest of humanity, quietly patrolling the streets of their chosen cities at night and doing whatever they can to help those in need. Since its formation, this sect of the Order has become one of the largest. The Knights have found a satisfaction in directly helping other people that they haven’t felt for years. Senior Knights worry about the increased risk of exposure, but the Order has been revitalized by this new sect, and they don’t want to do anything to upset the boost in morale.

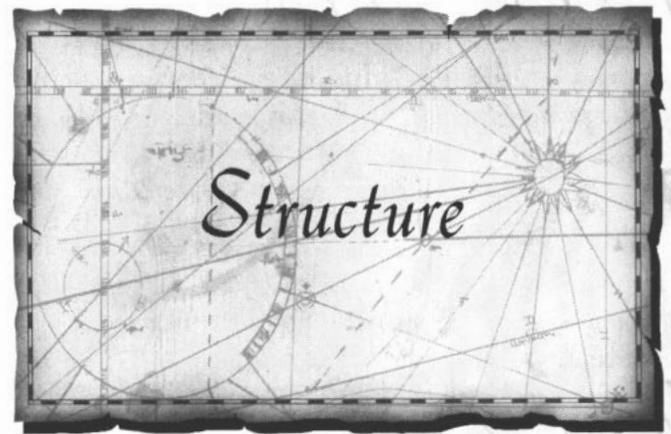
The Knights Today

The Knights today act much as they have for the past hundred years. The Hierophant’s death and subsequent Church chaos has not interfered with their true mission or their ability to fulfill the Order’s needs. They ostensibly obey the Hieros Council until a new Hierophant can be chosen, but since the Council rarely agrees on anything, the Knights are virtually autonomous. The Hochmeister directs them as he sees fit until such time as a new Hierophant rises.

In the meantime, there’s plenty to keep the Order occupied. The Dark Paths demand constant vigilance, explorers

continue to pry where they shouldn’t, and a shattered Eisen cries out for justice. The Knights are particularly worried about Empereur Leon. Since his open embrace of sorcery, use of Porté magic in Montaigne has risen significantly. Die Kreuzritter isn’t entirely certain what effect that might have, but they don’t want to find out.

Things could be better for the Order, certainly, but they will endure the current crises as they have always done. One thing die Kreuzritter knows about is survival.

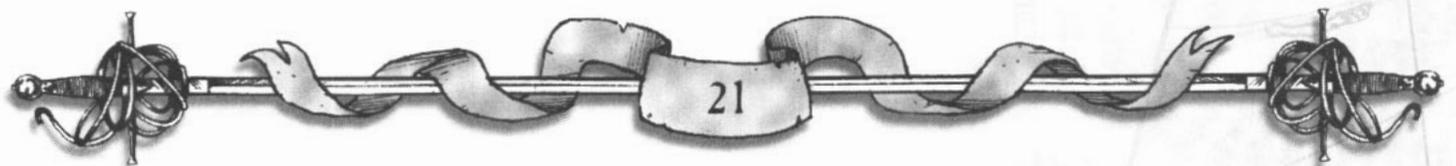


Structure

The Black Crosses have a simple organization, with only a few layers of leadership. The Order is small, and each Knight is expected to do his duty without much direction. Only when a Knight fails in his duty does the organization’s structure become important.

The Hierophant

The Hierophant of the Vaticine Church is nominally in charge of die Kreuzritter. He assigns the Order its missions, and he controls its funding. In reality, the Order has always done as it pleased: they have never actively disobeyed any of the Hierophant’s direct orders, save in the case of Matthias Lieber. So far, no Hierophant has seen fit to try to lay down the law to them. The Hierophant cannot make any of the decisions that determine how the Order operates or who gets to join – that’s up to the Hochmeister. In the



Hierophant's absence, the Hieros Council has been filling his role, albeit poorly.

The Hochmeister

The Hochmeister is in charge of the Order's day-to-day operations. He determines which Knights will be assigned to each of the missions handed down from the Hierophant. He makes the final decision on whether an acolyte nominee may join the Order or not. He also determines which Knights and acolytes are due for punishment or promotion, and he chooses his own successor. The current Hochmeister can only be removed by a two-thirds majority vote from the Knights of the Order, in which case the Knights would then elect a new Hochmeister from among their number. This has yet to happen, however, and the Order hopes that it never will.

Almost every Hochmeister comes from the ranks of the Phantom Guards. Those who don't are initiated into the Guards just before taking office.

The Knights

These men are the heart and soul of the Order. Knights are assigned to missions by order of the Hochmeister, who gives them absolute authority over how they fulfill it. Knights have one chance to refuse a mission; they need not give an explanation, they can simply say "No." If they don't, it officially becomes their problem, and they must see it through to the end. The Hochmeister doesn't want to know the details of how they get their job done, as long as the mission is successful.

Sometimes Knights are assigned in larger groups to a mission, in which case the Hochmeister makes it clear just who's in charge (usually, the most experienced Knight in the group). Finally, Knights can nominate promising people for induction into the Order, but the Hochmeister has the final say. There are four types of Knights, each briefly described below.

Assassins

Assassins work to eliminate enemies of the Order or the Church, usually petty nobles and other troublemakers. Assassins are most likely to be granted the use of the Order's most dangerous artifacts and often have access to the deadly power of nightblades. The most important Oath of the Assassins is Secrecy.

Phantom Guards

Phantom Guards are the elite of the Order, guarding the Dark Paths against the Strangers. They serve as spies, scouts, and occasional assassins, although that is typically left up to their more skilled brethren. They possess a unique sorcery which allows them to walk through the shadows. The most important Oath of the Phantom Guard is Faith.





Town Guardians

The Order has never forgotten that it once swore to protect and heal those who cannot fend for themselves; the Town Guardians were recently created to do just that. Some are assigned to a specific city which they regularly patrol, preventing those crimes they can and killing any unnatural beasts they encounter. Other Guardians have no set jurisdiction, but wander from town to town, performing the same basic tasks. The most important Oath of the Town Guardians is Charity.

Vigilants

The Vigilants often live by themselves far away from the sight of their fellow men, watching over dangerous Syrneth ruins that could unleash terrible destruction upon the world if disturbed. Those who are not permanently assigned to a specific ruin serve as scouts seeking out undiscovered ruins and determining if they are too dangerous to enter. The most important Oath of the Vigilants is Loyalty.

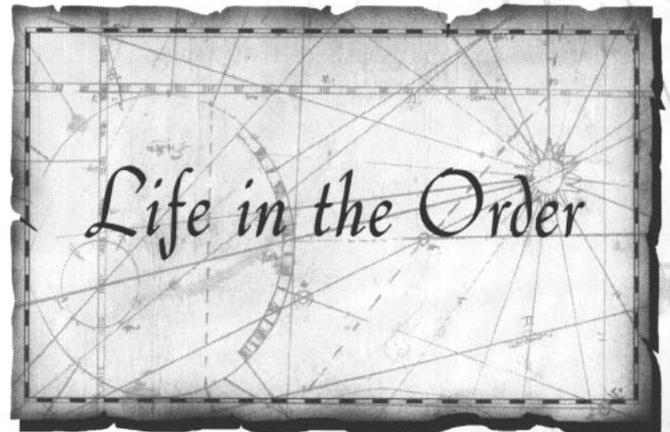
The Laymen

Not every member of the Order is a Knight. Some possess skills that make them too valuable to send on missions. Others are retired Knights who have grown too old to lay their lives on the line. Though they technically rank below Knights, they have unquestioned authority when fulfilling their duties. For example, a Knight must obey his healer's orders when it concerns his health, and anyone who ignores Grandmaster Kazi during training is liable to be severely punished. Most Knights are smart enough to treat Laymen with respect. After all, if a Knight abuses a Layman, the next time he falls under that Layman's authority, he's going to have a hard time of it.

The Acolytes

The newest members of the Order – those who have yet to prove themselves on a mission – are the acolytes. They are not yet permitted to wear the black cross, and in many cases aren't even aware of the real nature of the organization they're trying to join. Each acolyte is assigned to a Knight,

who provides for his training in whatever way he sees fit. If that means the acolyte spends four years carrying the Knight's possessions around before getting taught a thing about the Order, then so be it. An acolyte may only become a full Knight when his master says that he's ready. Knights cannot issue orders to another person's acolyte; not even the Hochmeister will break this rule.



Recruitment

When a Knight sees a person who he thinks would be a valuable member of the Order, he recommends him or her to the Hochmeister, who then observes the candidate himself (possibly using Nacht sorcery – see Chapter Three – to do so). If the Hochmeister approves the Knight's choice, then the Knight himself cautiously approaches the candidate with an offer (cautiously, because if he gives too much away about the Order and the candidate declines to join, the Knight must then kill his would-be protégé). Assuming the candidate accepts the offer, he is assigned as an acolyte to the Knight who recommended him. Unless the candidate has important political or religious ties to the outside world, his death is faked and all contact with his old life is forbidden. Currently, most acolytes come from the Kippe Academy in Tannen (see the *Eisen* sourcebook, pages 19–20, for more information).



Acolyte Training

As mentioned before, an acolyte's training depends entirely upon the Knight he's assigned to. He might spend several years as a glorified squire or the Knight might treat him as a partner on missions from day one. Once the Knight is satisfied with the acolyte's training he informs the Hochmeister, who then assigns the acolyte his first solo mission. Should the acolyte survive and complete the mission successfully, he joins the Order as a full Knight. At that point, he chooses which sort of Knight Training he wishes to receive and joins that particular portion of the Kreuzritter.

Initiation

At the start of the initiation ceremony, the acolyte is led by his master into a secret room in the Kippe Academy where the artifacts of the Order are kept. The Knight then leaves his acolyte in the hands of the Hochmeister and an honor guard of five Phantom Guards. The Hochmeister then says, *"You have died for the Order. Now it is time for your rebirth."* He removes an inky black cloak from a crucible that appears to be filled with shadows and placed it on the applicant's shoulders. The other six men in the room take up defensive positions around him and draw their blades. All but one of the torches in the room are blown out, and the entire group steps forward into the darkness. They enter a strange, gray place that seems to have only shadows, with no objects casting them. The sky above is pale white, but the light there is dim.

The Hochmeister continues his guided tour, but his voice is very faint, as if he were whispering. *"These are the Dark Paths, the spaces between the shadows. Normally, we cannot stay here very long, but you are wearing one of the Cloaks of Shadow, which protects us from the harmful energies of this place – what we refer to as shadowburn. We only use the Cloaks on rare occasions, such as when we are inviting a new member to join our ranks."*

Then the Hochmeister points at the strange white sky. *"We call that the Barrier. We don't know where it came from or who made it, if anyone, but we do know that it keeps out something*

terrible, possibly even Legion itself. But, it's easier to show you what I mean than try to explain it."

The group takes another step forward, and the landscape blurs briefly. When they stop, they are in a different place, although obviously still on the Dark Paths. In the sky above, something presses up against the whiteness. It's the face of some inhuman creature hundreds of feet tall. Fortunately, it cannot seem to breach the Barrier. *"We call that the Face. It's been there for hundreds of years, trying to break through. We have dedicated our lives to making sure it can never enter our world. We've seen countless other small creatures clawing at the barrier, and a few have even squeezed their way through holes in its fabric."*

The group takes another step forward, and this time they stand beneath a sky that is torn open. The edges of the tear bleed red, and there is a faint, constant scream, as though the universe were in pain. Through the tear, a rippling silver substance, like mercury, can be seen, and terrible shapes swim beneath its surface. The Hochmeister stares into the acolyte's eyes. *"The Montaigne did this. Their sorcery tears holes in the barrier when they use it. If enough holes are torn in the same place, the tear becomes permanent, and begins to grow unless left alone. We've contained this tear, but for how long, we don't know."* Then the group returns to the room they left from, and the Cloak is replaced in the Crucible. *"You've seen the thing that drives us, so it is time for your answer. Will you take the Oaths of die Kreuzritter?"*

Unknown to the acolyte, if he refuses to join the Order at this point, he will be killed. The Black Crosses cannot afford to break their veil of secrecy. Assuming he joins, he is asked to repeat these four Oaths:

"I swear Loyalty to the Black Cross. I will not abandon my Brothers – not in life, not in death. My hand shall be turned against my Brother's killer. I will aid my Brother if his cause is just. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten."

"I swear Charity toward my fellow man. I will never allow suffering to continue. I will give aid to those in need. I will give bread to those who are hungry, and shelter to those without a home. Lastly, I will give death to those who can be helped no



Loyalty

other way, and they shall have the Last Rites from me without exception. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten."

"I swear myself to Secrecy. I will not reveal our Order. While we are dead, we are safe. I will not put us in danger. Living men cannot perform our duties. Only we, the walking dead, can defend the Church and her children. Only we know the face of her true enemy. I will not mistake my fellow man for that enemy. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten."

"I swear Faith to the Church. I will honor the pact made to protect the Hierophant and the Church. I will die in the Hierophant's stead, if called upon by the Order. No other voice shall guide us through the shadows save the Hochmeister's. We cannot and will not swear allegiance to another – not even in subterfuge or jest. Should I break this Oath, I will die and be forgotten."

Upon completing the Oaths, the acolyte receives a black cross necklace. He is now a Knight in the eyes of the Order.

Knight Training

Once initiated into the Order, the Knight must choose what sort of duties he wishes to perform. Although the Hochmeister may suggest one group or another to him, it is the Knight's decision which part of the Order he ultimately joins. He then goes through

another round of training to prepare him for his specific duties.

Assassins

Assassins are trained closely by Grandmaster Kazi (see page 52). He ensures that they have the skills they need to hunt down their target and eliminate him with a minimum of risk. Many of them possess nightblades and all are skilled at numerous forms of weaponry. They learn to unleash their abilities silently and efficiently. Thus far, no assassin has ever left a clue as to his true identity. Assassins are prime candidates to become Phantom Guards.

Town Guardians

Although not as universally respected as the Phantom Guards, Town Guardians have become integral to the well-being of the Order; more Knights belong to the Guardians than any other faction. They receive careful tutelage in shadowing, tracking and street navigation, making them at home during rooftop chases and night-time patrols alike.

New Lives

Members of the Order must shed their old lives when they join: they fake their deaths and leave their loved ones behind in order to fully embrace the Kreuzritter's secret cause.

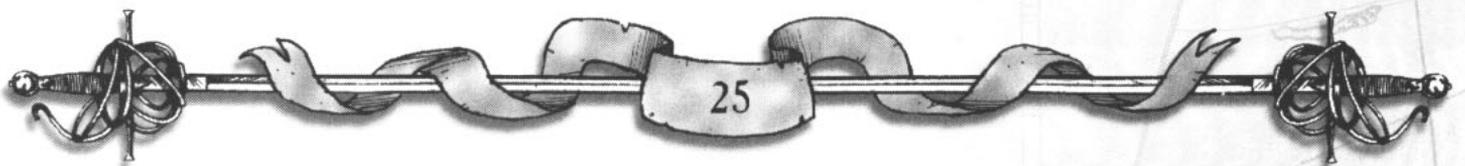
Many Knights, however, establish new identities in order to better fulfill their duties. Using the Order's resources, they start new lives as courtiers, guardsmen, even sailors. They prepare a false history, establish new friends and contacts, and generally lead normal outward lives. Only when the Order calls upon them do they leave this identity behind to pursue their true agenda. They know that they must leave any new friends or contacts behind if necessary, and most keep acquaintances at arm's length lest they grow too attached to them.

Heroes who belong to the Kreuzritter have probably established such false identities. This way, they can meet and interact with other Heroes, join adventuring parties, and generally behave as most player characters do. They need to take care not to reveal their allegiance to their friends, however: the repercussions could be devastating.

The Hochmeister may grant a Knight permission to reveal his true identity to an outsider, but there must be a reason and the outsider must be absolutely trustworthy. If he's not, the Knight will be forced to slay him. Kreuzritter Heroes should keep that in mind before showing their true colors to their fellows.

Vigilants

The most self-sufficient of the Knights, Vigilants must be prepared to live off the most barren land for months at a time. Things go wrong with supply deliveries, and a Vigilant





who becomes too dependent on these deliveries is as good as dead.

Phantom Guards

Acolytes cannot choose to join this sect of the Order; they must first earn the right. Phantom Guards are among the most skilled of the Knights, as they have the most dangerous duties to perform – including hunting down and killing Strangers that have broken through the Barrier. They receive a well-rounded education, training in everything from the arts of the assassin to the skills of the courtier. They also receive an advanced course of training from Grandmaster Kazi in preparation for receiving the Black Ring's power.

The Ceremony of Remembrance

At some point during his Knight training, each candidate has to make a pilgrimage to Tannen in order to visit the graves there. An older Knight walks him through the graveyard at night, telling him a story about each fallen Black Cross and praying with him until nearly dawn. The two leave a forget-me-not on each grave as a sign of respect. This ceremony has led to legends of ghosts haunting the graveyard of Tannen (see the *Eisen* sourcebook, pages 19–20 and 111, for more details).

Customs

The Knights of the Black Cross have developed many customs over time. Each sect of the Order does things a certain way that sets it apart from the others.

Assassins

The Assassins have two customs that are particular to their sect – the rite of first blooding and the custom of damning stones.

The rite of first blooding takes place when a newly appointed Assassin has successfully carried out his first mission. The Assassin is brought before his fellows and blindfolded. He is then told that they have taken a cup of

blood from his victim, and for him to be accepted into the Order, he must drink the entire cup without becoming ill. Naturally, the Knights are just having some fun with their newest member – the cup they hand him is full of warm seawater, and he is accepted into the Order with a rousing cheer whether or not he actually manages to drink it down.

The practice of damning stones evolved out of the Assassins' desperate need to seek some kind of atonement for the things they do in the line of duty. Before each mission, an Assassin seek out a stone that is nearly split in half with a crack; if he can't find a stone, he'll use a rounded piece of wood. He then carries it along on the mission, making sure to touch it to his victim after the job is done. When the Assassin does this, he whispers, "Here is my accomplice, spirit. Do not come for me until you've dealt with him completely." Finally, the Assassin breaks the stone in half and hides the two halves a considerable distance from each other. The ritual is intended to confuse and ward off any would-be vengeful ghosts. The ghost supposedly cannot decide which half of the stone to punish first, and therefore becomes trapped in its own indecision.

Phantom Guards

Phantom Guards also have two interesting customs unique to their group – the fading and the shriving.

The fading is a ceremony designed to teach a new Phantom Guard about the dangers of the Dark Paths. He is accompanied into the shadows by several more experienced Knights, and they explain to him the basics of walking the Paths. They warn him never to enter the Paths while swimming, that fire will not burn there (meaning that firearms will not work), and that anyone who dies in the Paths will rise again as a Night. The ceremony concludes when the Knights exit the Paths and shake the new member's hand before leaving him to digest everything he's learned. (Rules for the Dark Paths appear in Chapter 3.)

Less a confession than a rite of passage, the shriving is a new Phantom Guard's first opportunity to prove himself. When a small, less dangerous Stranger breaks through the Barrier, it falls to the newest Phantom Guard to journey to





the Dark Paths, hunt it down, and kill it. He is always accompanied by a more experienced Knight, but the other Knight only intervenes in the hunt if the initiate is obviously in mortal danger. Once a Knight has been shriven in this manner, he is accepted as a full member of the Phantom Guard.

Town Guardians

The Town Guardians have three customs that they call their own – the acolyte chase, the leap of faith, and the bloodletting.

The acolyte chase takes place across the rooftops of the Guardians' chosen city on a moonless night. The acolytes, who have been carefully taught to recognize every inch of these roofs, must flee from their superiors along a pre-arranged route, navigating by feel and memory. Those who get caught go back to training until the next new moon, while those who successfully reach the rendezvous point without getting captured must endure the leap of faith.

The acolyte chase typically ends atop the tallest building in the town (or the next tallest building in the case of Freiburg). The acolytes are congratulated on not getting caught during the chase, and then told to jump off the building. Unknown to the acolytes, a net has been prepared below to catch them, but the darkness obscures it. If the acolyte performs this leap of faith, he has only one final test to pass in order to become a full member of the Town Guardians – the bloodletting.

The rite of bloodletting is the most important to the Town Guardians. They must be sure that a new member will do anything to protect their city. The hopeful acolyte receives the name and habits of an irredeemable criminal in the town and asked to bring back proof of his death. He must carry out the assassination by himself, but if successful, the acolyte becomes a full member of the Town Guardians.

Vigilants

The Vigilants have three traditions that they've followed for over a hundred years – the send-off celebration, the return celebration, and the first vigil.

Whenever a Vigilant leaves to serve a vigil, his fellows hold a celebration in his honor. Since he will often be alone in the wilderness for the next several years, the memories of the friends who attended this last celebration are sometimes all he has to keep him going. Because of this, a send-off celebration is always impressive. Wine, food, dancing, and other activities the Church frowns upon all take place at these parties.

The celebrating when a Vigilant returns from duty is even more boisterous than the send-off. Both the Vigilant and his friends exchange gifts at these welcoming-back parties. The returning Vigilant usually hands out items he has made while serving his vigil, and the others give him things they've bought for him while he was gone. In this way, the Vigilants keep themselves occupied during a vigil (making gifts for their friends), and the celebration gives a returning Vigilant a welcome taste of civilization.





The first vigil that a Vigilant serves is strictly ceremonial in nature. He is placed in a room with a large black Prophet's Cross and told to guard the cross until morning without sleeping. Once an hour, a Knight comes to check on the Vigilant, typically making enough noise to wake him, in case he's fallen asleep. Upon the successful completion of the first vigil, the Vigilant becomes a full member of the sect.

Assignments

Missions for die Kreuzritter members include assassinations, vigils, hunts, patrols, and protecting the Hierophant.

Assassinate Enemies of the Order

There are a number of circumstances in which a Knight may be called upon to assassinate someone. They include:

- The Hierophant has ordered his death.
- He has learned of the Order's existence.

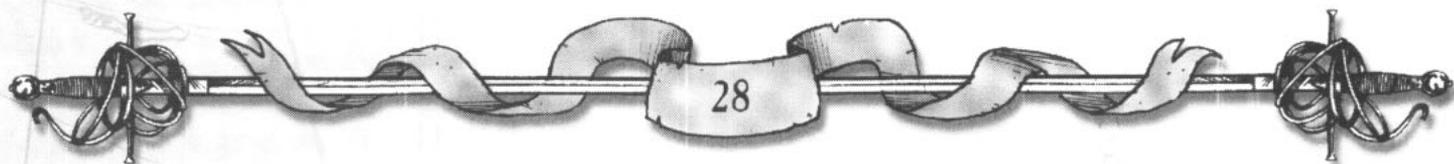
- He persists in investigating a Synchrony ruin that he's been warned away from.

When possible, only Knights who possess Nacht sorcery or can project a nightblade are chosen for assassination missions, since they minimize the risk of the Order's existence being discovered. However, when the target isn't expected to be missed or to put up much of a fight, a normal Knight goes instead. The priorities a Knight must keep in mind on an assassination mission are as follows, from most to least important:

1. Avoid detection.
2. Leave no evidence of your involvement.
3. Kill the target.
4. Give the target last rites.

Stand Vigil

Often, Knights are assigned either to guard an already-discovered Synchrony site or to scout out and locate new sites





that are potential trouble spots. The priorities a Knight must keep in mind when assigned to a vigil mission are as follows, from most to least important:

1. Do not reveal the existence of the Order.
2. Prevent the removal of dangerous artifacts from the site by any means necessary.
3. If a dangerous artifact is removed in spite of the Knight's best efforts, get word to the Order so that an assassin may be dispatched.
4. Kill any dangerous creatures that attempt to leave the site.

Hunt the Strangers

The Phantom Guard must constantly watch for signs that Strangers have broken through the Barrier. When this happens, the Knight is supposed to hunt down and kill the creature before it can inflict serious harm on anyone. The priorities a Knight must keep in mind on a hunting mission are as follows, from most to least important:

1. Kill the Stranger by any means necessary.
2. Leave no evidence of your involvement.
3. Do not reveal the existence of the Order.
4. Keep the Stranger's existence a secret (the Knights do not wish to panic the populace).

Patrol a City

Although not technically a part of the Order's official duties, the Knights consider it their spiritual responsibility to monitor major population centers for monstrous incursions and crimes against people who cannot defend themselves. The priorities a Knight must keep in mind when assigned to a patrol mission are as follows, from most to least important:

1. Do not reveal the existence of the Order.
2. Kill any dangerous non-human creatures encountered.
3. Kill any violent criminals encountered.
4. Watch for potential problems that are beginning to develop.

Protect the Hierophant

For hundreds of years, two Black Crosses have constantly served as bodyguards for the Hierophant. This duty was

created as part of the original agreement that restructured die Kreuzritter under the direct supervision of Hierophant Logan III. Typically, these bodyguards possess neither Nacht sorcery nor the ability to project a nightblade. Knights who have these abilities usually serve more important duties, such as assassinations, guarding the Dark Paths, or standing vigil. The priorities a Knight must keep in mind when assigned to the Hierophant are as follows, from most to least important:

1. Do not reveal the existence of the Order.
2. Stay near the Hierophant at all times. Place yourself in front of any potential threats.
3. Should something happen to the Hierophant, get the news back to the Order as quickly as possible.

Advancement and Rewards

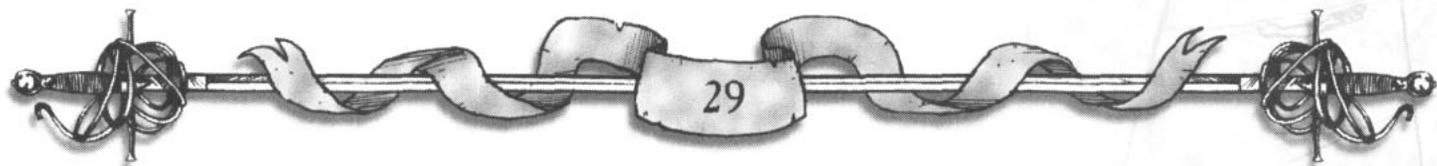
There are not that many ways to advance through the ranks of the Black Crosses, simply because there aren't that many ranks. Die Kreuzritter has little to offer to ambitious Knights, but there are a few coveted rewards available for outstanding Knights.

The Black Ring

Knights who consistently succeed in their missions while still remaining true to the Four Oaths are often invited to accept the Black Ring and become a member of the Phantom Guard. Only one Knight a year is chosen to receive this honor; because of the importance attached to the assignment, it is often a hotly contested decision.

When a Knight receives the gift of the Black Ring, the entire Phantom Guard gathers for the occasion. The ceremony is held in a room containing only a single, brightly burning candle. The candle sits on a table in the center of the room, casting the Knights' shadows up onto the walls. The Black Ring is brought in on a pillow and presented to the Hochmeister, who recites the following:

"<insert Knight's name>, you have proven yourself worthy of joining the Phantom Guard. This is one of the highest honors a Knight of the Black Cross can receive, but it carries with it great





responsibilities. *The Phantom Guard is all that stands between humanity and Legion itself. Will you join their number?"*

If the Knight refuses, the Hochmeister nods, and the candidate is dismissed (a secondary candidate, quartered nearby, is then summoned and receives the same offer). If he accepts, the Hochmeister places the Black Ring on the candidate's finger. There is an icy burning, and then numbness spreads through the candidate's hand. The Hochmeister speaks again:

"Welcome to the Guard, Brother. Remove the Ring, and hold up your hand so that we may see your badge of membership."

When the candidate removes the Black Ring, he sees the black mark it has left, and when he holds up his hand, the candle casts his shadow onto the wall in front of him. The marked finger's shadow now has a gap where the black mark is, making it appear detached from his hand. The other Phantom Guards and the Hochmeister then hold up their own hands, revealing the same mark and gap in their shadow. The Hochmeister concludes the ceremony by asking the candidate to recite the four Oaths once again. As he does so, the other Guards turn away and walk into their own shadows. The Hochmeister is the last to do this, leaving the Knight alone in a room that proves locked from the outside. He is expected to follow their example and step into the Dark Paths to leave the room. He then receives his fading (see page 26) and is considered an initiate. Once he has been shriven (see page 26), he is a full member of the Phantom Guard.

The Black Glove

Knights who show good judgment and reliability on their missions are often invited to accept the Black Glove. This position shows the Hochmeister's immense trust in the Knight, since only one Knight a year receives the honor. Runners-up for the Black Ring often receive this reward.

The Black Glove is awarded with much less ceremony than the Black Ring. Those Knights who have received the Black Glove gather in a windowless room. The Hochmeister then enters the room and offers the Black Glove to the candidate. The Knight may not speak during the ceremony,

but he may nod or shake his head to accept or decline the Glove. If he declines, it is offered to the next candidate. If he accepts, the Hochmeister hands the Glove to him, and he places it on his sword hand (the Glove fits both right and left hands). There is an icy burning in his palm, then a sensation akin to clenching a muscle in the middle of his palm. A blade of shadows then extends from his hand. After a moment, the clenching feeling stops and the blade disappears, but the Knight knows how to summon it up again when he needs it. The Glove then returns to the Hochmeister, and the candidate shakes hands with each Knight present before they all file out of the room in silence.

The Hierophant's Guard

Two of the Order's most talented Knights usually serve as the Hierophant's Bodyguard, but the position is less important to the Order as the previous two duties. However, for those Knights who do not wish to accept the Black Glove or Ring (or practice sorcery which they don't want to lose in exchange – see Chapter Three), this is most likely the highest position they can aspire to within the Order.

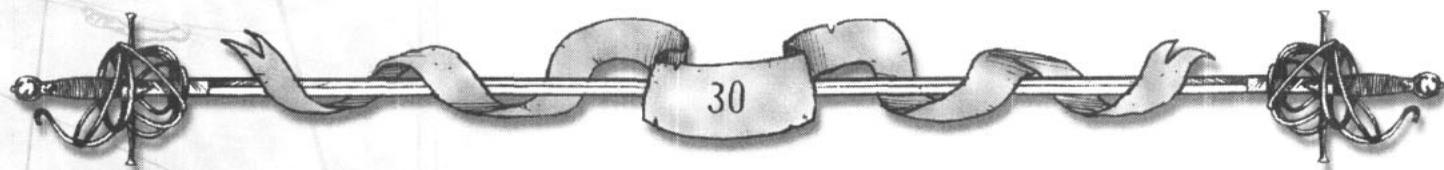
The Hierophant's Guard accompanies the pontiff at all times and never leaves his side, save to sleep and eat. They take care not to draw attention to themselves, usually appearing as Church advisors or ordinary guards. One guard is on duty at all times, and neither is ever more than thirty feet away. They dedicate themselves entirely to the Hierophant's safety; nothing else comes between them.

These positions are offered in private by the Hochmeister. There is no ceremony attached to the offer.

The Wall of Honor

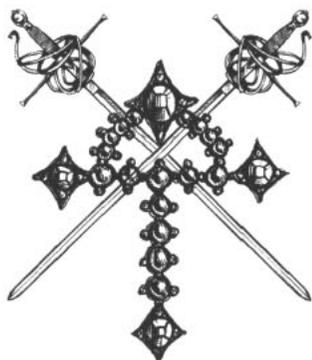
Those Knights who show extreme valor in the line of duty sometimes have their name etched into the Wall of Honor in the basement of the Altamira monastery. This is a rare thing, usually awarded only after a Knight has given his life to protect the Order. There are currently only 17 names upon the Wall of Honor.

When a Knight's name is added to the Wall, the Hochmeister gathers as many Knights as possible in the





basement, gives a speech, and then etches the new name into the wall with a plain knife. The Hochmeister then speaks of the Knight's accomplishments, and finishes by driving the knife into a crack in the Wall and hanging his cross from it. Those who were closest to the Knight may add their crosses to the knife's handle. The ceremony is short and simple, but it is the highest honor a Knight can receive, living or dead.



Quarrels

Quarrels are never allowed to interfere with a mission. Knights who find themselves at odds with each other must suspend the quarrel until the end of the mission, with the less experienced Knight bowing to the senior Knight's wisdom. Of course, things don't always work out this way, and arguments that cannot be resolved eventually go before the Hochmeister for judging.

Punishment

Punishments in the Order are usually light: loss of privileges, suspension from duty, degrading tasks and the like. However, for more serious transgressions, a Black Cross might find himself permanently reassigned to a distant vigil – perhaps in the Crescent Empire, or on a far-off isle. The death penalty is extremely rare, and takes place only when the Knight's continued survival threatens the Order's existence (for example, if an angry Knight threatens to break the Oath of Secrecy). In such instances, the very best Assassin in the Order is assigned the mission so that there will be no mistakes.

Marriage and Children

While the Black Crosses do not frown on marriage (as long as both parties are Knights), there is no place for children within the Order. Therefore, children born to Knights must go to foster homes to be raised. Some of these children eventually enter the Black Crosses themselves after growing up, but this is an unusual situation, and would-be parents shouldn't count on it to reunite them with their child sometime down the road. More than one marriage has been torn apart by this seemingly heartless, but very pragmatic rule. Essentially, Knights who want children are advised to wait until they retire from active service, and then adopt if they can no longer have children of their own.

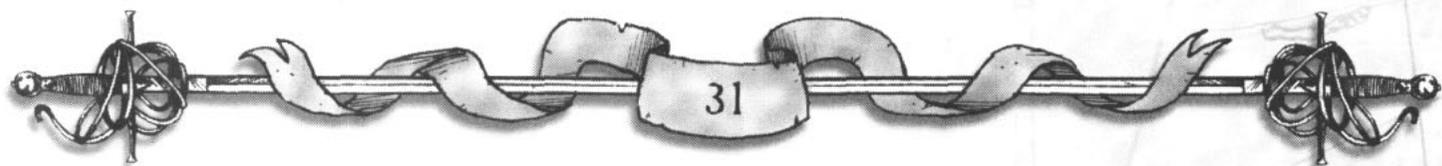
Retirement

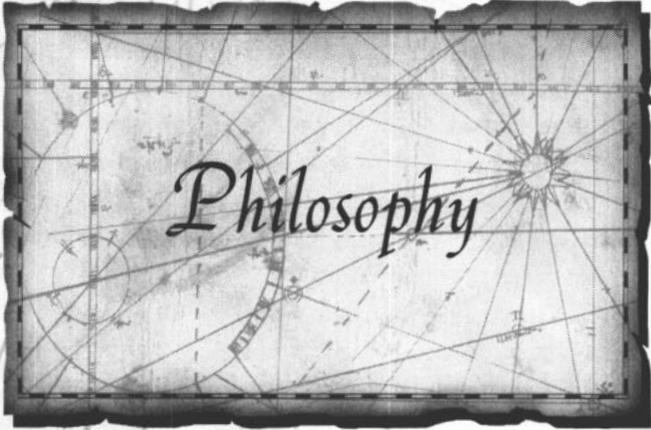
Knights rarely serve the Order their entire lives – indeed, they are encouraged to retire once they can no longer maintain the peak physical conditioning required to perform their duties. Retiring Knights receive a pension of 200G for every successful mission they completed over the course of their careers, and they are reminded of their Oath of Secrecy. Often, Knights settle down and raise a family, although they have also been known to serve as contacts, mentors, or safehouse managers, freeing up active Knights for other duties.

Death

Unless he has requested otherwise, when a Knight dies, his corpse goes to the graves at Tannen, where he is buried with the others. His name and accomplishments are then added to the Ceremony of Remembrance. If a Knight was killed for being an Oathbreaker, his corpse is left where it fell, and his name is expunged from the Order's Journals. Knights who request to be buried elsewhere, such as with a loved one or family, still receive a cross at Tannen and a place in the Ceremony of Remembrance.

Because of the graveyard's haunted reputation, none of the locals have ever counted the crosses. They aren't aware that the cemetery is larger now than it was in 1411.





Philosophy

Religion

The Black Crosses have been an isolated religious Order for several hundred years. Even while working under the Hierophant, they've maintained their own brand of Faith, which takes into account their unique experiences and secrets. Below is a list of questions and the official answers as posited by the Hochmeister:

What is Legion?

Legion is the enemy. We believe that he makes his home on the other side of the Barrier in the Dark Paths. You were shown his true face when you joined the Order, but Legion manifests himself in many forms. He wishes to lead mankind into damnation, and we must protect humanity from his influences.

Are there angels?

Possibly. We believe angels to be one of two things: either another face of Legion, or simply a fabrication designed by the Church to make its followers more secure in their beliefs. We have found no evidence that there are any supernatural beings working toward the salvation of mankind. There is only us.

Why do we protect humanity?

Because every man deserves the chance to live up to his potential. Legion would take away that opportunity and enslave us all.

Do the needs of the many really outweigh the needs of the few?

Absolutely. Life is a matter of balancing victory with loss. If, in the long run, killing one innocent saves two others, the sacrifice was worth it. In the eyes of Theus, no man is worth more than any other. Saving ten peasants instead of a High King is a worthwhile choice, unless the King's death would result in even more deaths. As for members of the Order, each Knight is but one person, no more, no less. The child you give your life to save may become more valuable to humanity than you yourself were — there's no way of knowing in advance.

Why do we use sorcery, when we know it's a sin?

The stakes of this battle are so high that we cannot afford to lose. We know that Porté is destructive and we have our suspicions about other forms of sorcery, but they are all powerful and all can be used against our foe. Therefore, we continue to practice magic, even if doing it seems to help the enemy slightly.

Which religion is right?

All of them. None of them. The Order doesn't care. Knights must perform the duties they have agreed to, regardless of whether these duties violate any religious beliefs the Knight may have. We obey the Vaticine Hierophant because we have sworn to and because we require the resources he offers, not because we necessarily hold his Church higher than any others. In the war against Legion, there are only two sides — us and them.

What happens to members of the Order after we die?

Our sins drag us down into the Abyss, where Legion will feed upon our souls. We accept this when we join the Order. We must do horrible things in the name of Theus:



treachery, murder, and far worse. We commit these sins because we must, so that humanity can live without fear of Legion. We take this burden willingly and we understand its terrible price. As Hochmeister Judith said when she accepted this task, "For the sake of the many, we few are damned."

This is why it is so important to honor our fallen Brothers. No one else will ever know of their sacrifice unless we remember them. Keep that in mind when you question the value of our sacrifice. Though our suffering is eternal, the Order remembers our sacrifices. That is our reward.

Why not just sin however we want, then?

Because this defeats the purpose of our sacrifice. Sin strengthens Legion, so we only sin when we know it will do more good than harm. A Knight must always be aware of his actions and their consequences.

Conduct

The Knights follow a simple code of behavior based on four Oaths: Loyalty, Charity, Secrecy, and Faith. By all means, their oaths are much less stringent than most comparable codes of behavior, but this simply reflects the desperate measures the Order is forced to use to fight Legion. The four Oaths may be found in the Initiation Ceremony section on page 24.

Loyalty

The Knights of die Kreuzritter never leave their fellows behind, unless recovering them would result in even greater loss of life. The corpses of dead Knights go to the graves at Tannen to be buried in a midnight ceremony.

The Knights are also sworn to defend each other to the death, and to exact vengeance upon anyone who kills one of their compatriots. The life expectancy of anyone with a vengeful Black Cross hunting him down can usually be measured in days.

Finally, the Knights are sworn to aid one another to the best of their ability, if they feel the task is noble and just.

Charity

The Knights of the Black Cross seldom retain wealth for themselves, preferring to give it away to those who need it more. They share their food, shelter, and money with perfect strangers that they encounter (though they keep their own identities a secret). Knights almost always give away the remainder of their expense money upon the completion of a mission rather than return it to the Church.

In addition, they show a certain charity to their opponents, giving them their last rites before or immediately after killing them. There are no exceptions to this rule. They believe that without the final cleansing of sin from a man's soul, the weight of those sins will drag him down to the Abyss and thereby strengthen Legion. Thus, no matter how much a Knight hates his opponent, he will not condemn him at the expense of strengthening his ultimate enemy.





Secrecy

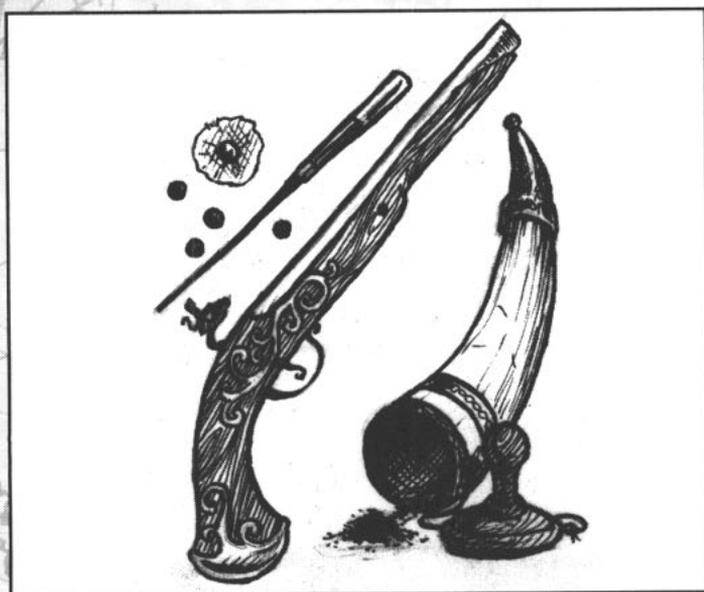
This Oath serves two purposes. First, it reminds the Knights never to reveal the existence of the Order. A Black Cross will die rather than betray his fellows. Secondly, it reminds the Knight that no matter how evil a man may be, he is not the enemy. The only real enemy is Legion and its minions.

Faith

The fourth Oath results from the pact made with Hierophant Logan III, and Knights take it less seriously than the other three. While the Knights would indeed die to protect the Hierophant, the Hochmeister truly holds their loyalty. Knights are often forced to stretch the Oath in order to infiltrate competing secret societies and other dangerous organizations when the Hochmeister commands it. In these instances, breaking this Oath is overlooked.

Oathbreakers

Should a Knight break one of the four Oaths — maliciously and in such a way as to leave no doubt as to his intent — then the Hochmeister reluctantly declares him an Oathbreaker, and sends the best Assassin in the Order to kill him. His name is then blacked out of every record the Order has, and he vanishes from the Knights' history. Obviously, only the most severe transgressions require this punishment.



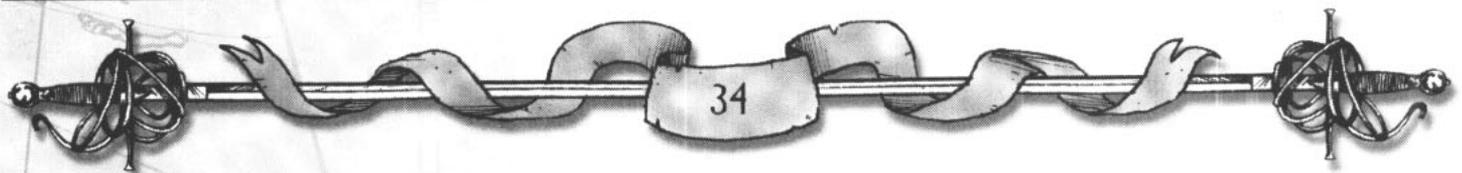
The Dark Paths

Another world lies in the space between the shadows that certain Knights of the Black Cross can enter. They refer to this world as the Dark Paths, and by entering it and then re-emerging elsewhere, they can seem to walk through walls and other obstacles. A huge white Barrier of some sort surrounds the entire world, forming a canopy in the sky, and strange things push against it from time to time, trying to break through.

The Knights aren't certain, but they believe that the Abyss lies on the other side of the Barrier, and Legion is constantly trying to force his way through. Worse, they have definite proof that the Montaigne use of Porté is slowly eroding the Barrier. They aren't certain what to do about this yet, but going public is not an option. They don't wish to provoke mass hysteria.

The Strangers

Due to the continuous degradation of the Barrier in the Dark Paths, creatures have been slipping through into Théah more and more often in the last few years. The Knights refer to these monsters as "the Strangers" and believe them to be aspects, if not direct manifestations, of Legion. They come in many different forms, from blind, crawling things, to predatory beasts that seem to reason as





well as men. There is even a group, known as the “Nights”, who claim to be deceased Knights of the Black Cross and resemble shambling corpses. Some of these Nights have been known to aid Black Crosses in trouble, but most of them are bloodthirsty fiends.

The Knights consider the Strangers to be their true enemy, and their first priority is to kill them whenever encountered. They may even ignore their Oath of Secrecy, if necessary; the Strangers are that dangerous. Knights are instructed to hide evidence of the Strangers if found, and keep the monsters’ existence hidden from the rest of Théah. Some things, man was not meant to know.

Secret Signs

The Kreuzritter place a great deal of importance on the ability to communicate in secret. Thus, they have developed codes that conceal information out in the open, where anyone could see it if they only knew what to look for.

The Black Cross Alphabet

Although the Knights have several different ways to deliver coded messages, all of these methods use the exact same vocabulary – the Black Cross alphabet. The alphabet consists of a series of “dots” and “dashes” which the Knights memorize upon joining the Order. Their exact configuration depends on the method of delivery, which is described after the alphabet, below. All Knights above the rank of Acolyte have mastered this code and never need to roll to decode it.

Statements

Watch for danger.	••••–
All clear.	•••–•
Send help. We are in trouble.	•••––
Compromised location. Get away.	••–••

Meet me at	•••–•
Return to	•••–•
I have a mission for you.	•••––
The mission was successful.	•–•••
The mission is a failure.	•–••–
Message was garbled. Repeat.	•–•••

Places

this building / here	•–•––
the meeting place (prearranged)	•–•••
the nearest graveyard	•–••–
the nearest sanctuary	•–•–•
the Kippe Academy	•–•––

Times

noon	–••••
twilight	–•••–
dawn	–••••
midnight	–••––
tonight / today	–•–••
the next sabbath	–•••–
the next full moon	–•–••
ASAP (urgent)	–•–•–

Punctuation and Modifiers

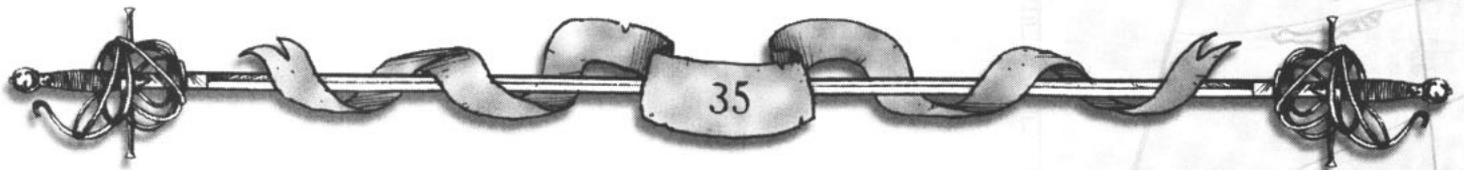
before	–••••
during	–•••–

Pebble Code

When two Knights wish to communicate without meeting one another, they will often use the pebble code. This code consists of finding a number of oblong pebbles and placing them along the edge of a wall to spell out messages in the Black Cross alphabet. “Dashes” are represented by pebbles pointed towards the wall, while “dots” are represented by pebbles pointed along the wall. Thus, “all clear” would look like $---|-$.

Blink Speech

When two Knights wish to communicate face to face in front of others, they use blink speech. What is being said verbally is unimportant – everything the speaker says and



does is simply a cover for a pattern of blinks which communicate a secret message in the Black Cross alphabet. Dots are indicated by a quick blink; dashes with a longer blink. When the speaker wishes to reply, he stops talking, and his fellow picks up the phony conversation while deciphering the now-silent speaker's blinks. Needless to say, this form of communication is quite difficult and the Knights train long and hard to master it.

The Eye Cipher

If two Knights wish to communicate in writing, they use the "eye", or "dotted i", cipher. The Knights write elaborate false messages, discussing the weather or some other inane topic. The only important information in the message is conveyed by how each "i" is dotted. A dot is represented by a normal dot over an "i", like so: *i*. A dash is represented by a dashed dot over an "i", like so: *ī*. These dots and dashes, read in order, spell out messages in the Black Cross alphabet. Thus, "Dearest Timothy, How is your wife this fine day? I hope that she has gotten over her illness. Is your son still attending the Academy? I know he'll go far in this world," translates to "The mission was a failure. We are in trouble. Send help."



Avalon

The Black Crosses dislike operating in Avalon. There are many powerful groups there that would undoubtedly prove a threat to the Order, including Elaine's Knights, the Rose and Cross, and Derwyddon to name a few. The Sidhe in particular frighten the Black Crosses to the extent that they've begun collecting every bit of lore on the Sidhe's weaknesses that they can find.

The Order has found the Highland Marches to be a much more inviting country. The Sidhe are less prevalent, and folks tend to mind their own business. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it), there has not been much call for the Knights to perform missions there.

As for Inismore, the Knights perform their duties there quietly, and as far from the O'Bannon as possible. A few years ago, two Knights were attending the O'Bannon's court, having a pleasant conversation, when the mad king drew his sword and beheaded one of them with no warning. No explanation was given for this behavior, but when the other Knight gathered up his fallen comrade, he found that the O'Bannon had crushed the tiny black cross under his friend's clothing. The Order has taken the hint.



Castille

Aside from the Inquisition, the Black Crosses have no real opposition in Castille. Indeed, thanks to the Church's power base there, they all but have the run of the country. Of course, the Inquisition has grown so powerful in recent years that the Knights have become even more secretive just to protect themselves. The Black Crosses are desperately seeking information on the more powerful members of the Inquisition, believing if they can destroy this evil at its source, the rest of the malicious organization will fall apart by itself. Unfortunately its most powerful member, Cardinal Verdugo, is too well protected to face directly. Worse, Verdugo knows of the Order's existence, and would expose them if he believed they were a threat to him. The Knights have learned to move very carefully to avoid drawing his wrath. So far, he suspects nothing of their true intentions.

Eisen

Die Kreuzritter remember their birthplace and currently work to help Eisen pick up the pieces after the bloody War of the Cross. They hope to steer the country toward reunification, preferably under the leadership of one of the more competent Eisenfürsten, such as Pösen or Fischler.

Until that day, the Black Crosses continue working in the shadows, helping to fend off the influx of inhuman creatures that have emerged since the War of the Cross.

Montaigne

The past two years in Montaigne have terrified the Black Crosses. Things have changed so quickly, and Porté sorcery has become so public, that they fear the Barrier will collapse if something is not done. The Empereur himself stands right at the center of their concern. Somehow, some way, the Knights must remove him from power, stem the tide of sorcery, recover the missing Archbishops, and get the Hieros Council to elect a new Hierophant before the Inquisition utterly destroys the Church's credibility. It's no wonder the Hochmeister has lost so much sleep lately.

Ussura

The Black Crosses first ventured into Ussura in the late 1400s. At first they met with inexplicable storms, rabid animals, and natural disasters that took a terrible toll. Finally, the Hochmeister sought out one of the holiest priests in the nation, who reportedly took him to speak to Grandmother Winter herself. As the story goes, he found Ussura's supernatural protector and made a deal with her. Matushka has never again bothered the Black Crosses and in exchange, they have done their best to eliminate Porté sorcery in Théah.

Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar

The Black Crosses have done their best to remain neutral in the Vendel civil war. While die Kreuzritter's philosophy is similar to certain Vestenmannavnjar beliefs, they have no interest in the political and moral issues at stake. They want only to perform their duties in the Vendel isles with a minimum of interference. Currently, the Knights are trying to determine if Lærdom sorcery has any degenerative effect on the Barrier, but so far no conclusive evidence of lasting harm has been found.

Vodacce

Vodacce is no place for men with secrets, and the Black Crosses have to be extraordinarily cautious when operating there. Knights in Vodacce take care to avoid physical interaction with others, to conceal identities even from each other, and to take extremely complicated routes during those rare occasions when two Knights must meet face to face. The Black Crosses might have pulled out of the country entirely were it not for the dangerous ruins hidden in the catacombs beneath the islands. The Order is doing its best to conceal those ruins from the Princes, lest they unleash some terrible power in pursuit of a petty vendetta. In addition, the Knights are still trying to determine if Sorte magic somehow poses a threat to the Barrier.





The Crescent Empire

Ironically, the Order has a larger operation in this country of "infidels" than in the much nearer Avalon. Vigilants have been permanently assigned to several deadly ruins in the desert sands, steering travelers away from their dangers and silencing those who see too much. In addition, the Church of the First Witness in Zafara continues its humanitarian works, attempting to slowly repair the damaged relations between the Crescents and Théans.

Explorer's Society

The Black Crosses consider the Explorers children who have been given loaded pistols to play with. They are extremely dangerous, not only to themselves but to those around them. The Knights fear that the Explorers will someday unleash a force capable of destroying all mankind, and die Kreuzritter has quietly destroyed several expeditions from within to prevent the discovery of dangerous devices.

Invisible College

More than one Knight belongs to the Invisible College, albeit secretly. The Black Crosses wish to destroy the Inquisition's growing power, much like the Invisible College does. Therefore, it is only natural that the two groups should work together, even if one isn't really aware of the other.

Knights of the Rose and Cross

Somehow, despite their best efforts, the Black Crosses have been unable to infiltrate the Rose and Cross. Their moles are always passed up for initiation into the Order – almost as if the Rose and Cross can sense the dishonesty of the spies. Despite that, they show no sign of realizing that the Black Crosses still exist. They have made no efforts to confront members, and the Rose and Cross has yet to interfere with a single Kreuzritter mission.

Even so, die Kreuzritter have come to see them as a threat. The Black Crosses actively disdain their unknowing rivals, wondering if they truly have the guts to live up to their unofficial motto, "Righteous men should stop at nothing to make justice." It may simply be jealousy, however: the Rose and Cross has much more freedom than the Order ever will, a fact which may be hard to swallow.

Los Vagos

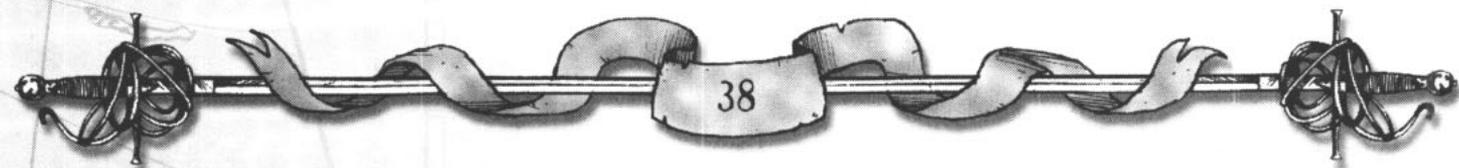
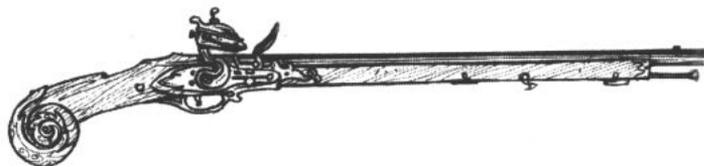
The Black Crosses have begun to consider a possible alliance with El Vago's organization against their mutual enemy, the Inquisition. The Knights have not yet revealed their existence to Los Vagos, and may ultimately decide to aid them from the shadows rather than make a formal commitment.

Rilasciare

Recently, the Rilasciare have caught wind of the Black Crosses' activities. They wish to uncover the Order – for what reason the Knights do not know. The Hochmeister has Order all Knights to avoid interacting with known Rilasciare members if at all possible. The Order does not wish to give the Free Thinkers any further opportunity to ferret them out.

Sophia's Daughters

The Black Crosses are unaware of the existence of Sophia's Daughters and their goals. Should the Knights become aware of the organization, however, they will attempt to infiltrate it as soon as possible.





These are the major Black Cross bases of operation throughout Théah. Other houses exist, but they are not as prominent as these. The GM may create these houses as he or she wishes, and the players can even form their own using the rules in Chapter 3. These, however, are the core of the Order. Heroes who belong to one of these sanctuaries are considered the juniormost Knights there.

Avalon

A Hovel in Carmen

Location: Carmen

Leader: Beth Gardner

Number of Knights: 3

The meandering roads and alleys of Carmen make an excellent place for the Black Crosses to operate in Inismore. The O'Bannon intensely dislikes their presence in his country, so the Knights have distanced themselves from Mad Jack's normal haunts.

The Knights are based in a run-down building situated in a narrow, filthy alley. A hidden exit leads to the sewers beneath the city and eventually dumps out into the ocean. Their leader is an older woman named Beth Gardner who poses as a beggar, rooting through trash on the off-chance that a careless word will reach her ears. Still, she's definitely not as harmless as she seems. She has received the Black Glove, although the black mark is usually hidden under the

soot on her hands (see Chapter 3 for details). In addition, she keeps a small MacEachern dagger hidden on her person at all times, just in case (rules on MacEachern steel can be found in the *Avalon* sourcebook, page 91).

The Knights in Carmen are currently investigating rumors of a permanent entrance into Bryn Bresail within the city. The Black Crosses wish to use it to study the Sidhe without getting caught by the terrible creatures that inhabit that realm.

Castille

Altamira Monastery

Location: Altamira

Leader: Grandmaster Kazi

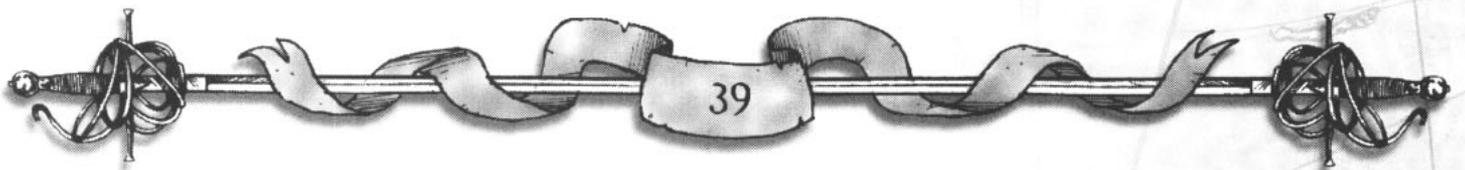
Number of Knights: 25

Poised atop a mountain near the city of Altamira, the hidden monastery serves as the primary training ground for Knights who have been accepted into the Order and need further instruction. The trail leading to the monastery is steep, narrow, and difficult, giving the Black Crosses the privacy they desire.

Grandmaster Kazi runs the monastery and supervises the training of most of the Knights who come here. He hails from an obscure island off the west coast of Théah called Kanuba, and has brought with him a number of skills and secrets that have greatly aided the Order. More on Kazi can be found in Chapters 2 and 4.

The monastery can comfortably house 40–50 people and holds enough supplies to withstand a six-month siege. There are prayer cells, sleeping chambers, a beautiful chapel, and extensive training facilities.

Deep within the monastery's wine cellar lies a false wine barrel. Twisting the tap upside-down and pushing it opens a secret door leading even deeper into the earth. A series of steps hewn into the stone itself opens up into the City of Shadows described in the History section. The city is filled with tall, spiraling buildings that look like they were carved





from ice. This strange material dissolves into air with a hiss if struck by sunlight.

A small stone building with no doors and no windows is hidden deep within the city. It hides the Crucible of Shadows and the Order's other major artifacts. There is a small hole on one side of the building with a torch holder next to it. Placing a lit torch there illuminates the inside of the room and casts shadows around it, allowing a Knight with Nacht sorcery to enter (a Porté mage could also conceivably enter by dropping in a blooded object). There is always a guard on duty next to the torch holder.

Countless artifacts could still be hidden within the city that the Order hasn't found. The maze-like buildings conceal numerous secret doors, alcoves and other nooks, and the Hochmeister occasionally assigns a group of Knights to go through one of the buildings with a fine-toothed comb. Unfortunately there are usually too many other missions going on to spare the men, and the majority of the city remains unexplored.

The Inn of the Green Eye

Location: Puerto de Sur

Leader: Janko Urhoff

Number of Knights: 5

This tiny inn by the road to Puerto de Sur has a sign out front with a green eye on it. A traveler with good vision might notice the faint black cross worked into the eye, but most never pay it a second glance.

The inn is run by Janko Urhoff, an Eisen man who claims to have moved here to get away from the horrors of his native land. In reality, he was sent here to take charge of an investigation and set up shop for the Black Crosses.

The Kreuzritter have heard stories of a society calling itself the Cauldron: a misguided group of lost souls that has made a practice of worshipping Legion. Urhoff's orders are to ferret out the members of the Cauldron, try to dissuade them from their dark ways, and if that fails kill them to a man.

The Knights recently discovered an Inquisitor's body outside the town — the man's horse had thrown him, breaking his neck. A letter found in his possession seemed intended for an unnamed person at "the Inn of the Green Eye", suggesting strongly that there is an Inquisition spy among the Knights. The Black Crosses here have grown intensely suspicious of each other, and Urhoff worries that the sanctuary may soon fall apart unless things improve.

Eisen

The Kippe Academy

Location: Tannen

Leader: Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl

Number of Knights: 29

The Kippe Academy is one of the most important sanctuaries that the Order possesses. Here, students learn how to be warriors and leaders of men. The Knights quietly watch the best of the crop to see if they would make good recruits. Perhaps no more than 1 in 100 will be chosen, but they represent the future of die Kreuzritter.

The Wall and Gates

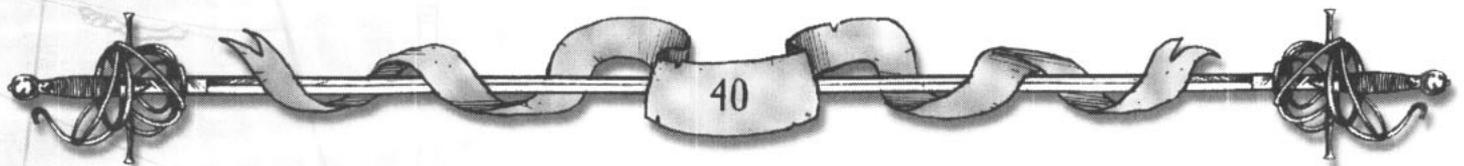
The walls are made of thick stone and stand 12 feet high, topped with metal spikes to keep people from climbing them. The gate is just as sturdy and also has metal spikes atop it. Two gatehouses flank it, manned with student guards all the time. The faculty values their privacy.

The Promenade of Heroes

Statues of famous military leaders line the walkway here: Emperor Corantine, General Julius Caius, Bastion the Knight, and even General Stauss, depicted in his younger days. The students walk past these great warriors of old each time they go to class.

The Dormitory

Three stories tall, the dormitory can house approximately 100 people. Each student receives a room of his or her own — the faculty feels that they need time alone so that they can study in peace, away from the distractions of a roommate. They may go into town, but the front gates close at sunset, and the dorm is locked soon after. Of course,





knowledgeable students know how to climb the wall without being seen. Plus, there's always an industrious trainee on the first floor next to the garden who can open his window for his fellow students — for a fee, of course.

The Garden

The garden not only supplies the Academy with fresh herbs, it also doubles as a punishment for unruly students. The cook, Hildegard Krause, tyrannizes her kitchen help, working them mercilessly until they collapse in exhaustion.

The Classrooms

Students study history, mathematics, logistics, tactics, and strategy in these four large classrooms. Students are expected to be quiet and not disrupt the class. None of the faculty care if they show up to classes or not — the results of such behavior show during tests. Only the most dedicated students stand a chance at entering the Order. As for the rest, their families contribute over 4,000G a semester to the Academy whether they learn anything or not. If they pay attention at all, however, they receive the finest military education money can buy.

The Study Hall

The study hall holds a library of several hundred books on a variety of topics, up to and including the latest maneuvers in the Montaigne-Castille war! Students come here to read, socialize, and relax a bit from the rigors of the Academy.

The Training Grounds

Here, the students receive a physical regimen that would daunt most professional mercenaries. They run, lift weights, practice with swords, and even learn simple acrobatics. Most important of all, though, is the stamina training. The students are beaten with slightly cushioned sticks until they fall down, after which they crawl back to their rooms to rest up before the next session. After awhile, the students can shrug off blows that would incapacitate other men. Many students drop out after their first day of stamina training, but those who stick it out become fearsome opponents.

The Headmaster's House

Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl lives in this austere cottage. It features a large bedroom, two meeting rooms, a library,

and a study. Visiting nobility sleep in the guest quarters upstairs. The Hochmeister has only one "servant", a deadly Black Cross Assassin posing as his maid and secretary. If anyone made a threatening move towards him, "Greta" would take the interloper in an instant.

The Stables and the Stableyard

Students study the equestrian arts here. Each is responsible for the care and feeding of a given horse, and a student who mistreats or neglects his animal is expelled. During their four-year stay, the students help raise and train their steeds, which helps strengthen the bond between rider and mount.

The Storeroom

This ordinary-looking storeroom has a concealed trapdoor in the floor that leads to a secret meeting room. Once a month, the faculty gathers there to discuss matters of importance to the Order. So far, no student has ever discovered this: the faculty members are all extraordinarily stealthy, and many even possess Nacht sorcery.

The Rusty Nail

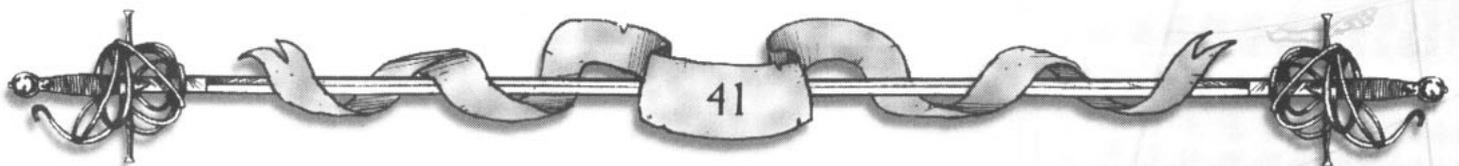
Location: Freiburg

Leader: "Innkeeper" Sylvester Weiler

Number of Knights: 10

This tavern stands on the outskirts of Freiburg, near the shantytown that has sprung up around the city. The Nail is not one of the more hospitable taverns in the town, identified only by the large rusty spike driven into the door. Sylvester Weiler, an enormous, muscular man with a patch over one eye, runs the place. Embittered mercenaries and scarred old soldiers come here to drink away the faces of the men they've killed, or to eat some of Sylvester's meat pies in silence. Loud or boisterous revelers are lucky to leave the Nail alive.

Of course, some of these hardened warriors actually belong to the Black Crosses — mostly Town Guardians. Sylvester hands out their missions by sticking small notes to the bottom of the huge steins he serves drinks in. These mugs need to be lifted with two hands anyway, so the Knight simply palms the paper off and into a pocket for later perusal. Similarly, the Knights stick notes for Sylvester to the



bottom of a mug before they leave, then alert the grouchy innkeeper by a tip of the hat as they walk out.

Currently the Knights of Freiburg are dealing with a nest of kobolds feeding on the poor. The city guards are too caught up in their own problems to deal with the beasts, and the Knights of the Rose and Cross seem unwilling to waste their time on the problem. Therefore, die Kreuzritter have been hunting the kobolds down one by one. The Black Crosses hope that if they can find the lair and kill enough of the beasts, the others will flee the city for good.

The Harbormaster's Office in Prachtig

Location: Prachtig

Leader: Harbormaster Raimund Hauk

Number of Knights: 8

As the legend goes, one of the Hochmeisters met with Matushka herself a hundred years ago and made a deal



with her. She would allow them to operate in Ussura unmolested, and they would work to keep Porté sorcery from entering her country. This sanctuary is the result of that bargain.

Although the office itself appears small and untidy, it is actually a hotbed of political intrigue. The Knights here peruse passenger lists both for enemies of the Order and for known Porté practitioners. In addition, the harbormaster is a half-blooded Glamour mage and uses his Thomas Knack to check people for sorcery before allowing them into Ussura. Often, Montaigne sorcerers find themselves embroiled in legal complications and red tape. If that doesn't work, the Knights leave threatening notes on the mages' beds. The truly stubborn sometimes set off down the River into Ussura – never to be seen again.

Of course, it would be impossible for the Black Crosses to stop every Montaigne sorcerer from entering Ussura. Extremely high-profile visitors, and those who travel in large numbers (such as Montegue's army), are generally left alone. If Matushka has any complaints about these "lapses", she has yet to voice them. In the meantime, the Black Crosses also use Prachtig as an excellent source of news. Several of the Knights work in the taverns on the waterfront, and sailors can be very talkative after they've had a few drinks.

Montaigne

The Bascone Orchards

Location: Bascone

Leader: Charlotte Gaulle dul Motte

Number of Knights: 18

Thanks to Vincent Gaulle dul Motte's patronage, the Knights have use of several remote buildings in the Bascone orchards. These buildings are dilapidated and weather-beaten, but the Order has renovated the basements and constructed underground tunnels connecting them with each other. Secret entrances to these tunnels dot the orchard.



One of Vincent's nieces, Charlotte Gaulle dul Motte, leads the Order's chapter here. She is a hard-edged, fearless woman in her early forties, who has assassinated 16 Porté sorcerers during her tenure in the Black Crosses. Her right-hand man is a Knight named Andrew Mills, an Avalon Glamour Mage and a skilled swordsman. Andrew disdains the use of all Syrneath artifacts, claiming that they don't feel right to him. Charlotte and her Knights often work to capture the abundant mirror ghosts that haunt the nearby countryside in preparation for a major assault against sorcery in Montaigne. For more information on their scheme, see the "Basement in Tamis" entry below.

A Basement in Tamis

Location: Tamis

Leader: Marie Étalon du Toille

Number of Knights: 12

The Black Crosses based in Tamis meet in the basement of their leader, a noblewoman named Marie Étalon du Toille who is an expert in the occult. They filter in for meetings through various secret passages leading up from the sewers.

The Knights have recently pulled off a major victory for the Order and are now lying low. They have completed a mission just last year that has stopped Porté sorcery from being used within Tamis — at least for the foreseeable future.

The operation's success hinged on the cooperation of the Knights in Bascone. They supplied a large number of mirrors containing captured ghosts and helped the Tamis chapter hide these throughout the city, typically in bricked-up basements, underground sewers, or old attics that no one thinks to go into. It was a massive undertaking, and Knights came from all over the nation to get the mirrors in place. Even so, only the central area of town was affected. Of course, since that area included the permanent Porté gateways of the city as well as all the homes of the nobility, it might as well have been the whole town.

It was Marie who suggested that they redirect the blame for the incident to the Rilasciare. The Free Thinkers were happy to accept credit for striking such a blow against the

nobility, and so far the Black Crosses' involvement has remained secret, in spite of an investigation launched by the Musketeers.

Porté use had grown so common in Tamis that the Barrier here acquired an enormous tear in it, lending the mission an added sense of urgency. By preventing further usage of sorcery, the Knights hope that the Barrier will heal itself over time. In the meantime, they keep an eye on it, hoping that nothing particularly horrifying slips through while they plan their next mission in Paix.

Lame Enflammée

Location: Charouse

Leader: Alexis du Montaigne

Number of Knights: 7

One of the oldest and most beautiful religious buildings in Montaigne, the *Lame Enflammée* was boarded up on the Empereur's orders just a year ago (see *Montaigne*, page 22). Although its mighty bells have since stood silent, the cathedral hasn't been empty by any means. A group of Black Crosses led by Alexis du Montaigne, one of the Empereur's own cousins, has moved in and claimed the building as its headquarters. Thanks to the extensive catacombs beneath it, they may come and go as they please without being seen. The roof makes a perfect spot to post a lookout: the building's gargoyles provide cover and prevent passersby from seeing any silhouettes that shouldn't be there.

The Black Crosses are using this sanctuary to organize the recovery of the ten Archbishops of Montaigne. Once they can restore some order to the Church and ensure the election of a new Hierophant, they will begin work on a plan to assassinate the Empereur.

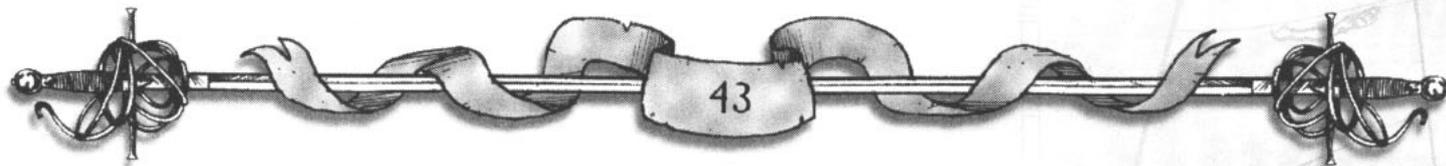
Ussura

St. Andresgorod's Chapel

Location: St. Andresgorod

Leader: Father Yuris Zhdanov

Number of Knights: 4-10





This quiet, unassuming chapel lies deep in the woods near St. Andresgorod, with no paths leading to it. It is carved from the fallen trunk of an enormous oak, which has since put out new shoots, clothing the church in living green. The furnishings inside – the pews, the podium, even the altar – are all carved directly from the tree.

Worshippers vary the route they take to the chapel to avoid harming the plant life in the area, and the four brothers assigned to maintain and care for the chapel – Father Yuris Zhdanov, Gela Zhdanovich, Slava Zhdanovich, and Mait Zhdanovich – hold services there. All four brothers have Pyeryem magic, and all are Knights of the Black Cross. Yuris, the eldest, serves as the priest for the chapel and possesses the spirit skin of a deer. Gela and Slava are fraternal twins. They do most of the chores, often hunting for food using the spirit skins of a pair of wolves they've befriended. The youngest brother, Mait, serves as a messenger to die Kreuzritter. He possesses three spirit skins: an otter, a hawk, and a fox. Typically, he switches between them frequently when making contact with the Knights, to confuse pursuit.

These brothers and their chapel serve as the Ussuran headquarters for die Kreuzritter, distributing missions to the Ussuran Knights, providing shelter and medical treatment for wounded Black Crosses, and watching for signs of trouble. Although they usually work alone they've had up to six other Knights assigned to help them out during multiple missions.

Vendel

Malaram Hideaway

Location: Malaram

Leader: Jørl Stensrud

Number of Knights: 14

The Black Crosses are seeking information in Vendel: they want to know if Lærdom sorcery is harmful to the Barrier. It has no visible effects like Porté does, but that's not conclusive proof. Instead, the Knights, led by a Vigilant named Jørl Stensrud, have followed the religious tales of the

Vestenmannavnjar to the legendary birthplace of Lærdom – the Great Tårn mountain.

They have set up a semi-permanent camp at the base of the mountain some miles from the city of Malaram. The camp is virtually invisible from the outside, and the Knights avoid drawing the attention of the Vesten, even going to far as to purchase an amulet with the "Mystery" rune on it to hide themselves. They don't necessary believe it will work, but better safe than sorry.

They work with a sense of urgency, knowing that the Vesten are bound to discover them so close to their holiest site. So far, they have explored the lower third of the mountain without finding anything out of the ordinary. They hope to finish the job soon and get out of there while they still can. After all, the Vestenmannavnjar aren't known for their kind treatment of trespassers...

Vodacce

Numa Cathedral

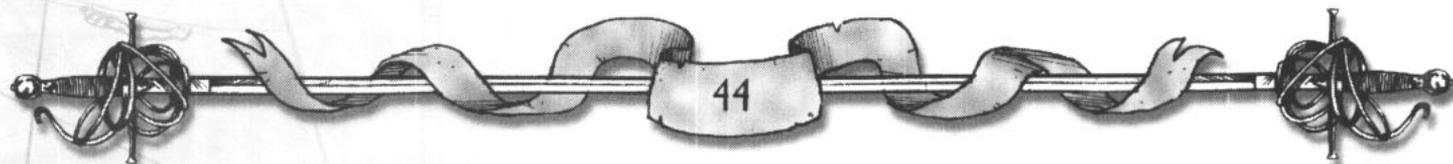
Location: Numa

Leader: Bishop Maffeo

Number of Knights: 6

Numa is the legendary birthplace of sorcery. It is here that the senators of the Old Republic became the first sorcerers. Although die Kreuzritter have no evidence as to how this was done, they believe that there was an artifact similar to the Black Ring or Black Glove involved – one that could pass its effects on to the offspring of the recipient. They *do* know that the Church has destroyed many writings and Syrnych artifacts that were considered too powerful for men to possess, which lends credence to this theory. Unfortunately, those in the Church with access to this information aren't speaking – not even to the Knights.

Now, a small group of Black Crosses operates out of the old Vodacce Church – not out of any loyalty to the regime, but because they've discovered something deep beneath the surface of Numa. In 1465, the Hochmeister entered a stone room in the basement. He emerged pale and shaking, and ordered the Knights to seal the room. Anyone who





entered it was to be killed immediately, and the bricked-up doorway was never to be opened again on pain of death. The next morning the Hochmeister was found dead. He had poisoned himself in order to carry out his own instructions.

None of the Knights serving here know what they're guarding, and given the severity of their orders, most don't want to know. Certainly, there's a bit of nagging curiosity, but no Knight wants to risk death just for a peek, and the prospect of looking into the room holds a real risk – what could have made a Hochmeister kill himself?

The Crescent Empire

The Church of the First Witness in Zafara

Location: Zafara

Leader: Sigrun Masthoff

Number of Knights: 30

This is where the Order traces its roots. Located deep within the Crescent Empire in the town of Zafara (found on a small, lush delta in the lower end of the peninsula), the hospital has been in operation since the Crusades, over 1,000 years ago. This makes it one of the oldest standing hospitals known to exist. Most of the Knights here are "peacekeepers." They have served as city guards for so long that it has become a time-honored tradition in Zafara – this is perhaps the only place in the world where the Knights still wear the Black Cross openly.

The hospital is mostly concerned with charity work – healing the poor, feeding the hungry, and taking care of orphaned children. However, it also serves as a way station for resupply caravans, taking food and drink to the Vigilants guarding the lost ruins of the Crescent desert. A saintly old Eisen woman named Sigrun Masthoff organizes all activities. She is considered a holy woman among the Crescents, and they often reach out to touch her for good luck as they walk past. Sigrun simply smiles and endures the attentions, knowing that she is helping to heal the scars left by the Crusades.

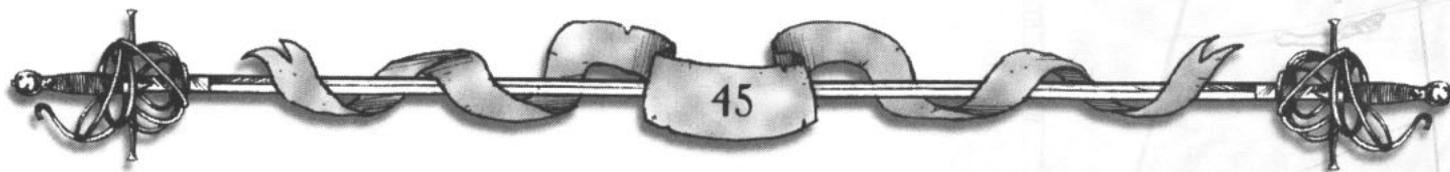


The Journals of the Black Cross

Beginning with Andrew Vanguard in 1411, the Black Crosses have kept a continuous log of their activities and missions, as well as a list of who ordered each mission. The personal remarks and stories of the Order historians pepper the journals, forming a unique commentary to the deeds described. Since Vanguard, the Journals have passed through the hands of over 30 Knights, and they are always available for perusal by Black Crosses in the library of the Altamira monastery.

By reading these journals, more than one Knight has discovered a way to pull off a seemingly impossible mission. More importantly, these journals give the Order a sense of history and age. When Knights see the 87 thick volumes that make up the complete history of die Kreuzritter, they know that the Order has been there long before they were born, and will remain long after they die.

Readers of these journals will notice certain names that have been blacked out. These names belonged to Oathbreakers who have been removed from the Order's history, one of the worst punishments that can be inflicted on a Knight. Few members of the Order can bear the thought of having their accomplishments and deeds lost to the annals of time forever.





Laymen of the Order

The Knights often find themselves in need of a skilled specialist of one sort or another, and look to Laymen to fill the gap. Some of them have acquired a name for themselves with the Black Crosses because of their extraordinary skills; the best of these are detailed below.

Avalon

Brand Smith (Carleon, Wits 4, Lockpicking 5, TN 20)

Publicly, Brand is known as a wandering locksmith of great talent. When the Knights have a particularly tough lock to crack, they come to him. He's a large, muscular man with long, thin fingers that are perfect for the work he does. Brand has even cracked several of the locks protecting the Chapter Houses of the Knights of the Rose and Cross — some of the toughest in the world.

Donovan "the Black" (Canguine, Wits 5, Poison 5, TN 25)

Operating out of Vendor's Row in Canguine (see *The Pirate Nations* sourcebook, pages 23–29), Donovan pretends to be an oily salesman of love potions and folk remedies. The Knights, however, know him as a master of every poison known to man. Those interested in securing one of his poisons ask to purchase "something that will make me a real ladykiller. A lover without equal anywhere in Théah." Donovan charges the Knights for his poisons — he has to maintain his operating expenses, after all — but the Black Crosses who deal with him know they're getting the best. Legend has it that he once even concocted a poison to kill a Sidhe, trapping a piece of cold iron inside a tiny ball of wax that melted in the Sidhe's stomach.

"Deadeye" Sydney O'Brien (Liumnech, Finesse 5, Attack (Crossbow) 5, TN 25)

Sydney makes his living as a mercenary in Liumnech, but he never reveals the true extent of his skill with the crossbow. That's reserved for the times when a Knight needs his services, either as back-up for a mission or as a rooftop sniper. Sydney doesn't speak much, but he's earned the respect of the entire Order with his miraculous skill.

Ian MacBride (Connickmoor, Wits 4, History 4, TN 18)

Ian supports himself as a scribe and has acquired an impressive collection of books over the years, covering any aspect of Théan history he could conceivably need. Many a Knight has made a pilgrimage to Connickmoor in order to speak with him about an obscure point of history.

Castille

José Nuñez del Rios (Vaticine City, Wits 4, Research 5, TN 20)

José is a respected curator of the Church archives in Vaticine City. He has access to many books sealed by the Church because of the danger they represent, although he requires a good reason to consult them. He wears small, round glasses that keep slipping down his nose, forcing him to push them back up.

Juanita Avila del Lopez (Avila, Wits 5, Surgery 5, TN 25)

Juanita is a famous surgeon operating in the town of Avila, and has saved the lives of men pronounced dead by other surgeons. Occasionally, a wounded Knight has staggered to her back door, requesting her aid, which she provides free of charge to members of the Order.

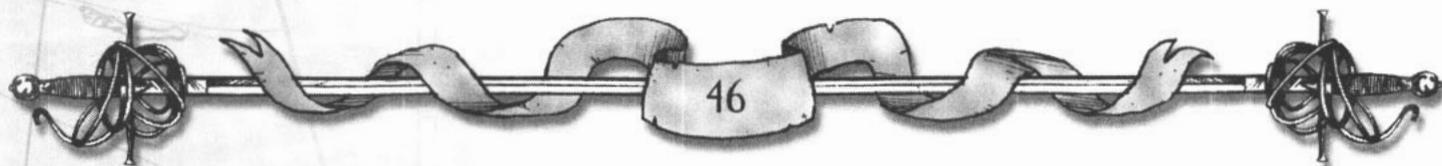
Pio Garcia del Nuñez (San Gustavo, Finesse 4, Pilot 4, TN 18)

While Pio can't always be found in his home port, he always makes a lot of noise wherever he goes. An incorrigible braggart and womanizer, Pio claims that he killed a siren armed only with a seashell, sailed a ship past a living storm that stretched forth hands of lightning to catch him, and swam with the selkies off the shores of the Highland Marches. Regardless of the accuracy of these wild tales, Pio is an excellent pilot and very close-mouthed about his dealings with the Black Crosses.

Eisen

Jerome Bansbach (Freiburg, Finesse 5, Pickpocket 4, TN 23)

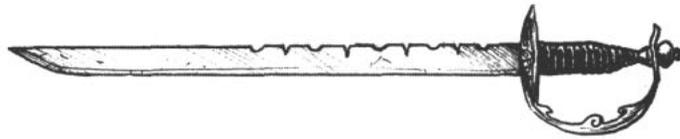
Jerome is a young man who makes his living as a pickpocket in the streets of Freiburg. Befriended by a member of the Order, he is sometimes willing to lift an object of importance out of a target's pocket for them. He is talkative and overconfident, but he holds the Kreuzritter in the highest regard, and wants to be a Knight some day.





Rica Gabler (Atemlos, Finesse 4, Glassblower 4, TN 18)

Rica creates beautiful works of art in Atemlos, specializing in stained glass windows. However, she has also produced more practical objects for the Black Crosses, such as glass knives filled with acid or poison. A successful hit with one of these knives inflicts normal damage and then shatters the blade, emptying the liquid into the fresh wound. Of course, the Knights have to bring her the poison or acid they want the knife filled with – she isn't an apothecary.



Montaigne

Emilie Tamis (Tamis, Panache 5, Fashion 5, TN 25)

One of the foremost tailors of Montaigne, Emilie often produces some of her best work for the Black Crosses. Sometimes, a Knight can only reach a nobleman marked for death by being invited into his home. In order to receive such an invitation, it's important to be witty, charming... and well-dressed. Emilie provides her services to the Order for free.

Danielle du Paix (Paix, Wits 4, Lip Reading 5, TN 20)

One of the loveliest ladies to grace the Paix Embassy, Danielle can often be found on the arm of a Black Cross, whispering the things she reads on the lips of the other courtiers' lips. Often, this information can mean the difference between success and failure when operating among the Montaigne nobility.

Laurent Flaubert du Doré (Charouse, Wits 4, Law 4, TN 18)

If a Black Cross is ever captured in Montaigne, he can expect the services of one of the finest lawyers around – Laurent Flaubert du Doré. Laurent understands the ins and outs of the Montaigne legal system. He knows whom to bribe, when to bribe them, and how much to pay. Moreover, he knows every legal loophole in the book, and failing that can provide useful outside assistance when planning a jail break.

Ussura

Genadi Kirilovich (Sousdal, Wits 4, Interrogation 5, TN 20)

Also known as Genadi “the Butcher”, this hulking Ussuran has been an unofficial “consultant” for the Church in Sousdal for many years. While ordinarily a fairly sedate religious organization, the church makes use of his talents when confronted with particularly vocal missionaries or locals whose beliefs are simply too incompatible with the church's to be tolerated. Genadi is happy to lend his services to the Order whenever they need him.

Khava Yuriovna (Breslau, Wits 4, Occult 4, TN 18)

Khava has lived in Breslau for over forty years because she's terrified of the dark – or rather, the things that live in the dark. The light of the wall of fire lets her live in eternal daylight. She often has knowledge that the Order finds useful – a tidbit about a Synchron artifact; a bit of information about an obscure form of sorcery; the weakness of some unnatural monster. Khava can provide a hopeful Knight with copious amounts of supernatural talents – provided they're dedicated enough to seek her out.

Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar

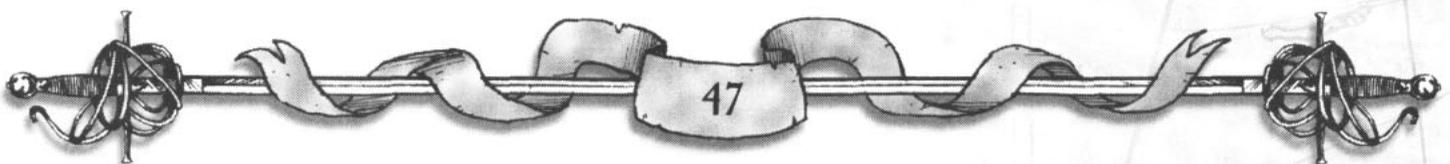
Grim Sawfen (Kirk, Wits 4, Shadowing 4, TN 18)

Grim has the gift of blending into a crowd. He has a face that's easy to forget, an average build, and dull blond hair that fails to draw attention. He combines this with an easygoing manner and the ability to pretend to ignore his mark completely. Knights sometimes hire Grim to follow someone around for a few days and report on his habits.

Vodacce

Eleonora (Numa, Panache 5, Seduction 3, TN 21)

Eleonora is one of the more skilled courtesans in Numa. She keeps her identity an absolute secret, employing feathered masks and never speaking above a whisper. She wrings countless secrets out of her clients, which she then passes on to the Order. Once in a while, a Knight has asked her to target a specific person. She's more than willing to do so, but insists on an absolute minimum of personal interaction with Knights, so that the Fate Witches cannot connect her to a careless Assassin later on.







Charity

The End of the Hunt, Part Three

He felt a pang of regret for Dieter, who had by all accounts merely stood by while Francis robbed the Bishop, but the furious clergyman had called for the death of both men. His mouth tightened at the thought of the fat, corrupt bishop, safe and secure at home. Shaking his head, he took a slow, deep breath and stilled his thoughts. It was not his place to judge, he reflected, only to serve.

Before the hunter could fire, a hissing noise arose from the woods around the camp as though steam were issuing from the trees themselves. Francis started and grabbed at his sword, shouting for Dieter to wake up. Red eyes glinted in the darkness all around them as the two men scrambled for their weapons, preparing to sell their lives dearly.

Dieter had met Francis when the older man had intervened in an alley fight in Freiburg, saving him from three young toughs who were determined to steal his boots. That was when he'd agreed to travel with the Castillian, not knowing that the man was a brigand himself. Only his earlier debt had prevented him from interfering when Francis had robbed the Bishop, and he still regretted the inaction that had brought him to this dark wood weeks later.

There was a pained scream from Whisper, the fine Castillian riding steed Francis had stolen from the Bishop. One of the beasts perched atop its back, digging in its claws. The horse reared up, pulling loose its tether and galloping into the woods. Francis lunged toward the horse, trying to stop its mad charge, but the little beast was clawing Whisper

into a frenzy of horror. Kicking and squealing, the horse and its monstrous rider disappeared into the woods while the two men stared in shock. A chorus of hissings and rustlings converged on the horse's screams. After a few moments the noise died down, replaced by sounds of the kobolds feeding upon the horse. Then Dieter heard his own horse rear in pain.

"Meg!" With a cry, Dieter leapt to her defense, heedless of his own safety. Meg was all he had left of his Uncle Sigmund who had raised him after his parents were killed by a storm at sea. Sigmund had given her to him for his sixteenth birthday three years ago and he wasn't about to let anything hurt her. He swung his torch back and forth, sweeping the creatures away from his loyal mount.

The tiny monstrosities swarmed over him and Francis, though careful blows kept them from Meg. Three, four, five of the beasts were cut in half by the duo's desperate swords, but dozens more pressed in around them. The two robbers began to bleed from numerous cuts and for a moment it looked like they'd be borne under by sheer weight of numbers. Then, with one last defiant howl, the grotesques ran back into the woods.

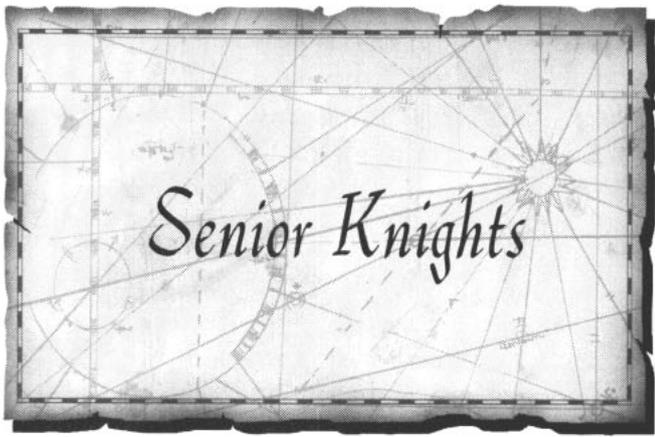
Dieter stood panting against the side of a thick pine tree while Francis had collapsed in exhaustion next to the campfire. The Vendel noted with some amusement that he had neglected to fire his pistol during the fight. It was just as well — the fanged horrors had been too quick to make good targets. Dieter chuckled at this quiet jest, then got a good look at Francis in the firelight and immediately moved to the Castillian's aid.

Francis had lost a lot of blood from his numerous wounds, and he looked pale and drawn, his lips beginning to turn blue. Dieter rummaged through their possessions and pulled out some bandages, carefully dabbing away the blood caked onto Francis' shirt and chest. While he was intent upon this task, a shadow fell across the two of them. Francis's eyes widened at the sight of the stranger looming above them.

"Run..."



Charity

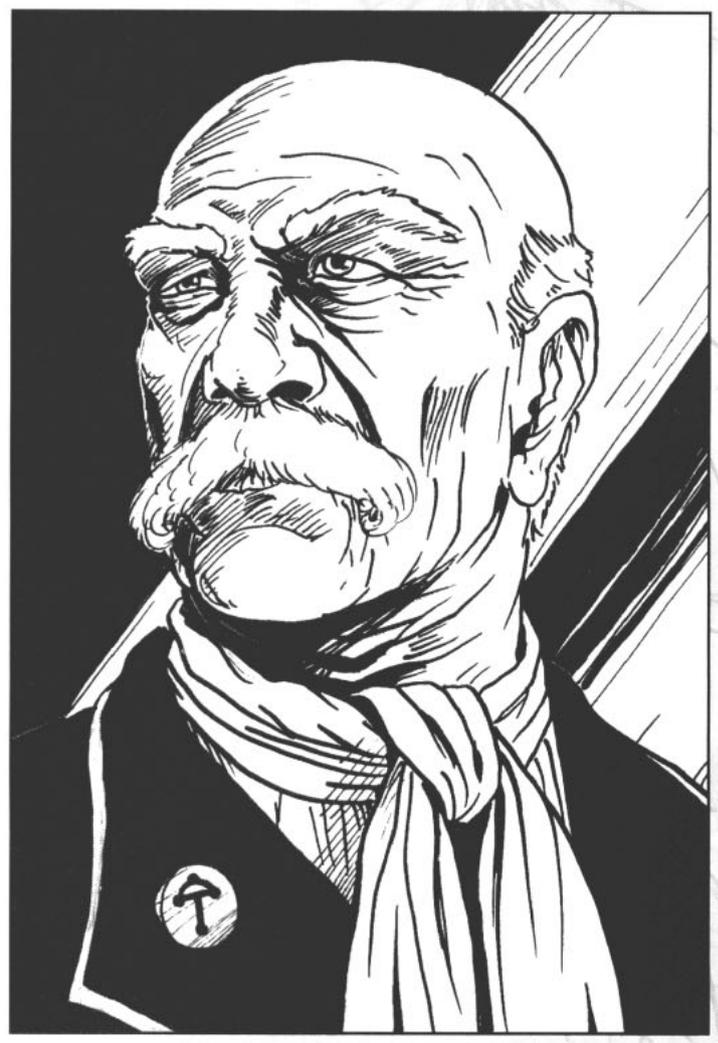


Senior Knights

Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl

The leader of the Black Crosses faked his own death about 25 years ago. Before then, he lived a public life and performed several missions for the Order and his “death” required elaborate preparation beforehand – far more than most Knights need. For whatever reason, he was too high-profile to simply disappear. Speculation on who he used to be runs rampant in the Order, but it is against tradition to ask him directly. Gunther has not chosen to tell any of the younger Knights his true identity, but some of the senior Knights know. Considering his immense tactical skills and unparalleled command abilities, the younger Knights believe that he once belonged to the military.

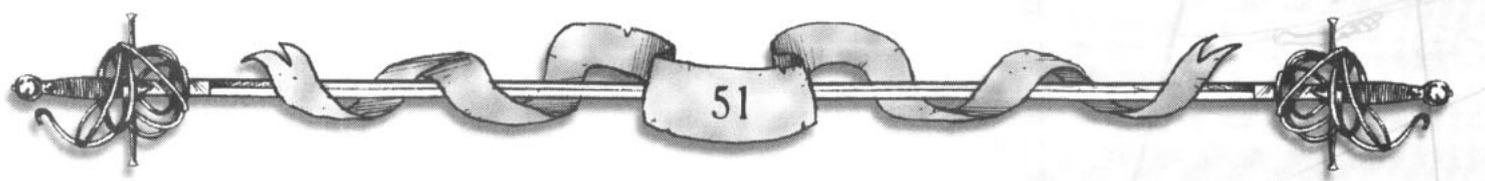
Once joining the Order, he moved quickly through the ranks despite his advanced age. He succeeded at missions that younger Knights wouldn't touch and kept in prime physical shape even as the years began to take their toll. He joined the Phantom Guard within five years and soon became a *de facto* commander of that elite order. Schmidl devised search patterns for the Dark Paths that maximized the Knights' limited numbers and developed new strategies based on the Order's powerful artifacts. Thanks to his skilled leadership, the Phantom Guard became more efficient than it had in years, and even managed to prevent several new tears from forming in the barrier. When the time came to select a new Hochmeister, there was no second choice.



Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl

Schmidl has served as the Order's leader for nearly fifteen years now and most Knights can't even remember another Hochmeister. In many ways, he is the voice of reason within the Order, and his ability to remain calm in the midst of the most heated argument has proven invaluable. When word came that the Hierophant had been murdered by the Empereur, it was Gunther's decision to withhold action until the Empereur was more vulnerable to attack. Although some of the younger Knights cried for vengeance, Gunther's argument settled them down, at least for the moment.

In addition, Gunther has that spark that makes a good leader. He honestly cares for his men and they feel his





concern. It's comforting for the Knights to know that when they return from a mission, there will be someone back at Headquarters to welcome them with a smile and a handshake. Of course, this has become something of a double-edged sword for the Hochmeister. As he has grown older, the Knights have begun treating him like a piece of delicate crystal. He doesn't feel like he's slowed down and he hates being treated like an old man. Several times recently, he has gone on missions personally rather than assign them out, just to show the younger Knights he can take care of himself. Last time, he received a slight wound to his shoulder and had to endure three weeks of bed rest. Since then, he hasn't gone on any more missions, although he still longs for adventure. The Order has its price, even for a Hochmeister.

Gunther is an Eisen gentleman in his late 70s. He has gone mostly bald and his face shows lines worn into it by years of worry. He's a sad, kindly man who has obviously done a lot he regrets over the years, and most of the Knights call him "Grandfather."

Grandmaster Kazi

Arguably the most valuable member of die Kreuzritter, Kazi teaches the most promising Knights how to track, conceal themselves, and prepare an ambush. He is renowned among the Order for his almost supernatural ability to move without a sound, or squat in one position for hours — even days — at a time.

Kazi hails from Kanuba, a large tropical island which lies far to the southwest of Castille. Located near the Théan equator, the island enjoys warm weather and hosts countless tropical plants and animals. The Kanu are a friendly, easy-going people with dark skin and short black hair. They lived a simple existence in their isolated paradise and few had any reason to want to go elsewhere. Kazi, however was different. As a young man, he constantly wondered what lay beyond the horizon and spent many long hours at sea, seeing how far he could paddle in his outrigger. He always returned before nightfall, however; he could never bring himself to leave his home.

That changed, however, when he learned that his best friend had fallen in love with the same woman as he. Rather than spark a rivalry, he gave the two his blessing in marriage, then loaded his boat up with all the fresh water and supplies it could carry. When the sun rose the next day, he was paddling towards the horizon that had called to him for so long.

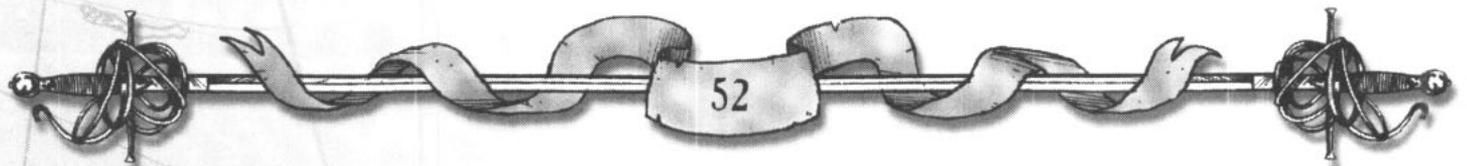
Three months later, a Castillian merchant ship picked up his battered outrigger just outside San Felipe. Kazi was raving and delirious, but alive: he had survived by fishing off the side of the canoe and conserving his drinking water to the utmost. He spent two weeks recovering in a Vaticine hospital, then set out to see the wondrous new world he had discovered.

He first encountered the Order a few years later in Montaigne, where he rescued a pair of Knights from the King's Musketeers. Impressed with the Kanu's extraordinary skills, they asked the Hochmeister if they could recruit him. The Hochmeister agreed, and after hearing of the Knights' dark quest, Kazi readily lent himself to their cause.

That was twenty years ago. Since then, Kazi has become perhaps the Order's most important figure. He has trained countless Knights in the arts of stealth and has seen his clout in the Order rise astronomically. He's found he enjoys teaching new members of the Order, and watches with secret pride as the Knights put his skills to good use.

He's also added numerous Kanu tricks to die Kreuzritter's arsenal, including a recipe from his native land for an ointment that conceals a man's scent from nearby animals. It has allowed the Knights to become even stealthier, and sneak up on many targets who were depending on guard dogs or horses to warn them of trouble.

Because of his many abilities, the Knights all look upon Kazi with awe and respect. The title of "Grandmaster" is an honorary one; he's technically just a Layman, but the Knights wanted to acknowledge his invaluable contribution. Many of them come to him for spiritual advice, even though he's not really a priest. Kazi always listens politely and often





has an answer for the Knight based on his straightforward world view. A few of the more memorable exchanges have included—

“What happens after we die?”

“How should I know? Wait and see for yourself.”

“Do you believe in any gods?”

“I believe in all gods. Better safe than sorry.”

“Why do good people die?”

“The same reason bad people die. To make room for new people.”

and one remark made to the Hochmeister himself,



Grandmaster Kazi

“I sometimes wonder if we’re doing the right thing, Kazi.”

“Good. Only fools have no doubt.”

In general, Kazi possesses a serenity that few native Théans can emulate. Nothing flusters him, nothing frightens him, and nobody can tell him what to do if he doesn’t want to do it.

In 1665, An Avalon ship reached Kanuba. When Kazi heard the news that his distant home had been discovered, he laughed. “They didn’t discover Kanuba,” he smirked. “I discovered Théah.” Although settlers from Eisen and Avalon have since found a home there, Kazi has never openly expressed a desire to return to his native land.

Kazi’s most prized possession is an ancient, battered spear. Its shaft is made from some tropical wood, and its tip is carved from obsidian. The other Knights believe it to be magical, since Kazi never misses, but he merely laughs at that, saying, “The spear has good *lan*, that’s all. Nothing magical about it at all.”

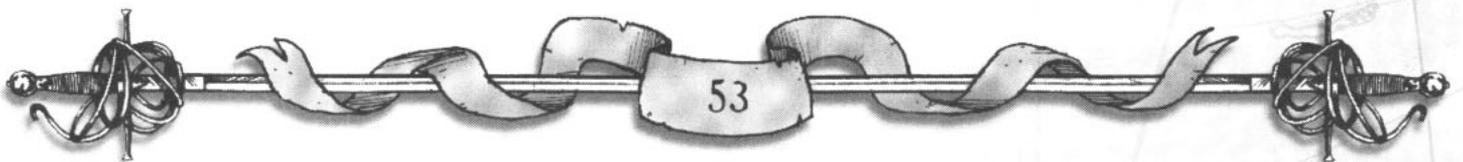
Recently, Kazi has been examining the young Knights more carefully than usual. He says he’s looking for “someone to carry his spear.” Whether that means he’s going to die or he just wants to retire is known only to him.

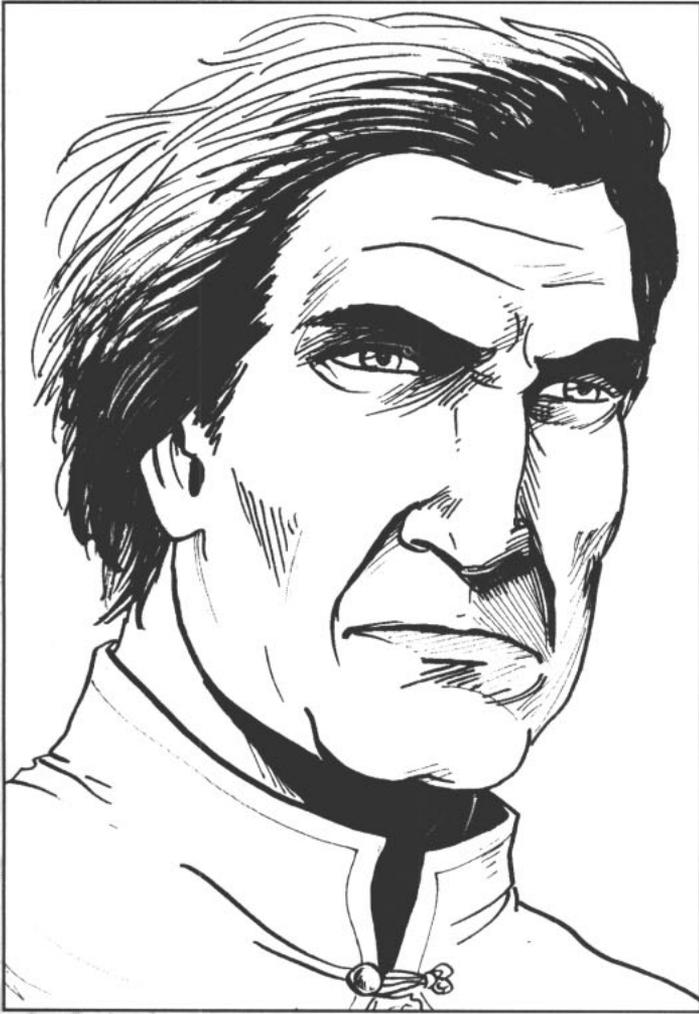
Kazi is a short, dark-skinned man who appears to be in his mid-30s but is reputedly much older than that. He comes from the island of Kanuba, and keeps his head and face clean-shaven. Knights often come across him with a distant look on his face and his head cocked to one side, as if listening to something only he can hear.

Jacques Renault

A respected and distinguished Knight, Jacques refused the Black Ring and Glove twice each. That left only one position open for a man of his talents — bodyguard to the Hierophant. He accepted the duty with a holy reverence and devoted his every waking moment to keeping the pontiff safe.

Another Knight named Dirk Grossenkir also served as bodyguard, and the two quickly became close friends. Dirk





Jacques Renault

approached him one day asking for his assistance on a private matter. His wife had given birth to a son and according to the tenets of the Order, the boy had to be placed in a foster home, never to learn of his true parents unless he later became a Knight himself. He wanted Jacques's help in finding a suitable home. The two men left the boy in Freiburg with a well-to-do family, but Dirk's wife never quite recovered from the ordeal. She requested reassignment as a Vigilant in the Crescent Empire and Dirk never saw her again. He, in turn, began to suffer from bouts of intense depression and his performance as a Knight

suffered. Jacques covered for his friend and few in the Order knew of Dirk's ordeal.

The two of them were present when the Hierophant visited the Empereur of Montaigne in an attempt to apologize for the Inquisition's rash invasion. The pontiff ordered Jacques to stand by the door while Dirk followed the two world leaders up a flight of stairs. The other Knight lagged behind a bit as the conversation between the Hierophant and the Emperor grew heated. Jacques watched anxiously as they reached the top of the stairs, ahead of Dirk, to stand near the Emperor's bodyguard, Remy du Montaigne. The conversation had apparently reached its peak, because the Emperor turned and pushed the aged Hierophant down the stairs before either guard could do a thing. He rolled past Dirk to the hard floor below, where he landed with a sickening thud, his neck twisting and snapping like a chicken bone.

The Emperor then turned to Remy and said, "Kill those two. No witnesses."

Dirk, realizing his error, drew his sword and shouted for Jacques to run. He then faced off with Remy for a few moments before the Emperor's man stabbed him through the heart. His sacrifice bought Jacques the time he needed to escape and warn the Order.

Unfortunately, after Jacques relayed his story, the Hochmeister shook his head sadly. "There is nothing we can do to the Emperor that would not reveal our Order. We must bide our time until he exposes himself."

Restraining his anger, Jacques asked for some time off so that he could tell Dirk's wife. The Hochmeister granted his request, but Jacques has not been seen since, by her or any other Knight. He vanished from the face of Théah, and the rest of the Order worries that he may do something rash. Schmidl has dispatched several Knights to find him, but they have yet to turn up a single clue.

Jacques is a tall, thin Montaigne with light brown hair and deep lines in his forehead that make him look a decade older than his actual thirty-five years. Like many Knights, he has a knack for blending in, and looked at home both in



formal guard uniforms and in the numerous disguises he donned as part of his duties to the Hierophant. Hochmeister Schmidl believes that this is the primary reason why he has yet to be found.

Her grandfather eventually insisted that she train Gray to fight at her side, should the need arise.

A year later, the elderly man died of a cold. She buried him and marked the grave, then took the goats down the mountain and traded them for what she could get – a good sword, some money, and passage on a ship to Freiburg.

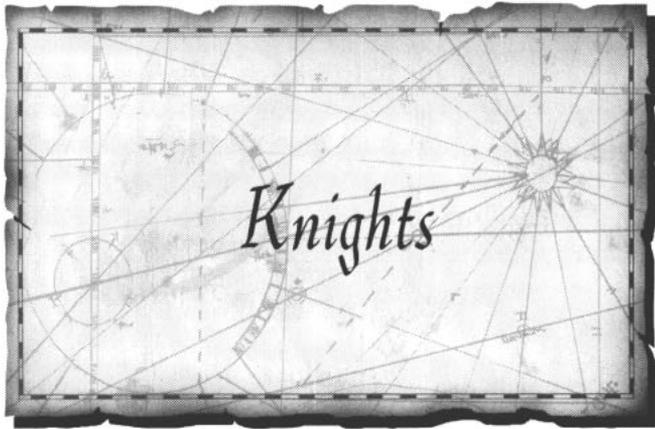
It was there she joined the Wachhunde, where she quickly distinguished herself through numerous acts of heroism. She came to the attention of the Black Crosses during a foiled robbery in which she held off almost a dozen thugs single-handedly until her companions could arrive. Later that night, the Kreuzritter came with an offer of membership. She eagerly accepted.

During her initiation, she and the Knights made a startling discovery: Gray could walk the Dark Paths as well as any Phantom Guard. No one knows how or why, but the implications were staggering. Because of this, and because of the superb team they made when fighting side by side, Tana was offered the Black Ring in record time. Now she regularly patrols the Paths with Gray, coming to the aid of any Guard who needs it.

Tana is tall and graceful, with enormous strength in her lean form. She is in her late twenties, with pale blonde hair and startlingly gray eyes. When not traveling or appearing in public, she often wears the Black Cross tabard over her traditional Vestenmannavnjar garb.

Gray

Gray was raised from a pup by Tana Garricks, although she has become the Order's mascot over time. The two were inseparable for many years, and when Tana underwent her initiation, the Knights allowed the wolf to be present – an almost unheard of gesture. When the group entered the Dark Paths, Gray went crazy, howling and scratching at the wall that her friend had disappeared into. Finally, she sniffed at the shadows for a few moments and stepped into the shadow herself.

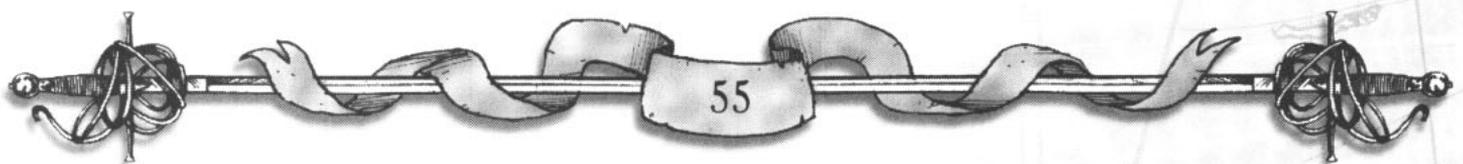


Tana Garricks

Although Vestenmannavnjar by heritage, Tana never became involved in the Vendel/Vesten civil war – she grew up too far off in the wilderness to really care. She lived alone with her grandfather, Thrand, and the two of them herded sheep in the mountains.

One year, a pack of wolves entered the area and began ravaging their flock badly. Thrand and his granddaughter set out on the trail of the predators and succeeded in tracking the beasts to their den. Thrand killed three wolves and sent the rest fleeing. When he was done he discovered a lone wolf cub in the den, barely old enough to open its eyes. He had killed the creature's mother.

Tana asked for the cub and Thrand agreed, but warned her that the wolf would have to be killed if it ever turned vicious. Tana named it Gray, after the color of its eyes – the same color as her own. The two played together for many months after that, and Tana began teaching Gray how to herd the sheep. The growing wolf was a natural, and remained gentle and sweet-natured despite its wild heritage.



Needless to say, the Senior Knights were shocked to find their initiate's pet wolf following them into the Dark Paths. Gray jumped up and licked Tana's face, overjoyed to be reunited with her. The other Knights looked at each other, shrugged, and carried on with the initiation. Tana ordered Gray to stay as the party moved on, and the wolf was waiting for them at the same spot when they returned.

Since then, the Order has accepted Gray's uncanny ability to move through the Dark Paths at will. She can track Phantom Guards even when their trail is months old, and seems unperturbed by the realm's eerie atmosphere. In

addition, she shrugs off the effects of shadowburn completely and never suffers any adverse effects from her surroundings. The Order, pragmatic in all things, sees Gray's abilities as potent weapons and makes use of them as best they can.

If only they could figure out how she does it.

Still, her abilities have come in handy on many occasions when Knights have been lost or captured in hostile territory. Gray can lead a rescue party to a missing Knight using a Cloak of Shadows, and she's good in a fight should one occur. Although she's still primarily Tana's pet, the rest of the Order spoils her terribly, and she often attends the burials of dead Black Crosses, howling mournfully in the cold Eisen night.

Gray is a large timber wolf, named for the color of her eyes. Her fur is mostly black, although her tail, ears, and feet fade to gray at their tips. She is a powerful beast with sharp teeth and strong jaws; she can occasionally be caught with an almost-human expression on her face.

Clara Grossenkir

Clara was born into a wealthy Eisen family with a long tradition of martial prowess and when she was old enough, her parents sent her to study at the Kippe Academy. There, she caught the eye of the Black Crosses, who eventually invited her to join the Order. She accepted and severed her ties with her past life. Depressed and homesick during her first year as a Black Cross, she met Dirk Grossenkir. The two fell in love and were married according to the tenets of the Order. Soon, however, they had a son. Despite their appeals, the Order did not allow them to raise their child – the boy had to go to a foster home.

The separation from her son was very hard on Clara, and her relationship with Dirk suffered terribly. Her husband threw himself into his work, ignoring everything else, and their relationship grew strained. Eventually, she asked for reassignment to the Vigilants hoping that the solitude would help heal her wounds. She transferred far away, to guard a



Tana Garricks and Gray



Clara Grossenkir

dangerous Syrnych building in the heart of the Crescent Empire.

Clara has become intimately familiar with every inch of the temple since then, and knows what areas are most dangerous. The site's most fearsome feature is a statue at the very center of the building. It stands almost forty feet tall, and depicts a hideous monster with three arms and teeth the size of swords. The creature seems to be staring into an enormous, flawless ruby, worth at least 100,000G to any treasure hunter who could get it back to civilization. Of course, removing the ruby would be an incredibly bad idea. When Clara was assigned to the temple, she heard that

another such gem had once been under the care of the Order and had been removed. The statue that clutched it came to life and ravaged the area for miles around. The gem itself drove its owners mad with frightening regularity. Her superiors have decreed that this must never happen again.

Clara receives food and news every month from a Knight operating out of a nearby city. He recently delivered word of her husband's death, which shook her to the core. After he left, she drank her entire month's supply of wine to kill the pain. Since then, she has kept a tight rein on her emotions. Although she grieves for Dirk, her duty is still foremost in her mind.

As for the son she never knew, it's been so long since she gave him up that the pain of separation no longer troubles her.

Clara is a wiry Eisen woman with long black hair that she typically keeps tucked under a hood. She has a tanned complexion from too much time in the sun, but looks to be no more than thirty. In reality, she's rapidly approaching forty. She dresses in tan militaristic clothes which blend seamlessly with her desert surroundings and once spent an entire day without moving an inch. Her long isolation has numbed her to the niceties of human interaction, and she often completely ignores the Knight who brings her supplies. When she does speak, it's blunt and to the point; she never wastes her breath in idle chit-chat.

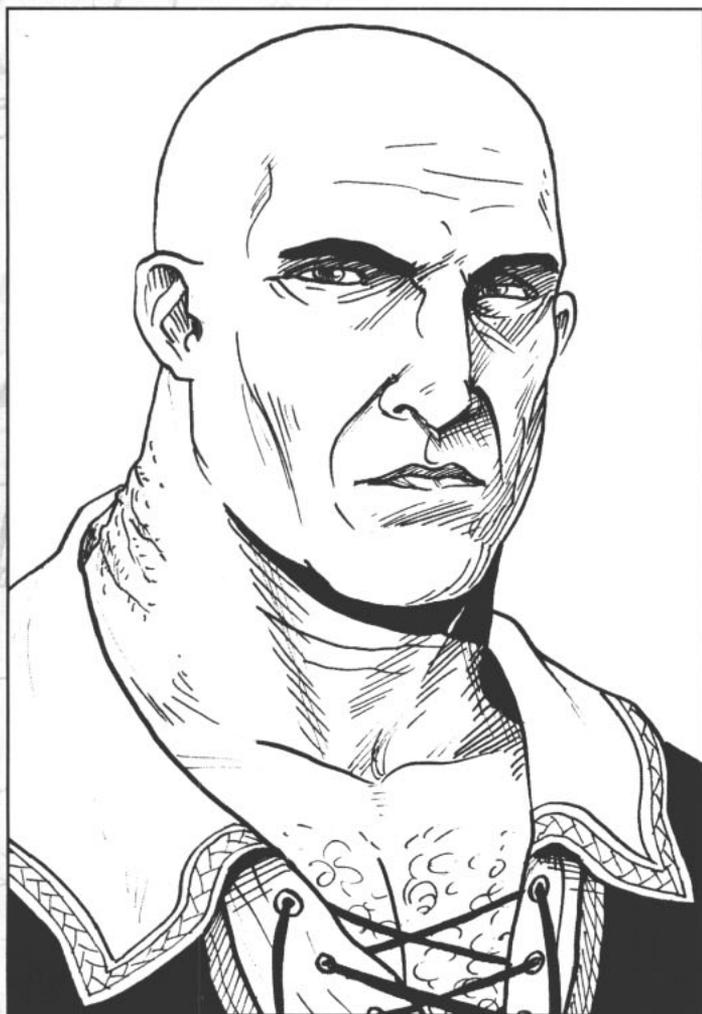
Jonas Glenfynon

Jonas currently serves as a Town Guardian in Freiburg. He patrols the city at night, hunting the most dangerous criminals and the inhuman creature who creep into the city looking for an easy meal. Jonas prefers working alone, but he has trained two Acolytes over the years.

He hails from Inismore, where he used to wrestle boxers for drinks. His incredible resilience allowed him to shrug off their blows until he could catch them in a hold, after which he could make short work of them. Only Roary Finnegan himself ever beat Jonas. The wily old boxer greased himself

with pig fat before the match, enabling him to slip free of Jonas' holds while he pummeled the wrestler into unconsciousness. The two had a laugh and shared a drink after Jonas woke up.

That life ended the night he and his best friend, Tom Morgan, were staggering home after a night of drinking. They came across a winsome lass by the river, and the two chatted with her awhile. When some dark clouds drifted in front of the moon, the woman changed form before their eyes, becoming a hideous Unseelie. She ripped Tom in two with her gorilla-like arms, then advanced on the wrestler. Jonas fell back a step



Jonas Glenfynon

or two, then rushed at her, hoping to get in close where her immense strength would be of less use to her.

He fainted to the left and then darted behind her, grabbing her in a hold and driving her to her knees. He pulled back on her head and forced his knee into the small of her back, trying to break her spine. Her powerful arms reached over her shoulders and clawed at him cruelly. He felt his arms nearly torn from their sockets as she battered him, trying to pull him off, but he only tightened his grip, bending her spine back in a hold that would kill a normal man.

Unfortunately, the creature was far more than human. She laughed at his efforts and continued to batter him until his strength began to flag. As she felt his grip slowly weaken, she began describing what she would do to him when she got loose, and Jonas felt ill.

Then a man stepped out of the shadows. Before the beast could react, he produced a cold iron dagger and drove it straight into her chest, killing her instantly. As he helped Jonas up, he introduced himself and claimed he had been watching Jonas for a long time. He invited the wrestler to join his Order — a group of men who protected humanity against creatures such as the Unseelie. Looking at the remains of his only real friend, Jonas readily agreed. They threw the Unseelie in the river and made it appear as if Jonas had drowned, then left Inismore behind forever. The Inish has never regretted his decision.

Jonas is a large, burly man in his late thirties. He is bald and clean-shaven, and seldom smiles. He has developed a stooped walk to help him conceal his tall, muscular form and works hard to eliminate his Inish accent, which stands out even among the cosmopolitan streets of Freiburg.

Kursis al'Marikk

Kursis is one of the Order's finest Assassins, using two odd Crescent daggers known as *katars* to strike down his victims. He has a fighting style unknown in Théah, named Marikk, after his father. Marikk is a very acrobatic style — flips, somersaults, and whirling attacks are common. More than once, Kursis has flipped over his opponent, only to land in

back of him and attack from behind. Hochmeister Schmidl considers him the best killer the Knights have. When someone needs to die – when absolute certainty is required – Kursis and his *katars* are all the Knights need.

Besides his duties as an assassin, Kursis often acts as an advisor for missions that involve the Crescent Empire. Even in the Order, few Théans have ever been there, so his knowledge is usually invaluable. Those who work with Kursis find him a friendly, talkative man, at least when he's not out to kill you. He gets a bit nervous, however, when pressed to speak about his past. Only the Hochmeister



Kursis al'Marikk

really knows how he joined the Order, but Kursis has let slip a few bits of information from time to time.

Kursis was once a Peacekeeper at the Hospital of the First Witness in Zafara, before the Order recruited him. Some of the stories he tells about those days border on the unbelievable. He claims that he once saw an angel descend from Heaven, and once killed a demon masquerading as an emir's daughter. Most of the other Knights are uncertain how much faith to place in these stories, since they have little experience in the Crescent Empire.

Kursis also maintains that he has traveled to Cathay. He says he was carried over the wall of fire by an enormous bird made of flames and that he met the ruler of all Cathay – the Mandate. No one believes him since he claims that the Mandate and all of his assistants live forever, unaffected by the passing of time. He has also said that the Mandate's wife is dead most of the time, but that the Mandate brings her back to life when he wishes to do so. Possibly his most outrageous claim is that everyone in Cathay, even the lowliest peasant, possesses sorcery. The nobles never age, the soldiers hurl flames around like spears, and the peasants speak with their plants, urging them to grow faster and produce more crops. He even claims to have seen a threatened peasant step inside a tree and vanish right before his astonished eyes.

It's all nonsense, of course, but it keeps the Knights entertained. When not engaged in Order-related skulduggery or advising Knights on the Crescent Empire, Kursis enjoys spinning his stories to whoever will listen. He's even earned a private chair by the fireplace at the Altamira monastery. No one else sits there, even when he's away.

Kursis is tall and thin, with wiry muscles and a handsome face. His skin is deeply tanned, showing his Crescent heritage, and he wears his hair short. It's not easy to tell his age, but a rough estimate would place him between twenty and thirty years old. He often wears a turban in addition to his Black Cross tabard; it gives him an "exotic" look that he rather likes. When performing missions, he dresses all in black, and never lets his victims see his face.



Unfortunately, Largo has recently met a woman in the Inquisition whom he finds fascinating. Her name is Lilia: an intelligent, lovely lady whose only flaw is her unbending devotion to the Inquisition's cause. His attraction to her could present a problem; she has come very close to uncovering his real identity on several occasions, and he may have to kill her if she gets any closer.

Largo is a Castilian in his mid-30s. He is a bit overweight, with ruddy cheeks. He actually put on the weight specifically for the mission – to make himself seem more harmless. He smiles frequently and acts rather more stupid

Largo Gallegos de Aldana

One of the Order's most involved missions to date placed a Knight in a position of power within the Inquisition. It took ten years, but the effort paid off and now the Order has a mole deep within Verdugo's organization. Largo is the Knight they chose for the infiltration.

Largo joined the order at a young age and advanced quickly through the ranks. He jumped at the chance to infiltrate the Inquisition, which he felt was destroying the people's faith in the Church. In order to worm his way into the organization, he first posed as a Church scholar for three years, writing papers filled with anti-intellectual dogma in hopes that an Inquisitor would notice him. Eventually, one did – a higher-up had read some of his work and felt he'd be perfect for membership. Several of his papers have been cited as Inquisition doctrine since then, much to his chagrin.

Largo is now a trusted member of the Inquisition, and currently handles their financial records. Although he is not powerful enough to get close to Verdugo himself, he still has the leeway to give the Black Crosses advance warning of the latest Inquisition maneuvers within the Church. Largo communicates with the Order by leaving notes tucked underneath his desk. A member of the Phantom Guard reaches out of the Dark Paths and grabs the messages once a week.



Largo Gallegos de Aldana

than he truly is. Largo has become a consummate actor, and play the part of Inquisitor so convincingly that even he sometimes believes it. The Order could not have asked for a better mole.

Josephine Hearne

“Josephine” joined the Order from her native Ussura, where she worked as a long-distance messenger. Since joining the Black Crosses, she has demonstrated a remarkable affinity for the art of disguise, and the Hochmeister assigned her to infiltrate the Explorer’s Society on a semi-permanent basis. “Josephine” is only the latest of four identities she’s had to assume in the Society. At the moment, she’s pretending to be Inish, although that could change at any moment.

Her assignment is to accompany Explorer expeditions as a Shield Woman, determine if the ruins in question are too dangerous for men to poke around in, and if so kill the other members of her expedition. She’s had to do this three times so far, changing identities after each fatal expedition.

On one occasion, her party discovered a device that produced weapons far more deadly than muskets. They could kill at a distance and didn’t need to reload. Worse, they were very simple to operate. Josephine led the party into a death trap she’d discovered on the island and listened to their screams as a green liquid ate the flesh from their bones. Then she walked back to the machine and destroyed it with one of the weapons it had created before throwing the weapon itself into the ocean. Afterward, she used her Pyeryem sorcery to transform into a bird and fly back to civilization.

The Hochmeister is concerned about the stress of her assignment. The Knights assigned to monitor her have reported some very odd behavior on several occasions, such as talking to herself in a strange language and crying for no apparent reason. If the reports continue, Gunther plans to pull her from the assignment and give her some time to recuperate.

Josephine is an attractive woman in her late twenties. She is tall, with long legs and flowing black hair, and dresses in



Josephine Hearne

practical clothing. Her demeanor is calm, efficient, and distant to a fault; she doesn’t get emotionally attached to any of the Explorers because she might have to kill them if they stumble upon the wrong device or artifact.

Anita Calissano

Anita is a servant in the employ of Vincenzo Caligari. She watches her employer very carefully and reports his activities back to the Knights. Caligari’s interest in Syrneth artifacts is of great interest to the Order, and Anita is their most important link to his activities.

Five years ago, she was an actress performing in Caligari's province with a theater troupe. Her husband and son also belonged to the troupe, and the family formed a dazzling team. The eventually earned the notice of the Prince, who invited them to his own house to perform. Unfortunately, while waiting for an audience, her son picked up one of the many artifacts owned by Caligari to examine it, and Vincenzo chose that exact moment to walk into the room. The Prince, always protective of his artifacts, accused her son of trying to steal the item. Her husband tried to protect the younger man, but Caligari simply assumed that they were both in on it and had them hanged for theft. Anita was spared only because she had stepped outside to get a breath of fresh air.

Devastated by her loss, Anita wandered aimlessly across Vodacce for several months, until a strange man in a cloak approached her with an offer. The man promised her that Caligari would die a slow death if she would feed him information on the Prince's activities. She jumped at the opportunity for revenge. Assuming the identity of a kitchen maid, she entered Vincenzo's employ and began feeding information to the Order about his activities. She's informed him of numerous Syrneth shipments, allowed them to stop several Caligari-funded expeditions, and even alerted them to his alliance with the notorious pirate Reis (see the *GMs' Guide* page 119 and the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook, pages 75-85).

Caligari, for his part, failed to recognize her when she started work and is quite satisfied with her domestic skills. In fact, he was so impressed with her work that he even bestowed a last name upon her. He has no idea who she truly serves and considers her one of the best servants he's ever had.

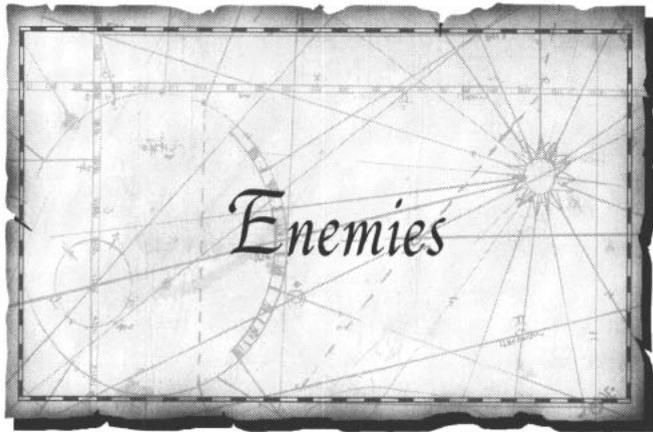
She knows nothing of the true nature of her contact. She writes what she learns down in a diary which she keeps beneath her bed. Once a week, a Knight swaps the diary with a new clean one through the Dark Paths. Anita never questions how they do it, doesn't know that the Black Crosses exist, and certainly doesn't know that she's one of their most valuable spies. All she knows is that she hungers

for Vincenzo's death. More than once she's stood over the sleeping Prince with a knife in her hand, desperately wanting to kill him, but realizing that, in the end, the slow method promised by her mysterious contact will be much more satisfying.

A Vodacce woman in her late thirties, Anita has piercing green eyes and brown hair which she usually keeps in a bun. She dresses conservatively, preferring dark colors and lace to the more fashionable frills; Vincenzo approves of her "proper" servant's attitude. The other servants have taken notice of her and a few have even made amorous advances towards her. She carries a pair of wicked hair pins to repel any wandering hands.



Anita Calissano



no distinction who vanished on a mission 120 years ago. The Hochmeister believes that she's simply insane, taking on the identity of an important figure to compensate for her own undistinguished record.

"Judith" is an ephemeral beautiful woman with pale white skin and dark red lips. She is a cunning mimic, and feign distress, panic, or whatever it takes to lure a foolish Knight into arm's reach. Then smoky armor forms around her and a nightblade appears in each of her hands. Knights who fall for this play rarely escape with their lives.

"Judith"

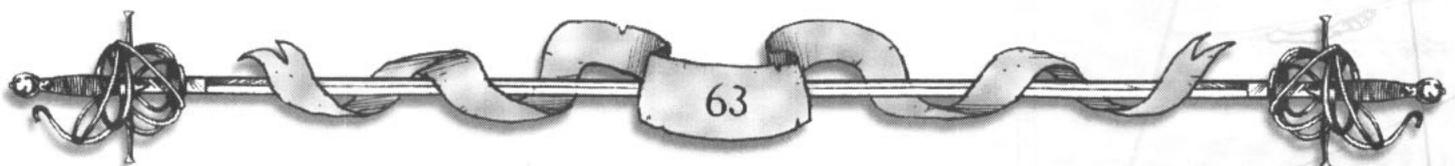
A Knight who dies in the Dark Paths returns as a horrible undead creature called a Night (more details can be found in Chapter 4). The leader of the Nights is a vicious, cunning creature who claims to be Judith Losch, the Black Cross who first entered the Dark Paths. While no one is certain how she died, or if even she's really who she claims to be, she has dedicated every fiber of her being to destroying die Kreuzritter.

"Judith" works to transform other Knights into creatures like herself. Using a variety of tricks, she entices wandering Black Crosses close enough to strike, then cripples them and slowly drains their blood over a long period of time. When a Knight is on the brink of death, she kisses him deeply, draining the last flickers of life from him and transforming him into a new Night under her control. The Order believes that she commands 15 of the 17 known Nights in the Dark Paths, including herself. Her exact intentions for this growing undead band are as yet unknown, but they have clashed with the Order on numerous occasions. The Knights consider her a threat second only to the Strangers themselves, and the Phantom Guards have standing orders not to engage her unless numbers and circumstance are on their side.

While she insists that she is Judith Losch, there is ample evidence to disprove her claim. According to Black Cross records, her name was Jessica Klein, an Avalon Knight of



"Judith"



Patrons

Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim

(More information on Cardinal Durkheim can be found in Montaigne on pages 50, 58, and 108.)

Cardinal Durkheim was a Black Cross for several years before her elevation to Cardinal and she retains an honorary membership in the Order, although she no longer goes on missions. Because of her high profile, the Order has allowed her to keep her old identity, which suits her just fine. She's far more useful where she is and besides, her bad leg makes those rooftop chases rather difficult.

Nonetheless, she has been very helpful in promoting the Order's agenda within the Hieros Council. She ensures that the Church provides ample funds to the Black Crosses each year, and thanks to her efforts, Cardinal Verdugo does not yet realize the threat the Order poses to him. She has even altered Church records to hide several important missions and kept knowledge of the Strangers away from those who might exploit it for their own ends.

Recent events in Montaigne have kept the Cardinal away from Vaticine City, so her influence there has slowly waned. Luckily, the Order can use her presence in the royal court, and Durkheim has paved the way for numerous Black Cross missions in Montaigne (the recent elimination of Porté in Tamis would not have been possible had she not diverted several units of Montaigne soldiers away from the area). Her disgust for *l'Empereur* is well-known and she has urged the Hochmeister to deal with Leon as soon as is humanly

possible. She watches the Emperor very closely for any signs of weakness.

Some Knights believe that she once volunteered for an experiment performed by Duke Vincent Gaulle dul Motte which left her with some kind of sorcery, but these rumors remain unconfirmed. No one has summoned the courage to ask her about them, and those in a position to know aren't talking. "Durkheim has sacrificed more for our cause than any of you lot," the Hochmeister once snapped. "Never question her character again." Of course, such comments only add more fuel to the stories surrounding her.



Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim

Duke Vincent Gaulle dul Motte

The Gaulle family holds a small province in southwestern Montaigne, far away from the Empereur and his court. Few nobles visit the backwater area, and the Gaulles have earned a reputation as unsophisticated country bumpkins. That's just how their patriarch wants it.

Vincent Gaulle dul Motte is a powerful Porté sorcerer and a reclusive scholar with unparalleled knowledge on the supernatural. He has also been supporting the Order for thirty years; while he never actively joined (he prefers his creature comforts to all that sneaking around), he supports their cause with all of the resources at his disposal. His estate forms the Black Cross's base of operations in Montaigne (see pages 42-43 and the *Montaigne* sourcebook, page 26), and the Knights use it as a rallying ground for many of their most serious missions.

In addition to the valuable resources he provides, Vincent pursues numerous forms of intellectual inquiry. His experiments with Porté sorcery have proven invaluable to the Black Crosses' understanding of their chief enemy. His current goal is to discover the connection, if any, between spilled blood and the ability to perform Porté. He is a Porté mage himself, but never uses his magic unless absolutely necessary: he is aware of the Barrier, and the effect Porté has upon it.

In addition, he has made several advances in the study of the Strangers themselves. A few years ago, a group of Phantom Guards brought him the intact corpse of a Stranger they had slain in the Dark Paths. He has since dissected and categorized every aspect of the body, and advanced several theories on the Strangers' possible vulnerabilities. Vincent has asked the Knights to procure a live specimen for him to test these theories on, but doesn't expect anything soon. In the meantime, the first creature's pickled organs remain in a series of jars in his lab: he numbers them among his most prized possessions.

Vincent is in his late 40s with hair graying at the edges, giving him a distinguished look. He can often be found with his aristocratic nose shoved in a book. Failing that, he's liable to be in his alchemy laboratory, wearing a blood-



Duke Vincent Gaulle dul Motte

spattered apron, or out in his orchards, working alongside his peasants. He tries to pay attention to what everyone else is saying, but he has so many ideas and thoughts running through his head that it's difficult to keep up with the real world. It's far easier for him to nod and pretend that he knows what's going on than to actually keep track of all his appointments and social obligations. Vincent's true love is research, and he hopes to find a way to destroy Porté sorcery forever, even though it's been helpful to him in the past. The safety of humanity must come before his own petty comforts.





Secrecy



The End of the Hunt, Part Four

Francis looked up to see the figure that had been haunting his dreams — the hunter. He pushed Dieter aside, barely feeling the contact. When he sat up, the world shimmered nightmarishly, and he found he had difficulty standing. Squinting his eyes shut for a moment, he surged upward, pulling his sword from its sheath with a deadly hiss of metal.

“Francis, you’re too weak to take him,” protested Dieter, drawing his sword. Francis pushed the boy toward Meg.

“Get out of here, Dieter. You don’t have the skill to fight a killer like him. That scrawny mare of yours should be able to make it out of this Legion pit.” Francis felt his head pound and dearly wished the boy would flee so that he could concentrate on the probable fight ahead.

Silently, the stranger reached into his pouch and slipped a panzerhand on his left hand, then shrugged off his black cloak, revealing a white tabard with a black Prophet’s Cross upon it. Francis felt his blood turn icy with fear. The Black Crosses had been wiped out over two hundred years ago.

“Who are you?” he spat. “Why do you wear the colors of dead men? Answer me! Have you come to punish us for our sins?”

In response, the apparition drew a broadsword and started to chant in a hollow tone. Francis began to shiver uncontrollably as he recognized the words from his father’s funeral. This walking corpse — this whispering assassin — was giving him his last rites.

“May the arms of Theus open to you. May His embrace keep you safe from Legion’s talons.” The ghost feinted to the right, then slashed down with its sword so quickly that Francis nearly lost a leg. He felt Dieter’s gaze on him as he danced away awkwardly. What was the boy waiting for?

He lunged, and his opponent sidestepped easily, slapping him gently on the cheek with its panzerhand. “May you find the joys you did not find in life, receive the things you went without so that others might not lack.”

Francis staggered back. Where was his song? The blood was pounding so strongly in his head, and the hunter was chanting his death knell so loudly that he could no longer hear the music that he danced to during duels.

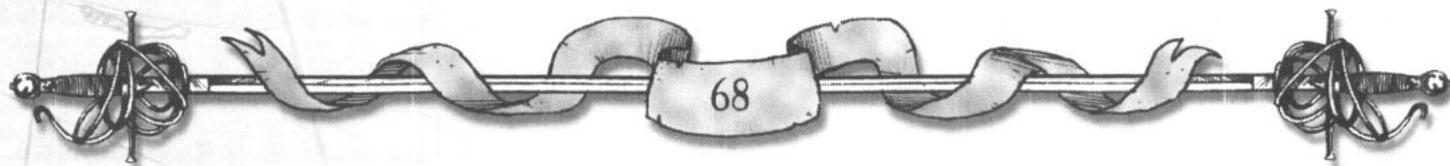
The specter’s sword rushed toward him, and he parried, a half-beat off. It slid down his rapier, skittered over the guards, and cut open his sword arm. His arm went numb, and he knew the fight was over. “May you be reunited with those you have loved and those who have loved you.”

Defiantly, Francis assumed the first fighting stance he had ever learned from his master — side to his opponent, rapier en garde in front, and his other arm tucked behind him. He calmly pointed the tip of his sword at his opponent in spite of the blood pouring down his sword arm. As he stood there, the song filled his head and began to rush from his red-stained lips. He sang of his home, of his mother, and of the beautiful girl he had left behind to become a bandit. As his training came back to him, he waited to die.

“May Theus receive you and hold you near.”

The broadsword easily knocked aside his weakened arm, and the rapier fell to the ground. Francis let his arm drop to his side gratefully, almost relieved that it was over. A lunge, and the broadsword passed into his chest. Francis fell to the ground, mouthing the last few words of the song, since he lacked the breath to speak them out loud: “For I am far from home, and here shall I die.”

He drew one last shuddering breath and then lay still. Kneeling down to close the man’s eyes, the hunter crossed himself and whispered, “Amen.”





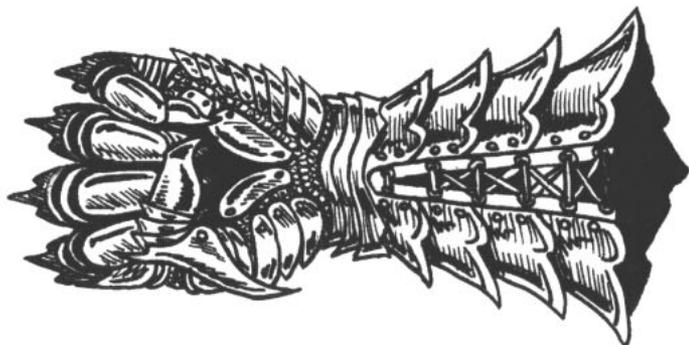
Introduction

This chapter details the new rules in this book. It includes new Advantages, a new form of Sorcery, and a new Swordsman School. It also includes rules for the Heroes' own Sanctuary and other resources at their disposal.

Grandmaster Training

It is possible to reach a Rank 6 in a Knack under certain circumstances. First, the Hero must have a Rank 5 in the Knack to begin with. Next, he must find a Grandmaster to train under for anywhere from one month to a year (at the GM's discretion). Finally, the Hero must spend 25 XP to complete the process. This doesn't make the Hero himself a Grandmaster; it just gives him a Rank 6. Normally, only NPCs and Heroes retired by their players will ever possess the title of Grandmaster, since the ability to grant others Rank 6 in a Knack can be game-breaking in the hands of a player.

Kazi, the Grandmaster of die Kreuzritter who resides at Altamira Monastery, teaches the following Knacks: **Ambush, Stealth, and Tracking.**



New Background

Dead to the World

You have faked your own death in order to join the Black Crosses. You are forbidden ever to have anything to do with your old life. Breaking that rule would mean death for you and those you made aware of your continued survival. The number of points you put in this Background determines how emotionally attached you were to the people in your old life and how hard it is for you to continue to let them believe you're dead.

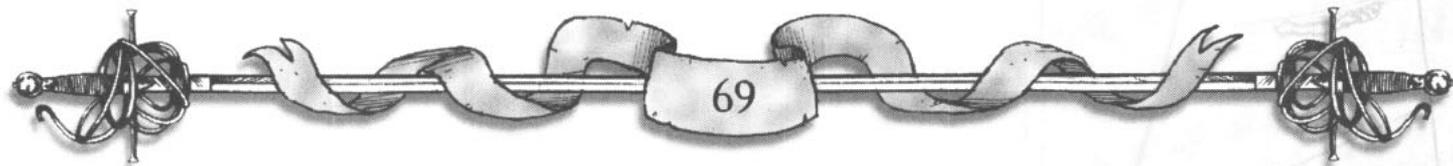
Keep in mind that many Knights have faked their own death. This Background applies only to those who have left loved ones behind.

The Mortis Swordsman School

Country of Origin: Montaigne. Any Black Cross may pay 25 points for the Mortis school, or 20 if he knows the Boucher school as well. It is available only to Black Crosses.

Description: After it split away from the Boucher school years ago, the Mortis school became much more focused on its possible uses as a tool of assassination. Students of Mortis wield a thin knife known as a stiletto in each hand, and use the two together in a series of attacks designed to mortally wound the opponent as quickly as possible. Like the Rilasciare's *Vipera ex Morsi* school (which also uses a stiletto), the intent is to ensure the target's death. Fancy skills and flashing blades come second to practical reality.

Mortis is different from Boucher in several ways. Its students are more likely to suddenly hurl a knife at an opponent or





Sorcery vs. Shamanism

There is a subtle distinction between shamanism and sorcery as defined in *7th Sea*. "Sorcery" refers to magic such as that which is inherited through the blood and practiced by Théah's nobility. It normally comes from external sources, such as the Bargainers or die Kreuzritter's strange artifacts. It includes the five schools listed in the *7th Sea* basic books, as well as defunct or obscure schools such as Nacht sorcery, *Zerstörung*, and *El Fuego Adentro*. Sorcery follows the rules as outlined in the *7th Sea* basic books.

"Shamanism," on the other hand, is less an inherited trait than a form of faith or secret knowledge. Shamanic magic is less powerful than sorcery, but doesn't have some of the drawbacks either. Anyone can become a shaman provided they believe in the method and take the time to learn its techniques (which often takes years). Shamanism includes *opah* sorcery (Crow's Nest #0), the Avalons' druid magic, and the mysterious Vows of the Knights of the Rose and Cross.

Shamanic magic ignores any effects that cancel or distort sorcery. No Hero with sorcery may learn or use any shamanic magic (and vice versa), but he is affected by it as normal.

to use poison on their blades. Even among criminals there is some slight honor — not so among assassins. Students of Mortis also use intimidation and surprise tactics to kill their opponents with little risk to themselves.

Of course, Mortis still suffers from the same problems as Boucher. The knives have a short reach, though this can be solved by throwing them. Worse, students of Mortis get too used to their targets being paralyzed with fear, and a fearless swordsman can catch them off guard.

Unlike other "Swordsman" Schools, Mortis students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Criminal, Knife

Swordsman Knacks: Double-attack (Knife), Exploit Weakness (Mortis), Riposte (Knife), Throw (Knife)

Apprentice: Students of the Mortis style of fighting are trained to wield a stiletto in each hand. This negates the off-hand penalty when using a stiletto and grants one Free Raise when attacking with a stiletto.

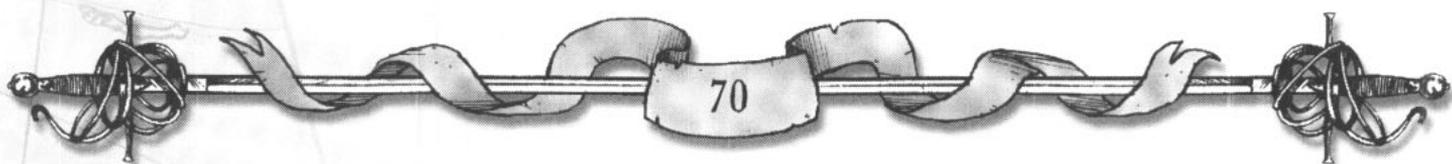
Journeyman: Mortis teaches its students to take advantage of an opponent who is surprised. When a Journeyman of the Mortis style calls Raises to hit on a Surprised opponent, each Raise grants an extra Kept die (+1k1) to damage, rather than the usual unkept die (+1k0).

Master: Once the student has mastered the Mortis style, he has learned to perform the Litany of Death. He administers Last Rites to his opponent during the duel in such a way as to completely unnerve him. At the start of each Round, before Phase 1, the Master's Fear Rating is increased by 1 (giving him a Fear Rating of 1 if he had no Fear Rating beforehand). This continues for a number of Rounds equal to the Master's Panache, after which his Fear Rating remains the same for the rest of the battle.

New Swordsman Knacks

Double-attack (Knife): When you use this Knack, you are making two quick Knife attacks against your opponent, one right after the other. You must declare that you are Double Attacking before you attack, and then roll the two attacks using this Knack. The TN to hit your opponent is raised by 10 when you are using Double-attack.

Throw (Knife): When you throw this weapon as an attack, you must use this Knack instead of your Attack Knack. The Range on a Knife is 5 plus two times your Brawn. This Knack is the same as the Throw (Knife) Knack found in the Knife Skill in the *Players' Guide*, but it is considered a Basic Knack for students of the Mortis school.





New Sorcery

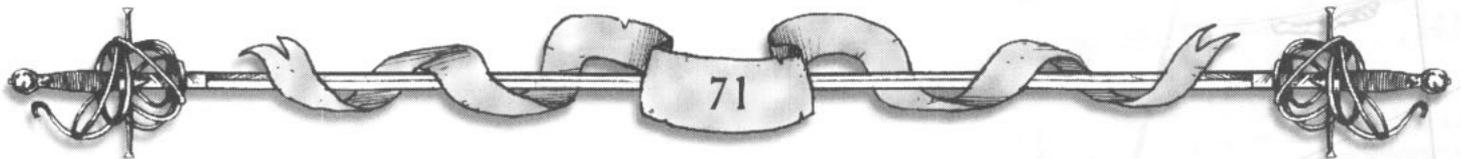
Nacht (25 points, Kreuzritter only)

The Knight has the ability to step through shadows into another place. This ability is somewhat similar to the Montaigne Porté sorcery, but has several key differences. The Knight does not have to tear open a portal – he merely steps into a shadow and wills himself to enter it. For a moment, it is as if the Knight were turning into a shadow himself, and then he vanishes without a trace, journeying to the Dark Paths. He is sworn to kill any non-Knight who witnesses this sorcery, upon threat of execution by the Order, although some Knights have received exemptions to this rule in regard to certain trusted comrades. *For further details on how this sorcery works, please see the Dark Paths description later in this chapter. There are no Knacks for this sorcery. A sorcerer who acquires Nacht sorcery loses any other forms of sorcery or shamanism he might have possessed.*

New Advantages

Acolyte (3 Points, Kreuzritter only)

The Knight is training an Acolyte. This Acolyte is a 60-point Henchman (designed by the GM, or by the player with GM approval) who is loyal to him. The Knight may train the Acolyte in whatever manner he sees fit (polishing swords, mucking out stables, guarding the horses, etc.) for as long as he sees fit. However, the Order will eventually begin placing pressure on him to allow the Acolyte to advance and become a full-fledged Knight as well. If an Acolyte dies in the service of the Knight, this Advantage is lost until a new Acolyte can be found and sponsored by him.





The Acolyte gains XP at the same rate as the Knight, and the Knight can put the Acolyte up for promotion at any time. The Acolyte then goes on his first solo mission, and if he survives it becomes a Knight (rising to Hero status instead of Henchman) and a trusted ally to his master. If the Acolyte is killed on the mission, he is gone forever; nobody said the Black Crosses were easy to join. This is determined by rolling a die and consulting the chart below. In either case, this Advantage is lost until a new Acolyte can be found and sponsored by the Knight.

Acolyte Solo Mission Survival Rate

Acolyte's Accumulated XP	Dies	Lives
0-10	1-8	9-0
11-15	1-7	8-0
16-20	1-6	7-0
21-25	1-5	6-0
26-30	1-4	5-0
31-35	1-3	4-0
36-40	1-2	3-0
41-50	1	2-0

After accumulating at least 51 XP, the Order insists on promoting the Acolyte and he automatically lives to become a Knight.



Blessing (3 Points, Kreuzritter only)

The Knight believes firmly that Theus protects him as he goes about his tasks. To some extent this seems to be true, although whether Theus really protects him is anyone's guess. *All damage dealt to you is reduced by 1 Flesh Wound. This applies only once to each separate blow, although in the case of Brute Squads attacking you, the damage their weapons deal to you per Hit is reduced by 1.*

Note: Heroes with Sorcery or Shamanism cannot take this Advantage.

Nightblade (6 Points, Kreuzritter only)

You were chosen one year to wear the Black Glove, and it gave you the ability to create a knife of shadow in your hand that leaves no visible wounds on those you stab with it. The process has left a black spot in the center of your palm that is one-half inch in diameter. *You have the ability to call forth a "nightblade" from your hand at will without using an Action. A nightblade is a stiletto (Ok2 Knife, with +1 unkept die for all Attack Rolls) made out of shadows, and it deals damage as normal. However, it leaves no visible wounds on its victims, and you can dispel it at will, again using no Actions. The nightblade passes through non-living objects, meaning that armor doesn't work against it and it can't be parried. This also means that it can't be used to parry, either. The nightblade vanishes and cannot be recalled for an hour if any part of the blade is exposed to direct sunlight.*

Note: The use of this Advantage can be canceled by things that cancel sorcery. Acquiring this Advantage causes a sorcerer to lose all of his previous sorcery, with the exception of Nacht sorcery. Nightblades cannot be thrown like ordinary knives.

Sanctuary (Varies, Die Kreuzritter only)

Heroes who wish to create a Black Cross Sanctuary may do so by investing up to 10 Hero Points per Hero during character creation. The total cost of a Sanctuary may not be less than 1 HP per Hero contributing to it. GMs may also use these rules to create Die Kreuzritter Sanctuaries for use in their campaigns; they may ignore the Hero Point requirements. Hero Points may be distributed as follows:

Size (Varies)

The size of a Sanctuary affects the resources it has to call upon in times of need.

- 1 Point: Small
- 1 Sanctuary Building
- 4 Knights
- 2 Laymen
- 3 Acolytes
- 5,000 Guilders per year





3 Points: Medium

1 Sanctuary Building
8 Knights
4 Laymen
6 Acolytes
10,000 Guilders per year

6 Points: Large

2 Sanctuary Buildings
14 Knights
7 Laymen
10 Acolytes
15,000 Guilders per year

Leadership (Varies)

Leadership in remote Sanctuaries is typically assigned by the Hochmeister and is chosen from among the Knights stationed there. Alternatively, a Leader can be elected in an emergency. The Leader makes sure his Knights have what they need when they need it to complete their missions. Sanctuaries do not tend to grow, as new members are offset by deaths and Knights being transferred away.

Poor Leader: -1 Point

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary must subtract 1 from all their Resource rolls made within 100 miles of the Sanctuary.

Average Leader: 0 Points

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary receive no penalties or benefits because of their Leader.

Good Leader: 1 Point

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary may move their Bag of Tricks roll up or down one column on the chart before each Story. This may “wrap around” on the chart, jumping from 10 to 1 or vice versa.

Excellent Leader: 3 Points

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary gain the benefits of a Good Leader, plus they may add 1 to all their Resource rolls made within 100 miles of the Sanctuary.

Wealth (Varies)

Some Sanctuaries have a steady source of income that gives their Knights more to work with when sending them on missions. Others have expenses that force them to economize even further than usual.

Poor Sanctuary: -1 Point

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary receive only 25G when undertaking a mission for the Order, and the Sanctuary’s yearly income is reduced by 1,000G.

Average Sanctuary: 0 Points

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary receive the standard 100G when undertaking a mission for the Order, and the Sanctuary’s yearly income is unaffected.

Wealthy Sanctuary: 1 Point

Knights operating out of this Sanctuary receive 200G when undertaking a mission for the Order, and the Sanctuary’s yearly income is increased by 1,000G.

Chapel (2 Points)

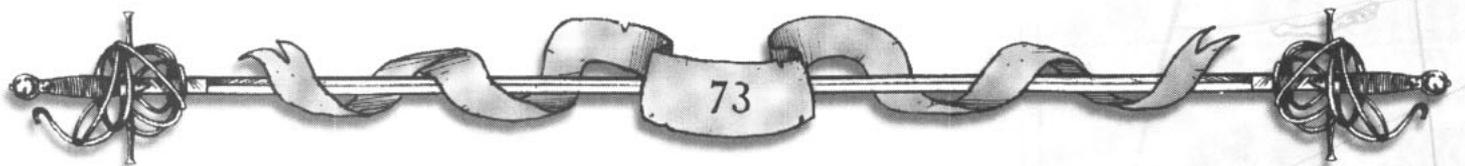
The Sanctuary has an especially old and holy Chapel that the Knights pray at each week. Once per Story, Knights who have been operating out of this Sanctuary for at least a month may allow all the dice in one (non-Initiative) roll to explode, even if they normally couldn’t (for instance, if the Hero is Crippled or making an Unskilled Check). This must be declared before the roll is made and doesn’t guarantee that the dice will explode; it merely allows them to do so as normal under conditions that would otherwise prevent this.

Healers (3 Points)

The Healers at the Sanctuary ensure that each Knight always has a vial of Herbal Balm (as listed on the Bag of Tricks Chart) in addition to whatever he rolls up normally before each Story (which could be a second Herbal Balm).

Secret Entrance (3 Points)

The Sanctuary building has an entrance below ground, underneath an altar in a chapel, or otherwise hidden. Members may enter the building unseen or escape if the Sanctuary is discovered. In terms of the Chase Rules (see



pages 169–172 of the *GMs' Guide*), it gives members an additional 4 Phase advantage over any pursuers.

Secure Building (5 Points)

The Sanctuary building has stone walls, stout locks, and easily guarded entrances. All Stealth, Climbing, and Lockpicking Rolls made to gain entry to the building are made with +10 to their TN.

Training Hall (1 Point)

If a Sanctuary has a training hall, Knights who operate from the Sanctuary receive one extra XP (usable only on Martial Knacks) at the end of each Story. Knights cannot receive this bonus more often than once a month.

Other Benefits of Die Kreuzritter

In addition to the advantages available above, Black Crosses automatically gain several minor special benefits.

✦ Black Crosses receive 100G for expenses when they undertake a mission for the Order. They are expected to return any of this that is not spent; most Kreuzritter give their excess money away to the poor once they have completed their mission.

✦ Before each Story, Black Crosses are supplied with one of the items from the Bag of Tricks Chart on page 76 and can use the Other Resources Rules in this Chapter.

✦ Black Crosses may demand access to areas sealed by the Church, such as the Crescent Empire and several other locations described in this book.

✦ Black Crosses are able to act as ordained priests in certain capacities. They can perform religious ceremonies such as

giving last rites. In addition, they receive an extra 2 unkept dice when resisting torture or interrogation.

✦ Depending on which part of die Kreuzritter a Hero joins, he receives a 2-point discount on one of the following:

Assassins – Nightblade Advantage

Phantom Guard – Nacht Sorcery

Town Guardians – Acolyte Advantage

Vigilants – Blessing Advantage

Other Resources

Resource Rolls

Black Crosses have the resources of the Order at their disposal while completing a mission. To request aid above and beyond the normal funds for a mission, the Knight must make a Resource Roll. This is done by rolling two unexploding dice and adding their total together. The TN is determined by the sort of aid being requested (see below). Naturally, Knights who have proven themselves are more likely to have their petitions granted, so the Knight may add 1 to the Resource Roll for every five missions he has successfully completed for the Order, up to a maximum of +15 to the Roll. However, he must also subtract 2 from the roll for each item on the Bag of Tricks chart that he was expected to return and did not.

For example, a Knight has been on 47 successful missions, but he lost a pair of sounding beads on one of those missions. His total bonus is 9–2, or +7. If he is rolling against a TN 16, he rolls two unexploding dice, adds them together, and then adds 7 to that. If the total is equal to or greater than 16, his request is granted.

Requesting More Money

This is the most common request within the Order. Money is requested in multiples of 50G and the TN is 3 for every



50G. Thus, a Knight who was requesting an extra 250G would need to roll a 15 or higher on his Resource Roll. This may be attempted only once per mission. This money comes from the yearly income of the local sanctuary, so Knights should not abuse it, lest they find these funds exhausted when they need them the most.

Calling on Laymen of the Order

Sometimes a Knight needs a skill that he doesn't have in order to complete a mission. In these instances, he may call upon one of the Laymen of the Order, who have all sorts of useful talents. The Knight chooses one Knack that the Layman will have, the desired Rank of the Knack, and the Rank of the appropriate Trait. Looking below, he adds the TN from the Trait Rank to the TN for the Knack Rank and makes a Resource Roll against the total. If successful, there is a Layman in the area who can help, and he can be contacted in one day. If not, he may try again, but must lower both the Trait and Knack by at least one Rank, and it takes an additional day to contact the Layman.

Laymen who are specifically named and mentioned in Chapter 1 (under Laymen of the Order) have the TN to contact them lowered by 5, since they are so well known in the Order. This is already reflected in the TN listed next to their name.

Trait	TN
0	1
1	3
2	5
3	10
4	15
5	20

Knack	TN
0	1
1	2
2	4
3	6
4	8
5	10

For instance, if a Knight has need of someone to pick a lock for him, he would choose Lockpicking as the Knack, a Trait of 3 (it's a tough lock), and a Knack of 4 (a really tough lock). He adds the two TNs together (10+8) for a TN of 18. Rolling, he gets only a 16, so there's no one around that skilled. He decides to try again, but he must reduce both the Knack and Trait by at least one Rank to do so. He tries for a 2 Trait and a 3 Knack, which is a TN 11. He succeeds, and it takes him two days to find his lockpicking Layman. Had he failed, he could have tried again, but only by lowering the Knack and Trait another Rank each, which might not have been worth his time at all.

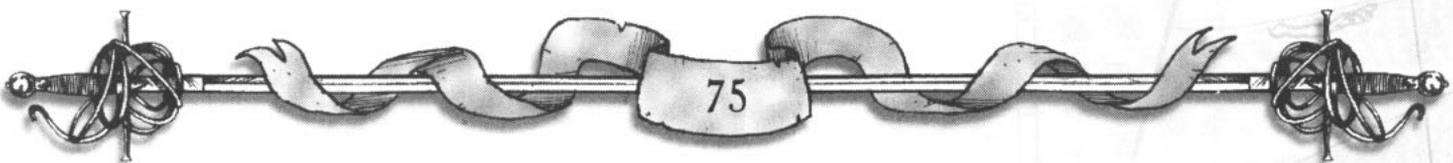
Borrowing Major Artifacts

Each major artifact described in this chapter has a TN associated with it. In order to borrow an artifact for a mission, the mission must be of critical importance to the Order. If the GM feels the mission is sufficiently important, the Knight may make a Resource Roll against the TN of the artifact he wishes to borrow. Only one can be borrowed at a time except under extraordinary circumstances. Artifacts must always be returned after the mission – if a major artifact is lost or destroyed by the Knight during his mission, he must thereafter subtract 5 from his Resource Rolls for each major artifact he's lost.

For example, a Knight wants to borrow one of the Cloaks of Shadows and the mission is important to the Order, so he rolls against its TN of 22 and succeeds (he's been on many successful missions in the past). Unfortunately for him, the Cloak is destroyed on the mission. From now on, all his Resource Rolls will suffer a penalty of -5.

Calling on Other Knights

A Knight may ask other Knights to assist him on a mission, but this should be decided entirely by the GM. Since the Knights are typically full Heroes except for the Acolytes, allowing one or more to assist a player can be unbalancing if the GM hasn't planned for that contingency. GMs should also consider whether or not the Knight could tag along with the rest of the party without drawing too much attention or detracting from the skills and contributions of the other players.



Bag of Tricks Chart

Knights of the Order have access to several unique items in the pursuit of their duties. Before beginning a Story, a Knight may roll on the following chart to see which items the Order grants him. Knights preparing for specific missions may request specific items (for instance, they may want Kazi's Ointment if they know they're going to be sneaking past guard dogs). GMs should decide for themselves whether the Order grants the request or not.

1 — Kazi's Ointment: This greenish cream conceals a man's scent for up to eight hours after being applied. It confounds animals that use scent to track and makes the wearer "invisible" to most animals unless he moves while in their sight. This subtracts two Ranks from the Tracking Knack of anyone tracking the Knight using scent. The Knight receives one dose of this ointment.

2 — Glowing Stones: These palm-sized rocks cast a greenish light illuminating up to 6 inches away. This allows their carrier to work in the dark without attracting unwanted attention. The Knight receives ten of these stones and is expected to return them after the mission.

3 — Herbal Balm: This aromatic gel takes one Action to apply to a character. It heals 1 Dramatic Wound or all Flesh Wounds the character has suffered, at the character's option. The Knight receives one dose of this balm.

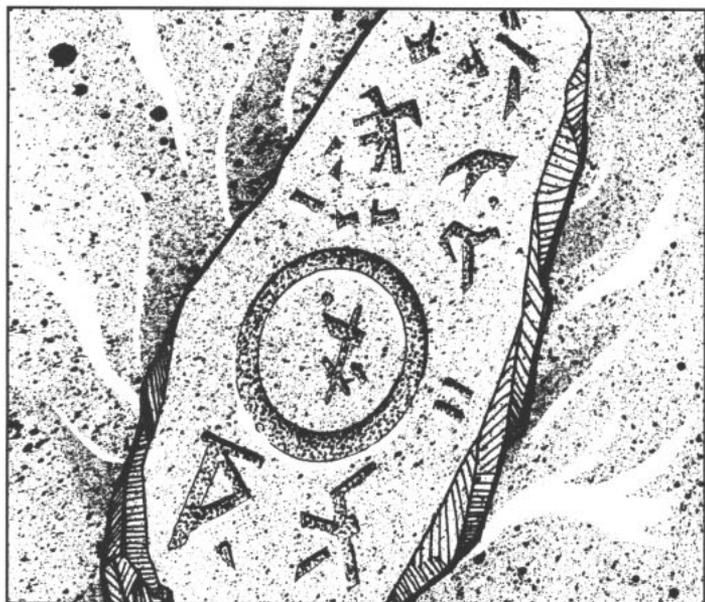
4 — Shadow Bag: This pitch-black, oily bag is cold to the touch and holds up to eight cubic feet of material in a 2-foot by 2-foot by 2-foot space. Its contents are weightless, no matter how much they would normally weigh. In addition, it can be placed inside the Knight's shadow for safekeeping. This takes one Action and ensures that only the Hero or a Nacht sorcerer can retrieve it. The Knight receives one bag and is expected to return it after the mission.

5 — Disguised Blade: This 1k2 Knife looks like a Vaticine cross. Add two Free Raises to rolls to Conceal it. The Knight receives one Knife and is expected to return it after the mission.

6 — Silver Thimbles: These two small silver thimbles can be worn on a finger and a thumb. When struck together, they make a clicking sound that affects all locks (max TN 25) within five feet of them. If they are locked the locks unlock, and if unlocked they lock themselves. This only works on non-magical locks, and the sound is audible up to thirty feet away. The Knight receives one set of thimbles and is expected to return them after the mission.

7 — Campfire Crystals: These fist-sized reddish crystals give off the same heat as a campfire for up to eight hours after being struck a sharp blow, after which they are useless. The crystals give off no light, and this allows the Knight to have a campfire that cannot be spotted. The heat of the crystal can be used to keep warm or cook, or even to start a fire if activated and left among flammable materials. The Knight receives three of these crystals.





8 — Pebble Watchmen: These small black stones burst with loud popping sounds when stepped on. If scattered around a campsite, they subtract two Ranks from the Ambush Knack of anyone attempting to ambush the camp's inhabitants unless they have been tricked by Pebble Watchmen before, in which case they can take special care not to set them off and ignore the penalty. The Knight receives enough stones to cover a 10-foot by 10-foot area (about 250 pebbles).

9 — Sounding Beads: These one-inch diameter beads come in sets of two: a black bead and a white bead. Whenever noise is made near the black bead, the white bead reproduces it perfectly — provided it's within 50 feet of the black bead. Thus, the Knight can leave the black bead in a room and listen to what is said with the white bead. The Knight receives one set of beads and is expected to return them after the mission.

0 — Hound's Powder: This silvery dust is taken like snuff. It greatly improves the Knight's sense of smell, adding one Rank to his Tracking Knack for up to eight hours after application, although this benefit is canceled if the creature being tracked has no scent. The Knight receives enough powder for two doses.

Major Artifacts of the Order

The Hochmeister's Ring

Gunther Schmidl has a ring, passed on from Hochmeister to Hochmeister since the founding of the Order. The ring is onyx, with a strange carving of a cat on it. It serves primarily to alert him when an assigned mission has failed or a Knight has been killed. He touches it to each new Knight as they depart on their first missions. It lets him know when anyone it has touched has died by weeping blood and projecting to its wearer a mental image of the person who has died.

The Hochmeister's Ring may not be borrowed for any reason, and does not need recharging.

The Black Ring

Originally found within the Crucible of Night, this small, plain ring is made of an unknown shiny black material. Those who place the ring on one of their fingers feel an icy sensation that dies away after a few seconds. When the ring is removed, it leaves a black mark around the finger where it was worn. Oddly, the area so marked casts no shadow. In addition, the wearer gains Nacht sorcery, as described earlier in this chapter. Any other sorcerous or shamanic abilities are lost when the Black Ring is worn.

The Black Ring must remain within the Crucible of Night for an entire year to recharge after its use. This is the only reason the Knights don't all have Nacht sorcery. Knights may not borrow it for missions.

The Black Glove

Found in the Crucible of Night along with the Black Ring, the Black Glove is a similar type of artifact. When worn, the





Glove emits an icy sensation that fades after a few seconds, and leaves a black mark in the center of the wearer's palm. This mark, unlike that left by the Black Ring, does cast a shadow. The wearer also gains the ability to project a knife seemingly made out of shadows from the mark. This ability is further described in the Nightblade Advantage earlier in this chapter.

The Black Glove must remain within the Crucible of Night for an entire year to recharge after its use. This is why the Knights don't all have the Nightblade Advantage. Knights may not borrow it for missions.

The Crucible of Night

This black bowl is approximately three feet in diameter and two feet deep. It seems eternally filled with shadows, and those who reach into it feel an icy chill where the shadows touch their skin. Knights who stand near the Crucible for too long get the feeling that someone or something is watching them. The Crucible does not possess any magical powers itself that the Knights are aware of, but it is used to recharge all of the major artifacts used by the Knights, with the exception of the Dark Blade.

The Crucible of Night lies in a secret room in the Altamira monastery, far from any sunlight. A single ray of sun striking its surface shorts out the Crucible's recharging abilities for 28 days. Knights may not borrow it for missions.

The Cloaks of Shadows

There are three of these artifacts, which appear as puddles of shadows that can be held and even draped over the shoulders like a cloak, leaving a shadowy hood hanging behind the wearer's head. If the hood is raised, the wearer enters the Dark Paths immediately, whether or not he possesses Nacht sorcery. Furthermore, the wearer and anyone touching the Cloak is immune to the effects of shadowburn. Finally, the Cloak can instantly carry its wearer and anyone touching it to anywhere in the Dark Paths as long as one of them is familiar with the place and can picture it in his mind. When the hood on the cloak is

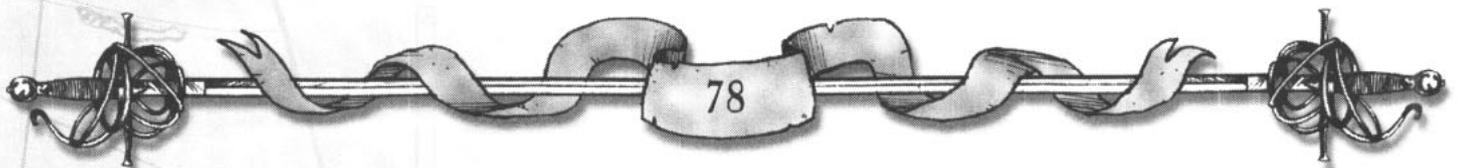
lowered, the wearer reappears in the real world just as if he were stepping out of a shadow using Nacht sorcery.

The Knights keep at least two of the Cloaks in the Crucible of Night at all times. There used to be four of them, but it was discovered that if a Cloak stayed out of the Crucible for more than a day and a night without being recharged for a like amount of time, it would dissolve into nothing. Since the Cloaks must be recharged so often, two of them must be kept constantly cycling. The other is reserved for emergencies. The TN to borrow a Cloak is 22.

The Dark Blade

Potentially the most dangerous artifact the Order possesses, the Dark Blade is a sword with a hilt and pommel made of human bone and a blade formed of shadows. This artifact was reportedly taken from a slain Night's body, somehow retaining its properties even after the creature's death. The Blade is seldom lent out to a Knight, because it seems to contain some of the Night's hatred for life, making it dangerous in even the most pacifistic person's hands. The TN to borrow the Blade is 30.

The Dark Blade is a 4k2 weapon that ignores armor and cannot be parried. In addition, the wielder may increase the damage inflicted by the Blade by suffering Flesh Wounds himself, on a one-for-one basis. Thus, if the Damage Roll was a 17, the wielder could increase it to a 22 by suffering 5 Flesh Wounds himself. Finally, the curse of the Blade means that the person carrying it (it must be a person, as no animal will permit the Blade near it) acquires an extra "Hubris" called "Bloodthirsty." The GM may activate this Hubris by spending a Drama die in order to anger the Hero, have him draw the Blade once angered and kill a helpless foe. The player may oppose the activation of this Hubris as usual. Fate Witches who examine the Hero's Arcana will see a dark, looming shape above it, something like an Ussuran's Arcana.



Die Kreuzritter National Influence

Black Crosses vary from one nation to the next. While every Knight is unique, some broad trends have developed among its members, depending upon the country. New players may want some guidance in deciding how to play their Black Cross Heroes. We've provided some rough templates for each nation, suggesting the sort of Traits and Skills native Knights are likely to have. These aren't hard rules – the Order has many Knights, after all – but can give you some idea of how its members vary across the face of Théah.

Avalon

The Black Cross in Avalon must operate very carefully. The Sidhe don't have shadows that extend to the Dark Paths, so a Knight can be surprised when emerging from the Paths by a Sidhe calmly sitting in his way, curious how the Knight managed to perform that amazing trick. Missions in Avalon tend to be courier deliveries, snatch and run jobs, or small assassinations – a Glamour mage who's proving troublesome to the Church, or a vocal member of the Druids. Black Crosses are instructed to stay clear of Elaine's court if possible: Derwyddon is an unknown factor, and the Order isn't ready for him to know of them just yet. Knights from Avalon are cautious and meticulous in their duties.

Emphasized Traits: Finesse, Wits

Suggested Skills: Criminal, Crossbow, Sailor, Spy

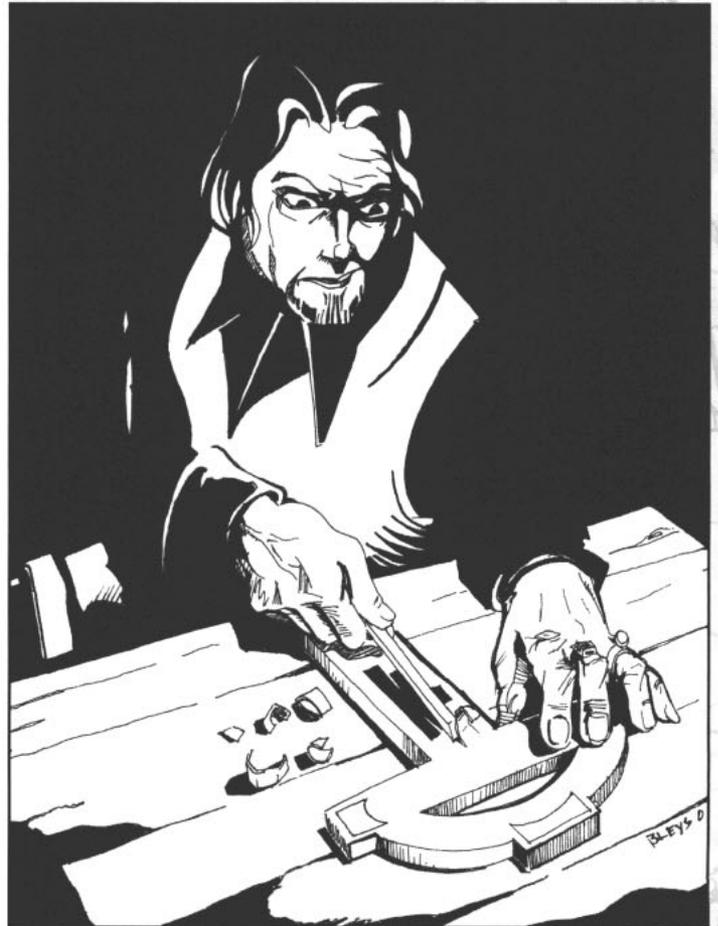
Suggested Advantages: Keen Senses, Legendary Trait (Wits)

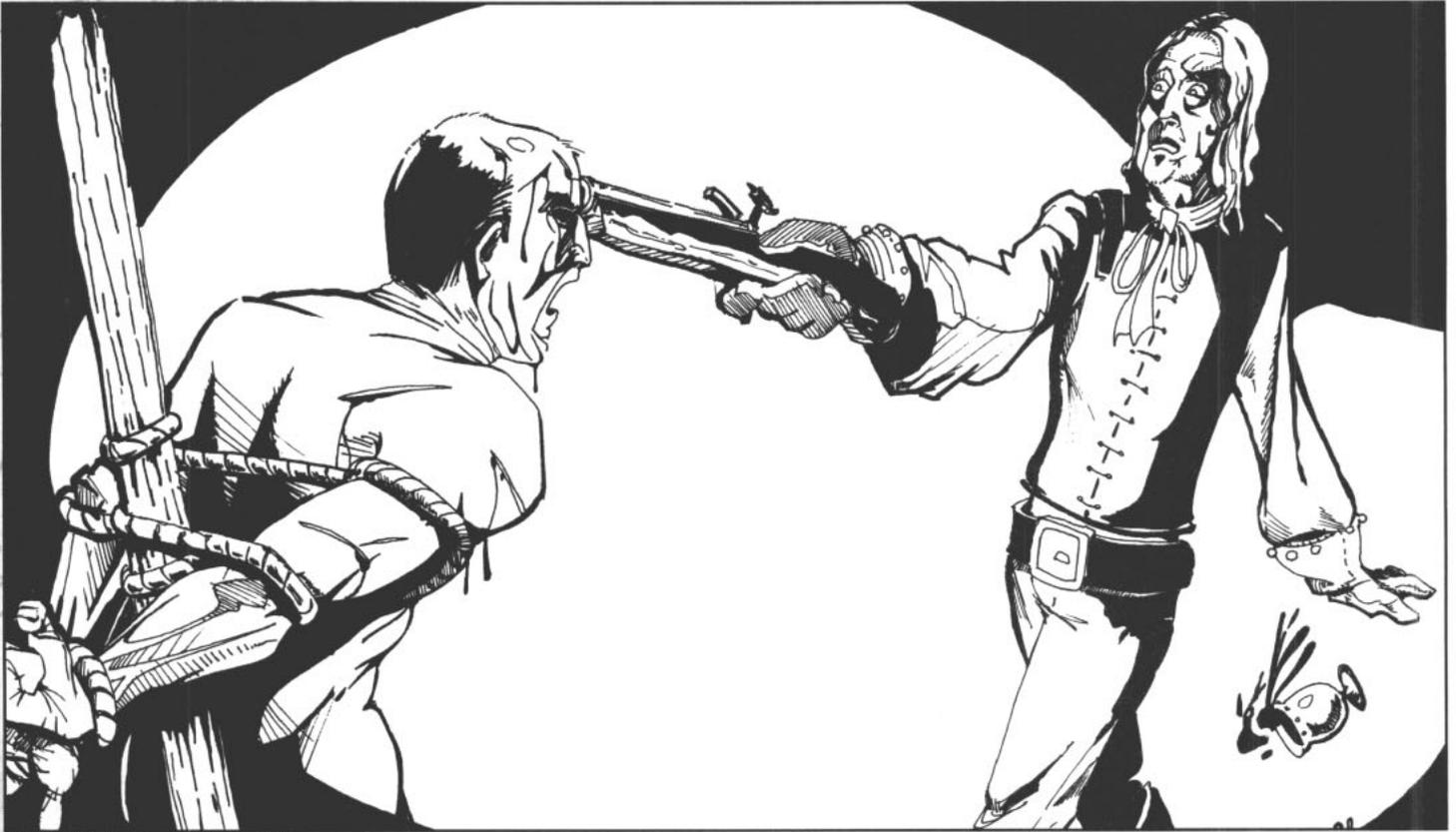
Castille

The Order treads softly in Castille as well, although Vaticine City is technically the Order's Headquarters. This is

because of the Inquisition's machinations. The High Inquisitor seems to be aware of the Black Crosses' existence, and suspects that the Knights are using Sorcery to accomplish their goals. Thus, the Black Crosses in Castille have made it their top priority to work toward the destruction or dismantling of the Inquisition. Although the Inquisition's goals are in line with the Order's own goals, they represent a danger to die Kreuzritter's members and must therefore be eliminated. Missions in Castille often concern themselves with discovering the identity of Inquisitors and assassinating them, or thwarting the Inquisition's efforts in other arenas. Knights from Castille are politically savvy and possess a wide base of knowledge.

Emphasized Traits: Wits, Panache





Suggested Skills: Courtier, Criminal, Heavy Weapon, Servant

Suggested Advantages: Castillian Education, Combat Reflexes

Eisen

Eisen is the nation where the Black Crosses are most active, for it contains the Order's true home – the Kippe Academy. The disorganized state of the country has allowed the Knights to pursue their goals much more aggressively. Missions in Eisen are usually monster-hunting expeditions, investigation of newly discovered ruins, training new Knights, or watching the nobility to ensure that they don't bring sorcery to Eisen. Stefan Heilgrund, in particular, is causing a great deal of concern in the Order and may soon find himself marked for death. Knights from Eisen are at home both in the country and in the city.

Emphasized Traits: Wits, Resolve

Suggested Skills: Commander, Hunter, Performer, Streetwise

Suggested Advantages: Academy, Legendary Trait (Resolve)

Montaigne

Next to Eisen, the Order is most aggressive in Montaigne. Knowing how destructive Porté magic is to the Barrier has the Knights here on edge. Operating out of Bascone, they've been performing experiments with mirror ghosts and their anti-Porté properties, culminating in the project that "eliminated" Porté from the city of Tamis. Missions in Montaigne often target flagrant Porté users, sometimes releasing mirror ghosts into their homes, sometimes simply killing the perpetrator outright. Occasionally, texts on the nature of sorcery surface in Montaigne, and the Order



spares no expense to acquire these for itself. Knights from Montaigne are carefully trained in the arts of seduction and spycraft.

Emphasized Traits: Wits, Panache

Suggested Skills: Courtier, Criminal, Firearms, Servant

Suggested Advantages: Dangerous Beauty, Noble

Ussura

Die Kreuzritter was one of the first secret societies to find its way into Ussura. After some initial difficulties, it is said that the Hochmeister met with Matushka herself, and the two reached an agreement – the details are hazy, but the gist seems to be that Matushka allows the Black Crosses to operate in Ussura, and they try to keep Porté out of the country. Missions based in Ussura are generally concerned with the exploration of newly discovered ruins and keeping sorcery out of Ussura for as long as possible. Many Ussuran Knights possess the Ussuran shapeshifting magic. Knights from Ussura are very self-sufficient.

Emphasized Traits: Brawn, Wits

Suggested Skills: Hunter, Knife, Performer, Scholar

Suggested Advantages: Pyeryem Sorcery, Toughness

Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar

The Order hasn't yet decided what to do about the Vendel civil war, if anything. It is uncertain whether Lærdom sorcery damages the Barrier in some manner. Likewise, it is unknown what effects Vendel predominance in trade will have. Because of this, most Vendel missions are concerned with information gathering, snatching some dangerous artifact, or the assassination of some troublesome person. Knights from Vendel are trained to operate under almost any conditions.

Emphasized Traits: Wits, Brawn

Suggested Skills: Criminal, Hunter, Sailor, Wrestling

Suggested Advantages: Able Drinker, Large

Vodacce

Vodacce is perhaps the most dangerous place a Black Cross can serve. The Fate Witches make keeping secrets difficult, but the Knights have developed a number of methods to diminish contact between their members, thereby avoiding the formation of a strong, easily discernable strand between them. Much of the organization operates via drop spots where members leave messages for one another, and duties that require frequent contact with other members are rotated on a regular basis. Missions in Vodacce generally focus on investigating dangerous ruins, investigating Sorte sorcery, and assassinating Fate Witches who become aware of the Order (after which the assassin is immediately smuggled out of Vodacce). Knights from Vodacce are some of the craftiest men the Order has to offer.

Emphasized Traits: Wits, Resolve

Suggested Skills: Courtier, Criminal, Dirty Fighting, Hunter

Suggested Advantages: Connections, Left-handed

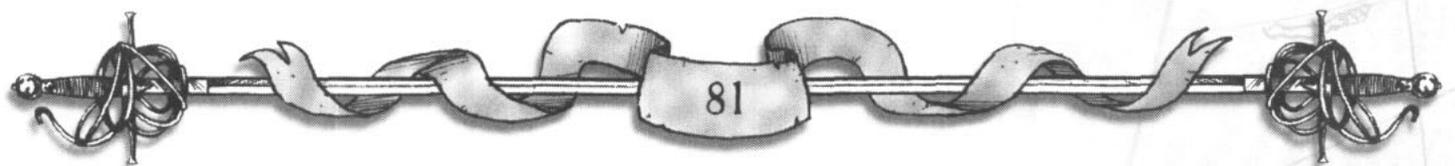
Elsewhere

Knights can also be found operating in such remote areas as the Crescent Empire and the islands to the west of Théah. These Black Crosses usually receive exploration and assassination missions, although they are sometimes entrusted with the destruction of a powerful artifact. Knights from outside Théah are often treasured for the unorthodox methods they bring to a mission – often resulting in success when it was thought impossible.

Emphasized Traits: Finesse, Wits

Suggested Skills: Athlete, Hunter, Sailor, Scholar

Suggested Advantages: Keen Senses, Legendary Trait (Wits), Toughness





The Dark Paths

The Dark Paths are the spaces between shadows. Using Nacht sorcery, the Black Crosses can roam the Paths, but this is not without its dangers. Unfortunately for the Knights, it is here that their most important battles must be fought. Unless they win their struggle here, there may well be no Théah left to squabble over.

The Paths' Appearance

The Dark Paths are in a perpetual state of twilight. The "sky" is a translucent white, but does not seem to give off much light. Over time, the Knights have come to feel that this sky is actually a barrier keeping something out of Théah. Once in awhile, grotesque, enormous shapes press up against it. Worse, the Knights know that Porté use tears small holes in the Barrier that become permanent over time. On those occasions when Knights have looked through one of these tears, they have seen a silvery liquid-like substance on the other side.

As for the ground, it is pitch-black and featureless, and gives slightly when stepped on. The hills and valleys of the real world are duplicated here, but buildings and other artificial structures do not appear. Only the shadows of such structures show up in the Dark Paths, sometimes hanging in mid-air. The same is true for living creatures and plants, except that their shadows typically move to match their "real world" counterparts. Bodies of water do not exist in the Dark Paths, so entering the Paths while swimming could be very dangerous. After all, suddenly finding yourself several hundred feet above the ground (a firm surface) can be hazardous to your health.

Physical Properties of the Paths

Time passes at the same rate within the Paths, and many physical laws appear to work as normal. However, there are several exceptions. First, and perhaps most importantly, fire won't burn there. Flint and steel are useless and open

flames simply snuff out when introduced to the realm. This also means that firearms are useless on the Paths, since gunpowder must ignite to fire the bullets.

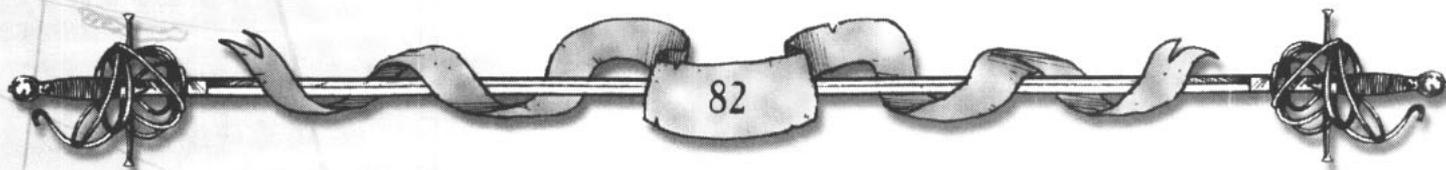
Secondly, as stated above, bodies of water do not exist on the Dark Paths. A Hero supported by water will fall immediately upon entering the Paths. Third, the ground in the Dark Paths is some sort of indestructible black material. No efforts to dig into it in any manner have been successful. Lastly, sounds are greatly muffled on the Paths, sounding much farther away than they really are. This gives a penalty of one unkept die to detect any Ambush or Stealth attempts. This isn't usually a problem, but with creatures such as the Nights around, the strange acoustics of the place can cause a Knight to be taken unaware.

Entering the Paths

A Knight who possesses Nacht sorcery may enter the Dark Paths by spending one Action as long as he's touching, or partially in a shadow, including his own. Unless in total darkness, or in an area with lighting designed to eliminate all shadows, this is usually a simple requirement to fulfill. Heroes wearing a Cloak of Shadows may also enter the Dark Paths by spending one Action to raise the hood on the Cloak; they don't have to be touching a shadow to do so. When entering the Dark Paths by either method, a Hero can bring along only 20 lbs. of equipment, and he can never bring another living creature across. (Once in the Dark Paths, however, the Cloaks may transport anyone touching them; their power is stronger here). There are no known natural entries to the Dark Paths.

Moving through the Paths

The Paths are a shadow of Théah, so one mile walked in the Dark Paths is one mile walked on Théah. Of course, since no way has been found to bring riding mounts to the Dark Paths, travel tends to be much slower. The only exception to this is using the magical properties of one of the Cloaks of Shadows, in which case travel is instant. The only drawback is that the Cloak must be returned to the





Crucible of Night within 24 hours or it dissolves to nothing, dumping the wearer back into the real world.

Dangers of the Paths

While the Paths are mostly uninhabited, several dangers threaten those who walk them.

The first and most dangerous is shadowburn. Théan beings in the Dark Paths are constantly assailed by an icy chill that seems to sap their strength. This works identically to the Drowning rules (see the *Game Masters' Guide*, page 174), except that the only way to stop this damage is to leave the Dark Paths. A Hero can cover only about 50 feet in the Dark Paths for each Action spent, due to the constant pain. There is no known way to prevent shadowburn except the Cloaks of Shadows; new initiates to the Phantom Guards take care to remain touching their superior (and his Cloak) during their initial tour of the Dark Paths.

The second danger of the Dark Paths are the Nights. These emaciated warriors claim to be Black Crosses who have died in the Dark Paths. They wield sword-like versions of the nightblades (which cannot be parried), and their armor is forged from darkness itself. Twenty are known to have existed at one point, although three of them have been destroyed by Black Crosses. Their leader claims to be Judith Losch, the Black Cross who led the Knights to safety and first urged them to protect the Barrier against the ravages of sorcery. Whether she is actually who she claims to be or not, these creatures seem to know many of the Knights' greatest weaknesses.

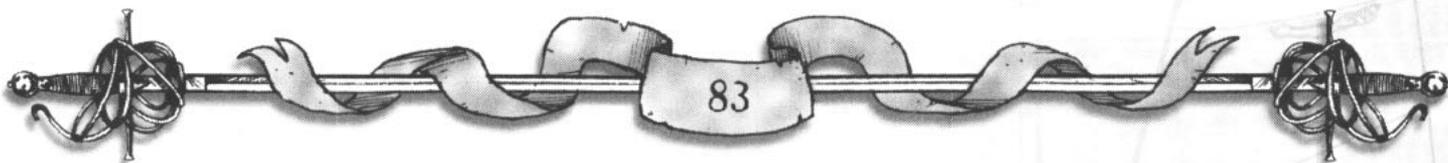
The last danger of the Dark Paths are the monstrous creatures that slither their way through tears in the Barrier. The Knights believe them to be the minions of Legion, like the Strangers, but larger and more fearsome. Nightmares of every variety have been found on the Paths, and a Knight never knows what he will encounter there. Experienced Phantom Guards have learned to be vigilant.

Leaving the Paths

A Knight may leave the Paths by touching or entering one of the shadows and spending one Action. He then reappears in the real world as close as possible to the shadow without appearing inside a solid object. The single exception to this is water. A Knight may reappear underwater, and then immediately begins suffering from the effects of the Drowning rules. Characters wearing a Cloak of Shadows may leave the Dark Paths by spending one Action to lower the hood on the Cloak; they don't have to be in or touching a shadow to do so. There are no known natural exits from the Dark Paths.

Attacking through the Shadows

Characters using Nacht sorcery are capable of devastating surprise attacks on their foes. When a Knight leaps out of a shadow at an enemy, he receives a Free Raise to his Wits + Ambush roll.





Limitations of the Shadows

Of course, shadow magic isn't good for everything. It won't allow a Hero to slip out of bonds, for instance, nor can it be used in complete darkness. Without light, there can be no shadows. This means, by extension, that a Hero cannot use it to escape a sealed, darkened cell, unless at least a little light penetrates it.

In addition, objects thrown by the Hero cannot pass through the shadows. He must be holding an object to take it from the real world to the Dark Paths and vice versa.

Finally, there is a pulling sensation when stepping through a shadow that does not allow a Hero to step part way through and then out again. He must finish the transition completely before he can reverse the process: if he spends an Action to cross the barrier, he must then spend another Action to cross back.

10 Hours	20
15 Hours	25
1 Day	30
2 Days	35
4 Days	40
1 Week	45
2 Weeks	50

The hunter must roll against this TN using Wits + Tracking. If he succeeds, the prey's lead is reduced by one row (from 2 days to 1 day, for instance). Each Raise the hunter makes reduces the prey's head start by one additional row. Should this reduce the lead below 1 hour, the hunter catches up to the prey. On the other hand, if the hunter fails any of these rolls, the prey increases his lead by one row. If this increases past 2 weeks, the prey gets away, and the hunter will need a different way to track him.

Advanced Tracking

Because tracking is so important to the Black Crosses and so integral to the success of their missions, GMs may wish to use this optional system to add more realism to the process. Basic tracking rules can be found under the "Hunter" skill section in the *Players' Guide*.

The Head Start

When a Hero begins to track his prey, the GM must determine how much of a head start the prey has. The older the trail, the more difficult it is to follow. All TNs for the hunter are increased according to the following chart (use the highest TN applicable).

Head Start	TN
1 Hour	5
3 Hours	10
6 Hours	15

Conditional Modifiers

The task of tracking may be made easier or more difficult depending upon the weather, the type of ground, the size of the prey, and the like. Apply the following modifiers, if needed, to the TN:

Weather (use the highest applicable modifier)

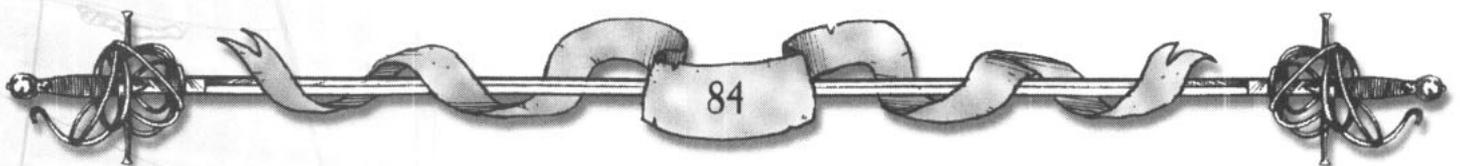
Clear	+0
Snow/Fog	+5
Light Rain/High Winds	+10
Medium Rain/Sleet	+15
Heavy Rain/Blizzard	+20

Ground Type (Use the type most prevalent in the area)

Mud/Snow	-10
Sand Dunes	-5
Loose Dirt	+0
Packed Earth	+5
Stone	+10

Traffic (use the highest applicable modifier)

None	-5
Light (Village)	+0
Medium (Town)	+5
Heavy (City)	+10





Prey's Size (Use the largest size applicable)

Drachen or larger	-15
Horse/Cow	-5
Man	+0
Dog/Wolf	+5
Rabbit	+10
Mouse	+15

Maneuvers

If the prey is aware of pursuers, or expecting to be followed, he can perform a number of maneuvers to try to shake off pursuit. However, each of these eats up valuable time, and the effort is wasted if the pursuer sees through the ruse. Each maneuver is described below.

River Crossings

When crossing a river or other body of water, the prey simply wades up or downstream, taking care to step on stones, and emerges from the river in a spot where his tracks will not be too obvious to his pursuers. The prey chooses how far he wades; the longer he stays in, the harder it is to track him, but the more ground he loses in the event that his pursuers outwit him.

Erasing Tracks

The prey uses a large leaf or similar device to rub out his footprints behind him as he goes. He might also sprinkle leaves behind him, if appropriate. The more effort he spends concealing his tracks, the harder it is to find them, but the longer he spends in one place, the more his lead shrinks.

Tree Climbing

The prey climbs up one tree, leaps across to another, and then drops back to the ground. Of course, if the prey wants to do a more careful job, he leaps from tree to tree until he is some distance from the original before climbing back down. On the other hand, this is time-consuming, and the hunter could stumble upon the new trail very quickly.

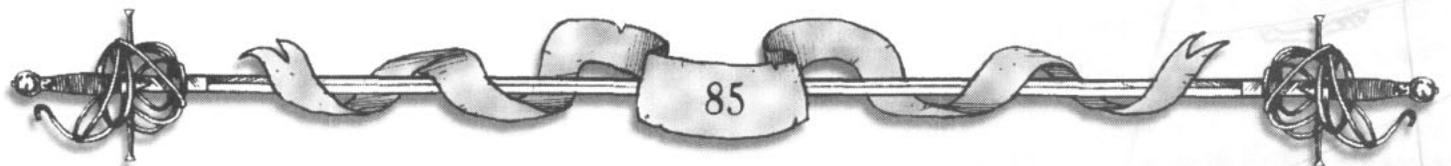
Doubling Back

The prey turns around and walks backward in his own footprints for a time, then climbs a tree and drops to the ground away from the original trail. If done properly, the prey is free to run in another direction while the hunter follows the false trail. Of course, it takes a long time to set up a false trail, and good trackers know to watch for them.

Game Effects

After each of the hunter's rolls, the prey may attempt to trick him by making a Wits + Stealth roll. For every 5 points he rolls, he may raise the TN required for the hunter to see through the maneuver by 5 (starting from a base TN of 5). Should the hunter succeed against the TN with a Wits + Tracking roll, the prey's head start drops by one row for every 5 points he raised the TN by. On the other hand, if the hunter fails the roll, the prey gets away.

For instance, if the prey has a head start of 4 days and rolls a 17, he can increase the hunter's TN to see through the maneuver up to 20. However, if the hunter then succeeds at the roll, the prey loses three rows from his head start, bringing his 4-day lead down to a 15-hour lead. Of course, if the prey had succeeded, he would have gotten away.







Faith



The End of the Hunt, Part Five

He felt sick as he gazed down at the corpse beneath him. The last words of the song he had read on the dying man's lips tore at him. "For I am far from home, and here shall I die." Something in them reminded him of the day, three years ago, when he had crouched in a tree and watched his weeping family attend his funeral. He cursed the bishop who had sent him on this damning quest and vowed to make the piggish little man suffer.

But the mission wasn't completed, and he decided in an instant that it never would be. He would spare the boy; he needed to talk with him and arrange for him to disappear, lest the Bishop some day receive word that a Black Cross had failed in his duties, but the young Vendel should not have to die for the Bishop's anger.

He stood up, looking around for Dieter. At first all he could see was the boy's horse, nosing around a tangled tree, but then the mare moved aside and he felt his stomach churn at the sight. The Vendel had not interfered with the fight because he couldn't. The sickly black tree had enfolded him in its thorny limbs, and he was trapped – pinned there like a butterfly. Catching a small sign of life left in the boy, the hunter edged up to his side, wary of the feeding tree. The Vendel looked at him and spoke slowly. "Take care of my horse, Black Cross, or my curse upon your corpse." Then, the tree contracted, squeezing the breath out of him. Dieter looked pleadingly at the loaded pistol lying just out of his reach. Nodding, the hunter picked it up and placed it against the boy's temple. He began to speak, "May the arms

of Theus open to you. May his embrace keep you safe from Legion's talons..."



Some time later, a cloaked man and a maddened horse galloped for the edge of the woods as if all the fiends of the Abyss were after them. Had he dared to look behind him at the rustlings and strange noises he heard, he would have been hard pressed to deny it.

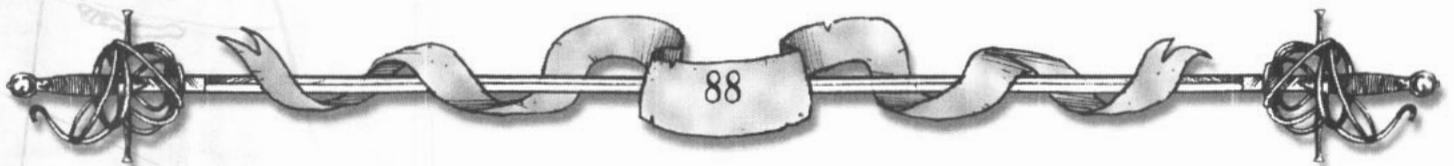


The Bishop awoke in a fine appetite that morning. He would have his cook prepare him six or seven hen's eggs, a loaf of bread, a thick slab of bacon or two, and maybe some custard. Mouth watering, he sat up to ring the bell, when something brushed across his chest. He looked down, and his eyes opened wide. A black cross hung around his neck, and tied to it was a note. Hands shaking, he opened it and began to read...

"My Dearest Bishop,

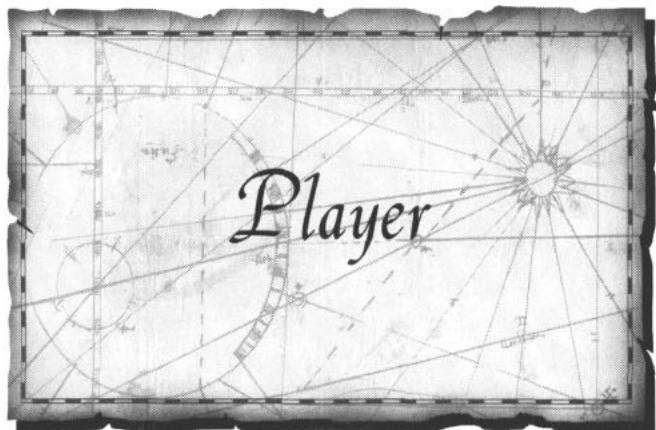
The task you have asked of my Order is complete. Both men are dead. However, because of your zeal for vengeance, an innocent man lost his life. This will not go unpunished. In your stables this morning you will find a new mare. She is your life from now on. The day she dies, I will know, and I will come for you while you sleep. You know enough about my Order to know that I speak the truth. If you run, I will find you. If you hire guards, I will find you. I suggest that you treat the horse with the utmost kindness, for I have heard that hard work and cruelty will shorten an animal's life. May your mare live a long and healthy life. I believe she enjoys apples."

The Bishop leaned back in his bed once more and numbly let the note fall from his grasp. Suddenly, he wasn't hungry any more.





Faith



Player

This part of the chapter is expressly for players who are going to create a new Kreuzritter PC, or who want to get a better handle on one they're already running. It's not appropriate for players who aren't playing a Black Cross, so if you aren't a member, scat!

A Matter of Scale

7th Sea is about heroism and heroes. It's about swinging from the chandelier while taking out five or six brutes at a time. It's definitely not about playing murderers who silence their enemies without a second thought. With that in mind, you might ask: Why are you letting me play the Black Crosses then? Aren't they evil?

Sort of.

Morality isn't always painted in the pleasant blacks and whites that so many of us would like to believe in. In this case, it's a matter of scale. Here's an unpleasant question to consider: *When is it all right to murder a person?*

Obviously, the first answer that springs to most healthy minds is *Never* or *Only in Self Defense*. Those are good answers, and if everyone stuck to them, the world would be a nicer place. But, just for the sake of argument, let's broaden the question a bit: *Is it all right to murder a person if doing so will save someone else?*

This time, the answer becomes more complicated. You might want to know if the person you're going to kill is

more "worthwhile" than the person you'll be saving. Of course, how exactly do you measure "worthwhile?" Saying that "politicians are more worthwhile than game designers" is fine if you're a politician, but you might have some issues with that statement if you're a game designer. Deciding who will live and who will die isn't a heroic act by anyone's standards anyway. Let's broaden the scope of the question one more time: *Is it all right to kill a person if doing so will save the lives of every other man, woman, and child on Earth?*

For most people, this one's pretty easy. Not many are moral or high-minded enough to condemn all of humanity to death for the sake of one person — even if that person has never harmed anyone in his life.

The question then becomes: *Who's going to pull the trigger?*

Murder is an immoral act, and the murder of an innocent is much more so.

Now consider, what if there is a Heaven and a Hell? The Commandment doesn't read, "Thou shalt not kill unless you can save lives by doing so." It's quite possible that by killing that person and saving humanity from destruction, you'd be damning yourself to Hell for all eternity. That's a long time.

In the real world, these sorts of questions don't come up that often. But if you can imagine being faced with the decision of killing an innocent person — someone who might be very pleasant; who might help out orphans and little old ladies in his spare time — or seeing everything you've ever loved come to a very final, grinding halt, then you can almost imagine being a member of die Kreuzritter.

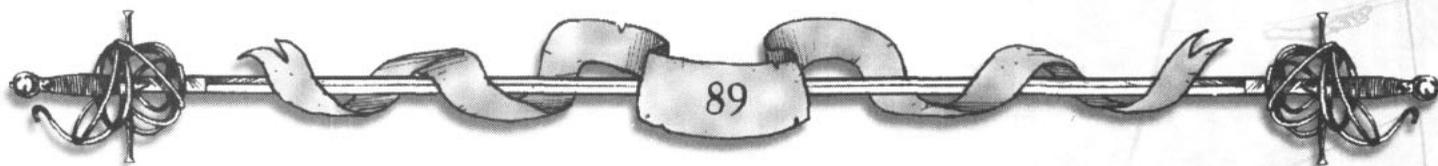
Almost?

Now imagine doing it every day for the rest of your life.

Welcome to the shadows.

The Order is Your Family

The fire raged out of control as Gerrold reached out for Derek's hand. He could feel the heat on his face and knew that the smoke would overcome him soon, but he didn't care. Looking up,





Derek saw that Gerrold's hand couldn't quite reach him and pulled his own away, tears in his eyes.

"Gerrold, it's no use. Get out!"

Gerrold's eyes narrowed and he thrust his arm deeper into the flames, ignoring the pain. "I'd rather die."

Seeing the resolve in his friend's eyes as the flesh on his arm turned red and blistered, Derek found the courage to stand and leap through the flames to Gerrold's side. Limping, the two of them stumbled outside just as the barn collapsed.

The Oath of Loyalty is the most important Oath as far as most Black Crosses are concerned. These men and women have given up their past lives to become members of this society and stand between the Strangers and mankind. They've had to abandon friends, family, everything they knew and loved. Most Knights are just not willing to suffer that loss a second time.

When getting an idea of your Hero's personality, you may wish to go one of two ways. Either your Hero has come out of the experience a bit more clinging and needy than before, or he has decided that it's not worth being hurt again and rejects all offers of friendship or romance.

The first option is ideal for a player character. The Hero becomes slightly paranoid when it comes to the safety of his friends and companions. This strengthens the bonds between the party and gives you a strong reason why your Hero would rush to his friends' aid at the drop of a hat — he's lost everything he loved once before, and he'll be damned if that's going to happen again.

The second option is also workable, but it's dangerous ground. Heroes who have decided that friendship isn't worth the heartache are difficult to integrate into a party. They typically tag along out of selfish or hidden motives, and should those motives be removed, they have no reason to stay with the party. Remember that it's not fair to expect the rest of the players to roleplay their Heroes incorrectly so that you can play yours the way you want.

Try to predict future problems when creating your Hero. If you are playing with a group of Explorer's Society members



who want to explore dangerous Syrneth ruins, remember what's apt to happen if they catch you destroying valuable artifacts, or worse yet, you have to kill party members because they've stumbled onto something Man Was Not Meant To Know. Playing a Kreuzritter is not an excuse to spoil your friends' fun, and it shouldn't be used as such.

The Little Guy

The Rose and Cross turned his eyes away in revulsion as Gerrold dropped fifty Guilders into the little beggar girl's bowl. As they walked away, Gerrold eyed his traveling companion.

"What now, oh moral compass?" he asked belligerently.

The Knight glared at him, "Doesn't your hypocrisy ever stop? Tomorrow you might be ordered to kill that little girl, and so you salve your conscience by giving her money from the Church – money that you neither earned nor care about. Is that somehow supposed to make up for your sins? Is that it?"

Gerrold stopped and looked the man in the eye. "No. It's supposed to feed, clothe, and house her until such time as I am ordered to cut out her heart. Simple charity could never erase the sins I have committed."

The Knight raised his eyebrow. "Then why do it?"

Gerrold replied quietly, "Because I can, of course."

The second Oath – Charity – is part of what keeps the Kreuzritter from crossing the line into outright villainy. In game terms, performing good deeds helps to balance out the evil the Knight is forced to commit in the course of carrying out his duties. Ideally, this should keep his Reputation from falling below -30, which would make him an NPC Villain.

In roleplaying terms, these acts of kindness keep the Knight sane. While the Order's goals are indeed noble, it's often hard to see what effect they're having on the world when they kill a Stranger or assassinate a particularly troublesome sorcerer. Good deeds are simple. The Knight gives money to a beggar, and the beggar can feed his family. Even the most jaded Kreuzritter can walk away from that exchange

knowing that he has accomplished something good – that his sacrifice has helped someone. It lessens the burden of guilt they have to bear.

This isn't how the Knights see it, of course. They don't consider their deeds a way to salve their conscience. They simply see themselves as doing the right thing – struggling against Legion in every way they can, even if it's just feeding a hungry child. Many Knights would resent the suggestion that they were being kind out of self interest, while other, more pragmatic and honest Black Crosses would answer the Rose and Cross in the story above with, *"Of course I hope this makes up for my sins a bit. But either way, doesn't the girl still eat tonight?"*

Not Even Your Own Mother

In the dark, Gerrold stood over his sleeping mother, unaware that she had once watched over him while he slept in his crib the same way.

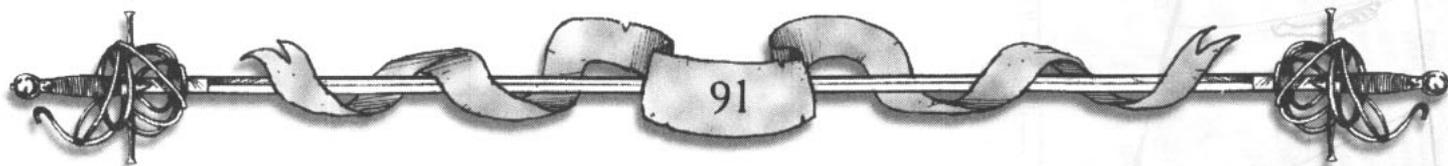
"Gerrold. Come back!" she murmured, and he was half-fleeing before he realized that she was talking in her sleep.

She thrashed through the covers, and he leaned over her in the moonlight, his hand next to her cheek but not touching her. Somehow, she seemed to sense his presence and quieted. Before he could stop it, a tear rolled off his face and splashed onto her nose. Hearing the change in her breathing, he dove into a shadow and was gone before she awoke.

"Gerrold?" His mother sat up in bed. She had been sure that her son was alive again and in the room, if only for an instant. It must have been another dream.

Lifting her hand to her face, she felt the wetness there. Had she been crying again?

The Black Crosses operate under a strict Oath of Secrecy. Unless the rest of the party are also members of the Order, or they've received special exemption from the Hochmeister, you're going to have to keep your membership to yourself. This means no shadow-walking or using your nightblade in front of your friends.





Of course, you can get around this simply by using your abilities more creatively. Wait for opportunities to present themselves – parties often split up for various reasons. Use the abilities in such a way that their true nature can't be discerned. Blame your talents on a Surneth artifact, or invent another story about how you acquired the ability. Only use the abilities as a last resort, or simply ask your friends to close their eyes and trust you before you step into a shadow. When you come down to it, there's no need for the Oath to interfere too heavily with the use of your Kreuzritter Advantages.

Between Mankind and Annihilation

Gerrold watched in horror as the creature continued to pulse its way out of the tear in the Barrier like an enormous caterpillar. The eyeless horror was at least sixty feet long, and in a moment, it vanished into the real world. Quickly, he stepped into a nearby shadow and drew his sword. The beast was worming its way down the hill toward a nearby town, drawn by the scent of human flesh.

He started after the creature, then looked down at his sword and realized just what a ridiculous weapon it made against a monster of that size. Throwing the blade to the ground, he felt around in his pocket.

There it was – a bag of poisonous dust so deadly that it could slay a drachen. Knowing that there was only one way to be sure, he looped the bag around his neck and ran at the monster screaming a battle cry.

"Tannen!"

Although eyeless, it somehow sensed his approach and turned its gaping mouth to face him, revealing jagged teeth that could grind him into a pulp in an instant.

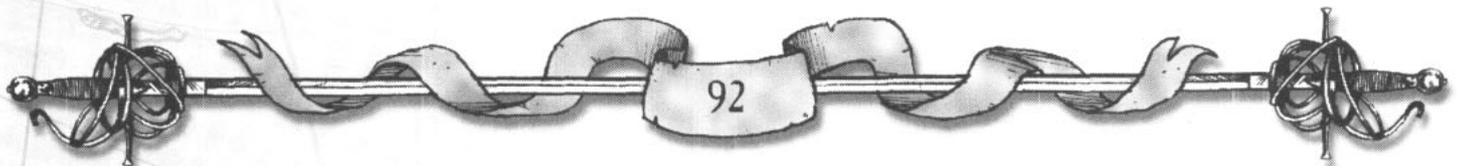
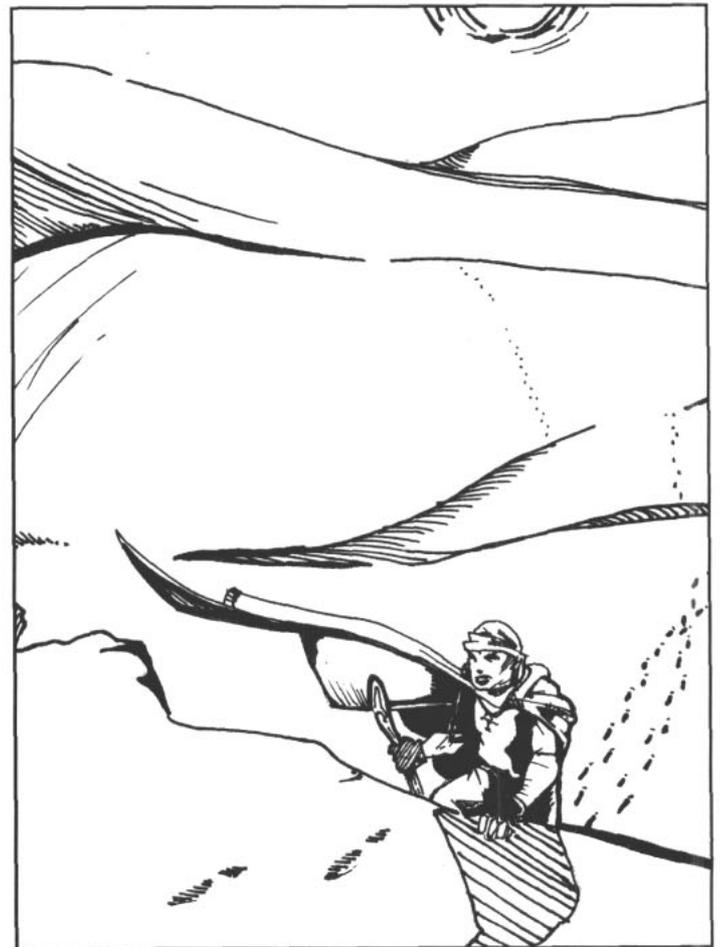
He hesitated for a moment, and then thought of the people he was protecting: Derek, the little girl, his mother, even the disagreeable Rose and Cross Knight. Closing his eyes, he leapt.

An hour later, the vultures began to gather.

Remember the ultimate goal of the Black Crosses above everything else: The destruction of the Strangers comes first. If you encounter one of these creatures, all bets are off. These monsters represent an unknown – but seemingly hostile and manipulative – force on Théah. The Strangers might be whispering into the ears of a dozen kings and a hundred priests.

A Knight's finest hour comes when he and his companions are the only thing standing between a sleepy village and an enormous *thing* from beyond the Barrier. This is your chance to drop the charade and get down to business.

Of course, it pays to be cautious. Make sure that the King's advisor is *really* a Stranger before sticking your sword in him, or you could be in for a world of hurt.





Players should stop reading now. This section of the book contains material that is intended for the GM only. Ignoring this warning will spoil countless surprises for you during the game.

NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the Charity chapter that we felt were too sensitive to give to the players.

Hochmeister Gunther Schmidl: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 2
Panache: 2
Reputation: 24
Background: Dead to the World
Arcana: Comforting

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Academy, Membership: Kreuzritter, Nacht Sorcery, Servants

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Lip Reading 4, Mooch 5, Oration 5, Politics 5, Scheming 3, Sincerity 5

Criminal: Ambush 6, Gambling 4, Shadowing 3, Stealth 4
Streetwise: Shopping 3, Socializing 5, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 4

Commander: Artillery 3, Gunnery 2, Incitation 5, Leadership 5, Logistics 5, Strategy 5, Tactics 5

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3

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

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Ear Clap 3, Footwork 3, Jab 2

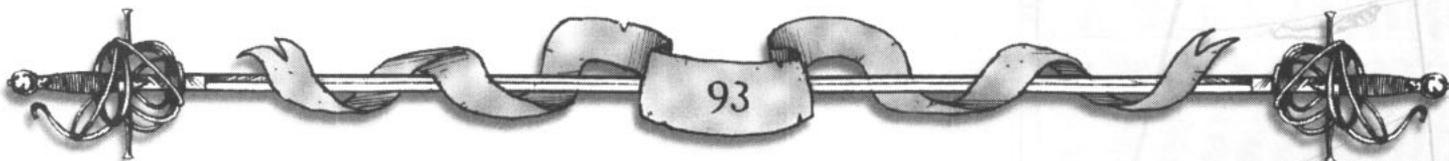
Rider: Ride 4

Unabwendbar (Master): Advance 5, Charge 5, Commander 5, Envelop 5, Flank 5, Hold Ground 5, Regroup 5, Scholar 5, Scout 5, Set vs. Charge 5, Trim Line 5, Withdraw 5

Gunther's real name is Helmut Stauss, but during the War of the Cross he was referred to by most people simply as "General Stauss." He led the Vaticine army to several victories early in the War, and it appeared as though his forces were going to put an early end to the Objectionists forces when he witnessed a wounded man stumble out of a shadow and fall to the ground in front of him. Stauss helped the man up and barraged him with questions; the Kreuzritter was tight-lipped, but Stauss noted the black cross peeking out from under the man's shirt. Being an extremely resourceful man, Stauss managed to ferret out some key facts about the Order, including the nature of their assassination methods.

Stauss' knowledge of die Kreuzritter's sorcery presented the Order with a sticky situation. He was too public and too valued a member of the Vaticine Church to assassinate, but at the same time, even the Hierophant was unaware of the fact that the Knights were using sorcery in pursuit of their goals. The revelation of this fact could spell disaster for the Order.

So they did the only thing they could – they recruited him. After he saw the Dark Paths and learned of the Order's true mission, he agreed to join. He faked his own assassination and left the public eye for good. Since then, he has rapidly risen to become Hochmeister of the Order, thanks to his marvelous organization and leadership abilities.



More on Schmidl's previous life (and the circumstances of his faked death) can be found in the *Eisen* sourcebook, pages 14–15.

Grandmaster Kazi: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 18
Background: True Identity
Arcana: Exemplary

Advantages: Kanuban, Théan, Montaigne, Combat Reflexes, Faith, Keen Senses, Membership: Kreuzritter, Opahkung, Small, Toughness

Artist: Drawing 5

Doctor: Diagnosis 5, First Aid 5, Surgery 5

Hunter: Ambush 6, Animal Training 5, Fishing 5, Skinning 5, Stealth 6, Survival 5, Tracking 6, Trail Signs 5, Traps 5

Archer: Attack (Bow) 5, Fletcher 5, Snapshot 5

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

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

Back on Kanuba, Kazi was a shaman known as an *Opahkung*. The Kanu believe that all objects are bound with *opah* – either *nal* (curses) or *lan* (blessings). *Opahkung* are skilled at coaxing the *opah* out of a given object and Kazi was one of the best. Kazi's spear is an ancient weapon passed down in his family for hundreds of years. In the hands of a Hero with the *Opahkung* Advantage, it possesses the following properties:

✧ *A sorcerer (not a shaman, such as other Opahkung) struck by the spear cannot use any Sorcerous Knack until the end of the Scene. Items treated with Lærdom magic are affected similarly, and any lingering magical effects are canceled immediately.*

✧ *The Hero adds his Resolve to his Attack Rolls when using this weapon. Thus, a Hero with a 6 Resolve who rolled a 24 would modify the roll to a 30.*

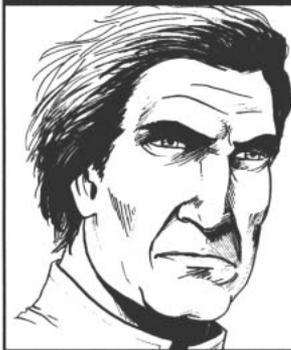
✧ *The TN to break this weapon is 110.*

✧ *When affected by sorcery while holding the spear, the Hero may spend one Drama die to resist that magic.*

✧ *The Hero receives up to 8 additional Drama dice at the start of each Story. This cannot more than double the Hero's starting Drama dice. These additional dice may only be used if the Hero is touching the spear.*

The *Opahkung* Advantage costs 10 points and may only be taken by a Kanu, which has put a considerable crimp in Kazi's plan to give to the spear to another Knight. Unfortunately, he's running out of time. Kazi has had a vision of his own death at the hands of a Stranger, and he knows he will not live more than another two years. He's considering sending word back home, but doesn't know if that will do any good. He doesn't want Kanuba to become embroiled in the Black Cross crusade, so he continues to look here, hoping somehow to find a proper heir.

Jacques Renault: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 15
Background: Obligation
Arcana: Loyal

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan, Vendel, Vodacce, Faith, Linguist, Membership: Kreuzritter
Hunter: Ambush 6, Stealth 5, Survival 3, Tracking 5, Traps 3
Sailor: Balance 1, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Leaping 2, Rigging 1



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

Spy: Disguise 3, Shadowing 4, Sincerity 3

Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2, Underworld Lore 2

Athlete: Footwork 5, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3

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

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 5

Valroux (Journeyman): Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

After learning that the Order did not intend to avenge his friend's death at the hands of *l'Empereur*, Jacques decided that he would find someone more cooperative. He has sought out a man he met many years ago – now calling himself the Kire and on a mission of vengeance of his own. Jacques plans to “swap tasks” with the Kire once the burly man has matured some. He will offer to hunt down the person who killed the Kire's wife and daughter, and in exchange the Kire will kill the Empereur, allowing the Order to eliminate the man without exposing themselves.

Tana Garricks: Hero



Brawn: 4

Finesse: 3

Wits: 3

Resolve: 3

Panache: 3

Reputation: 2

Background: None

Arcana: None

Advantages: Vendel (R/W), Théan, Montaigne, Large, Membership: Kreuzritter, Nacht Sorcery

Hunter: Ambush 4, Animal Training 5, Skinning 3, Stealth 5, Survival 3, Tracking 4, Trail Signs 3, Traps 2

Merchant: Butcher 3, Cooking 2, Hagglng 3, Spinner 3

Streetwise: Socializing 1, Scrounging 2, Shopping 2, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 1

Athlete: Break Fall 1, Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Long Distance Running 4, Sprinting 4, Swimming 3, Throwing 2

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4

Gray uses the standard wolf stats (see the monster entry for Canines in the Villain Chapter of the GMs' Guide) except that he possesses Nacht sorcery as well.

Tana and Gray share a bond between them that allows Gray to follow Tana anywhere, even into the Dark Paths. After entering the Paths once, Gray could do it at will. It is uncertain why the Dark Paths do not affect Gray the same as they do a human. Other than their bond, Tana and Gray have no secrets.

Clara Grossenkir: Scoundrel



Brawn: 3

Finesse: 4

Wits: 3

Resolve: 4

Panache: 2

Reputation: -8

Background: Lost Relative

Arcana: Proud

Advantages: Crescent (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Blessing, Indomitable Will, Membership: Kreuzritter, Toughness

Hunter: Stealth 4, Survival 5, Tracking 4, Ambush 4

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

Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2, Swimming 3

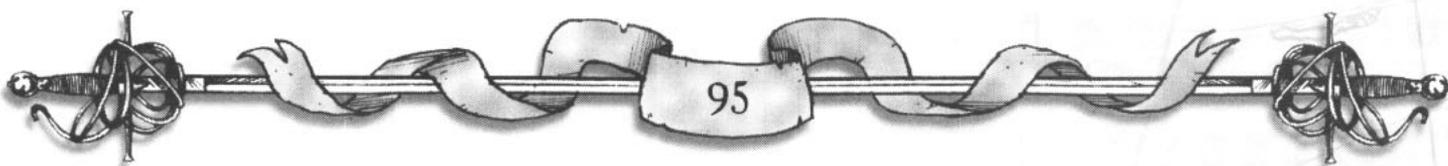
Commander: Strategy 3, Tactics 4, Cartography 3

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Rider: Ride 4

Clara has no real secrets. She simply wishes to be left alone with her pain. She doesn't want to see her son, or anyone else for that matter. She is done with the rest of humanity.



Jonas Glenfynon: Hero

Brawn: 4
Finesse: 3
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: 12
Background: Cursed
Arcana: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne, Théan, Able Drinker, Large, Membership: Kreuzritter, Toughness

Criminal: Gambling 3, Shadowing 5, Stealth 5, Ambush 3, Cheating 2, Lockpicking 3, Pickpocket 3

Performer: Acting 2, Cold Read 3, Dancing 1, Disguise 4, Oratory 1, Singing 3

Streetwise: Socializing 4, Street Navigation 5, Underworld Lore 4

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4

Wrestling: Bear Hug 3, Break 2, Escape 4, Grapple 5, Head Butt 5

Jonas has never quite been the same since the Unseelie woman dug her claws into his neck. He doesn't know it, but when she drew blood, she also infected him with a portion of her essence. In effect, he is now part Unseelie. While it doesn't affect his temperament or personality, wards and weapons that are useful against the Sidhe will work with full effect against him as well.

*Kursis al'Marikk: Scoundrel*

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 5
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 5
Reputation: -7
Background: None
Arcana: None

Advantages: Crescent (R/W), Théan, Montaigne, Combat Reflexes, Faith, Membership: Kreuzritter

Courtier: Dancing 5, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 2 (4 in Crescent), Fashion 3, Oratory 3

Hunter: Ambush 6, Stealth 5, Survival 4, Tracking 6

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Leaping 5, Rolling 4, Side-step 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Kick 4, Throat Strike 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5

Marikk (Journeyman): Double-attack (Katar) 4, Exploit Weakness (Marikk) 5, Lunge (Katar) 4, Whirl 5

Rider: Ride 5, Trick Riding 4

Kursis uses two Crescent knives known as katars. These knives inflict 2k2 damage, have -2 unkept dice when thrown, and have -1 unkept die when used for Active Defense.

Apprentice (Marikk): Marikk is a Crescent knife-fighting style using two katars. The student suffers no off-hand penalty when using a katar. In addition, for each attack on a single target during a Round that Kursis makes, the target's TN to be hit is reduced by twice Kursis' Mastery Level (4 points total) when Kursis is attacking. Thus, the second time Kursis attacks a TN 25 target, the TN drops to a 21 for him, and only him.

Journeyman (Marikk): Kursis has mastered an extraordinary somersaulting attack that places him behind his opponent. By spending two Actions (only one of which need be currently "legal"), Kursis may perform a rear attack on his target. The target may Actively Defend.



New Knack: *Whirl*. Whirl is a spinning attack designed to take out multiple unskilled enemies at once. For each Rank you have in this Knack, you may add 2 to your Attack Roll when attacking Brutes. Thus, a Hero with a Rank 3 in Whirl would increase a roll of 19 to a 25 when attacking Brutes.

Kursis has no secrets. He has come from the Crescent Empire to serve the Order as an Assassin and that's it. The reason he doesn't want to talk about his past is that he left a girl behind to join the Order, and doesn't like talking about her. As for his wild tales, he's just repeating stories he's heard other Crescents tell. He doesn't know whether they're true or not.

Largo Gallegos de Aldana: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 2
Reputation: 18
Background: Romance
Arcana: Starcrossed

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Castillian Education, Faith, Membership: Kreuzritter, Ordained, University
Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Gossip 4, Oratory 1, Politics 5, Scheming 3, Sincerity 5
Criminal: Ambush 3, Gambling 1, Lockpicking 5, Shadowing 2, Stealth 4
Merchant: Accounting 5, Scribe 4
Scholar: History 4, Law 3, Mathematics 5, Occult 3, Philosophy 4, Research 4, Theology 4
Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 5, Cryptography 4, Forgery 4
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4

Largo has no secrets, but Lilia, the woman he's in love with, certainly has her share. She's actually a member of Los

Vagos who has infiltrated the Inquisition. On several occasions, Largo has come dangerously close to uncovering her real identity, and she may have to kill him if he gets any closer. The irony of their situation is that if they both realized who the other one truly served, they could form a powerful bond between their respective groups, as well as pursuing their romantic attraction further.

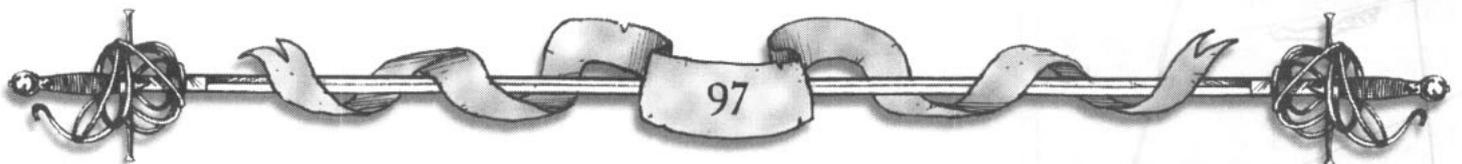
Josephine Hearne: Scoundrel



Brawn: 6
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: -18
Background: Cursed
Arcana: None

Advantages: Montaigne, Théan, Ussuran (R/W), Dangerous Beauty, Keen Senses, Membership: Kreuzritter, Toughness
Hunter: Ambush 5, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 4
Spy: Conceal 4, Disguise 3, Poison 4, Shadowing 4, Sincerity 5
Pyeryem (Apprentice): Speak 3, Man 4, Goshawk 3, Wolf 2
Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Rolling 4, Sprinting 3, Swimming 3, Throwing 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Josephine, or Jana Muratova, as she's really named, is possessed. One of the artifacts she came into contact with during her missions placed the trapped essence of a Stranger into her body. It is gradually growing stronger and taking over her mind. Her body is slowly changing as well, but the creature seems capable of concealing its real form. On the other hand, the process has made her incredibly strong. She knows what's happening, but is unsure what to do about it. She's contemplating suicide, but fear that that may give the creature uncontested control of her body. Unless something is done, the Stranger will have completely erased Jana from existence and taken over her body within a year. If this happens, the creature will have access to her memories – and many of the Order's secrets therein.



In the meantime, Josephine is having problems around animals, such as Gray. The animals sense the creature within her and want nothing to do with her. This only adds to her torment, as she feels that Matushka is abandoning her as well.

<i>Anita Calissano: Scoundrel</i>	
	<i>Brawn:</i> 2
	<i>Finesse:</i> 2
	<i>Wits:</i> 3
	<i>Resolve:</i> 4
	<i>Panache:</i> 2
	<i>Reputation:</i> -4
	<i>Background:</i> Vendetta
	<i>Arcana:</i> Stubborn

Advantages: Théan, Vodacce (R/W), Patron
Performer: Cold Read 2, Acting 4, Dancing 1, Oratory 2, Singing 1
Servant: Accounting 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Gossip 4, Hagglng 4, Menial Tasks 5, Unobtrusive 5
Spy: Conceal 3, Shadowing 2, Sincerity 5, Stealth 4
Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 1

Anita has no further secrets. She desires only Vincenzo Caligari's slow, painful death.

<i>"Judith": Villain</i>	
	<i>Brawn:</i> 3
	<i>Finesse:</i> 4
	<i>Wits:</i> 2
	<i>Resolve:</i> 7
	<i>Panache:</i> 3
	<i>Reputation:</i> -34
	<i>Background:</i> Vendetta
	<i>Arcana:</i> None

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Dangerous Beauty, Servants
Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Oratory 4, Scheming 4, Seduction 5, Sincerity 5

Criminal: Gambling 1, Shadowing 3
Hunter: Ambush 5, Skinning 3, Stealth 6, Tracking 6
Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 4, Law 4, Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 3, Occult 4, Philosophy 4, Research 3, Theology 5
Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5
Mortis (Journeyman): Double-attack (Knife) 4, Exploit Weakness (Mortis) 4, Riposte (Knife) 4, Throw (Knife) 4

Note: Judith has forgotten many skills during her long period of undeath. These are just a sampling of the knowledge she once possessed.

Judith is able to generate Shadow Armor, as other Nights. In addition, she can project one nightblade from each of her hands and throw them like normal knives, generating new blades to replace them. This allows her to use the Mortis style of fighting she is familiar with. She is also capable of assuming control of any Night she is in physical contact with when he "dies."

Sometimes the best lie is the truth. "Judith" really is Judith Losch. Several years after the Order was reorganized to protect the Hierophant, Judith was attacked by a Stranger in the Dark Paths and killed.

However, death is ephemeral at best in the Dark Paths. Judith awoke, trapped in her own corpse, and the strain drove her insane. The Order has rigged the records to keep morale up, but Judith remains an implacable enemy.





Sanctuary Secrets

A Hovel in Carmen

The entry into Bryn Bresail is real, hidden under some garbage in a side alley. However, the Sidhe will know instantly if someone uses it, no matter how stealthy they are.

Altamira Monastery

A Night named Alphonso has been tightly bound and hidden in a wine cask in the cellar. He suffers from homicidal mania, but the Phantom Guards managed to capture him “alive.” The Order keeps him locked away so that they can make use of his Dark Blade, which would dissolve away to nothing if he were killed.

In addition, there are still many artifacts hidden away within the City of Shadows, and Knights will occasionally come across one of them. To randomly generate an artifact from the City of Shadows, roll once on the powers chart, and once on the flaws chart. If you receive results that you don't like or that don't make sense to you, roll again. For more powerful artifacts, increase the number of times you roll on each chart, rerolling duplicate effects. The artifacts should be available only to Knights – the Order would kill any non-member who knew of the City.

Powers

1–2: The object extinguishes all light sources within 15 feet of itself. The light sources will relight themselves after leaving the area of effect.

3–4: While worn, this object allows its wearer to see in all forms of darkness without penalty.

5–6: The object is a form of firearm that fires bullets of darkness. It does not need to be reloaded (although it takes seven Actions to “recharge” after firing), and these bullets inflict 2k2 damage to any living creature they hit.

7: This device allows its user to command his shadow to attack a person standing nearby. The shadow elongates and

stretches, reaching up to attack the target with its bare hands. The shadow's stats are equal to the user's, and it cannot be harmed by normal weapons, although fire- and light-based attacks directed at it inflict double damage to both it and the user.

8: This object is a 1k2 knife that allows its wielder to sever the shadow from a living creature (with two Raises to hit) and store it inside the pommel. While a creature lacks a shadow like this, it receives a Free Raise to all stealth-related rolls, but it cannot spend any Drama dice. Only one shadow may be contained within the knife at a time. The wielder may free the shadow currently captured within the knife at any time. The knife does not need to be in constant use to contain the shadow.

9: Reroll. If you roll another 9, the Hero has found another Crucible of Night, possibly with one or more Cloaks of Shadows inside. Do not roll on the Flaws table.

0: Incidental, but interesting effect. (Shadow changes shape periodically, or seems to draw light into itself.) Do not roll on Flaws table.

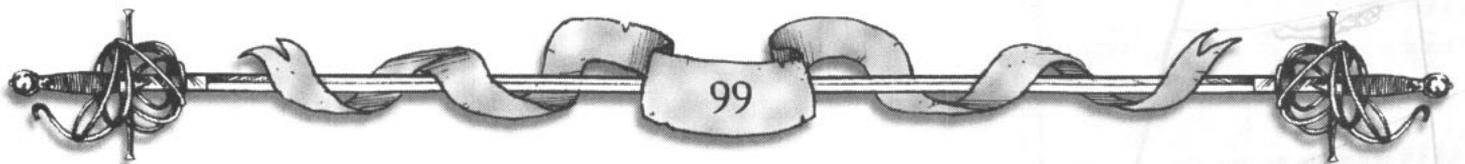
Flaws

1: Once used, the item marks the Hero permanently in some way. Those familiar with the item can recognize the mark easily. The item inflicts one die of damage per use (or for every Round of constant use).

2–5: The item must be recharged in the Crucible of Night regularly or it ceases to function (GM's option how often it must be recharged and how long that takes).

6–9: The item works only in the Dark Paths.

0: The user gradually loses weight and fades away. If the artifact is used regularly for one month, the user is transformed permanently into a shadow. He cannot speak, touch anything, or use any of his normal abilities, but he can move across surfaces. He cannot die, but the touch of sunlight will cause him to fade out until the sunlight is removed. Once completed, the process is irreversible, effectively trapping him in an eternal hell of his own. If the user stops handling the artifact before the month is up –





throwing it away or never touching it again – he will gradually return to normal.

The Inn of the Green Eye

The dead messenger was a ruse by the Inquisition. It is secretly controlling the Cauldron in the town, hoping to uncover more Legion worshippers and kill them all at once. Since Esteban Verdugo is a member of the Hieros Council, the Inquisition has a fair idea what the Black Crosses are up to at any given time (that is, they know what the Black Crosses are up to as it pertains to the Church; they know nothing of die Kreuzritter's other activities). They hoped that the body would distract and fragment the Black Crosses in this town, preventing the Knights from spoiling its plans too soon.

The Kippe Academy

Hildegard Krause, the cook, is an Inquisition spy who reports back to Esteban Verdugo on the Order's plans. She has discovered the faculty's secret meeting place and listens to their discussions through a crack in the floor.

Numa Cathedral

Obviously, the big secret at this Sanctuary is the contents of the forbidden room. What could have been so mind-destroying as to cause the Hochmeister's order and his subsequent suicide?

It was a blueprint.

On the wall of the room is affixed a thin metal plate that can be neither removed nor destroyed. Drawn on the plate is a detailed sketch of a male and a female human being, complete with accurate anatomical details. The drawings are accompanied by a 4-foot by 8-foot block of text in some form of Synchron language. At the bottom is a tiny picture of a mechanical humanoid, like a self-portrait... or an artist's signature.

No one has seen the plate in over two hundred years.

Other Secrets

The Hierophant's Death

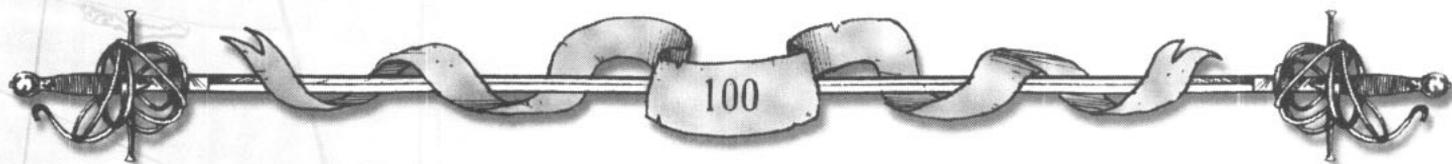
The Knights know that Hierophant's recent death was not caused by illness. They are aware that the Empereur of Montaigne pushed him down a flight of stairs. While it might seem unusual that the Order has not assassinated Léon in retaliation, they have been powerless to act upon this information so far. The Empereur is an incredibly public figure, and is almost always accompanied by several of the best swordsmen in the world. Undertaking such an operation is no small task, and would almost certainly leave evidence of the Order's existence that the Empereur's pet Fate Witches could trace back to its source. Since the Order's secrecy is more important than avenging the Hierophant, no assassination attempts have been made yet.

However, a more recent development has thrown the Order into a panic. The Cardinal of Montaigne has gone missing and is presumed dead, while the ten Montaigne Archbishops have vanished – abducted by the Empereur's men according to the Order's sources. Until they are recovered, or proof of their death can be produced, a new Hierophant cannot be chosen to lead the Church. Of course, they could be replaced after a five year waiting period, but such a long period of inactivity could be disastrous. The Inquisition has used the opportunity to seize a great deal of power, and their irrational actions are threatening to topple the Church.

GMs should feel free to reveal this information to Kreuzritter Heroes. More on the Hierophant's death and the archbishops' disappearance can be found in the *7th Sea Players' Guide* and the *Montaigne* sourcebook (pages 13 and 106).

What is the Barrier?

The Barrier was erected by the Sidhe many centuries before humanity ever became an issue. The Sidhe invested a great



deal of their power in this Barrier, and it was meant to keep out their enemies, whom they had driven away.

Unfortunately, they overlooked one threat that seemed like an innocent enough creature at the time. After all, it could barely defend itself from the wild animals, so how could it possibly pose a threat to the almighty Sidhe?

By tearing down the Barrier, that's how. This pitiful creature discovered a way to contact the enemies that the Sidhe had cast out so long ago and made a greedy bargain with them.

For power.

For sorcery.

And then it ignored the fine print.



How Does Sorcery Affect the Barrier?

Many of the different forms of Sorcery that are common on Théah are destructive to the Barrier in one way or another. They are, at least partially, attempts by the banished enemies of the Sidhe to regain a foothold in this world.

Specifically, *Porté*, *Sorte*, *Zerstörung* (see the *Rilasciare* sourcebook), and *El Fuego Adentro* (see the *Castille* sourcebook) are destructive to the Barrier. *Porté* is the most obvious in the way it assaults the Barrier: it simply tears holes in it. Similarly, *Zerstörung* corrodes the Barrier's essence whenever it is used. *El Fuego Adentro* is more subtle, attacking the Barrier by consuming the energy that maintains it. *Sorte* is the most devious, not attacking the Barrier at all, but instead manipulating events to lead toward its sudden destruction. The more these magics are used, the weaker the Barrier grows, and the sooner the enemies of the Sidhe will return. Luckily, that time may be far off, but with the sudden rise of *Porté* use in Montaigne, it grows closer every day.

Glamour actually strengthens the Barrier when it is used. The Sidhe's own sorcery, and those of their Avalon allies, makes it more powerful over time. *Lærdom* and *Pyeryem* neither harm nor help the Barrier. These magics came from other entities who were not cast out when the Sidhe erected the Barrier. They have no interest in destroying the Barrier, and took their payment from the humans in other ways.

The Strangers

The Strangers are actually enemies of the Sidhe who have managed to slip back into Théah, specifically through the holes torn in the Barrier by *Porté*. You may also have deduced that if the Strangers were cast out of Théah by the Sidhe, then they must have left some evidence behind telling of their presence, such as records, tools... or ruins.

Ruins that gave mankind the key to contacting them and bargaining for sorcery. *Syrneth* ruins.



It only stands to reason that the Surneth and the Strangers are one and the same.

Or at least that one particular Surneth race and the Strangers are one and the same. The “Surneth” actually comprised numerous races, many of whom were wiped out before the Sidhe ever walked the planet. Of those left, some were canny enough to avoid conflict with the Goodly Folke and others were so few or so obviously in decline that the Sidhe ignored them. Only one was powerful enough to fight the Goodly Folke directly. This race, referred to by the Explorer’s Society as the Thalusiai, was responsible for the ruins left on the Thalussian Isles. Long ago, they launched a great war against the fae and were eventually defeated. As punishment, the Sidhe banished them from Théah and set up the great Barrier to prevent them from ever returning.

The creature that Judith Losch killed in the Hierophant’s presence was a Thalusiai. It used an artifact to allow it to appear human and was steering the Hierophant into policies that were less anti-sorcery, especially Porté. Judith destroyed that individual, but a few others have found their way back to Théah; the rest wait behind the Barrier. Even now, they seethe behind their imprisonment and yearn to return to the lost kingdoms of their distant past.

The Goals of the Strangers

The Thalusiai have been infiltrating human society ever since the holes in the Barrier grew big enough to let them through. They have done this in order to work quietly toward their goals from behind the scenes. No one is certain what exactly those goals are, but they surely mean no good for humanity. The Strangers treat humans as a small boy treats ants beneath his feet: living toys to be tormented and destroyed.

To date, less than two dozen Thalusiai have managed to escape the Dark Paths (others have tried, but have either been struck down by the Phantom Guard or were unable to satisfactorily ape human behavior). They have taken human identities and move among Théan society as normal people. Some of them have become nobles, and use the courts and halls of power to further their own agenda. Others monitor

Avalon for Sidhe activity, although they can’t afford to get too close (Queen Elaine’s rise has made things very difficult for them there). A few have even set up “schools of magic” in Montaigne, encouraging young nobles to develop their Porté powers.

These disguised Strangers meet each other in hidden places where they share what they have learned and plot their alien schemes in private. Secrecy seems to be their primary goal. They never reveal themselves unless cornered and only attack when their security is threatened. For now, they seem content to pursue their unknown agenda in anonymity.

Thankfully, no Stranger has yet reached a position of power like the one Judith slew in front of the Hierophant. While a few have attained influential positions, none has the ear of a ruler or can shape government policy the way the Hierophant’s advisor could. Die Kreuzritter have made it difficult for them by watching the halls of power very closely for signs of their activity.

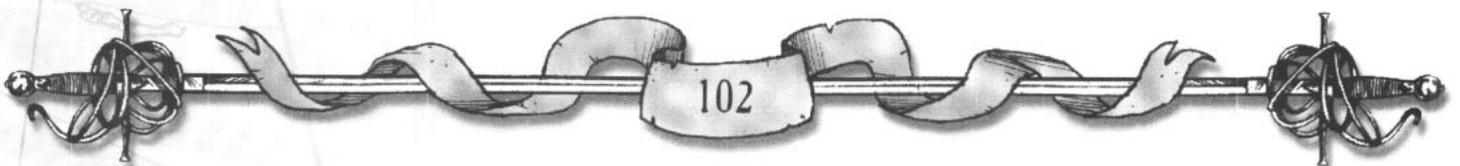
Still, the threat they represent is incalculable. With secrecy on their side, they can hatch untold numbers of sinister plans. The Knights have tried to uncover any Strangers masquerading as humans, but their small numbers prevent them from making any serious progress. Until a Thalusiai actually exposes itself, die Kreuzritter can only remain watchful and try to thwart the Strangers’ schemes as best they can.

The Tools of the Thalusiai

The Thalusiai have an assortment of powerful artifacts to assist in their machinations. These are usually light-based or designed to fool the eye in some way. Some of these devices are described below, although GMs are encouraged to create more if they feel like it.

Disguise Ring

This artifact appears to be an ordinary diamond ring, but it is really used by the Thalusiai to quietly infiltrate human society. First they capture a human whom they wish to impersonate. The ring is placed on the human’s hand, and the gem is twisted clockwise in its casing. This stores the





Faith

human's appearance in the ring. After an image has been stored, a Thalusiai can then wear the ring and – by twisting it counterclockwise – appear to be that human as long as it continues to wear the ring.

However, the ring has several limitations. First, it doesn't affect any sense other than sight. Touch, smell, and sound can all give the Thalusiai away. Second, the ring's ability isn't perfect. The Thalusiai's shadow can sometimes reveal its true appearance if a viewer examines it carefully. Third, it is dependent on an internal power source. If the ring is badly damaged, the effect ends. Last, the ring can only hold one image at a time, so they are careful to choose humans who do not change their style of dress very often, such as soldiers or priests.

Voice Necklace

This odd-looking amber necklace works like a disguise ring, except that it allows the Thalusiai to sound exactly like the human who was wearing the necklace when it was activated.

Light Battery

Many of the Thalusiai artifacts require light to function, so they devised a type of glass that can store light for later use. Essentially, light moves very slowly through one of these small chunks of glass, taking an entire year to move through it. Thus, if it is left sitting in continuous light for one year, it will emit continuous light for one year afterward. By rotating two such batteries, a Thalusiai can have a constant source of light to power its artifacts.

Lens Knife

This artifact is a rod about five inches long and one inch in diameter. At one end is a lens, and at the other end is a compartment that holds a light battery. The lens is virtually immune to the effects of heat, and it focuses light from the light battery in the compartment at a point two to five inches away from itself. This light is so precisely focused that it can act like a blade, cutting through anything with a melting point of less than 1600 degrees Fahrenheit. This

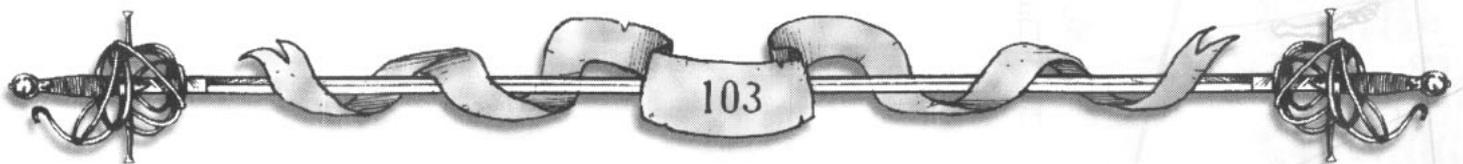
Sample Stranger: Jacques-Louis du Paix

“Jacques-Louis du Paix” is the human identity of a Stranger living in Montaigne. He can be used as a foil for your Heroes, as the center of a Thalusiai conspiracy, or as an example of how the Strangers operate on Théah.

To the general public, Jacques-Louis is a reclusive scholar who spent his formative years sequestered in libraries and study halls. He became known as an expert in Porté magic: although he never practiced it himself, he displayed an uncanny understanding of the sorcerous art and advanced several theories that led to the development of new Knacks. Ten years ago, he began teaching young Montaigne nobles how to use their powers and has since become renowned as one of the foremost Porté instructors in the world. He has even received a citation from the Empereur and has offers to lecture in front of the royal court in Charouse.

In truth, the real man was kidnapped years ago by a Thalusiai in need of a new identity. The introverted du Paix had few friends, which made it easy for the Stranger to replace him. His body was defaced and dumped in the ocean, and the Stranger picked up his life with no one the wiser. The creature began by publishing several groundbreaking treatises on Porté. Once its reputation was secure, it turned to teaching eager humans how to use it. Each new student weakens the Barrier a little further, and with *l'Empereur's* “open sorcery” policy, it expects to continue spreading Porté for many years to come.

The Black Crosses consider Jacques-Louis to be a serious threat, but aren't aware of his true nature. No Knight has yet gotten close enough to ascertain his origins. He is well-protected and moves around constantly, making assassination attempts difficult in the extreme. Should it ever learn his true nature, the Order will spare no effort to hunt him down. Stats for Jacques-Louis can be generated using the Thalusiai rules in the “New Monsters” section, page 105.





“blade” inflicts 3k3 damage, regardless of its wielder’s Brawn.

Steel Lens

This device appears to be a pair of misshapen steel spectacles. It is useless for anyone but a Thalusai. When worn, the steel lens allows the creature to see through solid objects such as walls. This effect is focused at a point six feet away from the wearer and penetrates up to one foot of material. In other words, the Thalusai could, by standing six feet away from a wall that is less than a foot thick, look through it and see what’s on the other side. The lens focuses this way because if it saw through everything, then the wearer would be unable to see anything.

Other Creatures Beyond the Barrier

The Thalusai aren’t the only ones inhabiting the strange region on the other side of the Barrier. Countless monstrous creatures press up against the wall and a few even manage to escape. Some were Thalusai-like terrors that were banished by the Sidhe, others were Strangers themselves until they degenerated or mutated after thousands of years in captivity. A few may even be native to the dimension; what they think of the “immigrant” Thalusai is anyone’s guess. Most of these terrors are unintelligent and show little inclination for the Strangers’ brand of malevolence. They simply attack and destroy anything that comes near them. Porté holes have allowed some of them to escape the Barrier, but the Knights have destroyed most of those in the Dark Paths. Only a scant few ever reach Théah and their high profile allows die Kreuzritter to track them down with ease. The Black Crosses consider them minions of Legion, just as the Strangers are, and hunt them with equal zeal.

Use the rules for Ruin Monsters (*GMs’ Guide*, pages 159–161) when creating one of these creatures. Most of them have a larval or insect-like appearance and all of them are horrible to behold. Be imaginative in your descriptions and adjust the creature’s strength to provide an ample challenge for the party.

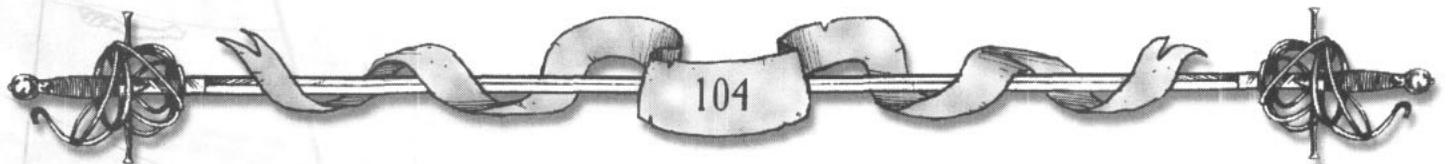
Running a Stranger-based Campaign

GMs can run a fascinating Black Cross campaign based around the idea of discovering and ultimately uncovering a Stranger posing as human. In most case, such an unmasking should be the climax of a long series of adventures. Strangers can’t stand up to extended fights and their small numbers make them inadequate as combat-fodder. They should be the hidden masterminds behind lengthy schemes, not sneering villains daring the Heroes to bring them down.

Instead, GMs should begin with a more mundane conspiracy story that ultimately leads to the Thalusai at its heart. Decide what the Stranger is trying to accomplish and give it a group of unwitting humans to carry it out. The Heroes can stumble across its plan and follow it as a perfectly normal (though sinister) human plot. As they unravel the conspiracy, they can encounter human minions of the Thalusai — co-conspirators and the like — all of whom believe they are serving a human master. Evidence of otherworldly involvement should be obscure and indirect: maybe they know the mastermind visits Sryneth ruins or that the Knights once saw him in the Dark Paths for some unknown reason. There might even be another monster from beyond the Barrier, serving the Stranger like a trained pet. The Heroes can dispatch the beast and still be in the dark as to its true origins.

Only when they reach the latter stages of the story should evidence of an otherworldly power come to light. Perhaps they find their adversary’s living quarters cocooned like an insect’s hive. Maybe they catch sight of its shadow at a garden party, warning them that their foe may be more than he seems. In the final climactic scene, the villain’s true nature can be revealed and the Heroes come face-to-face with the Strangers’ terrible threat. How will this knowledge change them? If they defeat it, will they be able to go back to their old lives or will they begin a new quest to rid the world of this alien menace? Where they go from there is entirely up to you.

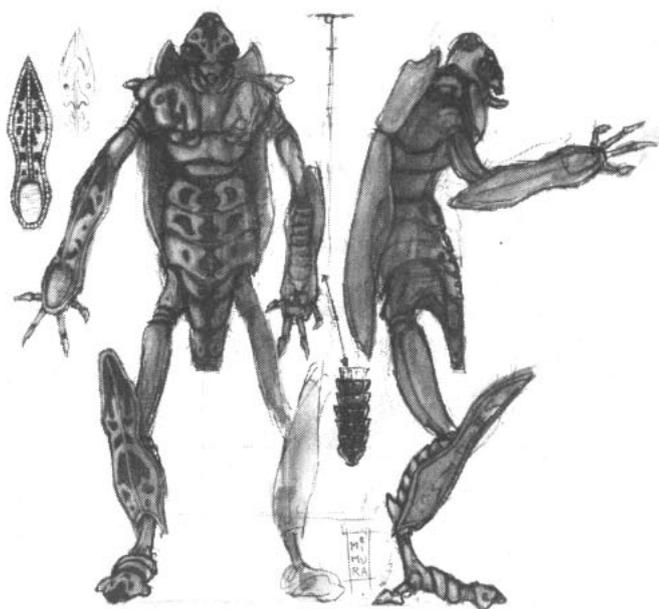
The Black Crosses can play however large or small a role you wish in this sort of campaign. If they suspect that a Stranger is involved, they will monitor the Heroes from a





distance, perhaps providing indirect help if they wish. Heroes who belong to the Order may be contacted by the Hochmeister with instructions to keep their activities secret or assigned a mission to investigate the Thalusiai's human identity "as an enemy of die Kreuzritter." How this affects the story or exactly what help the Heroes receive from the Order is completely up to you. Remember, the Knights have no wish to reveal the existence of the Strangers to the outside world. They attach strings to the help they give – information in exchange for secrecy – and Heroes who belong to the Order will be urged to keep their mission as low-profile as possible.

The Strangers are different from most *7th Sea* adversaries and should be played as such. Don't let their alien nature intimidate you. In many ways, they are a secret society of their own, with their own rules and hidden agenda. The best way to handle them is by approaching them as a creepier variant of, say, the Rilasciare or Novus Ordum Mundi. With a little effort, you can fit them quite readily into *7th Sea's* atmosphere of swashbuckling and sorcery (albeit with a more horrific twist). Be ready to experiment if you wish, and don't feel bound by the information we have presented here.



New Monsters

Thalusiai ("Stranger")

Villain

TN to be Hit: Varies by Skill

Brawn: From 3–6

Finesse: From 2–5

Resolve: From 2–5

Wits: From 1–4

Panache: From 1–4

Attack Roll: Varies by Skill

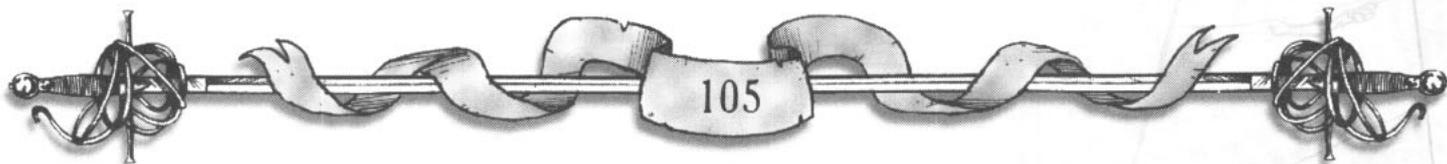
Damage: Varies by Attack, Barehanded Damage is 0k2

Skills: Any, Ranks 1–5, Parry (Chitin Plate) 3

Description: Thalusiai Strangers appear to be a cross between a human and an insect. Thick, chitinous plates protect the creature's forearms and shins, while its oddly jointed legs allow it to make prodigious leaps. Although the creatures have only four fingers, they are surprisingly dextrous and nimble, their limbs possessing enormous strength.

Special Abilities: Strangers receive the Parry (Chitin Plate) Knack at Rank 3 for free. This represents their ability to parry blows using the hard, chitinous plates on their arms and legs. In addition, a Stranger may spend one Action to perform a leap, which allows the creature to move up 3 Levels at once.

Creating a Stranger: Strangers are designed in the same way as any character. They receive +2 Brawn, +1 Finesse, and +1 Resolve. Their maximum Brawn is 6, while their maximum Wits and Panache are 4 (although these numbers can be modified by Advantages). Strangers have access to any non-nationality-specific Advantage the GM is willing to let them buy. They also receive all the abilities above for free. Their main drawback is that Civil Skills and Knacks cost twice as much as normal to purchase and later advance. Strangers may not purchase Sorcery, Shamanism, or an Arcana, and they do not receive Drama dice.



However, they receive a Disguise Ring with an image of their choice, a Voice necklace, and a Lens Blade with two Light Batteries for free.

A Stranger's average lifespan is several centuries, so they must periodically acquire new human identities as their old ones "wear out." The most cunning have learned to link their new identities with their old, passing on titles and possessions to an "heir" or "apprentice" who is merely the same Stranger with a new face.

Night

Villain

TN to be Hit: Varies by Skill

Brawn: As in Life

Finesse: As in Life

Resolve: As in Life +2 (maximum 7 without modifier)

Wits: As in Life -1 (maximum 4 without modifier)

Panache: As in Life

Attack Roll: Varies by Skill

Damage: Varies by Attack

Skills: Any, Ranks 1-5

Description: The Nights are members of die Kreuzritter who have been killed while walking the Paths. They appear just as they were after being killed, complete with all the wounds that resulted in their death. To date, they have only been encountered in the Dark Paths, and the Knights pray that these dark *doppelgangers* will never find a way to reach Théah.

Whatever force animates their corpses also drives them mad. These creatures might be paranoid or homicidally enraged, or even believe that they are still alive.

There are at least 17 Nights walking the Dark Paths. Of these, 15 are in the control of the creature known as Judith. The remaining two are working towards their own ends. The first was once a Knight named Alcalá, who now searches endlessly for a golden locket that contained a picture of his wife. The other was called Lakov, and he has come to the rescue of Knights in danger in the Dark Paths

on more than one occasion. Others may exist, but the Knights are currently unaware of them.

It is unclear what determines the motivation of a newly-created Night. Judith, for instance, seeks the destruction of every living creature in the world; to do that she must escape the Dark Paths. Apparently, the Nights lose their Nacht sorcery when they die. However, Judith correctly believes that if she can acquire a Cloak of Shadows, it will let her enter the real world when she puts it on and raises the hood. Knights are under orders to keep the Cloaks out of her hands at all costs.





Special Abilities: The Nights have two primary special items at their disposal – shadow armor and the dark blades. The creatures’ own energies generate these items, and if the Night is killed (as normal, by suffering Dramatic Wounds equal to twice his Resolve), they (and the Night) fade away to nothing.

Shadow Armor: A Night can project black armor around himself by spending one Action. The armor lasts as long as he wants it to, but he can end the effect at will. While it is in place, the Night rolls two extra Kept dice on Wound Checks; whenever he fails a Wound Check, he divides the amount he failed by in half (rounding down) before suffering any additional Dramatic Wounds.

Dark Blade: This is identical to the Dark Blade described in the Secrecy Chapter (page 78).

Becoming a Night: When a Hero is killed in the Dark Paths, he will rise again as a Night after 24 hours. His Traits are modified as listed above, though his Skills and Knacks remain the same. In addition, he gains the ability to project a suit of shadow armor and a dark blade at will. However, he loses the ability to leave the Dark Paths (although a Cloak of Shadows would let him escape), and he must roll on the chart below to determine what form of insanity he acquires as a result of the process.

1–3: The Hero becomes convinced that his undead state can only be cured through some esoteric method, such as retrieving a personal item or seeking forgiveness from a wronged person.

4–5: The Hero becomes paranoid, feeling that everyone is out to destroy him. He may try to fool others into believing he is harmless, and then attack them when the opportunity presents itself.

6–8: The Hero acquires a powerful hatred of all living things. He will attack anyone he sees on sight.

9–0: The Hero believes that he is still alive. He is unsure why he is trapped in the Dark Paths, but he wants to get out and carry on with his life as soon as possible. He notices nothing wrong with his appearance and doesn’t remember being killed.

Creating a Night: The simplest way to create a Night is to create it as a living character first and then kill it, using the conversion process above. Nights are not recommended as Heroes, for obvious reasons.

Running a Black Cross Campaign

More than any other secret society, the Black Crosses carry the taint of evil. This presents a number of problems for a 7th Sea GM, who must carefully weigh the benefits of moral ambiguity against the threat of a player using the Black Crosses to justify any villainous activities he wants.

Single Players

Most campaigns will contain no more than one or two Black Crosses traveling with a group of other Heroes. This can be tricky to handle. Black Cross players will want to play their Heroes as gritty, pragmatic Knights, willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Unfortunately, this might not sit well with other more “chivalrous” party members.

Party conflict can be fun, as long as it remains on the level of bickering, minor disagreements, and philosophical debates. However, if it reaches a point where one Hero is killing helpless prisoners and expecting everyone else to go along with it because he’s “only playing in character” there are serious problems.

There are several ways to prevent this problem from developing. The first is to avoid placing a Black Cross Hero in a situation where the player must perform a party-damaging action to fulfill his duties to the Order. This includes having the Hero guard a prisoner he knows is a Stranger in disguise, or having the Hero watch as the party prepares to bring a dangerous Svrneth artifact back to civilization. The prisoner can refuse to be left alone with the





Black Cross (“Don’t leave me alone with this killer! He’ll cut my heart out the second you turn your back!”), or the artifact can self-destruct after being used once.

Of course if you are planning a campaign where the Hero would be forced into these situations over and over, it’s best to simply disallow Black Cross Heroes and be done with it. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Black Cross Parties

This is perhaps the simplest and best way to use the Black Crosses – a special task force of Knights assigned to complete a mission that could span the course of an entire campaign. This allows you, as a GM, to fully explore the shadows within the Heroes.

Such a campaign should focus on difficult moral decisions, such as the dilemma of “the good of the many over the good of the few.” The Heroes should have to perform actions that their players might consider evil, but the decision to commit these acts should never be a straightforward choice. Rather, they should agonize over the proper course of action to take, and they should never be truly comfortable with the decision they’ve made.

For instance, the Heroes might realize that Josephine Hearne (described in the Charity chapter) is slowly turning into a Stranger, but only after she has assisted them several times and proven her worth as a loyal Knight. They might go on a quest to find a cure for her, bringing her along to keep her out of trouble, only to realize that time is running out and she might be irrevocably lost before they can save her. At what point does the danger she represents to the party exceed her worth? She might kill a favored NPC while the Stranger controls her actions, allowing the Heroes to realize how powerful she is becoming. If they wait too long, they might not be able to take her down. For a deliciously tragic twist, have them recover the cure only to have Josephine destroy it herself during another “fit.” The Heroes will be forced to destroy her and return home with a queasy feeling in their stomachs.

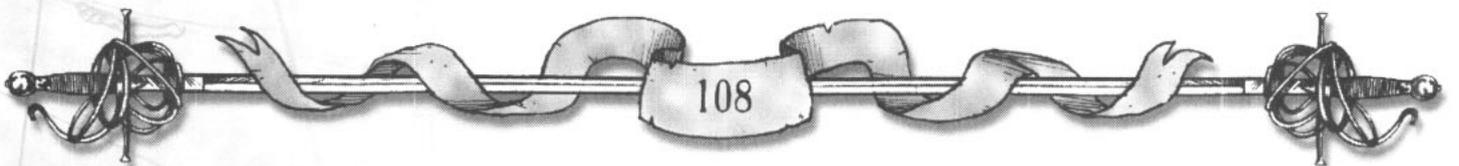
Of course, too much darkness and depression can make for an unpleasant game. The players, just like the Heroes, should be allowed to feel like their sacrifices make a difference in the long run. The NPCs they help should pop up again later, having turned their lives around thanks to the Heroes. The Strangers should suffer setbacks to their invasion when the Heroes deal them decisive blows. Perhaps most importantly, never allow the sacrifice of a Hero’s life to seem meaningless after the fact. When a Hero pays the ultimate price in the line of duty, the monster should be slain, the plot foiled, or the hostage saved. Even if you intend for a story to have a tragic ending, you should be prepared to revise it if one of your players is ready to sacrifice a treasured Hero to stop that sequence of events.

That’s what heroism’s all about.

Stealing the thunder from a Hero’s death is probably the most demoralizing thing you can do to a player. Admittedly, it can be an effective and tragic technique under the proper circumstances, but think long and hard before using it in *7th Sea*. The players are encouraged to behave heroically because very little can kill them. When one of them chooses to behave heroically, knowing that his Hero will die, it’s not necessarily a good idea to punish him for that. The player may feel betrayed. Besides, you can bet that while the players will be depressed for a while about the way Aaron Thistledown sacrificed his life to save a young peasant girl, they’ll always remember how his noble leap pushed her free of the Villain’s deathtrap.

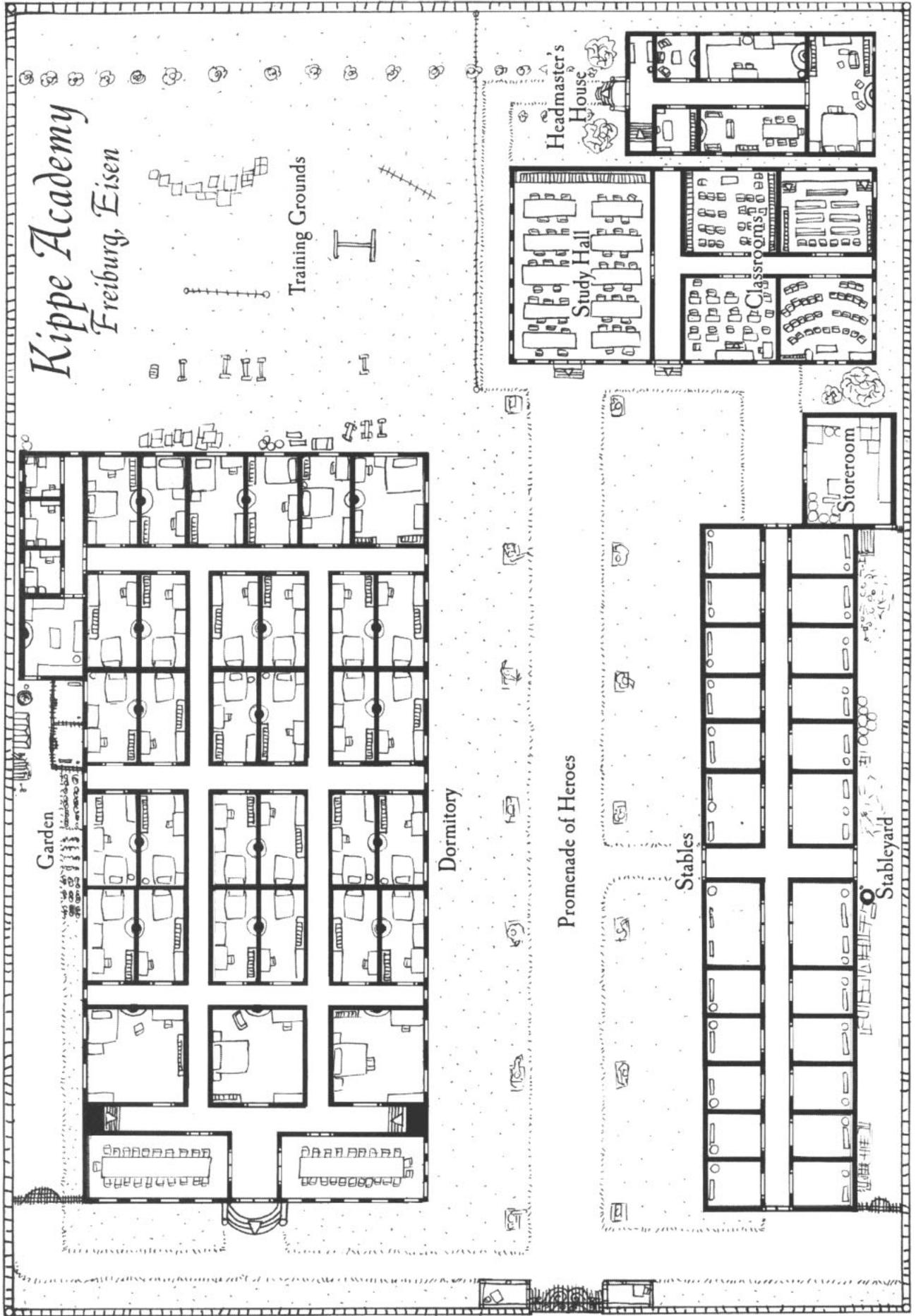
One sequence of events leads to a table filled with depressed and angry players, while the other leads to a memory that can last years, even though it never really happened. GMs who make their players truly feel like Heroes will never lack for players.

It’s all about walking the narrow line between tragedy and nihilism. Things might be bad – the battle might seem to be lost – but the Heroes can always make a difference, no matter how small.



Kippe Academy

Freiburg, Eisen



Garden

Training Grounds

Dormitory

Promenade of Heroes

Stables

Stableyard

Storeroom

Headmaster's House

Study Hall

Classrooms



Castillian Phantom Guard

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	3
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Membership: Kreuz	(5)
Nacht Sorcery	(25)
Nightblade	(6)
Inheritance	(1)
Castille	(0)

Arcana: Righteous

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 1

Hunter

Stealth 3, Survival 1, Tracking 3, Ambush 2

Scholar

History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Occult 1

Martial Skills

Archer

Attack (Bow) 3, Fletcher 1

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Knife

Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3

Income: 500G starting / 0G per month



Faith

Eisen Town Guardian

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	3
Resolve	3
Panache	2

Advantages

Membership: Kreuz.	(5)
Acolyte	(1)
Ordained	(4)
Eisen	(0)

Arcana: Rash

Civil Skills

Criminal

Gambling 1, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3, Ambush 1

Scholar

History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 2, Research 1

Spy

Conceal 1, Poison 1

Streetwise

Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2

Crossbow

Attack (Crossbow) 3, Fletcher 1

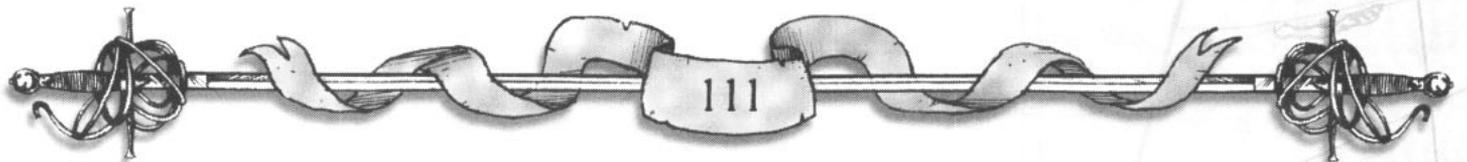
Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Knife

Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3

Income: 90G starting / 30G per month





Montaigne Assassin

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	3
Wits	2
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Membership: Kreuz.	(5)
Swordsman School	(25)
Nightblade	(4)
Montaigne (R/W)	(1)
Inheritance	(5)

Arcana: Star-crossed

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 1, Seduction 1

Hunter

Stealth 3, Survival 1, Tracking 3, Ambush 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Knife

Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3

Mortis School

Double-attack (Knife) 2, Riposte (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 3, Exploit Weakness (Mortis) 1

Income: 2,500G starting / 0G per month